

9 West Road

A Newsletter of the
Faculty of English

Volume 3, 2003



Dominic Jerney consulting an online version of
Shakespeare's Sonnets

Dominic Jerney, Head of UN Peacekeeping, narrates a life of books in stressful situations: A Literary Odyssey — From Cambridge to Kabul (and beyond)

It took me around five years from graduation to read anything for pleasure. This was less a reaction to my degree, and more because of a brief fling with investment banking, when I scarcely recall being out of the office long enough to do anything at all for enjoyment. My first (sweet!) forays away from the financial press were mostly inspired by my new employer, the Foreign Office. Once I had got over the hit to my pay cheque, I returned to reading with a vengeance — gobbling up both the inspiring (e.g. *Mandarin* by Sir Nick Henderson) and the utterly tedious (extraordinary core tracts on drafting in a bureaucratic style, only enlivened marginally by FCO booklets on how, when arranging placement at a dinner party, 10 is an impossible number of guests to seat). Suddenly, the *Financial Times* no longer dominated my life.

Within a year, I engineered myself time as a student again (ah — the joy of being paid by the Foreign Office to study!), this time at SOAS, learning Urdu. Sadly, there is not a large market in gripping teach-yourself-Urdu books. I found myself scouring the UN and South Asia's aid organisations for simple adult literacy pamphlets in Urdu through which I could laboriously work for practice. I didn't pick up much about diplomacy, or local politics; but I vastly increased my knowledge of preventing cattle disease in rural Punjab and the merits of breast-feeding over powdered baby milk. From this eclectic base, I gradually expanded into Urdu versions of the American trashy novel — ideal for their limited & easy vocabulary, but not exactly a mind-broadening genre. I never did get close to attaining sufficient literacy to enjoy the classics of the language, except in translation.

Things changed when I moved into Afghanistan. The only Brit in a devastated Embassy, and a 9 p.m. curfew, meant long evenings alone with a pile of classics to work through. With no television (these were Taliban times, when even the British diplomats wore beards) and no electricity, I tackled the Embassy's plundered library by candle-light. Jolly Soviet propaganda about smiling Afghans in 1980s Kabul (selective documentary at its least appealing), Byron's *Road to Oxiana* and Hopkirk's *Great Game* series — I worked through the lot. Early ventures into local folk tales (the life and times of Mullah Nasiruddin — a Persian classic) encouraged an interest in learning Dari, and yet again I found myself collecting the International Committee of the Red Cross's basic pamphlets. Although I couldn't do diplomatic business with the Afghans in Persian, by the time I left I could hold a basic conversation about mine clearance and the evils of opium cultivation...

Next stop, Balkans — where I cannot recall reading anything worthwhile. Perhaps it was too cold, or the troubles of Kosovo were too intractable to leave time for such frivolity. So I sought refuge in a tropical isle and set up shop (well, what became the British Embassy, actually) in East Timor. No Foreign Office champagne-circuit this — with fighting still in the West, I cadged a berth and food off the military. I rapidly finished the one book I'd brought with me (*Le Carré*, trying to recreate himself after the Cold War) and swapped it with an Australian major for Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*. Hmmm. I think I preferred the crocodile stories in the north Australian newspapers. Determined to improve my mind and my library, I hitched a ride on a UN plane into Darwin and went on a desert-island book-buying spree. Finally, I



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

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Inspiration for Aspiration –

how the Faculty is attracting a wide range of applicants

Most of the students we see wandering around Cambridge are old enough to vote, old enough to drive, and certainly old enough to buy a few beers to celebrate finishing the weekly essay. So why have twelve year-olds been spotted heading into the Faculty lately?

The answer's simple — if perhaps unexpected. Pupils and teachers from inner-city schools have been joining members of the English Faculty to take part in *Converse*, the Faculty's Aspiration Raising project. *Converse*, part of the University's wider Aspiration Raising initiative, will create a website full of resources that encourage young people to extend the ways in which they look at and discuss literature.

The project has two goals: to broaden and deepen the experience of literature for 11-19 year olds, and to inspire students with little previous contact with higher education to think about studying literature at university. By providing an innovative, stimulating and engaging environment online, we hope to encourage students to explore the site independently, to encounter new literature and ways of thinking, and to discover new talents and potentials within themselves.

