News from the Faculty of English, Cambridge

9 WEST ROAD

'M E T A M O R P H O S I S' (recycled sterling silver, cuttings of decorative letters from early modern books, 2022)
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A SHARED LEGACY

CHAIR'S LETTER

I'm delighted to write to you for the first time as Chair of the Faculty of English. This letter is one of four I will write during my office, and I can't help but wonder what themes I will be reflecting on in 2028.

One of the surprises this term has been the arrival of a delayed bequest from a generous alumnus towards a new home for Cambridge English, part of a response to the campaign in 1999 that came to fruition in the form of the building at 9 West Road in 2005! Anticipating its opening, the editor of the 2004 issue of this magazine wrote that 'the building will be the place for teaching, for meeting, for social events, for private study, for use of the Library and drama studio, for open air study in the garden court. A whole new world for English opens up.' Coming into the building each day, it is a pleasure to see that vision realised and it is hard for me to imagine what doing English at Cambridge felt like before its creation.

As a collegiate University, community in Cambridge can feel diffuse, primarily coalescing within college walls. There are more routines and places within colleges that create a sense of belonging: being welcomed at a porters' lodge, enjoying the ease and familiarity of common rooms, eating with fellow students or staff at table. The rhythm of the year is also sometimes more tangible in colleges, created in large part by students: the giddy excitement of freshers' week, the nervous time-pressured energy of admissions, the quiet tension of exam weeks followed by raucous May celebrations.

Compared to this, a sense of community within the Faculty is harder to catch, but it's something that as Chair I feel privileged to gain a greater sense of every day and not just amongst our students. It is somewhat dizzying to see the range and number of research applications and teaching initiatives underway at any point in the year. I have always known the brilliance of colleagues, but I have a new sense of the level of striving, collaboration and support, and the practice of individual resilience that underlies every successful publication and grant application. Our Work in Progress sessions fill me with joy as people respond with enthusiasm and generosity to colleagues' research tussles. I also feel deep gratitude for the intelligence and thoughtfulness of colleagues gathered for our Faculty meetings. I spend many, many hours in these and yet emerge from most with a conviction that the insight and incisiveness of colleagues has led to deeper understanding and better decisions.

At this time of year, the sense of the Faculty pulling together is particularly palpable as we engage in the huge undertaking that is graduate admissions. Within an extremely compressed timetable, hundreds of graduate applications have to be read and ranked, with the very best candidates submitted for funding. As I read colleagues' comments I am repeatedly struck by their desire and commitment to do justice to the brilliant applicants we get and to perhaps change their future for the better. However, as my predecessor, Professor Raphael Lyne, observed, it is somewhat 'melancholy' to do this work in a climate where postgraduate funding in the humanities is diminishing.

It matters that there is postgraduate funding in the humanities. Without it, the people who teach the next generation are likely to come increasingly only from the most financially privileged backgrounds and our community will be diminished for it. How many of our favourite supervisors would not have been here if not for financial support as students?

This feels personal to me. My parents were the first in their families to go to university. My paternal grandfather grew up in the East End of London to a family of laundresses and rag-n-bone men. His father died when he was young and his mum was on poor support so, although he studied hard, university was never on the cards. Similarly, my maternal grandmother was born in Singapore to a poor family and while extremely bright was denied an education as a girl and married young. It was through their determination and the 1962 Education Act, that both my parents went to Leeds to read English.

In contrast to my grandparents, I therefore grew up expecting to go to university and I was fortunate to have teachers that directed me towards Oxford. But I would not have been able to progress beyond my BA if it had not been for the generosity of my maternal grandmother who paid for my Masters, and an AHRC award that allowed me to progress to a PhD. I can still remember the feel of the offer letter when it came. That award changed my life: nineteen years later, I'm writing this letter to you as Chair of the Faculty of English, at Cambridge University! So I feel a real sense of loss that, due to cuts in funding, the Arts and Humanities Research Council will reduce the number of PhDs it funds by a third by 2030. For the Faculty, this means the potential loss of about four PhDs a year, which is significant within an already stark funding landscape.

The Faculty, as part of the School of Arts and Humanities, is determined to ensure that the best PhD students can do their research here regardless of financial situation by looking to replace those lost studentships and I look forward to working with colleagues, students and alumni to achieve that. It may be less visible than a college community, but the community that is the Faculty – made up of all its past and present members – is extraordinary. I am confident that we can positively affect the future together and invite your suggestions as to how we might do that.

Alex da Costa
Professor of Medieval Literature and Early Print,
Faculty of English

THE WORK OF THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION AND OUR SISTER SUBJECT BODIES

This short piece aims to introduce you to the work of the English subject bodies, especially the English Association of which I am the chair (2024-7). This work has changed significantly over the decade I have been involved.

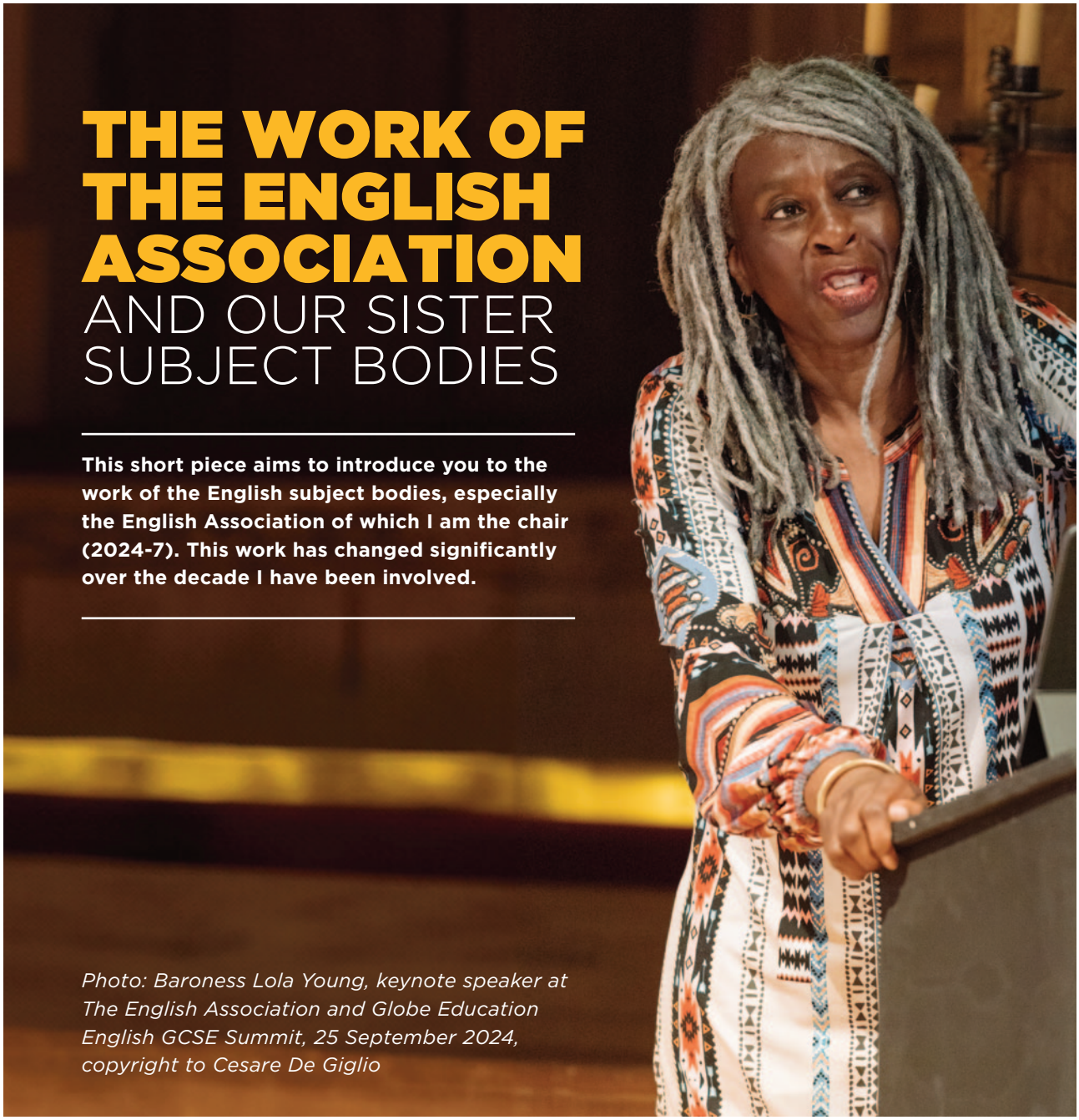


Photo: Baroness Lola Young, keynote speaker at The English Association and Globe Education English GCSE Summit, 25 September 2024, copyright to Cesare De Giglio

Gone are the days when we focussed mainly on responding to government consultations on TEF (Teaching Excellent Framework), REF (Research Excellence Framework), KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework) or whatever. Perhaps the most important work we are doing right now is to offer practical support for HE departments facing job losses. We do this together, speaking with one voice. This is 'all-hands-on-deck' work, and the level of service that colleagues across the UK are prepared to offer is simply amazing. We are always refining what we offer, drawing on the time and expertise of all three bodies. That work includes advising on counterproposals, writing letters of support, meeting with senior university management teams (if they agree!).

We also work closely on collecting and interpreting data on University admissions, providing information on current trends in exam entries and results, and University applications and enrolments so departments can plan ahead, or provide accurate, counter data in those universities that buy the kind of costly predictions that data-harvesting companies sell. The subject bodies, along with the Universities of Edinburgh, Newcastle, and Reading, each of whom donated to my crowdfunding call in 2023, are now

working with SUMS Consulting to change data culture, so that data analysis is something that happens with us, not to us. With SUMS we are building an interface for analysing the sector data, including popular English + (joint or combined) degrees, on enrolments by region, and institution type; crucially, this includes analysis of degree programme titles to get 'inside' the data.

In addition to this, we each have our own campaigns. The Institute for English Studies advances new initiatives in research and teaching in collaboration with other subject institutes in the School of Advanced Study, and with learned societies and non-HEI partners, and they also provide training in advocacy as part of the School of Advanced Study's Campaign for the Humanities. University English supports departments across the UK by promoting student recruitment, by providing fora for sharing expertise, by creating a national network of HE subject leads, and by drawing on grassroots inspiration for events. In 2023-4, University English launched their #EnglishCreates campaign as part of broader advocacy for the value of English. The campaign material focused on employability, making use of the British Academy's Skills and English Studies reports, and alumni stories. This year #EnglishCreates is focusing on the impact of English beyond the academy which will draw on the applied research of colleagues. The aim is to show applicants, their teachers, and families that English is a vital part of an effective contemporary response to global challenges.

The English Association represents English Studies across all four educational sectors: primary, secondary, further, as well as higher education, and we have a small office team funded partly through our membership fee. This year we are launching campaigns on skills, oracy, data and AI, working with colleagues with expertise/projects in these areas, facilitating outreach to help with their impact. We are developing yet more recruitment materials for all sectors, building on our Skills for the Future work. Perhaps the most important work we are doing right now is focussed on GCSE English Literature and GCSE English Language, the root cause of the decline in students opting to take the A-level.

In 2023-4 we convened a working group with University English colleagues and other stakeholders to understand why GCSE provision is not fit for purpose. It was agreed that the curricula in English Literature and English Language are too narrow, driven by assessment. The lack of study of media, digital and other non-literary texts in English Language and the removal of Spoken Language Study, as well as the less diverse selection of literary texts studied for English Literature, mean that these GCSEs do not engage with students' identities or our diverse global world. On 25 September 2024, with the Education team at Shakespeare's Globe, Dr Rebecca Fisher (CEO of the English Association), Professor Robert Eaglestone (Royal Holloway), and Emma Smith (Oxford), we hosted the first national GCSE English Summit, attended by over a hundred English teachers, subject leads, academics, policy makers, members of national organisations and exam boards. A report outlining points of agreement and disagreement, and recommendations, is available on our website.

In 2024, we launched a series on collaboration titled 'Thinking Forwards'. We want to understand and celebrate all kinds of collaboration: between academics and teachers, the cultural sector, and other disciplines. Cross-disciplinary collaboration is especially important right now for a host of reasons, but a key one is the recognition that global and local challenges cannot be addressed by STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) alone. In October we hosted a conversation with colleagues from modern languages who have pioneered an inclusive, multi-disciplinary pedagogy for addressing challenges like climate change or intergenerational justice: 'Challenge Labs'. Equally important are the STEM-SHAPE (Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts for People and the Economy) collaborations that we are profiling, building advocacy for the humanities from within STEM.

The Cambridge English Faculty is contributing directly to this national work: Fiona Green is a member of University English executive; Jenny Bavidge, FEA, is setting up an English Association special interest group for adult learners; and, thanks to Alex da Costa, the English Faculty will be launching a national essay competition for schools on the 'future of English' in collaboration with the English Association this year. Finally, our first 'Thinking Forwards' interview in June 2024 profiled a project close to home: the UKRI (UK Research and Innovation)-funded work on memory co-led by Jon Simons (a neuroscientist at Cambridge), Alex Walsham (History, Cambridge), Charles Fernyhough (Psychology, Durham), and our very own Raphael Lyne (English Literature, Cambridge). You can hear what Raphael and Jon have to say here: https://englishassociation.ac.uk/thinking-forwards-collaboration-english-and-neuroscience/

If you support the work that the English Association does, then please join us: https://englishassociation.ac.uk/join-the-ea/

Jennifer Richards
English (2001) Chair, Peterhouse

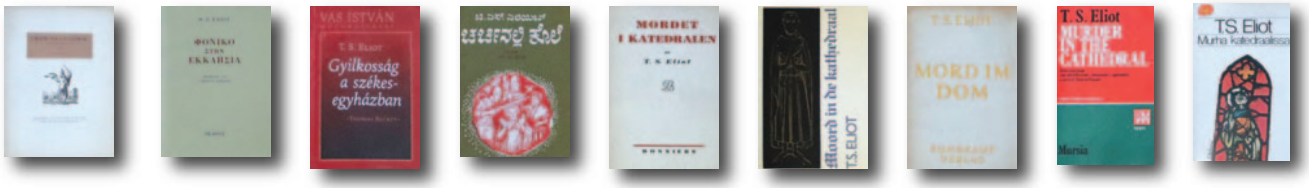
A DISPATCH FROM THE

VALERIE ELIOT BEQUEST

He was a maestro of the quip, which makes him endlessly quotable, and also a man of often unfortunate politics, which can add a tinge of pleasurable malice to the already considerable pleasure of quotation. I wouldn't say it's his most famous phrase, but I'd hazard more than a few readers of this publication know it and have feelings about it.

