

9 West Road

*A Newsletter of the
Faculty of English*

Welcome to the first edition of 9 West Road, the Newsletter of the Cambridge English Faculty. Architects recently prepared a briefing document for the Faculty's new building; in it they made the point that 'many undergraduates never set foot in the Faculty building'. That dispiriting observation highlights the fact that many students leave Cambridge with only a shadowy sense of their Faculty's identity both in and beyond Cambridge. Students will leave Cambridge with a very strong attachment to their college, while the Faculty will probably have had only a spectral existence, responsible, so it seems, solely for the production of austere bureaucratic documents and for the setting of exams. In reality, of course, the Cambridge English Faculty has been a distinctive, vibrant and developing intellectual centre for almost a century, contributing very substantially not only to the academic study of English Literature, but also to the cultural life of many countries in the anglophone world. This newsletter is addressed especially to the Faculty's *alumnæ/i*. 9 West Road is the past of the Faculty, but it is also the Faculty's future: the new building we are planning will be built on the site of the current building. If students in the past did not set foot in that old building, the new building will instead be the centre of student life. It will also, at last, allow the Faculty and its associated departments of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics to offer a proper welcome to its *alumnæ/i* on its own territory.

James Simpson
Editor



The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson

*Why! Though I seem of a prodigious waist,
I am not so voluminous and vast
But there are lines wherewith I might be embraced.*

So wrote the twenty-stone Ben Jonson cheerily to the painter Sir William Burlase, who had despaired of ever capturing his likeness on canvas. Jonson's literary corpus is equally large and equally daunting to the modern editors who rashly try to embrace it. For Jonson wrote more than thirty court masques and entertainments, and seventeen complete and surviving plays, as well as three large collections of verse, many occasional poems, inscriptions, and letters, two different translations of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, an English Grammar, and a commonplace book, *Discoveries* - to say nothing of the various lost plays and entertainments that are known today mainly through their titles. There are numerous surviving Jonsonian manuscripts and early printed texts that editors need to examine with minute attention.

An international team with good representation from the Cambridge English Faculty - its thirty members include Anne Barton, Philippa Berry, Colin Burrow, and Eugene Giddens - is now nevertheless ambitiously attempting to re-edit the entire Jonsonian canon. The last such edition of Jonson's complete works took its distinguished Oxford editors, C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, more than half a century to complete. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson will need to move altogether more swiftly than its great predecessor, as publication is scheduled by Cambridge University Press for 2005. The edition will appear in two formats. A six-volume print edition will present Jonson's complete works in modernized form and chronological order, with full scholarly commentary and apparatus. An electronic edition (in CD-ROM or via



Ben Jonson by Robert Vaughan, 1612-1627. The earliest datable likeness of Jonson. The inscription styles him the most learned of English muses

the internet) will contain the whole of the print edition as well as a range of early texts, manuscripts and archival materials, all fully tagged and searchable. Readers will be able to compare early and modernized texts by placing them side-by-side on their screens; run computer searches for particular words or topics; look at early maps, portraits, and designs; study the musical settings of the songs; and rapidly retrieve archival information.

David Bevington of the University of Chicago, Martin Butler of Leeds, and I act as general editors to the project, which is currently supported by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board of half a million pounds, spread over five years. This pays for the work of two research associates, one in Cambridge and one at Leeds, and the essential tasks of keying and tagging which are carried out under the direction of the project's electronic editor, David Gants, at the Universities of Georgia and Virginia.

Most work in the humanities is essentially solitary in nature. The Cambridge Jonson is a spectacular exception to this general rule, as has been evident in the daily email exchanges between editors, and the high-spirited editorial meeting held in Cambridge earlier last summer at 9 West Road, to review the progress of the edition. If only our subject were just a *fraction* less voluminous, and our deadlines just a *fraction* further away, our spirits would no doubt be even higher. ☺

Ian Donaldson



Troublous Dreams

*'dear gods set me free from all the pain,
the long watch I keep, one whole year awake'*
the Watchman, at the opening of the Oresteia

Maybe third year English students never sleep well. Over the course of last year not only our bleary mornings, but even our sleep was saturated with the shared horror of the Tragedy paper. One person after another woke up with a story to tell about meeting Adrian Poole in a dark alley or forgetting to discuss both the Greeks and Shakespeare (apparently equally prophetic visions).

