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Slippery Words 1760-1830

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Celebrating Wallace Stevens

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CCUE NEWS

COUNCIL for
COLLEGE
and UNIVERSITY
ENGLISH

Teaching Postcolonial Literature & Anglo America

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Editorial

This issue of *CCUE News* contains articles both comparative and philosophical, asking fundamental questions about the nature of the University, of the history and future of University English, and of its constituent parts.

Elleke Boehmer and John McLeod's brilliant article on the teaching of postcolonial literature not only provides an incisive checklist of alternative approaches to the postcolonial, but also dares to ask questions about the effect of separate postcolonial literature modules. Do they have the effect of inoculating the twentieth-century literature syllabus against the deeper questioning that might occur when such texts are integrated into a wider frame? I hope this exemplary piece will be the first of a series of articles on the pedagogical and conceptual challenges offered by different aspects of the English curriculum, from creative writing to the relationship between the popular and the canonical. In the first of another series, Ian McKillop writes on the example of William Empson: his place in the institutional history of English, his tone, his striking ability to trace the layers of discomfort and incomprehension in the act of reading and the route to understanding.

The four pieces on Anglo-American English teaching, by academics who have had experience of both UK and US Universities, is both informative, atmospheric and questioning. They cover the nature of the institutions, the variance in public perceptions, the form of the

syllabus and the attitude of the students, the two kinds of audit culture and the practical business of working within these systems. The balance of the comparisons (and preferences) is far from a foregone conclusion—and the emphases are certainly different from what they might have been twenty years ago. Regenia Gagnier, who is represented in the 'Anglo-America' section, goes on to take a philosophical look at notions of excellence, audit, appraisal and research assessment in her passionate critique of "Teaching and Research" in the UK, and of the pursuit of targets that can never be reached.

Susan Manning's lovely tribute to Kate Fullbrook closes this issue. Kate was important to the emergence of CCUE and invaluable in innumerable ways to the professional life of English Studies in the UK. Many people in British universities had reason to be grateful for her kindness and support, and I can certainly count myself among them.

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Chair's Annual Report 2003



Rick Rylance University of Exeter

The CCUE Executive met on four occasions this year and, as ever, conducted an energetic schedule. As predicted, it has been a year of major policy initiatives and CCUE has responded comprehensively on behalf of the subject. Several of these developments are not as yet concluded, and colleagues will not be wholly surprised, nor wholly cheered, to learn that several new consultations have arrived at our desks. There will be the second round consultation on the future of the RAE following Sir Gareth Roberts' interim recommendations; there will be an important Treasury-led inquiry into the future of the dual support mechanism; and the formal consultation on the findings of the Funding Council's 'Report on Improving Standards in Postgraduate Research' (the so-called 'Lewinski report') is also due. In addition, the future career of the White Paper on 'The Future of Higher Education' will be watched with interest and concern.

CCUE made full written responses to the Joint Funding Bodies' Review of Research Assessment and, more recently, to the White Paper. (Both are available on the website.) However, the process of involvement in the creation and maintenance of policy is not confined to these. Members of the Executive have attended several AHRB sessions and contributed to the Board's wish to discover opinion in areas such as the future of publishing in the humanities, the development of Masters-level programmes, issues in Doctoral research and the contribution of the Arts and Humanities to society. Two members of the Executive, one from language and one from literature, also attended a small advisory seminar organised by the AHRB on research in languages and literatures.

The Executive has maintained the Council's involvement with other bodies active in English in education. It contributed to QCA's meditations on the development of statutory assessment in English at Key Stages 1-3 and to its consideration of comparability issues between 'A' level English and the International Baccalaureate. The Common English Forum (an informal group established by CCUE, the English Association and the National Association of Teachers of English [NATE]) has continued to discuss issues of shared interest across the sectors, including subject content at GCSE and 'A' Level, during several meetings. Recently, it has advised the Specialist Schools Trust, the quasi-autonomous body responsible for developing specialist schools in various subjects. From 2004 specialist schools and colleges will for the first time include English and other humanities subjects.