Converse kicked off in September 2002, with a full time member of staff to co-ordinate the project, and two years funding from HEFCE. Since then, and with a lot of time and effort from teachers, pupils and Faculty members, the site has begun to take shape. We were all



Students from Camden creating a film-adaptation of *Macbeth*

keen to make the most of the multimedia, interactive potential of the web for teaching and learning. Working closely with CARET, the University's Centre for Applied Research into Educational Technology, we thought carefully about what a website could do — and about what it couldn't.

Over the past 8 months, both teachers and pupils have been busy designing and trialling a range of online resources designed to broaden the way pupils look at literature. One resource was inspired by a twelve year-old, part of a group visiting the University to give its opinions about an idea we had for an interactive Globe Theatre. As we talked about how the Elizabethan stage differed from those we see today, the boy became more and more enthusiastic: 'Imagine that you were Shakespeare's special effects' expert!' he shouted. 'You could smear dried porridge on the Hamlet's Ghost's face and it would look like pus!' Teachers struggling to get

across to their students that these were plays, intended to be staged, not read, immediately picked up on his ideas. We're now working on an online 'special effects' game, in which pupils think about how they would stage key moments of Shakespeare's plays — from the bear in *The Winter's Tale* to the cannon in *Henry VIII*, whose sparks destroyed the original Globe. Amongst a range of other resources, students will have the chance to explore Wilfred Owen's variant texts, create their own film adaptations of Shakespeare, and explore the murky relationship between the Elizabethan stage and law courts.

The website will launch in July 2003, and new resources will continue to be added from then until August 2004. You can find out more at <http://www.caret.cam.ac.uk/english/> 🐼

Harriet Truscott (Newnham, 2000),
Research Associate

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would have time to read the classics I had skimmed during my degree (or worse still, had not actually read, but had cribbed from Coles' *Notes* or the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*). Coleridge, Johnson, Austen, even Shakespeare's *Sonnets* went into my shopping basket...

.....and into someone else's freight

consignment! I never did trace where they ended up, but an international civil servant is somewhere out there with a great collection of literature. I just hope s/he reads English. Little did I know as I boarded the plane back to Dili that my books had been waylaid and I would be spending the next few months with nothing but the *Northern Territories*

News to read. Until, of course, a Timorese friend prevailed upon me to learn some Tetum and produced strangely familiar pamphlets about land mines, breast feeding, farming..... 🐼

Dominic Jermy, Head, UN Peacekeeping
(Clare, 1986)

Alumnæ/i Achievements

This is my third and final edition of *9 West Rd* (Dr John Harvey has kindly agreed to take over as Editor). Editing the newsletter has been a great pleasure, mainly because everyone I approached for material was so happy to contribute and so prompt in delivery (academics are unused to receiving copy by deadlines!). By far the greatest pleasure of this job has, however, been receiving news of what English Faculty alumnæ/i have been doing. Reading through responses to the call for news is an inspiring experience, presenting as it does the compacted narrative of so many dedicated lives, many of them committed to the arduous yet rewarding arts of reading, writing and teaching. The following sample was taken from last year's call for news; I apologise if some elements are now slightly out of date.

James Simpson, Editor

Brian Fewster (Jesus, 61-64), Poet, *Poor Tom's Revenge* (2002)

Chris Fox, aka Philip Fox (Sidney, 71-74), Actor for BBC TV; Headteacher in *People Like Us* series.

Anna Franks (Newnham, 68-71), Librarian, Rushcliffe School, Nottingham.

Michael Frohnsdorff (Peterhouse, 59-62), Retired Deputy Head. Now doing academic research (Christopher Marlowe and Elizabethan and Jacobean contemporaries).

David Gammon (Selwyn, 63-66), Part-time lecturer, book reviewer, author; achievements: J'ai vécu.

Richard Gibbons (Downing, 71-74), Assistant Education Officer, Cambridgeshire LEA.

John Gillespie (Jesus, 48-52), Retired Headmaster (International School, Ibadan; Comprehensive School, Oldham). Developed spoken poetry programmes in junior schools.

Heather Gilmour (Jesus, 84-87), Self-employed healthcare consultant; working with NHS Trust; parent. Achievements: having children and surviving it. Currently setting up an Arts in healthcare project at King's College Hospital.

Jean Gooder (Newnham, 53-99), Olive farmer (!); Trustee and Chairman of Governors, Bedales School; Governor, Dulwich College. Ed., *The Education of Henry Adams* (1995).