I'm speaking of T. S. Eliot, of course, writing, in 'The Social Function of Poetry', that 'no art is more stubbornly national than poetry.'

Except Eliot didn't first compose those words for print. He spoke them, at the behest of the British Council, to a group of Norwegian refugees in London — they were words not to goad but to comfort, words to be first spoken to a small, displaced population wondering about the place of their culture under the flattening mallet of fascism. (Not that we would know anything about that!) At the same time, of course — also often under the auspices or through the machinations of the British Council — Eliot's writings were being translated out of English. Among Magdalene College's over 200 translations of Eliot's work — all part of the Valerie Eliot Bequest — is Henri Fluchère's French translation of *Murder in the Cathedral*, printed in Switzerland in 1943



for Albert Béguin's series *Les Cahiers du Rhône*. It is, I think, exhilarating to imagine *Murder* within this series of texts aimed to combat Vichy propaganda with literature, nestled in Béguin's list alongside French Resistance writers like Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, and Saint-John Perse (whose *Anabase* Eliot himself had translated in 1930). It is exhilarating, in an entirely different way, to see Eliot's marginal 'NO!' next to a quoted translation of *The Hollow Men* in Fluchère's explanatory essay.

My research project, as Magdalene College's inaugural Armstrong T. S. Eliot Research Fellow, emerges out of the intersection of, firstly, such histories of cultural diplomacy pressed on the naturalised citizen Eliot by, for example, the British Council; secondly, Eliot's turn to verse drama, which may not have felt so stubbornly national, despite containing poetry; and, thirdly, a general tendency in myself towards archival prurience, a love of marginalia and inscription and book history. Magdalene's collections were my initial inspiration for the project, since they contain an extraordinary variety of his works in translation; my second has been the small intriguing histories like these that started to pop up when I began to look, in a very non-empirical way, at the patterns of Eliot's translations, at least in book form. I was surprised by the preponderance of drama, though perhaps I should not have been. Consider some of the international translation and performance history of *Murder in the Cathedral*: in French, in Paris, in 1945; in German, in Berlin and Cologne, in 1946; on the BBC East India Service in Hindustan, in 1948; and at the National Theater of Northern Greece in 1967 — the first year of the military junta. (This last performance is of special interest to me, a third-generation Greek American, a heritage learner of the language, and a general enjoyer of the work of George Seferis.) Eliot's work had ends outside of England and English that may not have felt so apparent to audiences who saw the play, for example, when it was first performed on site at Canterbury Cathedral. But there is much in the play that would seem to lend itself to translation — his choice of Ancient Greek drama as a backbone, for example, which incorporated a set of tropes already recognised as open to the particular modes of reading that for David Damrosch constitute the world literary 'classic.'

Eliot is a good figure with whom to think about translation, and by extension the twentieth-century construction of 'world literature', not only because of his dialectical way of acting and thinking (about translation and about everything else), and not only because his work underwent so much translation both in his lifetime and after, but also because he is at the same time a polyglot and a philosopher-errant (the best kind). I am interested in tracing the status of English and other languages across the prose, poetry, and drama — where translation is the domain of politics, and where it is a domain of theology, for example — but also in examining this legacy of translation through distant reading. I mean distant reading in both senses of the term — I am analysing the data that I can gather about Eliot's history of translation, but I am also utilising the work of scholars in other language traditions to present a thicker history than my few competencies could allow.

In the meantime — in these delightful months where I only have to imagine finishing my research, and can project all the necessary grandeur onto it — there are the pleasures of the archive, its little unfolding dramas, its grounding glimpses of the flawed personality of the breathtaking poet: the (frustratingly!) uncut pages of Seferis's translation of *Murder*, for example, or Eliot's tireless rededication of seemingly every book in his library to his second wife. (How neither of them got bored of this practice I may never understand.) This material ridiculous sublime reminds you that before this collection was intended to inspire or support research, it functioned mainly for Eliot as a series of tokens — fetishes, even — circulating in personal economies that before Valerie included Eliot's sad flirtation with Mary Trevelyan. Such encounters with inscription and lassitude — with nauseating words like 'honeypet' and phrases like 'sweet bedfellow' —makes it easier to keep a necessarily critical stance towards our new archivalism; it also makes for excellent posthumous gossip. My first book project (soon to be under consideration) is about modernist coterie literature, so if you are looking to spill some very old, very cold, but also very delicious and funny tea — or to talk about literary translation, or postwar cultural diplomacy — come find me in the archive.

Michelle Taylor
Armstrong T. S. Eliot Research Fellow,
Magdalene College


W moim początku jest mój kres
Eliot
T.S. ELIOT
DE POESIA E POETAS
Ideja krščanskog društva
T.S. ELIOT ZBRANA DRAMSKA DELA I
T.S. ELIOT ZBRANA DRAMSKA DELA II
T.S. ELIOT ZBRANA DRAMSKA DELA III
Old Possums Katzenbuch
T.S.ELIOT
T.S.Eliot Stücke
T.S.Eliot Stücke
T.S. ELIOT · KÁOSZ A RENDBEN
T. S. ELIOT
T.S. ELIOT FOUR QUARTETS
THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY
COLLECTED POEMS
Notes towards the Definition of Culture
THE FAMILY REUNION
The Cocktail Party
The Confidential Clerk
ON POETRY AND POETS by T.S. ELIOT
T.S.ELIOT
T.S. ELIOT THE ELDER STATESMAN
T.S. ELIOT Collected Plays
T. S. ELIOT COLLECTED POEMS 1909-1962
Knowledge and Experience
TO CRITICIZE THE CRITIC T.S.ELIOT
THE COMPLETE POEMS AND PLAYS OF T.S. ELIOT
ELIOT
The Film of Murder in the Cathedral
T.S.ELIOT and GEORGE HOELLERING
FABER AND FABER

MANSFIELD FORBES AND 'FINELLA'

Mansfield Forbes (known as 'Manny') was the very young historian-Fellow of Clare College who just after the First World War had more to do with the founding of the Cambridge English Faculty and its intellectual bias than almost anyone else.

(Hugh Carey, *Mansfield Forbes and his Cambridge*, 1984)

Readers who exclaim 'But I have never heard of him!' can console themselves. Nor have many others. Not a whisper will be heard in the redoubtable Terry Eagleton's recent book *Critical Revolutionaries: Five Critics Who Changed the Way We Read*. There they are, the usual suspects: T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis, William Empson, Raymond Williams – but poor Manny has joined the ranks of the great forgotten. All the more striking, then, that Leavis thought Manny one of two figures 'to whom the world owes more than it knows' (the other being H. M. Chadwick), as seen from his dedication to the 1967 Clark Lectures. More than that, Leavis tells a correspondent in a private letter that Manny wrote a good deal of Richards' *Practical Criticism* (1929) (a title whose words have survived!).

Dramatically but probably accurately, Leavis declared in those lectures that

> *the circumstances of war-time Cambridge gave him [Forbes] an unforeseeable chance – thrust it upon him. Young, convinced, contagiously charged with energy and irrepressible, he performed during those opening years of Cambridge English – the dark late years of the war … the service he was unmistakably … fitted for. There was the charter, there was an examination to be held under it in two years' time, there was no Faculty – no plausible team even, and there was Forbes.*

We have good reason for supposing that Leavis reported accurately. He returned to Cambridge in 1919 (following service with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in France), switching from History to become one of the University's first Englishers. He had kept closely in touch with his native city and in particular with that early evolution of English studies, and few people played a greater part in shaping the period of 'exciting strangeness' that followed. Forbes took him under his wing. Completing his PhD in 1924, he began conducting his first supervisions (including at Girton, where he taught Muriel Bradbrook and Queenie Roth).

In that same year Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* appeared; it had been Forbes' genius to recruit Richards for the Faculty. Strange to say, Richards was never really a literary man. He had read Moral Sciences and subsequently delved into psychology. But he had a brilliance and inventiveness of mind which appealed to Forbes. E. M. W. Tillyard, in his 'intimate account of the revolution in English studies at Cambridge', believed that Forbes 'needed Richards through whom to work.' A succession of inspiring Clark Lecturers also appeared, including John Middleton Murry and, in 1926, Eliot on the Metaphysical poets. But Hugh Carey suggests that 'few men can have done less than Forbes to organise his own immortality.' Which brings us to Finella, the monument of his designing of which he was probably proudest. The lovely house is set back from the road hidden behind foliage. Many readers who have only noticed a sign for it when hurrying along the Backs will, reading on, now know what lies beyond.

Elizabeth Darling (Reader in Architectural History at Oxford Brookes) writes that in 1927 'Manny acquired an annual lease from Gonville and Caius College of a substantial, gloomy, and decrepit Victorian house, "The Yews", on the Backs in Queens Road. The transformation of this into … "modernist" architecture was the greatest adventure of his life and set the course of it for his last seven years.' It could be said that Forbes' modernising of 'The Yews' drew on the same creative impetus that characterised his modernising of the study of literature. He had lived in rooms in Clare for nearly twenty years but now sought a place large enough to enable him to host his literary and artistic guests, but equally importantly, one which would allow him full scope to implement the radical designs he was beginning to conceive in collaboration with a young architectural researcher, Raymond McGrath. McGrath had been about to take up a PhD place at Caius but Manny, being upset, according to

McGrath, 'at the prospect of my going to Caius (a barbarous college he says)', poached him for Clare.

Fortunately for Forbes, the house was in bad repair, requiring Caius to carry out extensive renovations. He took his opportunity. The re-fashioning would centre on his Scottish ancestry and in particular on the legend of the early mediaeval queen Finella – apocryphally the inventor of glass. Her palace, Forbes liked to believe, had a roof of copper. Glass and copper would feature prominently in her new home. Skilful disposition of lighting would enhance the effects of these materials. Pink (with possible sexual or at least androgynous suggestions) would be the prevailing colour inside and out. The west end of the house became a single large salon capable of division into two rooms – North Pink and South Pink. To that salon in the 1930s came the good and the great of the literary and artistic worlds. June 1931 saw the appearance of Manny's most sensational guest, Epstein's sculpture 'Genesis'. 5000 visitors followed.

After Manny's death in 1935, Caius commissioned Peter Bicknell to divide the house into two. When Pevsner saw the result he reportedly exclaimed "Vot a tragedy!" The Bicknell family moved into Finella where Peter's wife, the dancer Mari Scott Henderson, introduced generations of Cambridge children to classical ballet dancing. Their artist son Renchi, whom we were fortunate to accompany there with Iain Sinclair in February last year, has fond memories of his childhood at Finella and of 'The Great Cedar', now gone but forever memorialised in his haiku:

Fell or felled who saw?
The cedar at 'Finella'
My childhood ended.

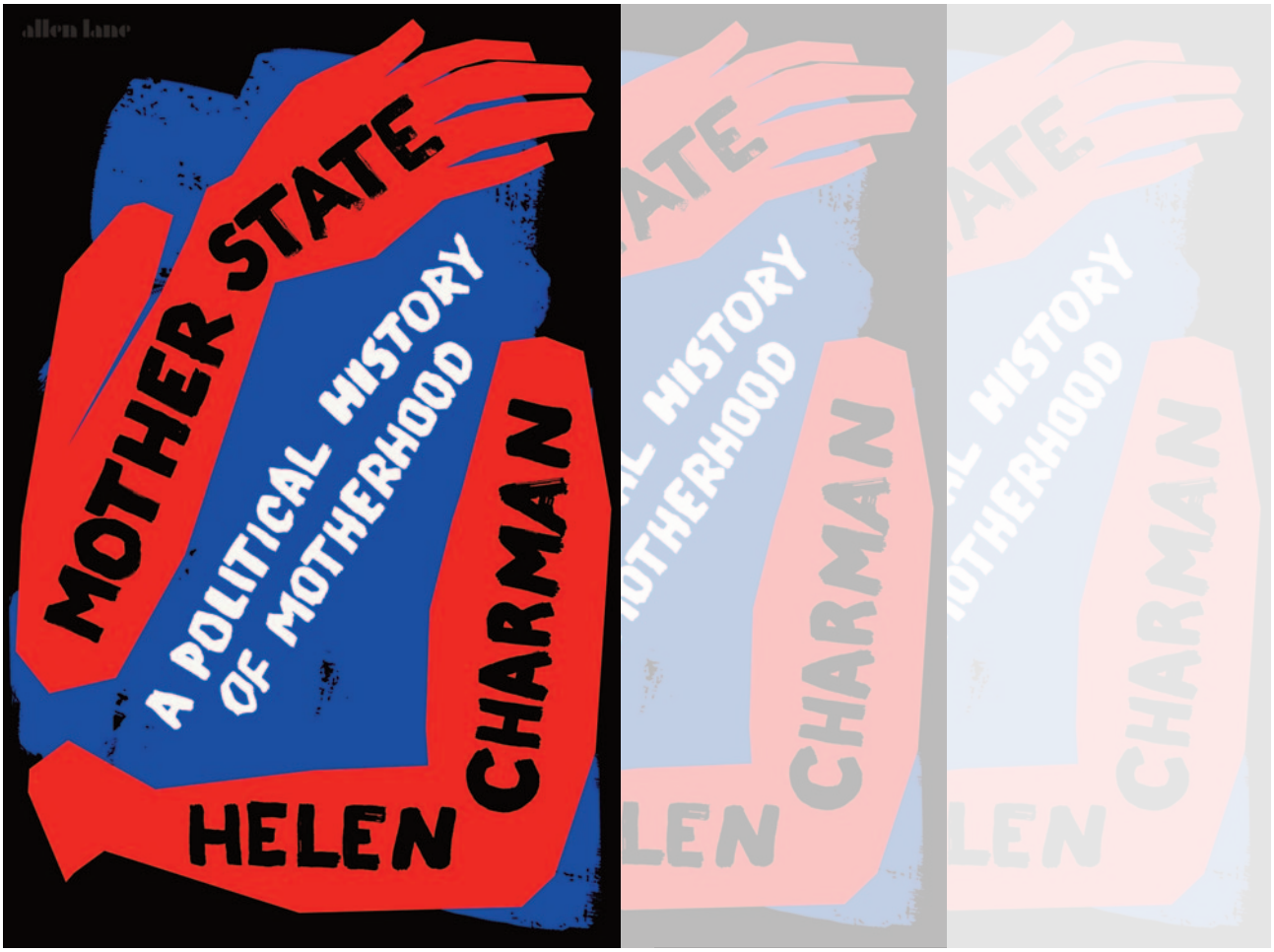
Chris Joyce
Pembroke College (1969)

Plans are afoot for a fuller celebration of Manny and Finella, taking in Renchi Bicknell's memories and making use of archival materials currently under exploration. Look out for further news of the Finella project!