Active links have been maintained with other subject associations in the humanities. The History in the Universities Defence Group (HUDG) organised a symposium of humanities associations to discuss common interests, and CCUE contributed a postgraduate representative to the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) board. (The MHRA are keen to expand their involvement in postgraduate education in the Humanities.) CCUE also continued involvements of

various kinds with the English Association, the British Academy, the Council for University Deans in Arts and Humanities (CUDAH), and the Standing Conference for Arts and Social Sciences (SCASS) whose 'One Voice' initiative, to which CCUE contributed, aims to represent the consolidated views of these subject groups to government, initially in relation to the future of the RAE. We also remain thoroughly involved with the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) whose President, Adolphe Haberer, we again welcomed with pleasure to the AGM. CCUE has a seat on the ESSE board, and their next meeting will be hosted at St Anne's. CCUE is involved with the development of the next ESSE conference in Zaragoza in 2004, among other initiatives.

CCUE remains comprehensively engaged with the work of the English Subject Centre through active membership of the Advisory Board. There will be a separate report on the Centre's work at the AGM, but the Council has contributed substantially to the new curriculum survey administered by the Centre, to its independent External Evaluation (undertaken this year by Professor Marion Shaw), and to the appointment of Professor Phillip Martin's successor as Director. We welcome Professor Ben Knights to the post, and thank Phillip heartily for his outstanding work in launching the Centre so successfully. Thanks are also due to all members of the Centre's staff, especially its manager Jane Gawthrop. The last important item to mention here is the International Conference organised by the Centre in partnership with CCUE and the Institute for English Studies, which took place in July.

CCUE's finances are once more sound and at a level comparable with those in the past

There are a number of internal matters to report. Thanks to the labours of Linden Peach as Treasurer, and to individual departments who have paid subscriptions promptly, CCUE's finances are once more sound and at a level comparable with those in the past

The Executive has been eager to secure greater representation of views from across the whole of the UK and has used its powers of co-option to secure delegates from Northern Ireland and Wales as well as Scotland. 'Issues from across the UK' is a standing item on the Executive Meeting agenda.

The Executive also co-opted an additional English Language specialist to increase the presence of that part of the discipline. Finally,

we have also begun to consider changes in the structure of English Departments, including their increasing inclusion in federal departments or schools of humanities, and the consequences of this for subject distinction. This will be my last annual report. After three years as Chair and three before that as Secretary, it is time to let someone else take their turn. I leave with regret, and only a little relief to be taking a holiday from the seemingly endless process of consultative advocacy that is now the entrenched form of policy development for initiatives both wise and unwise. This year I have to say thank-you to many: to an assiduous and resourceful Executive as a whole, and to several individuals in particular: to Mike Rossington, who has been an outstanding Secretary for two years and who also steps down this time;

to Vincent Gillespie, a wise and informed Vice Chair and roving ambassador for CCUE to ESSE; to Linden Peach, a prudent, scrupulous Treasurer; to Elisabeth Jay for her work as Assistant Secretary and her patience with the messy organisational ways of QCA; to Chris Ringrose for his good-humoured, tactful and imaginative editorship of *CCUE News*; and to Judy Simons for so dynamically chairing the Advisory Board of the Subject Centre. Finally, particular thanks are due Carol Thomas at APU, an expert administrator for CCUE over many years. However, I also want to say many thanks to you, the membership of CCUE, for your support for the organisation and your commitment to the subject. After all, that is the best and most necessary reason for the Council to exist in what are bound to be testing and possibly divisive times.

The Challenges of Teaching Postcolonial Literature

Elleke Boehmer The Nottingham Trent University
and John McLeod University of Leeds



An informal survey of English department websites across the UK suggests that texts like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* or Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, both generally described as postcolonial, are taught as part of a wide range of undergraduate curricula in English. Postcolonial literature-it would seem-has finally 'arrived' or been canonized in most English departments in the form of the inclusion of these books. Yet it is worth taking a second look at this apparently positive state of affairs and question more carefully, as this article will do, whether this is in fact the case. What has been gained by the inclusion of these texts? And, even more to the point, how are they taught? Is *Things Fall Apart*, say, discussed in the classroom in ways that maintain the challenges to our teaching approaches and political and cultural assumptions that such a text represents, or in ways that merely incorporate and thus co-opt it into existing structures?