J. M. B. Gotch (Jesus, 54-57), Retired transport consultant; Governor, Dulwich College; Warden of St Olave's and St Saviour's Foundation; Sheriff of London, 1993-94; Knight of St John, 1996.

Paul Griffin MBE (St Cat's, 46-49), Retired Headmaster of Aldenham 62-74; collaborated in six Penguin/Viking HOW TO BE books. Five volumes of verse under own name. Won £5000 from *Literary Review* for poem in 1991.

Peter Griffith (King's, 60-63), Staff Tutor in Education (West Midlands Region), The Open University; *Literary Theory and English Teaching* (1987); *English at the Core* (1992).

John C Griffiths (Peterhouse, 54-57), Writer; TV producer/ director of arts programmes. Chairman, Minerva Arts Channel (since 1989); President, Liberal Party (1982-83). *The Survivors* (1964); *Afghanistan* (1967); *Modern Iceland* (1969); *Three Tomorrows* (1980); ... *Flashpoint Afghanistan* (1986); *The Third Man: the life and times of William Murdoch* (1992); *Fathercare* (1997).

Valerie Grosvenor Myer (Newnham, 63-66), Co-Editor, forthcoming *Encyclopedia of British Literature*. 14 books (incl. 2 novels), mainly literary criticism and biography.

Teaching in China when Tianamen Square exploded; Visiting Fellow, University of Sierra Leone.

D. Malcom Green (Magdalene, 61-64), Recently retired as Headmaster of Eltham College, London (1990-2000).

Sister Mary Gundulf, OSB (Girton, 63-66), Member of Anglican Benedictine Community of Nuns; *The Play of Wisdom* (1980); *Pestle and Mortar* (1996).

John B Gunn (Emma, 56-59), Schoolteaching (1960-76), finally Head of English Dept, Ryders Comprehensive, Surrey; Training Consultant (1978-2000); self-employed, 1980-2000.

Barry Gunner (Fitzwilliam, 76-79), Technical author, writing user guides and online help for IBM's WebSphere product suite. "Since meeting my wife Katharine in 1990, my main focus has been family. We now have 4 children, 2 cars, a beach hut, no money, no time, little sleep and a lot to live for."

Christopher John Hall (Cat's, 76-79), Television drama producer; produced drama serials *Aristocrats*, *Other People's Children*, *The Lost World* for BBC1.

Martyn Nicholas Hallett (St Cat's, 75-79), Minister of an independent evangelical church in Bedford.

J. J. Halliwell (Emmanuel, 73-76), Managing Director, Microban (Europe) Ltd.

D. C. Hamley (Jesus, 56-59), Early retirement 1992 from being County English Adviser for Hertfordshire. Now freelance educational consultant and children's author.

Kelvin James Hard (Queens', 71-74), Partner at Price Waterhouse Coopers management consultants. *Managing the Change Process* (joint author) (1996).

Stephen Hart (Christ's, 68-71), Solicitor, working in-house for Marconi, as secretary to its pension trustees.

J. V. Haviland (King's, 50-53), Retired ex-head of English at preparatory schools.

A. R. Haynes (Trinity, 79-83), Commissioning Editor *Writing Successful Textbooks* (2001).

J. C. Hayward (Trinity, 70-78), Publisher; Meditation Teacher, *Eyes of the Spirit* (1997).

Leslie Helliwell (John's, 49-53), Formerly teacher (retired 1985), Head of Department, in secondary schools.

J. M. Herdman (Magdalene, 60-63), Writer of 12 books of fiction and non-fiction.

James P. S. Hewett (King's, 69-72): 'All achievement is an illusion'

D. A. Heycock (Pembroke, 62-65), Lecturer and Tutor in media and English. 26 years as BBC Arts TV producer before teaching at Birkbeck College.

Andrew Hill (Trinity, 84-87), New York bureau chief, *Financial Times* newspaper (see Volume 2, page 1).

A. P. Hilton (Churchill, 67-71), Artistic Director, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory

D. J. Hindley (Selwyn, 59-63), Retired schoolmaster.

J. W. Hodgson (Caius, 70-73), Translator, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, The Hague.

M. M. L. Hoffman (Newnham, 64-67), Full-time writer, journalist, and editor of "Armadillo" magazine. 80+ books for children.