The author would like to acknowledge the help given by Sarah Houghton-Walker, one of the fortunate Fellows of Caius to have a room in Finella, and her enthusiastic participation in the project, together with that of Caius' archivist, James Cox. Thank you also to Charlotte Conybeare for her excellent photography.

Finella, main hallway Photograph © Charlotte Conybeare (Gonville & Caius College)

Finella (Gonville & Caius College) south front Photograph © Cambridge 2000



Maternal LINES

Helen Charman

Motherhood is a political state. This is the argument I make in my first book, *Mother State: A Political History of Motherhood*, which was published in the August of 2024 by Penguin Allen Lane. But what do I mean by each of these terms: motherhood, politics and the state?

One of the primary insights of feminism has been that things previously understood as private, intimate and natural are actually public, cultural and socially constructed. Mothering in particular has long been perceived as a private and domestic act, despite the fact that it is directly entangled with social and economic conditions. Nurture, care, and the creation of human life have more to do with power, status, and the distribution of resources—both by mothers and for them—than we like to admit.

In *Mother State*, I sketch out alternative histories of mothering by bringing together elements that have too often been considered distinct and separate: first, the state of being a mother itself, including (but not limited to) the physical experiences of pregnancy and birth; second, the relationship between mothers and

the state; third, the uses the state makes of mothering — its politicization — and, finally, the conception of the welfare state in Britain as a maternal entity in and of itself. The book charts a path from the 1970s to the present day and draws on a diverse range of material: obscure Marxist-feminist poetry pamphlets, Margaret Thatcher's autobiographies, the recent zeitgeisty spate of autofictional works about mothering and being mothered, and the primetime BBC period drama *Call the Midwife*, to name a few.

The germ of the book began while I was a PhD student in the Faculty, though in a rather different form. My doctoral thesis, *Generative Economies*, argued for a reconsideration of the importance of the maternal body in mid-to-late nineteenth-century social realist fiction, taking George Eliot's work as its primary case study. During my research, it gradually became clear to me that the topic of maternity required an interdisciplinary approach: the thesis drew on historical advancements in obstetrics and gynaecology, political economy, and Freudian psychoanalysis to question the received idea that the pressures of the new industrial age created a divide between the public, masculine workplace and the feminine, domestic domain of the home. It uncovered, in other words, the political stakes of maternal life both in fictional texts and across the period as a whole.

While I was delving into nineteenth-century mothering, capitalism, and the murky depths of our psyches, however, I couldn't stop thinking about the period of British history I had lived through myself. In *Mother State* I declare myself to be a 'New Labour baby' (more precisely, a New Labour toddler: I was four years old at the time of the 1997 election), which places me firmly, as an adult, in the austerity generation. As I spent days combing through nineteenth-century accounts of the emotional effects of socioeconomic change on literary subjects, I began to recognise the dissonances in the way I had narrated my own relation to history. My perception of the British welfare state as a nurturing maternal structure doling out free school milk, malt and orange juice was anachronistic—frozen in an earlier time—and certainly distant from my own experience of it as something rapidly vanishing, if not already vanished.

In the work of writers like the historian Carolyn Steedman and the poet and philosopher Denise Riley, I found a source for my own ambivalent attachment to the kinds of maternal nurture the state represented. In their first-person accounts of their relationship to the postwar settlement, which they published in the 1970s and 80s—in tandem with the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement in the United Kingdom—I found a way to apply the lens I'd been using to look at the Victorian period to a more recent stretch of history. Later, I expanded my focus to other accounts of ordinary life and, crucially, emotional life, drawing on psychoanalytic texts and oral history as much as the official record. I wanted to root the book firmly in the subjective, to critique how maternity is constantly *politicized* (that is, manipulated to specific ends) without being understood as *political*. At the same time, I wanted to make room for the importance of individual subjectivity—the deeply personal feelings mothering generates, muddies and destabilises—without submitting to the weaponisation of such feelings in the service of the status quo.

It's been strange to consider the methodological metamorphosis that the book has enacted on me. I've always worked at the intersection of literary studies, social history and cultural studies, but seeing a hardback incarnation of myself with 'history' boldly proclaimed on the cover at first induced a sort of disciplinary vertigo. Really, though, the book relies on the tools of close reading and archival research I developed as a student of English. One particular highlight of this process was discovering that the enormous boxes of Women's Liberation Movement material I had been trawling through in the Bishopsgate Institute in London had been donated by Denise Riley, whose poetry and prose scaffold the entire book: it was Riley's own tattered pamphlets, handwritten notes, and worn copies of *Red Rag* and *Spare Rib* that I had been poring over. Another was managing to track down the only surviving manuscript of a play, *Not By Bread Alone*, written by the Easington branch of Women Against Pit Closures during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike, in a portakabin in the grounds of Beamish, the Living Museum of the North.

This treasure hunt was obstructed, frustratingly, by the lockdowns necessitated by the pandemic: by the time I finally managed to sit down in an archive, I'd been fantasising about what I might find in there for several years. Yet this context, while thwarting the book's progress, was an appropriate reminder of its primary point: that we all rely on each other, and that such interdependence is in itself profoundly political.

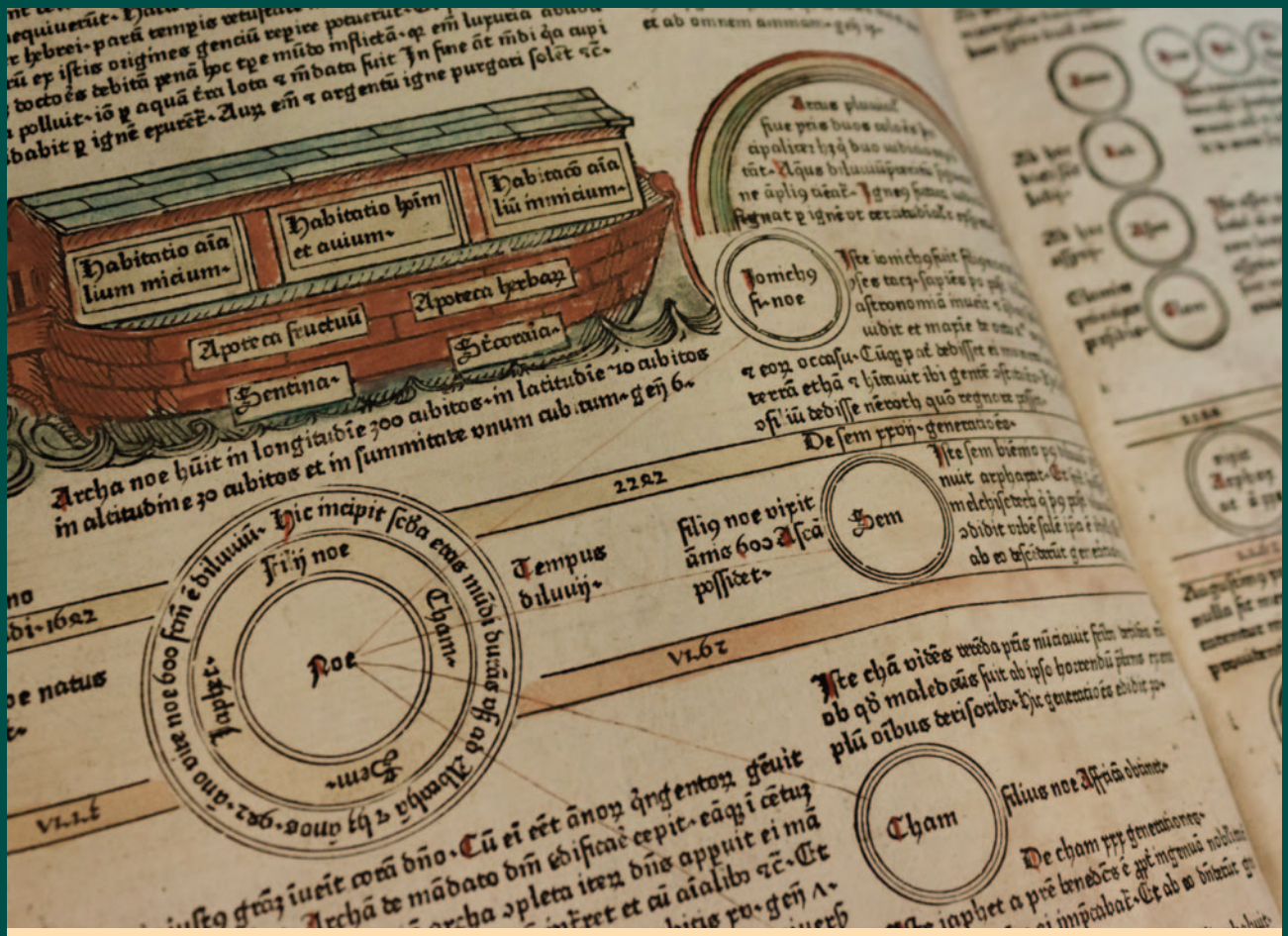
Helen Charman
College Teaching Officer, Clare College

INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS OF FACULTY:
ANTHONY BALE

I joined the Faculty in October 2024 as the new Chair of Medieval & Renaissance English (1954). Prior to this I had spent twenty-two years working at Birkbeck College in the University of London, including a period as Dean of Arts there. I'm a scholar of medieval literature and culture, concentrating mainly on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. My recent work has focused on travel writing, international translation, popular religious culture, and magic. I enjoy working in various formats too, sometimes through scholarly editing, sometimes in archival work, sometimes in writing creative non-fiction for a general audience. What unites my interests is a commitment to recovering neglected voices from the Middle Ages, and to internationalising and complicating our sense of medieval culture. These concerns run through all my recent projects.

I'm currently about halfway through a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2023-26) which is concerned with medieval news media and the writing of the Siege of Rhodes. In the summer of 1480 an Ottoman force attempted to take the Knights Hospitaller island of Rhodes in the eastern Mediterranean. The attack and long siege were unsuccessful but caused a sense of panic in Latin Christendom that a non-Christian empire was rapidly encroaching. This was the first international 'news event' (and one of the first times the word 'news' was used in English) and part of my project is to explore how accounts of the siege spread, through printing networks, Hospitaller networks and through nascent news networks in Venice and Urbino which ultimately connected to Cambridge, London, Mechelen and Odense. The writing of the Siege – especially in John Kay's little-studied 1482 Middle English *Siege of Rhodes* – discloses all kinds of interesting entanglements, including the representation of renegades, the construction of whiteness, new English vocabulary for Ottoman weaponry, and the rewriting of medieval siege literature and miracle stories in a new theatre of war. Part of this project involves editing Kay's *Siege of Rhodes* but it has led to many sub-projects: this reflects my way of working, where I like to be led by what I discover in the archives and to embrace the surprises I come across.

One surprising route I've taken with this work is exploring continuations made in early copies of Werner Rolevincks' *Fasciculus temporum (The Bundle of Times)*. This was a phenomenally successful chronicle, describing history from the Creation to Rolevinck's present day (1474), drawing much material from other chronicles. The emphasis of Rolevinck's chronicle is on papal and royal affairs combined with prodigies and miracles: comets, eclipses, floods, and saints' wonders. He added snippets of local history and folklore and, in the final pages of the work, recent noteworthy events. All of this was presented in a novel form – which has been called a kind of 'medieval hypertext'* – with linear graphics moving with the reader via several different calendars. Rolevinck's early editions evidently sold extremely well and the *Fasciculus Temporum* was very frequently printed. As time continued after 1474, when Rolevinck's 'original' chronicle ended, printers and readers continued to add events to their copies of Rolevinck. These additions have much to tell us about 'news' – novelties, current affairs, new events – and what newsworthiness was in Europe in the last decades of the fifteenth century. Crucially, they show how the cataclysmic events unfolding in the eastern Mediterranean – of Ottoman advances and sieges of Christian territories – appeared in western Europe and dominated printers' and readers' sense of 'current affairs.' So the *Fasciculus* was a newspaper as well as an encyclopaedia and my



Fasciculus temporum, 1476

archival work on copies of the *Fasciculus* shows that such additions concerned Islam, the Ottomans, heresy, and challenges to the Christian polity.