During a joint lecture given at the 2-3 May 2003 CCUE conference we drew on our shared and divergent experiences of teaching across a range of postcolonial literatures at the Universities of Leeds, Nottingham Trent, and elsewhere, in order to raise questions such as these. The issues and questions which we outlined, detailed below, appeared to meet with broad assent and interest and it is on that basis that we recap them here. In particular colleagues right across the spectrum of English literary expertise, from medievalists to modernists, seemed to share our concerns about students lacking cultural and historical contexts for their reading. There was also

general agreement with the illustrative analogy drawn between the choices and dilemmas which we outlined, and debates around feminist challenges to the canon in the 1970s. Then as now the key questions concern how we modify or dismantle canons to recognize and introduce 'new' writing, whether women's or postcolonial literatures.

Essentially these questions around the pedagogy of the postcolonial in literary studies break down into two, which are interrelated.

- **Exactly what are we teaching when we teach postcolonial literature? Or, what is the postcolonial?**
- **And, what problems do we face when teaching postcolonial literature? This then relates to a further question concerning the status of postcolonial texts and modules in English Departments.**

As regards the first question, Bart Moore-Gilbert and Robert Fraser amongst many others have pointed out that the 'postcolonial' is one of the recent academic disciplines that has grown to prominence in the full glare of academic attention. Literally thousands of pages of academic journals and books have already been taken up solving the riddle of the postcolonial hyphen: does it carry a chronological signification (as in, 'after empire')? Does it therefore label all so designated writings as derivative, imitative of Europe? Is the postcolonial therefore understood as meaning something 'out there', overseas, something from which Britain, even if its history is deeply informed by empire and its aftermath, is in

some way exempt? The CCUE programme, for example, interestingly understood the postcolonial to mean the 'non-British'.

These will rightly seem recondite worries, to say the least, to the non-initiate. Yet, in teaching postcolonial literature we cannot avoid providing an answer to the question what exactly *is* postcolonial literature, or, more accurately, what *are* postcolonial literatures? The answers we find will affect the literature we teach and the approaches we take in the classroom.

There are probably two basic models that we use in determining what-and how-we teach postcolonial writing and theory. The central issue underlying both approaches, which they answer in diametrically opposed ways, is whether we maintain a centre-periphery model in relation to the teaching of postcolonial literatures. The question that of course follows from this is, if we abandon this model, what do we put in its place?

Firstly, when added on to a pre-existing canon or curriculum, as they inevitably are, postcolonial literatures can be taught as trimmings to the basic fare of meat and potatoes that is the twentieth-century British canon, which runs from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf, or Chaucer to, say, Angela Carter. In other words, postcolonial texts can

“Postcolonial literatures can be taught as trimmings to the basic fare of meat and potatoes that is the twentieth-century British canon”

be taught in an add-on and even cosmetic way, as giving a superficial cultural or ethnic diversity in a syllabus. For example, Rushdie or Ondaatje are added to a course in the twentieth-century novel, as providing the view from without, the international perspective, as signalling, to quote Rushdie, a more chutnified approach to literature. This first approach therefore privileges writers who are seen to speak for a particular regional or cultural constituency. In this approach, however, Europe undoubtedly remains the source of cultural value, the centre through which the texts are mediated, or the standard against which various degrees of chutnification are measured.

The second approach is where the literatures are taught constellated-that is to say, the literatures are made to constitute one or more constellations of writing in relation to the constellations constituted by other areas of writing in English, for example, American writing, the Victorian novel, and so on. Here postcolonial literatures in English are read according to a broadly comparative and contextualized 'world literature' model, which also means that they tend to be taught as options outside the main core syllabus.