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Alumna interview: *Hannah Jenkins*

Since the opening of its St Pancras complex in 1998, the British Library has seen many changes. The centralisation of its services, a new management structure, and the development of its digital collections are all testament to the Library's recognition of the need for it to move with the times, in order for it to continue to rank as a world class organisation in the 21st Century.

Sitting at the hub of the Library's operations is Hannah Jenkins. As Executive Assistant to Lynne Brindley, the Library's Chief Executive, she sees the challenges facing the British Library from the highest level. Hannah graduated from Girton in 1997 and after taking a year out to think about what she wanted to do, joined Nat West's Internal Consultancy team. Hannah subsequently joined Magex, a Nat West spin-off company that supported digital commerce through the provision of payment structures. There, she was exposed to a wide variety of issues surrounding

business management, working in market research and analysis plus strategy and business development, while getting to grips with the challenges faced by the digital publishing industry. In March 2002 Magex's failure to develop a wide client base led to a series of redundancies, and gave Hannah the opportunity to rethink the direction of her career. Voluntary market research for the Prince's Trust led to her decision to move from the financial services industry and she joined the staff of the British Library in September 2002.

As Executive Assistant to Lynne Brindley, Hannah continues to work on research and business strategy, but she does so to a very different end. The British Library's mission statement is to 'advance knowledge to enrich lives', which is a strikingly different goal from those of Hannah's previous employers. Working closely with the leadership team gives Hannah an insight into the Library's strategic planning and decision making. Whilst continuing to fulfil its core responsibilities for acquiring, preserving and providing access to the UK's National Published Archive, the rapid growth of digital media provides the Library with new challenges. Developing systems and strategies to ensure long-term access to digital collections is a priority for the Library. Recent consultation with key stakeholders and user groups has also enabled the Library to refocus its approach to service delivery. Taking its primary audiences as a starting point, the

Library is following a market-driven approach, mapping user needs and expectations in order to define and shape service and collection development. Whilst academic users still account for a significant proportion of the Library's user base, it is keen to emphasise the supporting role it provides to a wider range of users, including business and educational communities, the UK library and information network, and, importantly, the general public, who can visit the Library's permanent exhibitions and attend the vast variety of talks, educational sessions and concerts that form its Events Programme.

For Hannah, working for the British Library allows her to expand and develop her knowledge of business management and of public sector organisations, as well as enabling her to maintain links with the academic community she left in Cambridge. She says that the post-graduation world of temping and job-seeking increased her retrospective enjoyment of Cambridge, even endowing the memories of cold cycle rides to and from Girton with a rosy glow. The experience she has gained in this job will, she says, open up a wide range of opportunities for her future career and stand her in good stead for whatever comes next. 🐾

Daisy Hay (New Hall, 1999-2002), currently in York doing an MA in Romantic and Sentimental Literature 1770-1830 at the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies.

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D. W. Hopkins (Cat's, 66-70), Professor of English Literature, University of Bristol; recently (with Paul Hammond) (ed.) *The Poems of John Dryden*, vols 3-4; *Dryden Tercentenary Essays* (2000).

B. Hopkinson (King's, 75-78), Political Consultant; British Ambassador to Bosnia; Director of International Crisis Group for Bosnia, Kosovo and Montenegro. Also written 4 performed musicals.

S. J. Horne (Lucy Cav, 91-94), Manager, Essex Careers

C. R. Horsfall (Christ's, 84-87), Acting Director, Bow Childcare

S. P. Hosking (John's, 90-93), Diplomatic Service.

M. L. Howarth (Newnham, 37-40), Retired Head, Girls' Grammar School, Brighouse, W. Yorks. Achievement: Survival!

David E. Hunt (Christ's, 55-58), Retired as Registrar of Haileybury College, 1995. Now Project Manager for North India for 'GAP'.

P. H. Hutton (John's, 49-52), At present working on a biography of Robert Stephen Hawker, '*Hawker of Porwenstow*', *Cornish Poet, Priest, Mystic*, 1803-75.

Saul Hyman (Trinity, 77-81), Assistant National Director of the Arvon Foundation, which teaches creative writing in four residential centers.

M. J. Innes (Trinity, 59-62), Retired Headmaster of Horris Hill, 1978-96. "*A Quiver Full*", *Some Memoirs of a Prep School Head*.

Stephen James (Pembroke, 87-90) Lecturer in English, University of Bristol.