In recent years I have also enjoyed developing a more public-facing side to my work. This has involved producing modern English translations of medieval works (Mandeville and Margery Kempe for Oxford World's Classics), working with several museums on exhibitions (most recently as an academic advisor for the British Library's *Medieval Women* exhibition), and publishing *A Travel Guide to the Middle Ages: The World through Medieval Eyes* (Penguin, 2023, and being translated into twenty languages). In *A Travel Guide to the Middle Ages* I aimed to communicate the richness and diversity of medieval sources to a wider audience, as well as experimenting in my own practice with creative non-fiction as a kind of research. I am now writing another book for Penguin, *The First Witch*, about the 1324 witch-hunt in Kilkenny. This was the first witch-hunt as such and represented a collision of local politics in Anglo-Norman Ireland with pan-European ideas about power and orthodoxy.

As part of my role at Cambridge I'm in the process of setting up the Medieval Ideas Creative Lab, to explore how the creative arts and creative industries might interact with medieval source material. I see my work as an academic as being social and collective; the Lab as a way of bringing people together in speculative and creative ways. I plan to organise more events over the next couple of years with the Lab, and would very much like to hear from anyone who wants to be involved.

Anthony Bale
Professor of Medieval & Renaissance English (1954), Girton College

INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS OF FACULTY:

MATT MAHMOUDI

I joined Cambridge Digital Humanities and the Faculty of English as Assistant Professor in Digital Humanities in September 2024. While I have been in close proximity to the University as Affiliated Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and a Research Associate with the Centre of Governance and Human Rights over the last few years, I am joining the Faculty from a somewhat unconventional trajectory, as a scholar-practitioner. Since 2020, I've been predominantly leading Amnesty International's research and advocacy work on AI-driven surveillance in policing, migration and military contexts. From the NYPD's surveillance machine to Automated Apartheid in the occupied Palestinian territory, I drew on my training as a scholar of critical race and digital studies to document and make sense of the ways in which racialised communities are subjected to quotidian and violent forms of digital control and exploitation.

I am interested in how new and emerging purportedly 'smart' technologies serve as new frontiers for racial capitalism, and what the Black radical tradition, critical migration studies, and urban studies, combined with digital humanities methods and approaches, can tell us about these new terrains. How do they symbolically, psycho-somatically, and materially change everyday infrastructures and how we engage with them? How do possibilities for movement in the increasingly digital city expand or contract as a function of race, immigration status, labour precarity/class? And how is control over movement related to the construction of the a priori rationale and expansion of carcerality?

In my doctoral work, which is also the subject of my book, *Migrants in the Digital Periphery: New Urban Frontiers of Control* (University of California Press), I interrogated the first Trump administration's encroachment and weaponisation of 'smart' city technologies purported to protect the very communities it targeted in sanctuary cities such as New York. I mapped, among other things, 'smart' kiosks and other digital initiatives littered across the city, intended to provide information and services to the city's immigrant communities, in relation to increasing deportation raids, to understand how the urban milieu for precarious communities on the move had become increasingly hostile. In Europe, I looked to Berlin's instrumentalisation of refugee subjectivity and narratives of 'welcome', against the backdrop of aggressive German – and European, more broadly – investment in experimental border technologies, and tech that actively exploited (and misled) migrant communities. A bizarre and futuristic obsession with technologies that categorise, inscribe racial hierarchies, and ultimately borderise communities on the move has become an all too lucrative industrial complex. I think of the *digital periphery* as an attempt at making sense of how the extractive tendrils of Silicon Valley have become steeped in the everyday lives of migrant communities, and how their construction as threats or needy in turn becomes a source of violent capital.

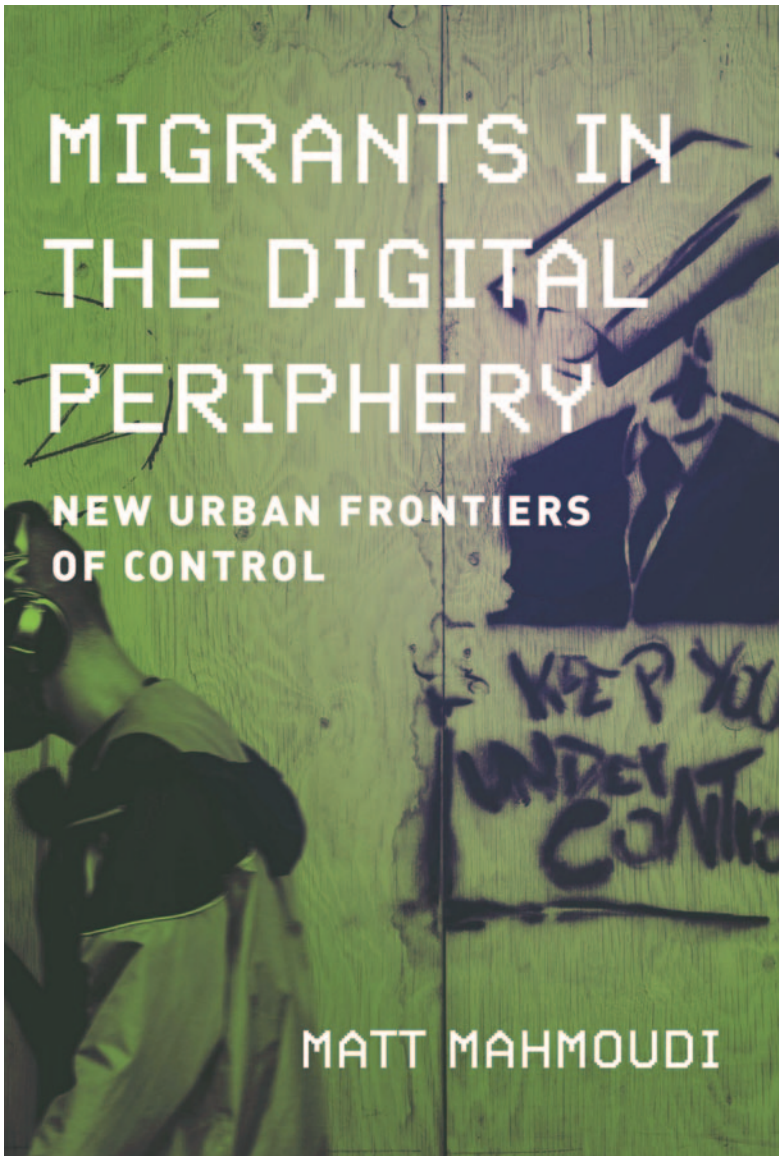
At Amnesty International, I used similar techniques to understand how facial recognition camera exposure is intimately tied with existing carceral geographies; in New York City, digital capture is directed by existing policing practices such as stop-and-frisk, in addition to the presence of a higher proportion of racialised communities. This situates Black and Brown New Yorkers in a virtual line-up, suspects by default, in perpetuity. In occupied Palestinian cities such as Hebron, I investigated how the installation, expansion,

and connectedness of Israel's AI-powered surveillance technologies, reinforce already severe and arbitrary restrictions on the freedom of movement, depriving Palestinians of access to places mere metres from their home, in what is described as a chilling effect on all forms of social life.

I am now building on this work with my new project, *Whose City? Red-lining & Resistance in the Digital City*, in which I look to understand practices of deliberate digital redlining, the resistance to it, and the criminalisation of the latter as a means of carceral expansion. Who has the right to the city, if resistance and its ensuing criminalisation are core components of how digital urban infrastructures expands? What communities are 'walled in' and 'walled out'? These are questions that I'm eager to pose, collectively with communities directly affected, activists, and artists.

We find ourselves in times of great urgency in matters related to the shifting nature of power, and its obfuscation through the symbiotic entanglements of state and corporate power. I feel reaffirmed to play a small part in exposing some of these dynamics, how they reconfigure everyday life, and to do so as part of a progressive research and teaching agenda at Cambridge Digital Humanities.

Matt Mahmoudi
Assistant Professor in Digital Humanities, Cambridge Digital Humanities (CDH), Pembroke College



9

INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS OF FACULTY:

RYAN HEUSER

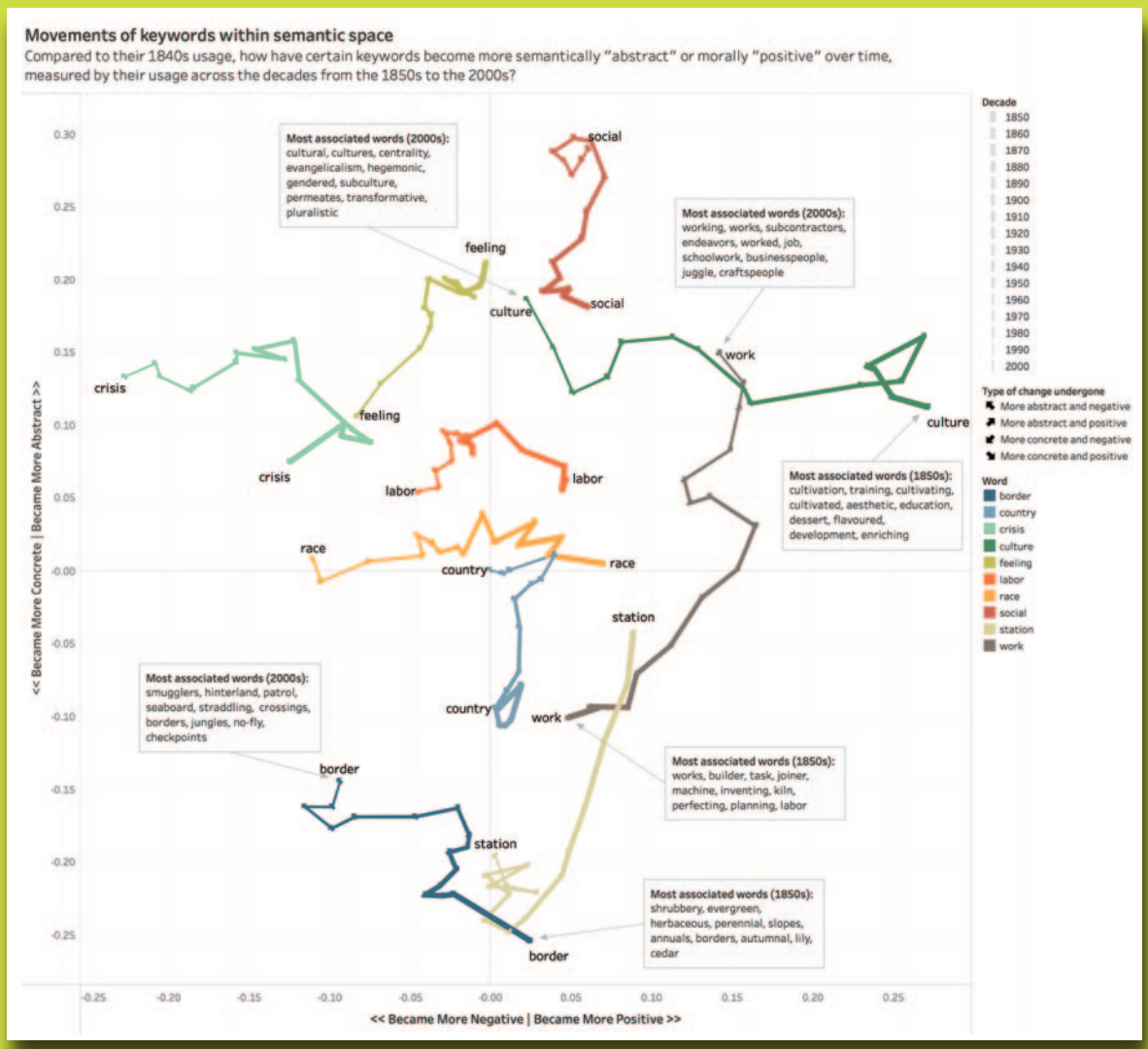
I begin this year in Cambridge as Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities, having previously been Junior Research Fellow in King's College. I completed my doctorate in eighteenth-century British literature at Stanford University, where I was a founding member and Associate Research Director of the Stanford Literary Lab, a collaborative research organisation specialising in the 'distant reading' of literary history. I currently teach in the MPhil programme in Cambridge Digital Humanities and supervise English students in King's College, where I am a fellow.

My research develops and critiques computational methods for the study of literary and intellectual history. My doctoral thesis and book manuscript, *Abstraction: A Literary History*, draws on computational semantics – which allows one to map the changing connotations and configurations of words across large literary corpora – in order to historicise forms of abstract language as they consolidate and transform across the literature of the long eighteenth century. I argue that the language of abstraction, when studied at the large scale of the digital archive, weaves a broad historical pattern that makes visible a new literary history of the period, counteracting long-standing arguments about, for example, the 'concrete particularity' of the early English novel. Similarly, in work collected in *Explorations of the Digital History of Ideas* (ed. Peter de Bolla, Cambridge UP, 2023), I return to the lexicon-based research projects of Raymond Williams' Keywords and Reinhart Koselleck's *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, showing that these authors correctly focus on the late eighteenth century as a threshold period in the abstractness of sociopolitical discourse while also recovering and collating other types and turning-points of semantic change.

Critically, my work aims to recuperate abstraction as both a method and an object of literary study. For decades, literary criticism has been largely hostile to abstract methods, from the New Critics' insistence on a poem's irreducible ambiguity to the new historicism's emphasis on its material circulation and exchange. My work participates in and theorises an 'abstract turn' within criticism, a set of related trends encompassing not only digital humanities work but also newly abstract and interdisciplinary notions of form along with new investments in large-scale critical frameworks like the institutional, the transhistorical, and the planetary.