This second approach breaks down into two further different models, which again depend broadly on how the postcolonial is defined.

- **An area studies or geographical model: here the Commonwealth tends to provide the underlying map for what is taught and / or the underlying premiss is one of 'nation and narration', where independent 'postcolonial' nations are seen to seek embodiment in literature.**
- **A theoretical model, which tends to favour migrant, diasporic, or transnational writing: the underlying premiss is one of resistance, or going against the imperial grain: 'the Empire writes back'.**

These are, of course, by no means mutually exclusive categories, and in our experience most pedagogical approaches tend to engage to different degrees with the strengths and weaknesses of each. In considering each pedagogical tendency, it is worth weighing up the possibilities and problems that are inevitably created.

For those approaches which tend towards the *first* 'regional' model, the range of primary texts is often determined in such a way as to convey the global reach of postcolonial writing. There are several advantages to doing so. In gathering together the work of, say, Chinua Achebe, Judith Wright, Derek Walcott, Daphne Marlatt and R. K. Narayan, students are invited to engage with the history and (Anglophone) culture of Nigeria, Australia, St Lucia, Canada and India. The emphasis remains on literatures in English located in overseas locations, rather than metropolitan or migrant writing. In pursuing such a module, students can encounter comparatively different kinds of colonial and postcolonial endeavours in settler colonies, settled regions and former plantation societies. As has been proved in practice, the gathering of these different contexts under the umbrella of the postcolonial does not necessarily produce a homogenization of the term; rather, a nuanced, culturally sensitive and healthily critical attitude towards the postcolonial can often result.

The regional approach also demands that the student be introduced to the linguistic, cultural, and historical frameworks that will help mediate the texts. For instance, a course on the West African novel in English-on Achebe, Okri, B. Koko Laing, and Ama Ata Aidoo - would also have to provide a crash course on Yoruba spiritual belief, animism, and social structures in Ghana and Nigeria. Apart from the danger of possibly encouraging students to regard the literatures in English in terms of ghettos of knowledge, this approach can also however run the risk of both confusing students and overloading them, and so may silently reinforce those western values they are most familiar with. Unless they are highly committed to learning cultural difference, they may well come round to thinking that the cultural realities described in, in this case West African fiction, are too unfamiliar, too other, to be bothered with. They may even feel intimidated and so put off by the cultural difference which such texts introduce to them. They don't want to be inside that ghetto; they want to be part of the Anglophone cosmopolis.

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Other problems to do with the regional approach follow from this. A key difficulty concerns (to borrow Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous term) the legitimization of the writer as 'native informant', whose work is consulted in order that (primarily) First World readers can gain uncomplicated access to culturally different peoples. In reading Patricia Grace's *Potiki* in order to access Maori culture and recent history in New Zealand / Aotearoa, the aesthetic specifics of the text and angle of authorial intervention may become sidelined, allowing these to disappear into its contexts or survive as a transparent contextual window. Arguably, this approach also tends to favour texts that tackle 'big issues' and seem to prioritize the public debates that concern postcolonial criticism, most notably the reading of texts as national allegories or critical judgements on 'native' politics and government in once-colonized countries. This might be appropriate for some texts—such as the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*—but less so for others. Under this rubric, it is difficult to value a novel such as J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* as anything other than an allegory for South Africa under apartheid, even though the specifics of the text may make other kinds of reading available. Finally, regional approaches often tend to take as their map the cartography of the Commonwealth and bypass other kinds of writing and criticism which in recent years have impacted upon our understanding of the postcolonial in significant ways. One might think, for example, of black American or Native American literatures, Cuban American writing, Irish literature, South American *testimonio* and First Nations writing.