Claire Tomalin (Newnham, 48-51), Winner, Whitbread Prize, 2003 for *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self*. 🐾



Gillian Beer reflects on a career of commitment to the English Faculty

Professor Dame Gillian Beer retired in September 2002 after a period of almost 40 years' employment in Cambridge. During that time she witnessed major changes in the teaching of English, and in the whole approach to literary studies. She reflects on those changes, as experienced through her own career, for the benefit of readers of *9 West Road*.

Gillian Thomas's first post at the age of 24 was as a junior Lecturer in the English Department of Bedford College, then a women-only college of the University of London. She had just finished a two-year B.Litt. in English from Oxford where she had been a student at St Anne's, a women's college. She joined a first-class department headed by the formidable Kathleen Tillotson, a figure of great distinction in the field of literary studies with clear ideas on career-formation for junior colleagues. The training in teaching and research provided by Professor Tillotson (who held this title at a time when there were very few women professors) to all her younger colleagues was legendary. Gillian looks back with gratitude and admiration on the academic formation she received. Her next two years, in the English Department at Liverpool after marriage to John Beer (then teaching at Manchester University), were exhilarating for the constant conversations about literature and everything under the sun among her colleagues in the English department there.

Gillian Beer's first post in Cambridge, from 1965, was as a Research Fellow at Girton (then a women's college), and by 1966 she had been appointed as a University Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of English, one of a very tiny band of women in the Faculty. 'An unusual appointment' as she herself says,

'for that time'. Her title was 'Mrs Beer'. She did not have a PhD (an Oxford B. Litt. was then regarded as equal with the PhD for appointment to academic posts). The convention was to address all women academics as 'Mrs' or 'Miss', whether or not they held PhDs; the title of 'Dr' was reserved for male colleagues with PhDs and for those holding the DSc or the Litt.D. (Gillian was awarded the Litt.D., from Cambridge, in 1989).

She was expected to lecture and supervise on a very wide range of topics from Shakespeare to Pope and, Byron, and the novel from Samuel Richardson through to Virginia Woolf and Samuel Beckett. She was assigned topics for a good deal of her Faculty teaching. She was also expected to take on a large number of graduate students (10 at one point) working in several different fields. She recalls that while the workload was extremely heavy, she felt well supported at Girton, and stimulated by both the teaching and, particularly, by a succession of graduate students from different parts of the world. Indeed, she emphasises that teaching has been a pleasure and a constant renewal throughout her career.

The 1960s and 70s were an exciting time to be in Cambridge, as Gillian is quick to emphasise. She feels particularly fortunate to have been at Girton, a college known for its distinguished female graduates, but one which was among the first to admit both women and men, and to reach out to as wide a mix as possible of prospective students.

Debates concerning the admission of women were taking place at the same time as debates opened up in the Faculty concerning the shape and content of the English Tripos. Gillian was part of an unofficial group that gathered on a regular basis with the intention of bringing about gradual changes to a course that had begun to seem very traditional and perhaps staid. The movement for change gathered pace, and it was not long before the possibility of offering a dissertation, and more choice of papers were introduced, with the consequent effect of greater control from the Faculty. Directing studies became a more complex and demanding job, but the students thrived under this more varied stimulation.

At the same time, the study of English was changing and new areas had opened up: literary theory, post-structuralism, gender studies, narratology, post-colonial literatures. Gillian ran a seminar on narratology with the participation of graduate students such as Allon White and Steve Watts, which she describes as one of the most exciting experiences of her teaching career. Later she collaborated with Frank Kermode in a thought-provoking narrative seminar that drew together unusual texts and outstanding students. Gillian regards this as a formative moment in her teaching career. Jill Mann arrived at Girton to join Gillian and, a little later, Juliet Dusinberre. Lisa Jardine joined the Faculty. Together they set up a new Part II paper on literary representations of women. Their opening the subject up paved the way for graduate students to develop these new areas through an expansion of the range of thesis topics; eventually these new fields were represented through optional papers in Part II of the Tripos.

The approach to teaching and training of graduate students is, according to Gillian, one of the areas in which she has witnessed most change. In Oxford in the 1950s she received a little gentle direction when reading for her B.Litt. from Lord David Cecil: that was how it was done in those days. As a junior lecturer she experienced firm direction, kindly advice and a watchful eye from Kathleen Tillotson. For the most part, however, she found her own direction in research. She welcomes the enormous changes she has seen in graduate education (more seminars and discussion groups, research training programmes, advisory meetings), and is particularly glad that these have been introduced without loss of the essential graduate supervisor/student relationship.