In line with long-standing digital humanities practice and ethics, much of my work is collaborative and interdisciplinary. In 'The Fall of Antimetricality', for instance, a collaboration with metrical phonologists, I demonstrate through computational metrics that the 'antimetricality' of prose, its rhythmic difference from metrical verse, has a centuries-long history responsive to the changing cultural dominance of verse and prose forms. At Stanford, I led a team of undergraduate researchers to develop 'The Emotions of London', a crowdsourcing project mapping the fictional representation of emotion across urban spaces in London; our results led to a co-authored publication in *New Left Review* and was profiled in *Smithsonian Magazine* and the *New York Times*.

Increasingly, my interest in the synergy between the critical and the computational is drawing my attention to the present and to the digital phenomena which saturate its culture. In current research, I investigate how generative AI technologies challenge and transform our understanding of literary form. By examining AI's 'formal stuckness' – its tendency to amplify traditional forms while simultaneously

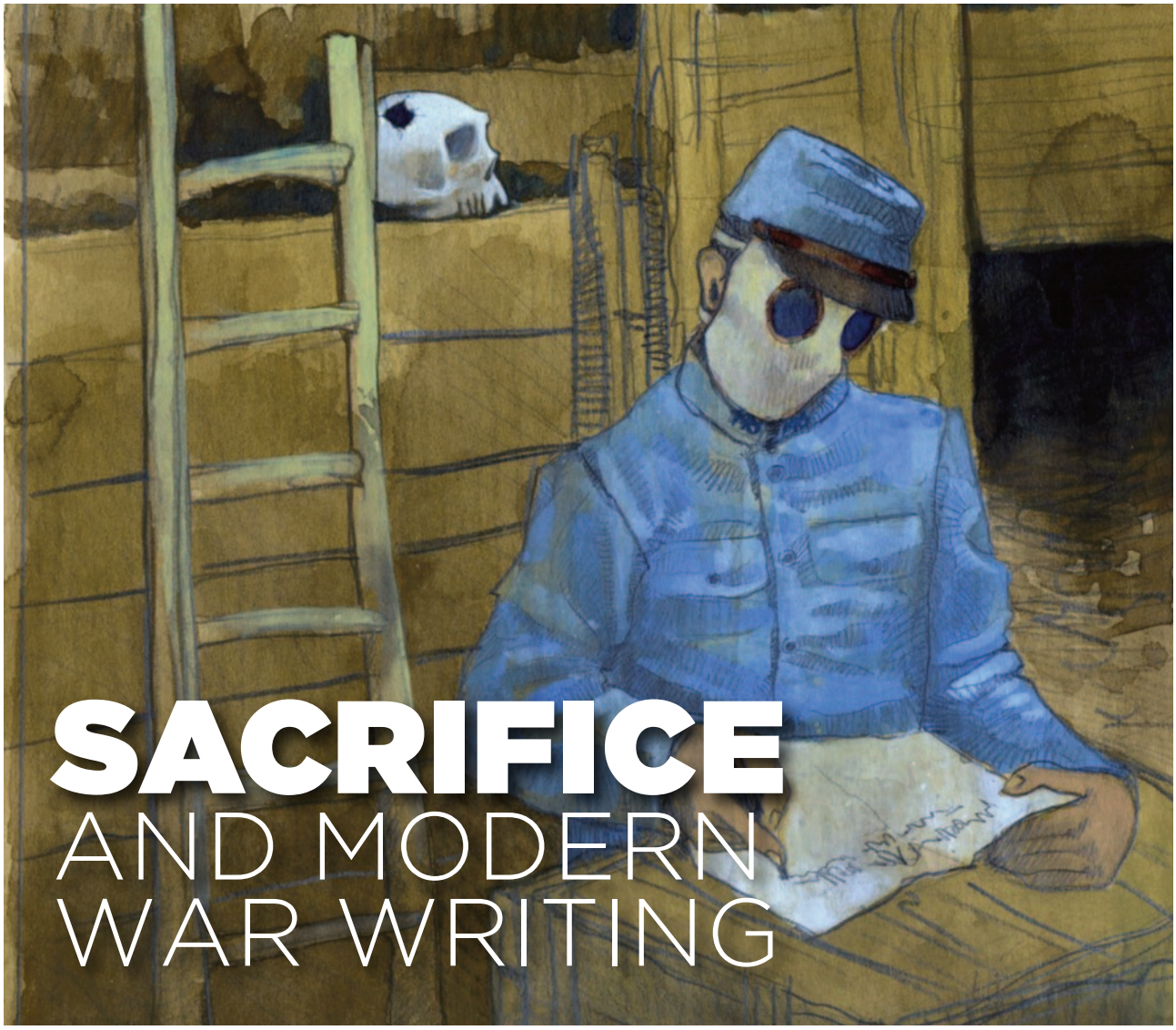


obscuring its historical contexts – I explore what these computational tendencies reveal about both machine- and human-authored textuality. This work develops methodologies for a 'generative humanities' that can critically analyse artificial literature while also cautiously experimenting with these systems as interpretive tools. The paradoxes of AI textuality offer, I believe, new perspectives on interpretive practices in an era where textual production is increasingly mediated by algorithms.

The classroom is, for me, a laboratory, a space in which students and I work together to create knowledge. What I love most about teaching in the digital humanities is the way it challenges students to bridge seemingly disparate worlds – the quantitative and the qualitative, the algorithmic and the humanistic, the contemporary and the historical. This productive tension helps students develop a unique sensitivity to both close and distant reading practices. I am currently leading a seminar in 'Distant Reading' for MPhil students wherein we collaborate to uncover patterns of style, diction, and character across a range of literary genres.

Sitting squarely between what C. P. Snow called the 'two cultures' of humanities and sciences, and at a time when the former looks to be devoured by the latter, I aim at Cambridge to help bridge this divide by demonstrating how computational methods can enrich rather than replace humanistic inquiry, and how literary and humanistic study can in turn shape more critical approaches to technology and its cultural forms.

Ryan Heuser
Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities, Cambridge Digital Humanities (CDH), King's College



SACRIFICE AND MODERN WAR WRITING

When a person is sacrificed *as* an animal then the figurative takes on a terrible reality, one that has frequently materialised in wartime. In the Spanish Civil War, for example, victims were sometimes killed sacrificially as bulls, a practice which Ernest Hemingway depicts in his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). In our contemporary period, jihadis have beheaded hostages by knife to establish a connection with animal sacrifice; as the sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar has commented, such killing 'is shown as an extension of the sacred act of cutting the throat of a sheep to the enemies of Islam'. The practice thus extends back through a long lineage of sacrifice that's not exclusive to Islam, for the sacrificial framing of a human victim as an animal is at the heart of all the Abrahamic religions with the parable of Abraham's willingness to make a 'burnt offering' of his own son to God. When Abraham shows his fidelity to God in being prepared to cut Isaac's throat as though he were a lamb, the reward is divine intervention through an angel who stays the prophet's hand and reveals the substitute victim: a ram hiding in a thicket. As Kierkegaard noted, while the killing of Isaac would have been a 'sacrifice' from a religious perspective, from an ethical perspective it would have been 'murder'. The parable exemplifies the exchangeability bound up with sacrifice; how it can suspend ethics to refigure both the status of a victim's life and the killing of it. In *Sacrifice and Modern War Writing* I explore how various modes of sacrificial exchange have remained intrinsic to war's reality since the First World War.

The book had a pretty long gestation period, partly because of the approach I took in it and partly because I kept wanting breaks from it to do less harrowing research – on affect theory and on poets'

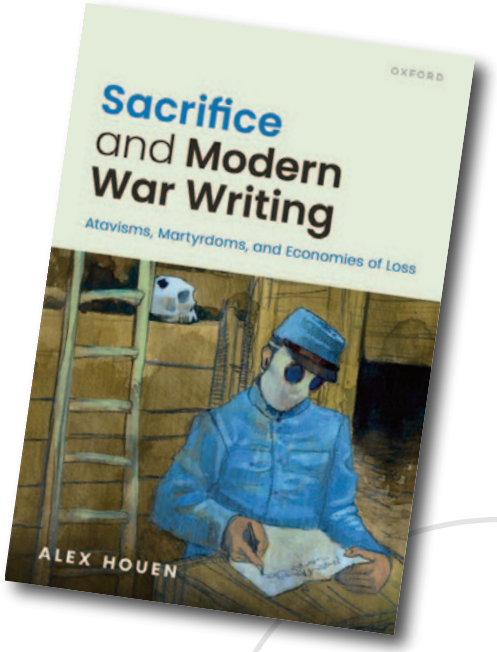
novels. My research for it began in earnest in 2014 when I had a one-year Leverhulme Fellowship. In my previous monographs I'd focused on one author per chapter, so for this book I set myself the challenge of writing thematically-organised chapters, each of which would present a transhistorical exploration of how multiple authors have engaged with a particular mode of sacrifice in war. As I didn't know which writers addressed which themes, though, I had to find out by reading widely across Anglophone modern war writing from most of the major conflicts: the First World War, the 'Easter Rising' and Irish Civil War, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the War on Terror. I read works by well-known authors such as Wilfred Owen, George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, and Don DeLillo; also texts by lesser-known ones such as Liam O'Flaherty, Helen Nicholson, John Balaban, and Nadeem Aslam. I read poems, novels, short stories, letters, and essays. By the time I'd also read relevant war history and theories of sacrifice I'd bitten off more than I could chew, but I eventually worked out how to organise the book into three parts that would in total examine writings by around 110 authors.

Part One is on 'Reprising Ancient Sacrifice in Modern War, from Abraham and Isaac to Moloch'. It focuses on how writers drew on the Abraham and Isaac parable to address how war leads to youths being sacrificed by an older generation. Whereas the parable concerns the relation of one father and son, the situation is clearly different when there are masses of youths being conscripted into war by a state and its bureaucracy. A Wilfred Owen poem about the parable gives it a very different final twist when the angel encourages Abraham to 'Offer the Ram of Pride' as substitute victim: 'the old man would not so, but slew his son,/ And half the seed of Europe, one by one'. Others saw such sacrifice as more akin to the mass offering of children as burnt offerings to the god Moloch, who is also mentioned in the Old Testament. In tracking writers' refiguring of ancient sacrifice across different conflicts I discovered new connections among them: the Abraham parable connects texts by Gwendolyn Brooks (WWII), Bernard Malamud (Cold War), and Nadeem Aslam (War on Terror) to name a few; Moloch connects Osbert Sitwell (WWI), Dan Billany (WWII), and Allen Ginsberg (Cold War).

In Part Two the focus is on 'Militant Martyrdoms'. As well as comparing texts that engage with Christian, Jewish, or Islamic martyrdom, I also examine the portrayal of secular/political martyrdoms such as those that arose in the Spanish Civil War and Cold War. Writers have often harked back to older models of sacrifice in order to draw attention to how they remain influential in wartime. The ancient sense of 'martyr' is of one who 'bears witness' to faith; numerous war writers have recast that aspect to be more a matter of bearing martyrly witness to the suffering of others. John Balaban, for example, in *Remembering Heaven's Face* (1991), his memoir about going to the Vietnam War as a conscientious objector, writes very movingly about being there 'not to bear arms but to bear witness'.

The book's final part, 'Sacrifice's Gifts and Prices', is mostly on secular modes of sacrificial war framed in terms of economics of losses and gains. The national 'economy of sacrifice' that President Roosevelt called for in the Second World War is a prime example. I found that the secular modes kept being associated by politicians and writers alike with religious conceptions of redemption, atonement, and salvation. Critics have asserted that war's association with an 'older language of sacrifice' has diminished since the First World War; my book shows the extent to which that's not been the case. Critics have also tended to argue that war literature is ontologically distinct from war's reality; in contrast, I argue that because war has continued to be shaped and experienced with sacrificial symbolism and mimesis, literature's figurative and imaginary aspects can establish critical intimacy with the reality of war's sacrifices.

Alex Houen
Professor of Modern Literature and Critical Theory, Pembroke College



GEORGE MALLORY:
MAGDALENE TO THE MOUNTAIN

For us Mallory, a man of strengths and frailties, of hope and fears, lives on in spirit and reputation: a man of both his time and ours, an inspiration to those who seek to fulfil their dreams.

(Peter & Leni Gillman, *The Wildest Dream*)

MAY BOAT, 1908

Bumped: *Sidney Sussex, Pembroke II, Trinity Hall II, Lady Margaret B.C. II, King's I.*
Finished fourteenth on the River.

A. D. G. S. Batty J. A. P. Edgcumbe T. Tanqueray D. H. Thompson (*9th man*)
S. K. Sawday G. H. L. Mallory (*capt.*) H. C. Hudson (Jesus) (*coach*) R. F. Kindersley (*str. & sec.*) H. J. Higgs
C. H. Scarlett A. R. W. Miles (*cox*)

Anniversaries are often commemorated in Faculties and Colleges here in Cambridge, and while some are celebrated, others are recalled in more sombre mood. Or some with a mix of sadness and pride. So it was when 9th June 2024 saw the centenary of the tragic death of George Mallory (Magdalene, matriculated 1905 in History) on Everest, along with his climbing partner 'Sandy' Irvine.

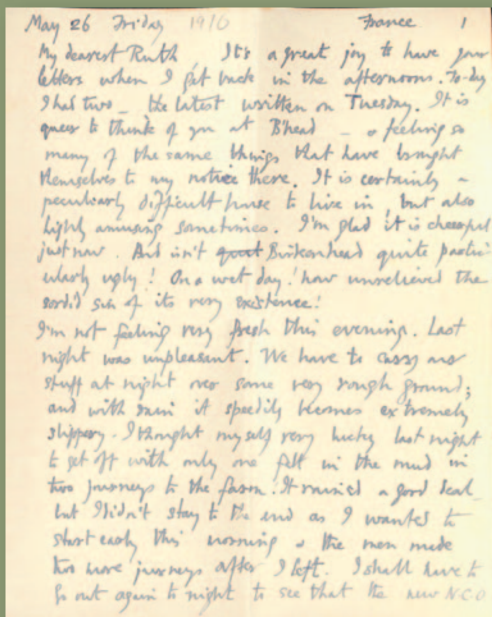
An exhibition in Magdalene College's Stirling-prize winning new Gallery and Archive Centre to mark Mallory's remarkable courage, perseverance and skill attracted hundreds of visitors; while an evening of talks explored Mallory's achievements as a student, an athlete, a soldier, a husband and a mountaineer.