In the second predominant tendency, which we might call the 'theoretical' model, postcolonial texts are conceived of as fundamentally political objects, the purpose of which is to 'write back to the centre', challenging the forms and functions of 'colonial discourse' deemed still to be resonating in the wake of Empire. This approach tends to work with the so-called 'Holy Trinity' of postcolonial theorists whose influence reached its zenith in the 1990s: Edward W. Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha. Pedagogical approaches to texts will often use a conceptual apparatus that includes Said's ideas of Orientalism; Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry and the transformative 'third space' of the cosmopolitan postcolonial (as opposed to national paradigms); and Spivak's ideas about subaltern agency, epistemic violence and postcolonialism's deconstructive energies.

A number of advantages are created within the theoretical tendency. First, such an approach immediately provides a sense of coherence to modules in postcolonial literatures which may draw their texts from divergent regions. Under this model, postcolonial writings may emerge from different places, but they are essentially taking the same journey and collectively desirous of an identical aim: to challenge the agency and efficacy of 'colonial discourse'. Perhaps due to the metropolitan bent of much postcolonial theorizing, 'migrant texts' are often valued over and above nation-centred writing, with the work by figures such as Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje and Caryl Phillips enthusiastically embraced as challenging 'colonialist' ideas of nationalism, rooted belonging and cultural separatism. Most usefully perhaps, issues of literary form are of central interest in this approach. Rather than treat texts as transparent windows on knowable contexts, theoretical inflections of the postcolonial tend to focus upon and prize the formal innovativeness of postcolonial writing as evidence of cultural difference, artistic merit and (sometimes) political intent.

Yet, as with the regional tendency, the theoretical conception of the postcolonial also runs into several problems. In focusing attention upon the disruption of colonial discourse, this approach traffics in big

abstractions (the west, 'colonial discourse') while perhaps excusing students from thinking too hard about historical and cultural specifics. As a pedagogical practice located in the western academy, it may also contribute to and collude with the continuing cultural and economic dominance of the west.

In addition, such versions of the postcolonial tend to privilege texts which appear subversive according to the dictates of theory. These are often texts that seem to play postmodernist tricks, such as the magical realist writing of Rushdie or Ben Okri, or the experimentalism of Daphne Marlatt or bp nichol. Leaving aside the extent to which such texts may be indebted to culturally specific influences invisible to a theoretical optic, there is a danger that those which seem more conventional to Anglocentric eyes—work by, say, V. S. Naipaul or Rohinton Mistry—are neglected. Even worse, they may be condemned for colluding with the aesthetic practices associated with 'colonial discourse'. Finally, theoretically inflected versions of the postcolonial may ignore texts from postcolonial countries which are not primarily concerned with 'writing back' against all things colonial, but might have other (regional, local) pressing concerns.

By surveying these different tendencies in the teaching of postcolonial literatures we have already begun to answer our second question regarding the challenges we face in the classroom. Certainly, one of the main challenges must be that the writings are asked to do considerable political and cultural work on curricula. This is a problem which effectively subtends all the models underlined above, even where the native informant problem was not overtly flagged. The texts are seen to provide what Gayatri Spivak in another context, speaking of her own representativeness as a third world intellectual, has called essentialised identitarianism. They are asked to stand in for whole cultures which since colonialism have taken the English language as a medium of national self-expression. Rushdie thus signifies India; Nadine Gordimer white South Africa; Derek Walcott the Caribbean. The questions which are implicitly asked go something like: can we make the canon more representative simply by adding Rushdie or Arundhati Roy or Tsitsi Dangarembga to it? Are we reflecting more of Britain's multiculturalism when we do so? Are we appealing to a wider constituency of students?

“Teachers and students of postcolonial literature are faced with the necessity of engaging with the myriad histories and cultures of vast expanses of the globe”