Already in the 1970s Gillian Beer was involved in early discussions concerning the construction of a building for the Faculty, a building which would be appropriate for its work and would allow it to cope with the changing demands of the subject. As she retired, almost 40 years later, the construction of that building had just begun. 🍷

Claire Dauntton

Cambridge has nourished many great literary writers; in what will be the first of a series, Mary Jacobus writes about Wordsworth's Cambridge:

Wordsworth's Strong Book-Mindedness

Newly arrived in Cambridge, Wordsworth describes himself in *The Prelude* as a 'northern villager'. He was blown away by the spectacle of a busy late-18th century university town: 'I was the dreamer, they the dream'. Like any first-year undergraduate, he found himself overwhelmed by directions and advice and former school-friends. Tutors and tailors had to be visited, gowned doctors and streetlamps (streetlamps!) jostled flocks of churches and — although he doesn't say so — prostitutes. The northern village boy was soon powdering his hair and wearing a lordly dressing-gown in his low-budget rooms above the college kitchens at St. John's.

Coming from a Lake District school

distinguished by the number of top Cambridge mathematicians it produced, Wordsworth was supposed to become a Senior Wrangler, win a college Fellowship, and go into the Church. Instead, he became an academic drop-out (at least where maths was concerned), a disappointment to his relations, and a French Revolutionary sympathizer who survived on handouts in order to write poetry. As a student, he didn't like the exam system, although he studied for and sat a surprising number. He didn't want to read the books he was supposed to be reading. He thought melancholy thoughts and had a 'feeling that [he] was not for that hour/Nor for that place'. He went for solitary walks and introspected, powerfully. He got drunk in Milton's rooms ('O temperate bard!') and inveighed against compulsory chapel.

The new vernacular literary canon that emerged during the 18th century had not yet displaced a syllabus centred on the classics, philosophy, and maths. But the literary landscape of Cambridge offered a seductive recreation-ground: 'Beside the pleasant mills of Trompington/I laughed with Chaucer'. Spencer — 'Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven/With the moon's beauty' — and Milton become Wordsworth's imaginary companions, Milton seen 'familiarily, and in his scholar's dress', bounding ahead of him: his familiar. Wordsworth (living beyond his means) fantasized about an earlier Cambridge, a medieval 'seat of Arts, renowned throughout the world' — World Class, but impoverished. Back then, 'The nurslings of the Muses' had

devoured their books abstemiously, while poor scholars lugged their folios around with them, begging for pennies.

The Cambridge book of *The Prelude* is part-satire on a late 18th century university, part astute analysis of the student malaise that Wordsworth defines as poetic latency. He was not just loitering, indolent, and directionless, but sitting it out: 'Imagination slept,/And yet not utterly'. In this suspended state, 'Hushed ... was the great under-soul'; he calls it 'this deep vacation', hinting at a necessary emptiness as well as play. He wasted time, went underground, read. Wordsworth the educational critic imagines a different university where he could have applied himself 'to science and to arts/ And written lore' — the Humanities — as devotedly as he had studied nature. In this ideal Republic of Letters, what he calls 'strong book-mindedness' would replace outmoded forms of study, competitive exams, and academic politicking.

But Wordsworth isn't so much offering a blueprint for educational reform as writing in praise of literary truancy — 'The rambling studies of a truant youth'. He confesses that it was laziness as much as fear of his relatives' disapproval that stopped him pursuing a course of independent study (although he did study modern languages). He disliked regulations, even his own. Instead, 'many books/Were read in process of this time — devoured,/Tasted or skimmed, or studiously perused — Yet with no settled plan.' He read Rabelais and Richardson. But who knows, he speculates, 'what thus may have been gained'? — 'what research/Unbiassed, unbewildered, and unawed?' Hardly the research culture inculcated by the modern Research Assessment Exercise.

As this goes to press, more than two hundred students of English (two thirds



Henry Edridge, 'William Wordsworth' (1806) (reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere)

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Wil Sanders (1936-2002)

The Faculty was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Wilbur Sanders in a fall, while walking in the high French Pyrenees, in September, 2002. Born and brought up in New Zealand, Wil, who had graduated from Melbourne University, and then read for his Ph.D. at Bristol under the supervision of L. C. Knights, was appointed to a lectureship in the Cambridge English Faculty and a Fellowship of Selwyn College in 1968, and remained here until his retirement in 2001.