The story of Mallory and Irvine is moving and inspiring. And the question of whether they were 'on the way up' or 'on the way down' excites. There is an argument that it didn't matter: the story is enhanced by the mystery. But then George and Sandy were real people as well as legends – and it surely would have mattered to them.


George and Ruth Mallory

This date also coincided with the planned launch of Magdalene's new online archive catalogue: we decided to make the digitisation of the Mallory materials housed in the College the inaugural project. The collection of artefacts, photographs, and personal letters in the College Archives is a physical memorial to Mallory; and with Katy Green and Kate Stockwell reading, scanning and summarising over 800 items of correspondence, the project makes available to readers, scholars and enthusiasts for the first time the letters which Mallory wrote home. And equally, the letters which his wife, Ruth wrote in return.

The archive team was surprised at the level of detail (discussions of food, clothing and the children) of both Mallory's life in the trenches and Ruth's life at home. The letters are an invaluable resource for social historians and those interested in women's history. The letters remind us of the strength, love and understated anxiety of both those waiting at home and those fighting on the Western Front. 'It is a great joy to have your letters when I get back in the afternoon', Mallory writes from France in 1916. And it is with awe that we see the affectionate letters which Mallory wrote both from war and later from Everest; written in both cases when he knew that by the time they were read he would have either survived – or not.


May 26 Friday 1916 France 1
My dearest Ruth It's a great joy to have your letters when I get back in the afternoon. To-day I had two – the latest written on Tuesday. It is queer to think of you at B'head – & feeling so many of the same things that have brought themselves to my notice there. It is certainly a peculiarly difficult house to live in, but also highly amusing sometimes. I'm glad it is cheerful just now. And isn't ~~great~~ Birkenhead quite particularly ugly! On a wet day! how unrelieved the sordid sin of its very existence!
I'm not feeling very fresh this evening. Last night was unpleasant. We have to carry our stuff at night over some very rough ground; and with rain it speedily becomes extremely slippery. I thought myself very lucky last night to get off with only one fall in the mud in two journeys to the farm. It rained a good deal but I didn't stay to the end as I wanted to start early this morning & the men made two more journeys after I left. I shall have to go out again to night to see that the new N.C.O

Picture of letter 26 May 1916
Reproduced with kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Magdalene College

The digital archive is a continuing project. Like planting a tree or building Chartres cathedral (this piece is written by a medievalist!), we know that all the impact of endeavours might not be apparent immediately. But the Mallory letters, which were viewed over 18,000 times in the first week, have proved a fine starting point.

MEJ Hughes
Director of Studies in English and Pepys Librarian, Magdalene College

9

MILTON REGAINED

The evening of Friday 1 March 2024, 6.12 pm. The photos started coming through in rapid succession. A large folio page printed in an Elizabethan black-letter font, with a handwritten note in the margin: 'see stow | otherwise'. The foot of another page, with a neatly-penned annotation: 'the booke of Provenzall poets numbers him in | the catalogue, telling of his poetrie, and his Provenzal | mistresses'. Another page, two typeset columns, with three hand-drawn lines in the margin of the printed text. Then three messages, commenting on the images: '??? !!! / what do you think? / holinshed'.

I was on my mobile and couldn't see all the pictures, so I went downstairs to get my laptop. All became clear – this was a copy of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, a sprawling survey of British history from its beginnings to the age of Elizabeth, and it had been annotated in a very familiar hand. There wasn't really any room for doubt, so I shot back a response: 'holy cow / bingo'. 'Right? it is Milton?' Claire asked. 'For sure!' I replied. Immediately we began comparing notes on the details. Claire snapped an annotation referring to 'the cronicle of Salisbury monastery'; I ran a search and found that 'cronicle' was a Miltonic spelling. Claire spotted a note saying 'vid. p. 88', and I commented that this was a familiar style of cross-referencing: 'all our old friends!'

I went to the University Library catalogue and identified the 'booke of Provenzall poets' as a work we'd never heard of, and that Milton was not known to have read – *Le vite delli piu celebri et antichi primi poeti provenzali* by Jean de Nostredame, younger brother of the astrologer Nostradamus. A magical feeling—here it was, all kicking off again.

Claire M.L. Bourne and I had discovered our first book from Milton's library in 2019, just before the onset of the COVID pandemic. Based at Penn State University, Claire had been working for a decade on an annotated copy of the Shakespeare First Folio (1623) in the Free Library of Philadelphia, painstakingly analysing the hitherto neglected marginalia and establishing that they were the work of a rather remarkable early reader of the plays. I chanced upon her article about the book, which contained the first published images of the annotations, and wondered whether the remarkable reader could have been Milton. Over the weeks and months that followed, we fleshed out the case for Milton as the annotator of this copy of the Folio. In the process we learned a lot about his reading habits and discovered that there was much about his library that we don't know, not least because only eight books were known to have survived from what was presumably a substantial collection. Looking at the Shakespeare Folio was, for me, an electric experience, not just because you can see his interest in minute textual differences between the variant texts of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but also because his lines in the margins are mute but eloquent witnesses to the appreciation of one poet for the work of another. They invite us to read Shakespeare anew, through Milton's eyes. The volume has now been digitised by the Free Library of Philadelphia, so this is a pleasure that everyone can enjoy.

Shakespeare was a big fish, but we felt sure that there were more survivals from Milton's library still to be found. We employed some research assistants to begin the search, but to no avail. This second find was the result of an initiative by members of the English Department of the University of Arizona, who knew that the Phoenix Public Library held a collection of rare books, donated in 1958 by a real estate magnate and philanthropist named Alfred Knight. They also knew that the books were not often consulted, so they scheduled a symposium to blow off the dust and see what they could find. One of the books they called up was the huge two-volume edition of Holinshed, in the second edition of 1587, which Knight had bought because it was a key source for the plays of his beloved Shakespeare. Among the invitees to the symposium were Claire Bourne and Aaron Pratt, special collections librarian at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at Austin, Texas. They immediately spotted annotations in the Holinshed. Hence the sudden deluge of texts sent to my phone.

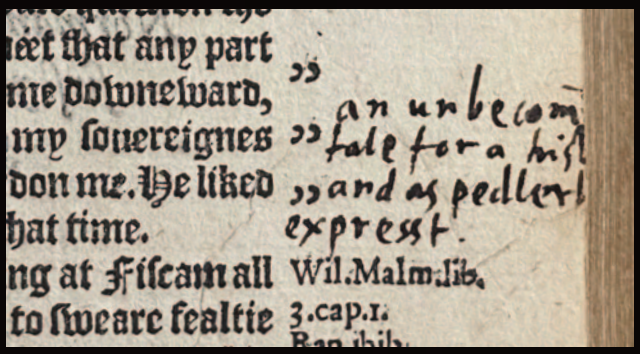


Image reproduced by permission of Phoenix Public Library.

We already knew that Milton read Holinshed in the early 1640s, since he made extensive notes from the *Chronicles* in his Commonplace Book, now held at the British Library. Holinshed is cited twice as often as any other author in those pages, as Milton mined his history for materials to buttress his developing republican views. And the citations in the Commonplace Book line up neatly (90% of the time) with the marginal markings in the Knight copy. There are also clear links between the plans for historical dramas that Milton made in the Trinity Manuscript (the draft of his works now at Trinity College, Cambridge) and the annotations in his Holinshed. The new find provides more evidence of Milton's diligence in comparing sources, as he cross-references Holinshed with Stow, Spenser, Villani and Jean de Nostredame. But perhaps the juiciest detail, and the one that was of most interest to the newspapers that picked up the story, is a crossing-out. Milton, whose reputation as an advocate of free speech has reportedly earned him a place in the personal pantheon of Elon Musk, could not tolerate a passage which described how Arlete, the mother of William the Conqueror, had behaved in bed. In the margin he sniffed that this was 'an unbecom[ing] / tale for a hist[ory] / and as pedlerl[y] / expresst'. For a writer who was not prone to express his opinions in the margin, this is a step out of character. It makes us wonder what other Miltonic outbursts might be lying undiscovered in the libraries of the world.

Jason Scott-Warren
Professor of Early Modern Literature and Culture, Gonville and Caius College

'Memory House: Chained Library' (recycled sterling silver, 2023) Copyright Jane Partner

'THE MUSE'S ANVIL'

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN CRITICAL AND CREATIVE PRACTICE

When Ben Jonson wrote an elegy for his friend and rival Shakespeare, he expressed the mental rigours of writing in terms of a more insistently physical kind of making:

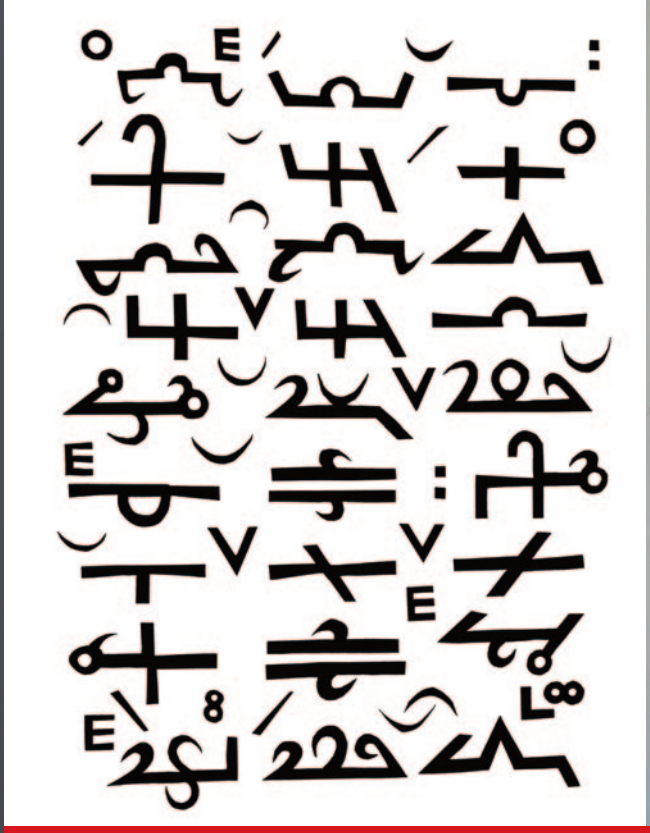
> *he*
> *Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,*
> *(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat*
> *Upon the Muses' anvil*

('To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr William Shakespeare', 1623)

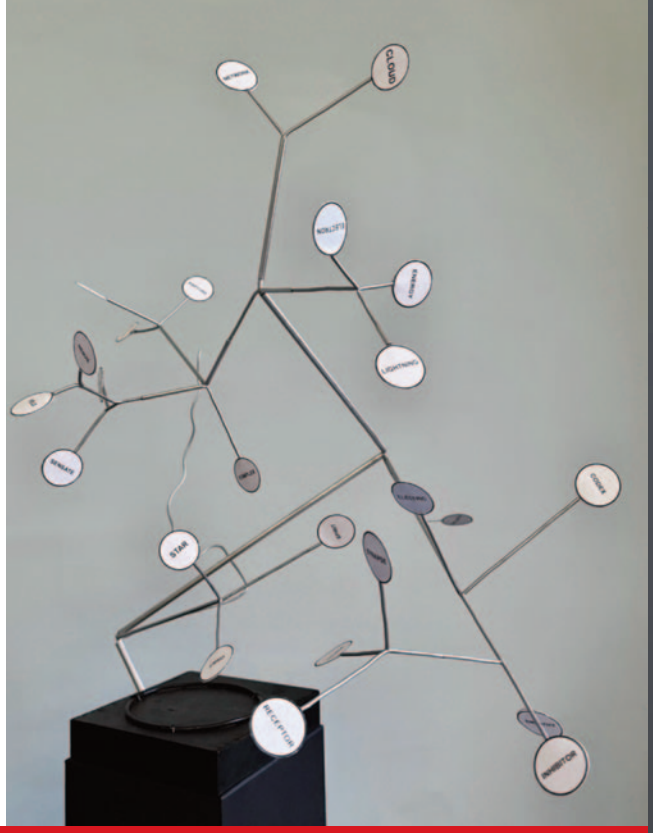
Jonson, a former soldier and bricklayer, had a vested interest in presenting literary composition as a laborious process. Far from the frictionless in-breathing of inspiration, he evokes the creaking bellows of the forge. For Jonson, in order to produce writing that is vibrant and enduring, first drafts that have cooled into fixity must once again be reanimated into the white-hot state of possibility and flux. And then you have to hit them, very, very hard, over and over again. Most narrowly, Jonson's image has in view the early modern idea of heating the brain to aid writing (a few flagons at the Mermaid Tavern should do it). More broadly, his mapping of thought onto action brings alive the creative process as embodied and experiential.

This is a talismanic image for me because it unites so many of my interests. My academic research spans early modern literature and art, whilst my creative practice also combines poetry with various kinds of physical artmaking, including metalwork. At the intersection of all these areas, I am especially concerned with the ways that critical insights can be accrued and expressed – like Jonson's here – through creative practice. One of the most significant recent transformations in the culture of academic research has been the growing desire to rethink the disciplinary partitions between creative and critical activities. There have long been academics doing creative work, but what is newer is the formally recognised concept of practice-based research, in which knowledge is generated through creative processes; and of creative criticism, in which academic research is produced or articulated through literary forms. At a moment when the study of literature is threatened by uncertainties about the value of art in society, the grounding of art in research, alongside the wider dissemination of scholarship in vivid and immersive ways, are both seen to have new practical purpose. The freedom to reimagine research also brings the challenge of achieving a balance of skills across diverse areas, and of negotiating meaningful cross-media integration and exchange. In my experience, it also entails trying to write while sitting on the floor of a commuter train beside a heavy bag of tools *en route* to a soldering masterclass and wondering where this journey will lead.