Increasingly convinced that the Tragedy paper had itself become an endless cycle of suffering, I asked all final year students if they would write down any nightmares they'd had, so that a representation of our collective subconscious might emerge and be analysed. A selection of the dreams is printed here. SG (Newnham, 2000)

I am in the English Faculty Library with a reading list. I scuttle from shelf to shelf, knowing I have to collect all my books before an untold disaster strikes. Just as I reach the door, a window shatters and Adrian Poole bursts in with an AK-47, to raze the library to the ground. EW (Newnham, 2000)

I am trying to lug a suitcase down the stairs just outside my room. I think I am rushing to the Tragedy paper, though the whole scenario looks more like a desperate escape. I bump the suitcase too hard on the stairs, and after a few steps it bursts open, spilling extraneous articles of clothing onto the landing. I crouch on the floor trying to gather up the clothes and stuff them back into the suitcase. I keep looking at my watch anxiously, aware that the Tragedy paper has already begun, while I'm folding clothes on a landing ten minutes away. I ask myself why I can't just abandon the clothes and run to the exam hall. At the same time, I realise it's possible to miss the Tragedy paper altogether, and find this thought unbearable. SG (Newnham, 2000)

I walk into the tragedy paper, which is in the Marks and Spencers on Market Square and find that all the invigilators are naked. I can't write anything because it is all so disturbing. No one else seems to notice. EKM (New Hall, 2000)

Some dawdling paralysis has prevented me writing anything for about two and a half hours of the Tragedy paper. Shaking myself out of it, I realise that I must write something, but find I only have a fat black marker with me. So on each line I write a few thick words that run together and seep through the page. Oh no, I think, they're going to fail me because this is messy and it smells, and I haven't mentioned both the Greeks and Shakespeare. SCM (King's, 2000)

I am sitting at the front of the exam hall where the Tragedy paper is being held. My desk faces the invigilator's, and on the wall to my right is a big round-faced clock. The clock is just behind me, so I have to crane my neck slightly to look up at it. I look up when I finish my first essay to discover that there is only half an hour left of the exam, in which (and these are the thoughts that race through my mind) I have to write two essays, and ensure that I've paid requisite attention to both the Greeks and Shakespeare. To my horror I see that the hands of the clock are moving in visible jolts, five minutes at a time. SG (Newnham, 2000)

The exam has just begun in the next room, but Adrian has arranged for us to be held back in the hallway because he wants us to have a last serious thought about the big picture and the overarching themes and concerns of tragedy. In vain I point out to him that the exam has begun and our precious minutes are being frittered away. When he finally lets us into the exam hall, I search anxiously for answerable questions. I find three questions I can just about handle, and look at my watch to discover that I have only thirty

minutes left. I think that maybe if I write fast enough I'll be able to scrape a Third with three ten minute answers. As I'm writing, Alex Deane rings me up and begins chatting casually that it had been an easy paper, and he'd finished early and what am I doing for dinner? In my mind I seriously balance the options of continuing to write while he talks on my answer-phone, or dashing over to disconnect it. B (Trinity, 2000)

A fellow English student and I are calmly walking through a sort of urban wasteland when someone in a car asks us for directions. Suddenly we've been captured by a cult with shaven heads and non-seeing eyes. They tie us up at the far end of a room and, from the opposite side, begin to walk towards us in a slow line, slotting in behind each other. I realise I've become Iphigenia, the one with the short curly hair in the Cacoyannis film, and I'm about to be sacrificed by the leader of the cult. But just as they raise the knife, Clare reaches up and bites the executioner's ear. We both jump out of the window, but are caught again. This happens three times before I wake up. Yuck. IM (Clare, 2000)

I sit down at the desk in the exam hall, and stare in mounting panic at the paper; not only the subject of the questions, but the questions themselves, and the rubric, are all in Ancient Greek. But as I consider this I remember that I have in fact been taught Ancient Greek for the past fifteen years, though I can no longer understand any of it. LA (Gonville and Caius, 2000)

In the early hours of the morning, an emergency meeting had been called. Long, low wooden tables are laid out, as if for a formal hall, in the gym of my old school. This year's candidates for the Tragedy paper, a motley selection of lecturers, and a congregation of Benedictine monks stumble in, half awake. Adrian Poole seems to know what's going on; he leads the meeting.