Comments such as ‘meeting Wil transformed the way I thought, and in all these years I’ve never stopped learning from him’, or, ‘one of the few people I always have in my head as a point of

reference, even after twenty years’ recurred in the shocked responses of former students to the news of his death. The rigour and integrity of his engagement with literature put both the literary work and the student or colleague, with whom the work was being discussed, under pressure, so that a lecture, a supervision, or just a conversation became a challenge to think and to experience more intensely. An element of the intensity was Wil’s remarkable capacity to hold a silence.

The ferociously uncompromising nature of his intelligence was already apparent in his first book, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare*

(1968), developed from his Ph.D. So was the generous curiosity about the literary imagination, and the sense that to read the past is also to read ourselves, that would inform his magnificent study of *John Donne’s Poetry* (1971). Later, came *Shakespeare’s Magnanimity* (1978), with Howard Jacobson, a critical study of *The Winter’s Tale* (1987), and two novels, *Like the Big Wolves* (1985) and *Hector’s Folly* (1995). In all of these, the movement of his thought and voice can be clearly heard in the written prose.

His formidable critical integrity, his undimmed passion for the written word and, by no means least, his wonderfully liberal hospitality will be sorely missed. 🐼

Jean Chothia

Who’s Who

At the end of the last academic year Professor Dame Gillian Beer and Professor Ian Donaldson retired. At the end of the academic year 2003, the following also retired: Professor Howard Erskine-Hill, Mr Jeremy Prynne & Mr John Rathmell. Dr Paul Giles left to take up a Readership in Oxford and Dr Robert Douglas-Fairhurst to take up a Tutorial Fellowship at Magdalen College Oxford.

Dr Rod Mengham was appointed to a Personal Readership. Dr Adrian Poole

was awarded a two-year British Academy Research Readership.

Dr Raphael Lyne was appointed to a University Lectureship and Dr Amy Morris (née Robinson) was appointed to an Assistant Lectureship.

A number of appointments to College Teaching Officer posts were made:

Dr Batsaki at St John’s; Dr Brown at Lucy Cavendish; Dr Lynch at Trinity; Mr Macfarlane at Emmanuel; Dr Rankin at Girton; Ms Russell at Emmanuel.

Dr Lees-Jeffries was appointed as the

second Research Associate on the Ben Jonson project (see Volume 1, page 1), and Ms Pollard was appointed as the Faculty’s first full-time Computing Officer. The poet John Stammers was appointed as Judith E. Wilson Fellow for the year.

As we go to press the Faculty has accepted, with reluctance, the resignations of Dr Oliver Padel, who wishes to devote himself to completion of a major research project, & of Professor James Simpson (current editor of *9 West Road*) to take up a Chair in Harvard. 🐼

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of them women) have just sat their Tripos exams. Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed? Well, no, probably not. But the syllabus they study is more elastic, more varied, and more constantly under review than the regulation-shy Wordsworth could ever have dreamed. Although it would be a stretch to say that Wordsworth invented

the English Tripos, his alternative syllabus puts him among the early advocates for syllabus reform (not to mention interdisciplinarity). Today’s students can substitute dissertations or portfolios for at least some of those ‘Examinations, when the man was weighed/As in the balance’. They can study commonwealth literature and

visual culture alongside Shakespeare-in-performance. A contemporary Wordsworth can even submit her long autobiographical poem for Tripos as an Original Composition — but in not more than 5,000 words! 🐼

Mary Jacobus (Grace 2 Professor of English)

Legenda

Leonie Rushforth (New Hall, 1975) (Head Of English, Hampstead Girls' High; Poet)

I've read Raymond Carver's stories for some years now. I began with his last collection *Elephant*, and just recently I've been reading the earlier stories. Early or late, they depict a suburban America struggling to find its moral bearings. This is not the Gothic *Blue Velvet* version of suburbia but something altogether less successful at keeping the yard free of leaves and confining disruptive desire to teenage curiosity. The stories operate in the region of poetry, working through images and implications, and are full of small scale wreckage, the male narrators only ever half aware of what they feel. These men exist in a world of temporary everything — marriages come undone, children dissolve into other worlds. People live in an alcoholic cloud of unknowing. His stories come closer than anything I've read to an account of what it is to live with inarticulacy, moral and actual — an inchoate humanity that wants to be better than it is, and in occasional epiphanic moments, glimpses through dark glasses how it might be to say or do something decent, reparative, simply good. They record existences that make up the huge silenced population of a lost middle America, knowing there must be better ways to live (and this is why the stories are both disruptive and strangely hopeful), while they drown in liquor and catalogues behind closed curtains.