In 2023 I held my first solo exhibition, 'Reformations', in Trinity Hall's Elizabethan chained library, displaying a series of wearable objects that reflect on relationships between texts and bodies. The neckpiece 'M E T A M O R P H O S I S' (see cover photograph) incorporates actual letters cut (not by me!) from early modern printed books. These cuttings have a deep material history of transformation: from flaxseed to



'Illegible Poem Two: Wilkins' Creed' (cut paper, 2021) Copyright Jane Partner



'The Cloud of Unknowing' (aluminium, copper, paper, wood, paint, 2024) Copyright Jane Partner

linen cloth, from early modern clothing to rags, from rag paper to books, and from a nineteenth-century archive of letter forms to dispersal at auction – allowing me to place them on the body for a second time. 'Memory House' is a recycled silver reliquary locket made in the shape of the Elizabethan library building itself, suspended on a chain that interprets the ones tethering the books. This piece, now in Trinity Hall's silver collection, brings together the ways that both buildings and bodies were used in renaissance memory systems. The process of making these works informs my ongoing research into how the properties of material substances – including metal and paper – were used during the early modern period to model states of being. My early stage project *The Matter of Identity in Early Modern England* will be accompanied by further practice-based investigation to reconstruct the material literacy that has been lost since blacksmiths at work were a familiar sight.

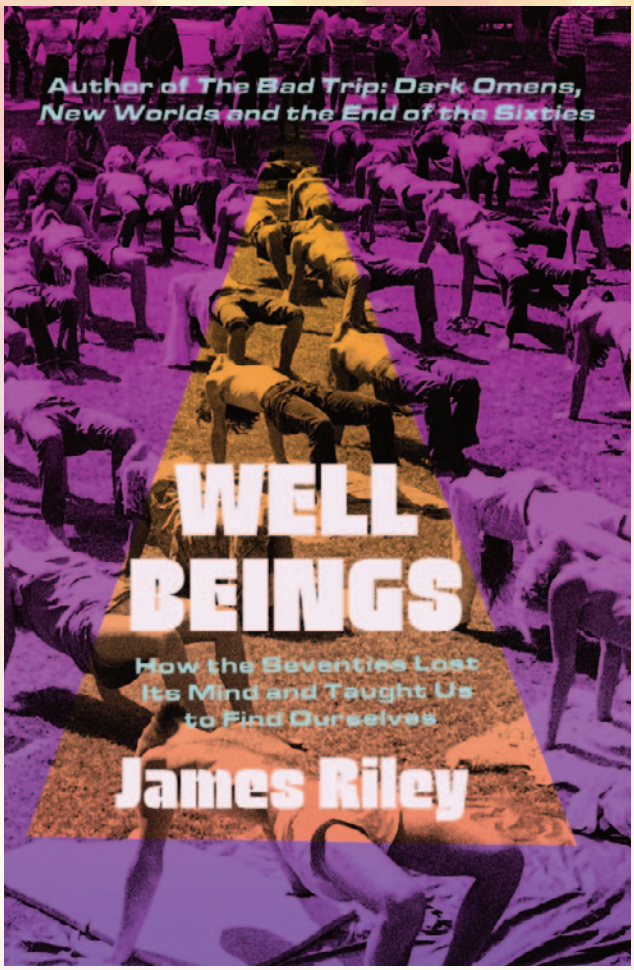
Another ongoing strand of my research concerns hybrid visual/verbal forms. My creative-critical essay for CRASSH's *Global Conversations* (2021) traces the history of invented 'universal' languages that proposed new alphabets. The essay incorporates visual poems that test and subvert these languages from within. My work on the non-linear typography of the seventeenth-century poet Thomas Traherne, which offers a silent polyphony for the eye, led both to an essay in *Close Reading as Attentional Practice* (ed. Ewan Jones and Marion Thain, forthcoming 2025), and a practical interest in writing poetry in which words have multiple simultaneous interconnections, including in 3D. My sculpture-poem in the form of a neural network was exhibited as part of the CRASSH-funded 'Expanded Librarian' artistic research collaboration (2024).

My current central academic project intersects with ongoing creative work. *The Body as Text in Early Modern Literature and Culture* reveals the pervasive habit of mind that viewed bodies as legible and inscribable, reading literary texts in conjunction with visual art and material culture. I show how actual words could be applied to the body – through embroidered clothing, lettered jewellery and script tattoos – and map over these the more abstract ways that bodies might be considered readable: through signs of the passions, courtly conduct or rhetorical gesture. The chapter that investigates bodily inscriptions in anatomical diagrams informs work in progress for my contribution to *Embodied Knowledge and Making Texts: A Handbook* (ed. Helen Smith, Georgina Wilson). Here I explore the neuroscience of writing by hand to create an artist's book shaped like my hands that draws on the structures of early modern anatomical flap-books. This 'handbook' is also amongst the new works that I am making for the *Tudor Contemporary* group exhibition opening at the Heong Gallery at Downing in February 2026. This exhibition will explore how Tudor influences are used in art today, placing contemporary work in dialogue with early modern objects. I look forward to reflecting on the research dimensions of my making process in an essay for the catalogue.

Jane Partner
College Associate Professor and Director of Studies, Trinity Hall

HOT TUBS, MUD AND SELF-OPTIMISATION:

ON THE ROAD WITH *WELL BEINGS*



Last year, Icon published my book *Well Beings: How the Seventies Lost its Mind and Taught Us to Find Ourselves*. At the time of writing, the paperback edition is waiting in the wings. *Well Beings* is a cultural history of wellness in the 1970s and beyond. It's a follow-up to my first book, *The Bad Trip* (2019), an account of the late 1960s and the various forms of 'bad craziness' therein. In essence, *Well Beings* picks up where that book left off, with the counterculture on the brink of both a new decade and a significantly more hostile political reality.

There are many stories about the 'End of the Sixties', and most are about historical failure. One of the most pervasive describes how the revolutionary impetus of the Left dwindles into complacency and self-regard. The political attempt to change the world, in other words, gives way to the personal attempt to change the self. Hence, the likes of Jerry Rubin getting into detox diets and encounter groups, and the rise to prominence of places like the Esalen Institute in California, as well as the Wellness Resource Center in Marin County. Novelists like Cyra McFadden took a sharp-eyed, satirical view of this scene while Christopher Lasch and other sociologists spent much of the 1970s taking aim at what they saw as a culture of self-indulgence. The trends continued, however, and many of the products that populated the alternative health market of the 1970s gradually morphed into today's massively lucrative wellness industry.

With *Well Beings*, I was trying to write a cultural history of alternative health by following several of the characters and situations from *The Bad Trip* into the 1970s. I was also trying to foreground the often-obscured political radicalism underpinning the decade's theorisation of wellness. It was a challenging, often sobering book to write. It was also a lot of fun. Happily, once published, *Well Beings* got some good media coverage. Reviews appeared in *The Spectator, The TLS, Financial Times* and others; I wrote essays for *The Telegraph, Bookanista* and BBC Culture, and a hectic schedule of radio and podcast interviews ran in parallel. I also did a lot of live events.

I love doing live events. After being confined to the desk, it's great to get out there and actually talk to people. When *The Bad Trip* was published, I gave public lectures, bookshop talks and did shows at literary festivals. This time around I was keen to do the same, but I also wanted to go slightly off-piste and speak at venues more in line with the themes I was writing about. And so, I contacted wellness retreats, floatation studios, health resorts and outdoor festivals, particularly those that looked as if they were planning to run a wellness tent in among the raving.

Of the events that came together, two stick in the mind. The first was at Paus, an outdoor retreat centre in Bourn, Cambridge. Nestled on a hilltop, Paus specialises in hot tub bathing and dry barrel saunas. There's food on sale, a sensory walk and yoga classes, but it's the cedar tubs that get the most traffic. Hot tubs were a ubiquitous feature of Esalen and the Wellness Resource Center, while in Cyra McFadden's version of Marin County in her novel *The Serial* (1976), they're both markers of social prestige and cauldrons of interpersonal intrigue. Thankfully there was none of the latter at Paus, just the strangely calming view of steam rising into the evening and people unwinding as they sank in. I did two events at Paus, a pop-up talk about wellness during one of their regular community evenings, and a longer event focused on the book shortly after its launch. Neither of these actually took place in a hot tub, mind you – although I was repeatedly offered the use of one – but the setting was still able to work a particular effect. This was a world away from a stuffy, airport function room somewhere on the academic conference circuit. It suggested – as was my intention – the kind of evening that John Travis, physician and wellness pioneer, used to run at the Wellness Resource Center in Marin County in the mid-1970s. The event was relaxed, informal, the discussion went in lots of different directions with the focus organically returning to the big, persistent yet necessary questions of what makes a happy life.

From the calm of Paus, I then went on a spiral tour of bookshops across Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire before driving further afield to Wales and Hay-on-Wye for a festival. No, not *that* festival but How the Light Gets In, a music and philosophy festival that takes place at the same time as the more famous event and no doubt competes for the same kind of crowd. How the Light Gets In is the type of place where you can see The Orb by night and watch Rowan Williams trudge through the mud during the day, where the spectacle of Slavoj Žižek appearing on television, in a tent, gets top billing.

I had been invited to talk about 'Self-Optimisation' and as per the format of the festival, the session was pitched as a debate between me, Stoic philosopher Nancy Sherman and beauty journalist Jessica DeFino. Despite some challenging questions from host Peter York (he of *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook* fame) we remained a stubbornly harmonious trio. Our differing takes on the intersection between the mind, the body and the spirit (broadly understood) overlapped more often than they diverged.

Were these 'ideas to change the world' as the festival blurb promised? Probably not. How can one conversation do that? On reflection though, looking back to that field, as election fever raged on with all its divisive, fractious intensity, reaching consensus on how things could be better was something of a refreshing change.

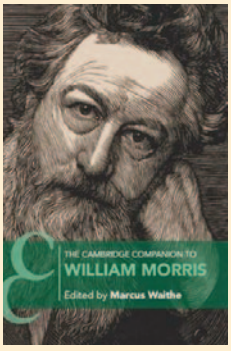
James Riley
Associate Professor in English Literature,
Girton College

FACULTY NEWS

Some Faculty highlights from the past year; for more detail and more stories, please visit https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/news/

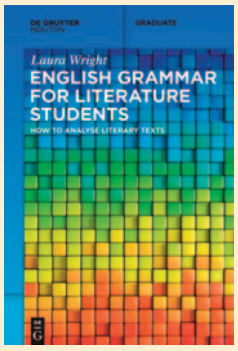
Jade Cuttle – a PhD student in the Faculty – was named a BBC/AHRC New Generation Thinker (2024) for her AHRC-funded research into nature poetry, supervised by Professor Robert Macfarlane. Applying her passion for metal detecting and mudlarking to the field of literature, she will be investigating this area from the ground up – 'digging between the "dancing daffodils" to unearth evidence of an overlooked tradition.' Her research is entitled 'Scriptocurrency: The New Language of British Nature Poets of Colour'.

Professor Marcus Waithe has published *The Cambridge Companion to William Morris*. The volume draws together influential voices from different disciplines who have participated in the recent critical, political, and curatorial revival of Morris's work. The volume was launched in the inspiring surroundings of the Robert Cripps Gallery at Magdalene College, and its first review appeared as a cover issue of *The Times Literary Supplement* (9 August 2024).



Luke Allan – a PhD student in the Faculty – has won the 2024 Ivan Juritz Prize. Open to postgraduate students throughout Europe, the Ivan Juritz Prize celebrates the creative explosion of the modernist era and rewards art that seeks to 'make it new'. At a prize-giving ceremony at King's College London on 24 June, winners in three categories (Text, Sound, and Visual Arts) each received £1,000 and a two-week artist residency at Mahler & LeWitt Studios in Spoleto, Italy.

Eva Dema – a PhD student in the Faculty – was awarded the William H. Helfand Fellowship by the Grolier Club of New York to continue her research on the transatlantic manuscript trade at the turn of the twentieth century. More recently, Eva has been awarded a Junior Fellowship in the Harvard Society of Fellows. Supported by this three-year research award (2025-28), she aims to publish her doctoral thesis on Hardy as a monograph, before starting work on a new research project that will chart a transatlantic network of working-class poets and political activists in the mid nineteenth century.



Professor Laura Wright's new book, *English Grammar for Literature Students: How to Analyse Literary Texts*, was published by De Gruyter on 22 July 2024. The book uses extracts from novels, poems and plays to teach the basics of the structure of the English language, so that literature students can identify parts of speech and discuss their effects.

Professor Sarah Dillon has been awarded a Leverhulme Research Fellowship for a project entitled 'Literature and AI: Rhetoric, Influence and Epistemology'. The research project historicises current AI hype by revealing the literary nature of the origins of Western AI science, both in terms of the speculative rhetoric of the founding papers, as well as the direct influence of literature on mid-twentieth-century AI researchers.

Professor Priyamvada Gopal was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature at an event on Thursday 11 July.

FACULTY NEWS CONT.

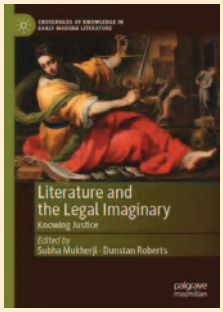
Liam Plimmer – a PhD student in the Faculty – was awarded a Kennedy Scholarship to fund a Visiting Fellowship at Harvard University in 2024-25, following a competitive UK-wide selection process. Liam's research concerns the *Künstlerroman*, or 'artist-novel', which is a product of German romanticism.