We are told that the Tragedy paper has been cancelled. There is no reason given. However, each college has, under orders not from the Faculty but some invisible University Board, been asked to produce a plan of action for coping with such a disaster. I look across at the report that Trinity has produced, calling for divine intervention (these words appear in boldface on the page). Adrian Poole, surprisingly cheerful, makes some quip about this being the college's usual mode of referring to his advice. The monks, it appears, are representing Corpus Christi. They clutch huge sheaves of paper and say very little. I wonder why everyone has thought so long over an obvious course of action: that the marks for Part II English will be calculated without the Tragedy paper. But I tell myself that this deliberation and bureaucracy is due to the enormity of the disaster. The meeting ends abruptly, and everyone has to break up the crude tables and stack them on the raised stage at one end of the gym.

SG (Newnham, 2000) ☺

Alumnæ/i achievements, 1999-2000

Adrian Beamish (Christ's, 1962), formerly British Ambassador to Mexico (1994-99) appointed a KCMG 1999.

Duncan Kenworthy (Christ's, 1971), producer, Toledo Pictures, awarded OBE 1999, for services to the film industry (including *Four Weddings and a Funeral*)

Louise London (Newnham, 1969), *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (CUP, 2000)

Sam Mendes (Trinity Hall, 1988), Oscar for Best Director 2000

Clare Pollard (King's, 2000), winner of the 2000 Eric Gregory Award, Society of Authors, for her poetry collections (published by Bloodaxe)

Catherine Seville (Newnham, 1986), *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England* (CUP, 1999), winner of the Yorke Prize (awarded by the University of Cambridge to a graduate for an essay on a legal subject), 1999

Zadie Smith (King's, 1997), *White Teeth* (Hamish Hamilton, 2000)

Who's Who

The Faculty has seen a number of changes in the last two years. Several long-serving members have retired, though each remains an active member of the Cambridge academic community. Professor Anne Barton (Trinity) and Dr Juliet Dusinberre (Girton) continue to publish on Shakespeare and related topics. Dr Richard Gooder (Clare) and Mrs Jean Gooder (Newnham) are active in their respective colleges and continue to support Faculty activities. Mr Colin Wilcockson assists with the teaching of medieval literature at Pembroke and on the Faculty generally. Dr Marie Axton continues to write and publish on Renaissance text and bibliography and is active in Newnham. Former Faculty Librarian, Dr Gillian Rogers, has now retired to pursue her own research, and Dr Richard Luckett, though retired, remains as the Pepys Librarian at Magdalene College.

In the summer of 1999, Susan Manning left to take up a Chair in Scottish Literature at the University of Edinburgh, and Sylvia Adamson left to take up a Chair

in English Language at the University of Manchester.

During the period 1998-2000, the Faculty was deeply saddened by the untimely deaths from cancer of Jeremy Maule and Tony Tanner, both contributing actively to research and teaching in the Faculty. Members of the Faculty were also saddened by the deaths of John Holloway, Dadie Rylands and Arthur Sale who, though no longer active in Faculty affairs, had remained as major figures in Cambridge English.

A number of new appointments were made over this period, and the Faculty has been pleased to welcome Mary Jacobus as Grace 2 Professor and Dr Gavin Alexander, Dr Christopher Cannon (Oxford), Dr Paul Giles (Nottingham), Dr Priya Gopal (Connecticut) and Dr Fiona Green.

In the coming year, two long-serving and much-valued members of the Faculty, Dr Richard Axton and Dr Wil Sanders, will retire. It is hoped that they will remain active members of the wider Cambridge English community.

MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Boydell & Brewer was founded to publish studies on all aspects of the middle ages, with a special focus on literature and history. The list has now grown to include work on later periods, but the middle ages remain at the core of the list. New and recent titles include:

Understanding the Middle Ages

HARALD KLEINSCHMIDT *Illus.* £45/\$75

The World of Chaucer

DEREK BREWER *Illus.* £19.99/\$35 pbk

An Introduction to English Runes

R.I. PAGE *Illus.* £30/\$55

Holy and Noble Beasts Animals in Medieval Literature

DAVID SALTER *£30/\$55*

Rape and Ravishment

CORINNE SAUNDERS *£50/\$90*

Maxims in Old English Poetry

PAUL CAVILL *£45/\$75*

Beowulf and the Dragon

CHRISTINE RAUER *£45/\$75*

Julian of Norwich: Revelations

FRANCES BEER *£10.99/\$19.95 pbk*

Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales

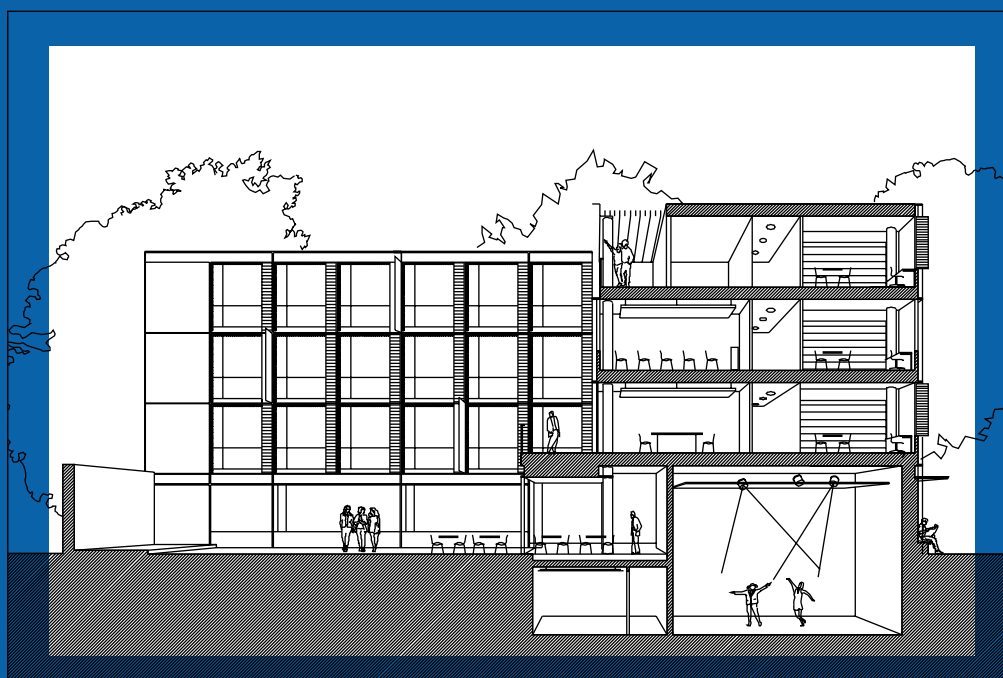
ROBERT CORREALE *£50/\$90*

Arthurian Legends

RICHARD BARBER *£11.99/\$17.95 pbk*

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A New Home for Cambridge English



The Faculty of English, one of the largest departments in the University, needs a building adequate and appropriate for its work, a building which will act as a focus for teaching and research in the subject, and which will encourage a sense of community and collegiality.

A new building for the Faculty is now planned on the site of its present building at 9 West Road, as part of a masterplan for the development of the Sidgwick Site, the principal location for faculties and departments in the Arts and Humanities.

Our new building will take account of a decisive recent shift initiated by the Faculty towards more communal learning where students can learn from each other. In addition to the supervisions and lectures, Faculty-based teaching through classes and seminars is becoming ever more central to the experience of most English undergraduates. The intellectual and social benefits of such group-based teaching are great - and greatly appreciated by students - but the inadequacy of our present building hampers the Faculty in the teaching initiatives it seeks to advance in the study of English literature.

Architects Allies and Morrison have been appointed to develop a masterplan for the Site and to design several new

buildings, including one for English. The design stage is well advanced and detailed planning permission will be sought during the course of the Easter Term. The four-storey building will be constructed round a courtyard, preserving trees and green spaces at the north end of the Sidgwick Site. It will unite the Faculty Library (currently housed in the Raised Faculty Building) with the Faculty's other activities and will provide well-equipped rooms for lectures, seminars, and supervisions; a drama studio; social space; space for private study and research; administrative and computing space, and a space public events. The building will provide an intellectual and social hub for the Faculty, which is greatly lacking at present.