Tessa Hadley (Clare, 1975) (Lecturer in English at Bath Spa University College; novelist ('Accidents in the Home', 2002))

I read my first novel by Penelope Fitzgerald in the year she died, 2000. *The Blue Flower* was about the German poet Novalis, and for the first twenty pages or so I was baffled. There was life abounding — wonderful detail, suggestive encounters — but no obvious footholds for judgement, to make the reader safe. This was a novelist who wrote like nobody else. Since then I have greedily read all the Fitzgerald I can find. She belongs (it's in her family) to a

certain honourable tradition of well-educated Englishness that *knows things*. But her writing never feels constrained by class or stuffy with English inhibition. The mystery of actual experience — a bear catching fire at a Russian tea party, a visit to Gramsci in prison, clerical work at a Glazing Supplies in Fulham — springs up fresh and surprising on every page.

Nicola Beauman (Newnham, 1966) (Managing Director of Persephone Books)

Recently I began to re-read Chekhov's short stories: we are considering a Persephone Books selection of a dozen of them to mark the centenary of his death in 2004. Until I started on the thirteen volumes, so magnificently translated by Constance Garnett (Newnham, 1879), I had assumed they were part of my landscape; but although I still have my 1964 Penguin (dreadfully called *Lady with Lapdog* rather than Garnett's euphonious *The Lady with the Dog*) I had hardly ever returned to them. Now, having published short stories by neglected writers such as Mollie Panter-Downes, Elizabeth Berridge and Frances Towers, as well as by Katherine Mansfield, I am going back to the master, whose restraint and subtlety were the model for them all.

Pippa Harris (Robinson, 1986) (Former Head of Drama Commissioning, BBC TV; left in March 2003 to set up 'Scamp Film and Theatre' with Sam Mendes.)

One of the great pleasures of my job at the BBC was the opportunity to read countless novels, in an attempt to decide which should be dramatised for television. Unsurprisingly, we returned time and again to the complex narratives and rich characterisation of Dickens, Eliot, Gaskell and Trollope. Originally published in installments, their books naturally lend themselves to TV serialisation. My final recommendation before leaving was Mrs Gaskell's *North and South*. The book explores and contrasts the attitudes and values of industrial northern England, with the rural south. Gaskell also interweaves issues of gender, politics and class, but never allows them to subsume



Lady Dorothy Howard at Naworth 1902; reproduced by kind permission of the Mistress and Fellows of Girton College

the central portrait of her outspoken, compassionate heroine, Margaret Hale. Margaret's emotional journey, and in particular her turbulent romance with John Thornton, make compulsive reading, and I hope, one day, viewing!

One of the few works of non-fiction which I've read recently is *Among the Bohemians: Experiments in Living 1900-1939*, by Virginia Nicholson. A portrait of the artists, novelists and poets of the early 20th century, it takes a fascinating look not at their works but at their daily lives. From hairstyles and underwear to cookery and interior design, these Bohemians pioneered new ways of living we now take for granted. I love the idea that cooking with garlic, or refusing to wear eight separate undergarments, could be considered avant-garde and daring!

Martin Bell (King's, 1959) (Former MP and television newsman) (who preferred to offer a brief reminiscence of very early Cambridge years)

I studied under the benign aegis of the Faculty while at King's from 1959 to 1962. I have the most vivid recollections of its chief iconoclast, F. R. Leavis. This was not an intellectual association — although my father, the novelist Adrian Bell, did write for his journal *Scrutiny*; it was that my mother exchanged baby clothes with the equally formidable Queenie Leavis. Occasionally I would be summoned to tea with them, and so became aware of the blood feuds that rent the Faculty at the time. It was my first experience of a battlefield. I am sure that things are much quieter today. I was never taught by Leavis, but I was by George Steiner of Churchill College. He taught me humility: in the presence of such a polymath, there was nothing to be but humble.