Claudia Cornelissen – a PhD student in the Faculty – was awarded a Chawton House Visiting Fellowship. Her research revolves around feminist revisionist literature and she is spending her time as a Visiting Fellow working on the parts of her research related to works by Aphra Behn and Charlotte Lennox.

Professor Raphael Lyne has been awarded a grant in a new interdisciplinary scheme run by UK Research and Innovation. The project's title is 'When Memories Come Alive: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Vividness of Memory'. On hearing the news, Prof Lyne commented: 'Gaining a better understanding of our topic — vivid memory, and subjective experience in general — requires contributions from scholars with very different expertise, and I'm delighted to be part of this team.'

Dr Sarah Houghton-Walker has published *The Cambridge Companion to John Clare*, which includes essays by Faculty members Dr Mina Gorji and Professor Ross Wilson. In this volume, leading scholars illuminate Clare's rich life and writing, situating each within a range of critical contexts.

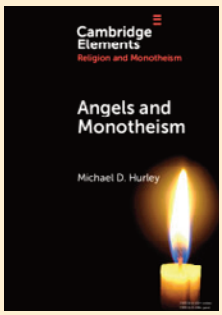
Amelia Zhou – a PhD student in the Faculty – has published her debut novel, *Repose* (New York: Wendy's Subway, 2024). Weaving together poems, fiction, and lyric essay, it follows an unnamed woman grappling with the limits of the self on the everyday stage of labour and routine. Seeking the edges of form—where it exceeds itself, where it breaks down—*Repose* offers a narrative of girlhood invigorated by the mutual possibilities of dreaming and defiance.



Professor Subha Mukherji and **Dunstan Roberts** have published their edited volume, *Literature and the Legal Imaginary: Knowing Justice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). Tuning into the collective understanding of law as lived experience, the book seeks to understand and inhabit the intersection between judicial procedure, legal thinking and imaginative practice, where epistemic processes that elude the formal discourses of law and legal history are generated and brought into view.

Professor Clair Wills has received the 2024 WHSmith Non-Fiction Book of the Year Award for *Missing Persons, Or My Grandmother's Secrets* (this book was covered in last year's issue of *9 West Road*).

Professor Michael Hurley has published *Angels and Monotheism* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

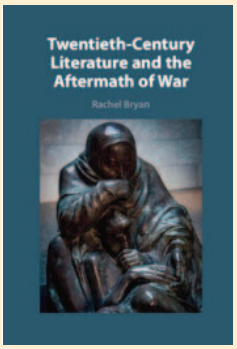


The book argues for the indispensable importance of studying angels as divinely created beings, for theology at large, and for understanding the defining doctrine of monotheistic religions in particular. Additionally, the book contends that the spirit of modern science did not originate with the so-called Scientific Revolution but was actually inspired centuries earlier by the angelological lucubrations of medieval scholastics.

FACULTY NEWS CONT.

Dr Hannah Lucas, Newby Trust Research Fellow at Newnham College, has been awarded a Research Fellowship by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The AvH Foundation funds outstanding postdoctoral researchers from around the world to conduct research at any academic institution in Germany.

Juliette Bretan – a PhD student in the Faculty – has been awarded a Fellowship at the Herder Institute, an internationally renowned centre for research on Eastern Central Europe.



Dr Rachel Byran has published *Twentieth-Century Literature and the Aftermath of War* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), a study of reparative, stabilising impulses in post-war writings from across the last century. Focusing on works by Henry James, Elizabeth Bowen, and Kazuo Ishiguro, it argues that to understand the relationship between modern warfare and literary art, we must learn to engage with texts whose modernity lies in their acknowledgement of consolatory counterfactuals..

LIBRARY NEWS

It's wonderful to read about all the publications produced by Faculty staff. You should find that most of these are available in the English Faculty Library, and if not, you can use our book recommendation form (see below for URL). Visitors can browse the collections in the English library and alumni of the University of Cambridge can apply for free access to the University Library. Further information is available online.

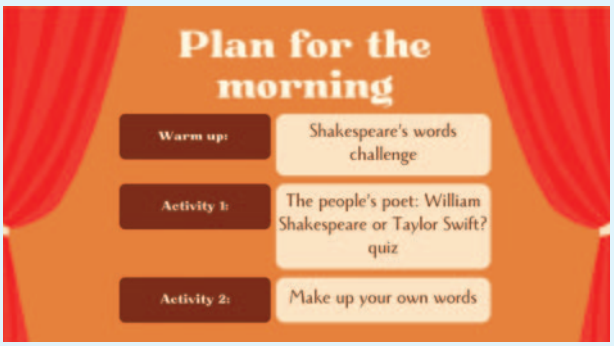
The library space continues to be popular with students and our book loan figures are very healthy, but I wanted to include in this newsletter some of the work we do as a library that is less business-as-usual and more unexpected.

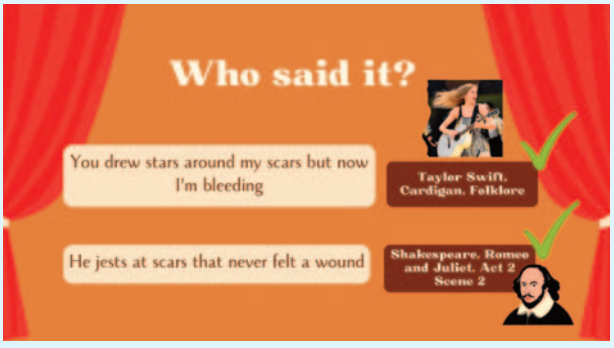
OUTREACH

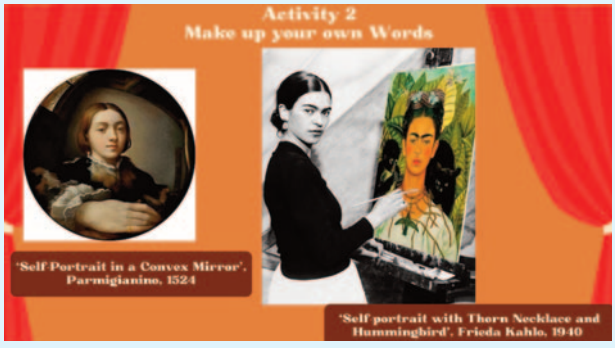
Encouraging the next generation of young people is important and working with the faculty Outreach Co-ordinator we helped to deliver seven A-level coursework days. We provided access to our space and print resources to enable students to work on their A-level coursework topics, with a broader range of resources than they have available at school. The aim was to excite and inspire them to consider the English tripos and Cambridge as a place for them, and to connect them with what an academic library can offer.

Broadening our reach even further, we taught a fun Shakespeare class to 63 enthusiastic primary school age pupils who were visiting Cambridge as part of a 'graduation day' organised by the charity, The Brilliant Club. We used Shakespeare sonnets and Taylor Swift lyrics to engage them in debates about language and the origins of words.

The co-ordinator wrote afterwards 'The session delivered by Laura, Kate and Lily was fantastic. It was pitched very well for the age group and was a good mixture of fun activities to get pupils engaged as well as some interesting learning points as well. They facilitated the session wonderfully and did a great job of getting all the pupils engaged in the session.'







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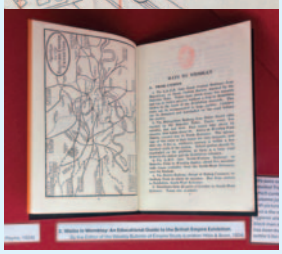
EXHIBITIONS

The Benson Gallery situated inside the English Faculty Library is used to promote research in the Faculty and helps to highlight library collections too. Ideas for exhibitions are welcome and reviewed each term by the Library Committee. This year we have hosted three exhibitions.

In Lent term, we were delighted to host 'Mise-en-Page: Designing the Medieval Manuscript' curated by two ASNC MPhil students, Rhiannon Warren and Lottie Wells. The exhibition explored the process of constructing a manuscript, from parchment production to techniques such as pricking and ruling, and historical inks and dyes. The display included modern examples as well as photographs of manuscript exemplars. The display brought together a wealth of images and objects and visitors could even have a go at writing on parchment themselves.



In Easter term, 'The British Empire Exhibition 1924' curated by Miraya McCoy (MPhil student in English Studies) marked 100 years since the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, held in Wembley, London. The materials on display conveyed a sense of imperial spatial and organisational logics, revealing the ways in which spectacular 'magic' is firmly underwritten by a logic of extraction and exchange. The exhibition considered the 1924 Exhibition as a site in which it is possible to see both a postcolonial London (and world) prefigured – in the anticolonial movements it sparked and its potentially subversive forces of hybridity and exchange – as well as a foreshadowing of its neo-colonial capitalist

formations. With thanks to the Rare Books team at the University Library for loaning a selection of fascinating archival material.

The next exhibition was curated by Lucy Rogers (PhD student in English) on 'Women and the Early Development of Cambridge English'. The exhibition considered the early evolution of the English teaching curriculum at Cambridge, from a subsection of the Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos in the late nineteenth century into a faculty and tripos in its own right. The exhibit suggests that one of the reasons the study of English Literature has a historical conception of being 'soft' is because of its popularity with women in the early years as a subject for which they had the means of entry. Intertwined with the evolution of teaching itself is the presence of women at Cambridge and the revolutionary methods which were developed in the women's colleges to support study within the discipline. We were introduced to prominent women who changed the way we think of teaching, philology, academic research, and writing, such as: Ellen Wordsworth Crofts, Anna Paues, Hilda (H.M.R.) Murray, Minna Steele Smith, Queenie (Q.D.) Leavis, Enid Welsford, Muriel (M.C.) Bradbrook, Elsie Phare, Rosamond Lehmann and Mar Bentinck Smith. The exhibit invited us to consider the role women have played in the history of English studies, at Cambridge, as well as how the subject continues to be thought about.

Further images are available on our blog [see URL below] which showcases all the great exhibitions and displays that have taken place in the library over the last year.

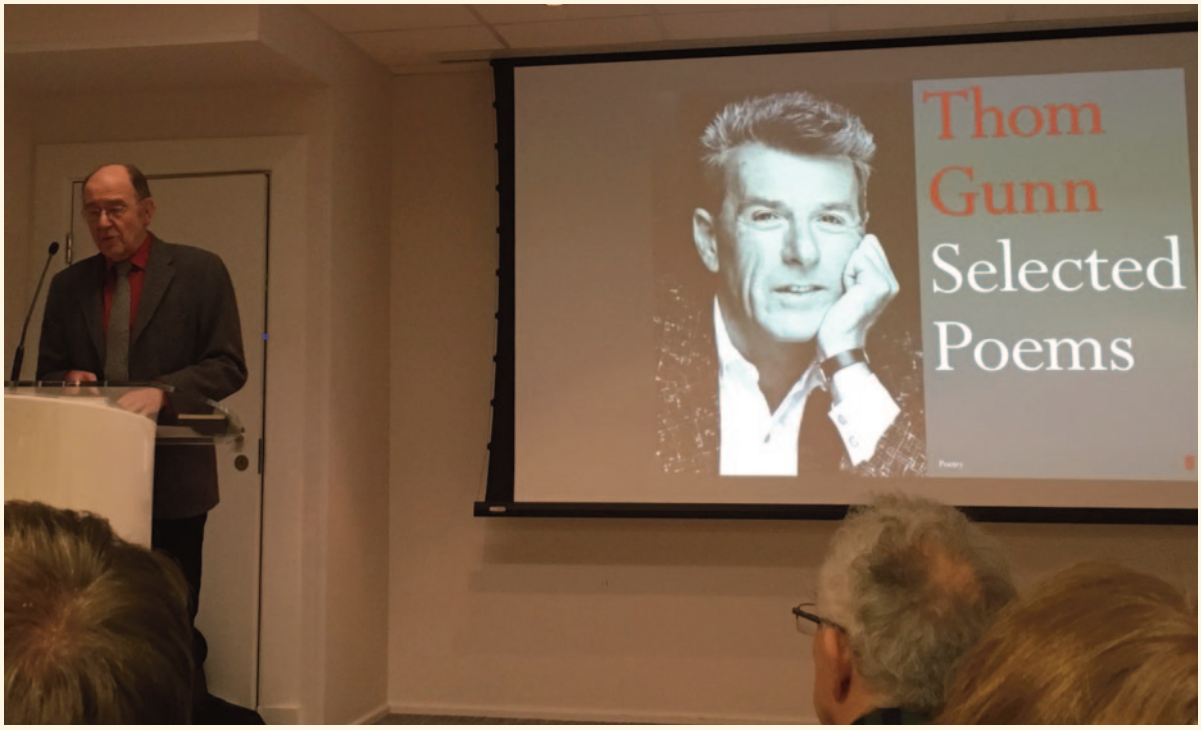
Book recommendation form:
https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/recommend-item-our-collection

EFL Blog:
https://englishlibrarycam.wordpress.com/

9

IN MEMORIAM
CLIVE WILMER

This issue of *9 West Road* was on the verge of going to press when the Faculty heard the sad and sudden news of the death of Clive Wilmer (1945-2025). Clive was an Emeritus Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, the Master of the Guild of St George (2009-2019), a poet and a scholar — of John Ruskin, William Morris, Thom Gunn and much else besides. He taught many of the Faculty's students taking Practical Criticism and Victorian topics, continuing to share his knowledge and critical acuity deep into the years of his formal retirement. He also continued to publish, producing editions for Faber & Faber of Gunn's *Selected Poems* (2017) (the attached photograph shows Clive launching the volume at the University Library) and *The Letters of Thom Gunn* (2021) (co-edited with Michael Nott and August Kleinzahler). Readers may like to hear this recent interview with Clive, in which he describes the revelatory experience of reading Ruskin for the first time on the advice of his supervisor at King's College, Tony Tanner: https://ruskinsociety.uk/the-ruskin-matters-podcast/



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