The new building will be home to our colleagues in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (ASNC), which will have a common room/meeting room, departmental office and offices for academic staff. It will also house the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics (RCEAL), which is an independent postgraduate research centre with its own library, teaching, and study space. There is real optimism that intellectual benefit will flow from relocating these three cognate departments within a

single building, adjacent to other Arts and Humanities departments on the Sidgwick Site.

The projected cost of the building, which will occupy approximately 4,200 square metres, is a little over £13 million. More than half that sum (£8.7 million) has now been raised as a result of the Faculty's fundraising campaign. The campaign, which was launched in April 1999 and is led by Professor Dame Gillian Beer, is a partnership between the Faculty and the University's Development Office. It is crucial that the remaining £4.5 million is raised by March 2002 in order to keep pace with the building programme on the Sidgwick Site, and in order to retain a time-limited grant towards building costs which has been received from the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Multi-purpose in as many respects as possible, our new building will provide a balance between quiet study space and welcoming public spaces for interaction, not least through our programme of high-profile public lectures and alumni events. It will also provide us with the well-equipped space to develop new teaching methods and initiate new research projects for the study of English. ☺

Barry Windeatt

The Alumna Interview: Rachel Jones



Bethel is a small town in south-western Alaska, with a population of only 7000 people. Fifty miles inland from the Bering Sea, it is surrounded by flat tundra and in the winter, temperatures drop as low as -30/-40 degrees centigrade. In December, there are only six hours of daylight, in June only six hours of darkness. It is here that **Rachel Jones** finds herself after graduating from Cambridge.

Rachel Jones bears witness to the fact that not all English graduates are immediately tempted by the glittering paypackets of the city job. Graduating from New Hall in 1998, Rachel embarked upon a year-out through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Volunteers commit themselves to four values: social justice, community, simple living and spirituality. The JVC is like the American VSO Peace Corps. Being half-American herself, this attracted Rachel: "I had never visited America and my experience was a culture shock on multiple levels in the contrasts between British, Americans and 'eskimos' known as 'yup'ik'".

Rachel was based at a women's shelter, the Tundra Women's Coalition, where she helped women and children affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse. Rachel found her work 'extremely demanding': working with native Americans, she had to learn to understand a whole new way of life, including the different verbal and body language: "Innuits are much less verbal and I have since become more comfortable with silence". The hardest thing about her work was learning to accept that she could neither change the situations of the families she worked with, nor 'rescue' anyone from violence and abuse. "I learned that what I was there to do was be with the kids and be a person whom they could trust and who loved them. And that was enough".

Rachel believes that her time in Alaska was "the best thing I could have done, having graduated from Cambridge. It gave me time to reflect on

what was important to me and to make choices about the future ... There is something about Alaska that strips away things which aren't important. It took me down to the core of who I am".

Alaska is a complicated mixture of a subsistence way of life and a consumer economy. "People drink Coca-cola by the gallon and eat Doritos by the tonne. But people also hunt moose and caribou and gather berries and plants from the tundra and spend much of the summer at fish-camp catching, drying and smoking salmon for the winter". Although most people have cars and motorboats, there are no roads out and Rachel spent much time alone. She came to understand the necessity of a balance between solitude and real community. "I spent hours walking along the river looking at the wide open sky and the tundra and letting it all soak into me. It gave me space and time to reflect; it stripped away a lot of the comfortable layers."

Away from the routines of 'ordinary life', what Rachel has learned to value most is "having time for people, not getting caught up in the rush, taking time to be still". Rachel now has a greater sense of direction about her future: "My time in Alaska has increased my desire to understand, to learn from the people I worked with - a year only touched the surface."

Rachel's love of thinking has fuelled her ambition to do a PhD. She loves teaching, and hopes to find in academic life and writing a way to deepen her understanding and speak out about social injustice. Above all she would like to "stay connected with what goodness means to me". Despite her rejection of the "selling yourself, CV-point mentality which is so pervasive", she carries with her "a deep appreciation of the people who taught me at Cambridge". I arrived with a passion for learning, and I graduated with my thirst whetted for more. 🍷

Anita Sethi (Robinson, 1999 entry)

Virtual English

Colin Burrow writes about a major new initiative online.

Most of the things which the Faculty tries to encourage in its students - lively writing, lively reading, deep thought - are not things that computers are good at. They require human contact: supervisors and lecturers who can joke and cajole and urge a good essay-writing style from a student.

This form of very close contact is fun, though hard work. Supervisions also require a great deal of knowledge from undergraduates if they are to be able to work well from their first few weeks. A year or so ago the University had some discussions about how Virtual it wanted to become, and about the ways in which online learning could help us both to attract excellent students, and to bridge the growing gap between the expectations of A-Level and of a first year degree course. This set me thinking, nerdishly, about what kinds of teaching the English Faculty could provide online, and what sorts of audience it could serve.

The obvious non-dull thing to do online was practical criticism. Since

practical criticism was all-but invented here, and remains a big element in both parts of the Tripos, this also seemed a good way of genteelly blowing our trumpet to the world. And so the Virtual Classroom was born.

The classroom gives an introduction to practical criticism, and a dictionary of critical terms. It also has (at the moment) two virtual practical criticism classes. These give visitors to the site a poem, and walk them stage-by-stage through a critical reading of it. The aim is to introduce some of the technical vocabulary for analysing poems, without making any great demands either on people's knowledge of computers or on their knowledge of literature (click on a term you don't understand and a definition pops up). Each class also aims to ask a big question about practical criticism: does context matter?

From quite early on the classroom was visited by about two hundred people a week, and all kinds of folk, from retired colonels in Kent to unemployed miners in Alaska, said how much they enjoyed it. Teachers and A-Level students were clearly finding it hit the spot too. An article on online learning in the *Sunday Times* mentioned the Virtual Classroom in the same breath as the BBC, and over the next few weeks we had several thousand visitors. It was clearly a means not just of attracting potential students and showing them what we did: it was enabling wide access to our expertise for any A-Level student or anyone who liked reading.

The University then gave us enough money from its Access initiative funds to employ someone to work on the classroom during the course of this year, so that we could broaden access still further and make more classes available. Over the next few months the site will get bigger and better. You can see what's on offer at

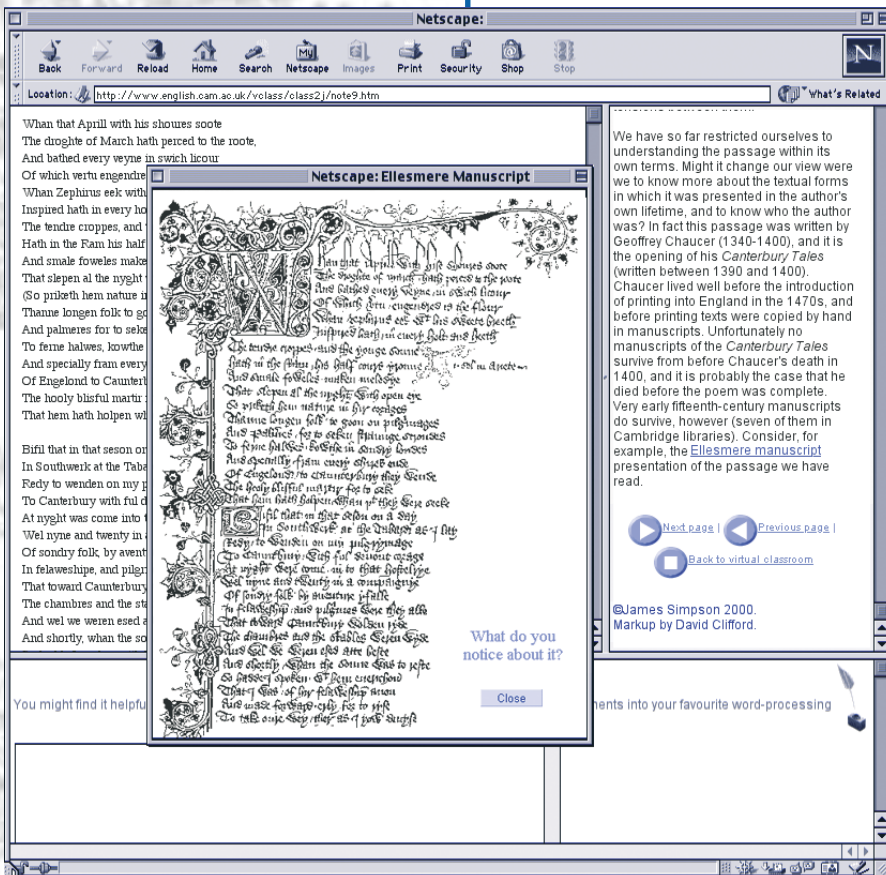
<<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/vclass/virtclas.htm>>

Or if you hate typing, go to

<<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk>>

and click on 'Virtual Classroom'.

Comments gratefully received. ☺



Events

1999 - 2001

The Faculty has been running an events programme for the past few years, starting with the first series of Empson Lectures in 1997, given by Edward Said.

The programme has been particularly rich and varied. Art historian and critic (and erstwhile Fellow of Clare Hall) **Frances Spalding** delivered a lecture timed to coincide with two exhibitions at the Tate and the Courtauld Galleries, on the Bloomsbury Group and Roger Fry respectively. Her illustrated lecture 'Image before Word: Post Impressionism and Virginia Woolf's Aesthetic of the Novel' examined the interconnection between British art and literature in the early years of the twentieth century.

Novelist and critic (and alumna) **AS (Dame Antonia) Byatt** delivered a lecture 'Modern European Storytelling'. The lecture was introduced by the **Rt Hon Chris Smith MP**, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, an alumnus, and admirer of Dame Antonia's work.

Candlemas was the occasion of a concert by the internationally renowned early music group 'Gothic Voices' under the direction of **Christopher Page**, a Reader in the Faculty. The concert took place in the chapel of Jesus College and was followed by a reception in the



Mr Tim Cribb, Mr David Baddiel and Mr Griff Rhys Jones at the launch of Cambridge English 2000



Dr Jonathan Miller

Prioress's Room. Music performed on that occasion had been discovered through the work of **Professor John Stevens**, also a member of the Faculty.

In late April and early May the Faculty was delighted to welcome Canadian novelist and critic **Margaret Atwood** as the Empson Lecturer for 2000. Ms Atwood gave six lectures under the title of 'Negotiating with the Dead' and described the series as being "about Writers writing about writers' writing". In her lectures she spoke about the different influences that were likely to shape writers' attitude to their work, either intentionally or unintentionally, and the choices a writer might make, either knowingly or unknowingly, about subject matter or characterisation. Ms Atwood also conducted a graduate seminar based on her novel *Alias Grace*, and fielded questions from undergraduates following one of the lectures.

At the end of the academic year the Faculty hosted a debate, as part of the University's alumni weekend on the theme of 'Journalism: Fact or Fiction?'. **Edward Stourton**, 'The Today Programme' presenter, chaired a panel including **Valerie Grove**, **Simon Heffer**, **Simon Hoggart**, **Minette Marin** and **Katharine Whitehorn**. All participants are alumni.

On 25 October 2000 the Faculty marked the 600th anniversary of the death of Geoffrey Chaucer with a series

of readings from Chaucer's works by members of the Faculty, including emeritus **Professor Derek Brewer**. Many local alumni attended.

In November the Faculty hosted a vigorous debate, 'Producing and Presenting News', with alumni **Jon Barton** and **Jeremy Paxman**.

The first event of 2001 was a fascinating workshop, led by **Jonathan Miller**, on non-verbal communication. Working with four student actors, Dr Miller held his large audience spell-bound for an hour and a half as he demonstrated the power of non-verbal communication.

At the beginning of March, the Faculty was very pleased to act as sponsor of a one-man performance of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* at the ADC by distinguished alumnus **John Barton**, one-time Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (and recently feted for his dramatisation of the Greek tragedies in the epic *Tantalus*). It was a particularly special occasion, not only on account of the dramatic quality of the performance, but also because it marked the return of John Barton to the ADC after more than 40 years.

These events not only play a key part in the Faculty's fund-raising programme, but they are also important in maintaining links with alumni, and in ensuring that contact is maintained between the academic study of literature and its practice outside academia. 🎓

Legenda

Professor Dame Gillian Beer

One book seized me last summer: Sybille Bedford's *A Legacy* was a complete surprise. I had somehow got the impression that this 1956 novel was a precious and inhibited work. Instead I encountered an extraordinarily lucid, passionate and disturbing exploration of European life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two families - one Jewish, one Catholic - interlock. France, Spain, England, above all Germany, shift and strain. Dialogue swerves. Calamities cut across the humour. The narrator hides. I couldn't sleep for reading it. 🍷

Tim Gardam (Caius, 1977, Director of Programmes, Channel 4)

Most of the time I read history; but my most memorable book of the summer has been *The New New Thing* by Michael Lewis, who anatomises the Silicon Valley mind and coldly reveals the cultural revolution it has wrought. *Nobrow* by John Seabrook is slighter, but it is rare in trying to gauge the nature of the cultural civil war that is going on at the moment, rather than reducing it to the name-calling of the dumbing down debate.

On holiday, I was, as every parent, consumed by *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire*, in which, against all my expectations, I became engrossed. Otherwise it was history. A biography of The Duke of Wellington, Anthony Beavor's *Spanish Civil War*. I failed with various novels, but read Rose Tremain's *Music and Silence*. The novel I will most remember was *The Vintner's Luck* by Elizabeth Knox, which was able to break me away from the normal pace of working life back into my imagination. 🍷

Chris Goode (Trinity Hall, 1995, Director, 'signal to noise')

Like many people, I find - three years on - I'm still in thrall to Ben Marcus's ludicrously under-celebrated book *The Age Of Wire and String*: its comprehensive idiosyncracies rapidly became a disabling virus inside my own

writing. However, recently some equally innovative work has advanced my recuperation, and offset other fuel crises: not least, Kief Hillsbery's ruthlessly inventive skatepunk novel *War Boy*, whose precarious vocal thrills articulate a curiously gentle *Weltanschauung*. Meanwhile, Keston Sutherland continues to develop as a profoundly altruistic, often revelatory poet, demanding but encouraging, frequently hilarious. His recent collection *Bar Zero* travels practically everywhere with me. 🍷

Kevin Jackson (Pembroke, 1977, writer, broadcaster, film-maker)

In common (or so I'd imagine) with most of your readers, I spend far more time with old books than new ones: by happy chance, on the morning your kind invitation arrived I was re-reading Tillyard's history of the origins of Cambridge English, *The Muse Unchained*. Still, a few of the titles published in 2000 have somehow forced their way onto my bedside table, and it would be churlish not to mention the instruction and pleasure I have found in two biographies, Tim Hilton's *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, and Christopher Frayling's life of Sergio Leone, *Something to do with Death*; in Susan Sontag's historical novel *In America*; in *News for the Ear* ed. Robinson and Sheppard, a poetic *Festschrift* for Roy Fisher; in Lloyd Bradley's history of Jamaican music, *Bass Culture*; and in Clive Wilmer's latest collection of poems, *The Falls*. 🍷

Griff Rhys-Jones (Emmanuel, 1972, Actor, writer director and producer)

I was mainly reading some excellent magazines last summer, with particular attention to the advertisements for old cars. Apart from that, I've been canoeing on the Stour and digging up reference books. *The River Stour, an East Anglian River and its People*, by Russell Edwards is anecdotal and a little pedestrian, and not even that when the author tries to walk the banks and finds his way blocked by private landowners.



van der Weyden image: reproduced by kind permission of the National Gallery London

Rather better is *The Suffolk Stour* by Ambrose J.R. Waller, who, as the former chairman of the River Stour (Essex and Suffolk) Catchment Board, writes from what some might think of as a rather one-sided perspective. But the details of ditches, dredgers, extraction and flooding explain why and how the river looks the way it does and, indeed, did to John Constable. I thoroughly recommend it. Oh, and the *Suffolk Historical Atlas* which is a splendid analysis of the statistical geographic history of the county. 🍷

Caroline Kerr (Newnham, 1981, Business and Economics Editor, ITN).

I loved Rose Tremain's *Restoration*. Why? Because *Restoration* is a rare treat: a novel that is not only moving and profound, but also extremely entertaining. Its quirky and unlikely hero, Merivel, finds favour in the court of Charles II, but loses his own sense of purpose and identity in the process. The novel charts his eventual fall from grace in the eyes of 17th century society and his subsequent spiritual restoration. In the course of his journey towards self-knowledge Merivel romps through the court of Charles II, cares for the mentally ill in a Quaker asylum, survives the Great Fire of London and at last regains the King's favour and discovers a hard-won peace of mind. *Restoration* offers depth of feeling, a impressive historical backdrop and a lot of laughs. 🍷