The issue of essentialised identitarianism leads us back to the relationship between text and context (the latter of which may be largely unknown to students). As teachers of postcolonial literature we are faced with a challenge which, in truth, affects all teachers of literature regardless of period or region; that is, we feel a responsibility to account for a text's relations to its contextual moment of production. But, whereas a module which focuses upon the Renaissance may well cover a relatively limited period of time and consider one particular nation or city, teachers and students of postcolonial literature are faced with the necessity of engaging with the myriad histories and cultures of vast

expanses of the globe. These may lead one from Anchorage to Auckland, or from the 1890s to the 1980s, on a weekly basis. There is scant opportunity for students to develop over a period of time a sense of contextual specificity for a particular location. Well-intentioned teachers are in danger of producing soundbite or voxpop versions of history full of compressed chronologies, absurd totalizations and unhelpful generalisations. In spinning the globe so frequently, teachers can often feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of bearing proper witness to context, while the disorienting effect on students does not always make their learning experience a happy one. Some students often worry about engaging with literature from an allegedly 'remote' culture, yet are (oddly) happy to talk about Chaucer's England despite the fact that this place is perhaps much more historically, linguistically and culturally remote than, say, 1970s Jamaica. It is not always easy to equip students with the same kind of confidence they may display when tackling John Milton or Henry Fielding.

However, the challenge which contextual issues create for teachers and students alike is at the heart of postcolonial studies and should not be sidestepped. It may be helpful here briefly to draw from our own work on this exact problem. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Elleke Boehmer) points out that, in order to do justice to a text's grounding in the now, or the past, it may be necessary 'to find out about local politics, for example, to read up on ritual practices, or to learn to decipher unfamiliar linguistic codes'. And *Beginning Postcolonialism* (John McLeod) argues that 'disorientation is also very much a productive and valuable sensation, and it is fair to say that many of the reading and writing practices often considered "postcolonial" achieve much of their effectiveness from derailing accustomed trains of thought'. The teaching of postcolonial studies is caught in between a need to provide coherence for students while maintaining the crucial sense of the literatures' disorienting propensity. For all their differences, Anglophone postcolonial texts share (versions of) a common language and, in their different ways, touch upon recurring issues: history, place, identity, aesthetic innovation, resistance. A comparative approach to texts seems inevitable and productive, in which students are asked to compare, for example, Achebe's and Rushdie's use of language, or Stow's perception of history with Walcott's.

Having raised a phalanx of rather downbeat questions, we will attempt to offer some suggestions as to how we might teach work from so-called non-British cultures by way of a conclusion. How do we teach such work, without losing or obscuring the profound disruptive difference which such writing inevitably gives expression to? The aim here is to maintain the contestatory or disruptive energy which impels postcolonial texts - the complex antiphonics of *Things Fall Apart* or Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* when read in relation to Conrad or Keats.

Here we could bear in mind an appropriately indirect aphorism from Homi Bhabha. Commenting on the western tendency to spatialize resistance in terms of geopolitical polarities—centre v. periphery; the quarrel of the modern with tradition—he observes that this has the effect of '[obscuring] the anxiety of the irresolvable'. Is it possible to develop a postcolonial pedagogy that abandons centre-periphery or even centre-centre models (the constellated approach) in favour of transmitting in some way Bhabha's irresolvable, indeterminate borderline space-times to which so many postcolonial texts, migrant and nationally rooted, testify?

The postcolonial, it is helpful to remember, essentially denotes a reorientation of knowledge to perspectives developed outside the west, or, in basic terms, looking at the world upside down, and in mirror image. Postcolonial writings are characterized by their remarkable facility of using the dominant discourse against itself, by mimicking, cross-cutting, interrupting, distorting, and so transforming it. We feel that it remains imperative to preserve this disruptive energy of the postcolonial, or, in other words, to give attention to the difficulty of the postcolonial text—its intentioned, as well as unintentional, political and cultural otherness. It is important to preserve the partial untranslatability of the text to western understanding, even while encouraging students in the west to read such texts, as this opacity performs important resistance work. Such texts, although written in English, by way of their strangeness resist western pedagogical assumptions regarding infinite explicability.

But these are high-flown ideals. Do they have any practical application? Turning back to the question of how to add diversity to our courses, or how to make the canon more representative, it seems that we may be asking the wrong questions as regards our procedures. In other words, we may be targeting the content of our curricula, where we should first be looking at our methods. Where we are concerned not to assimilate cultural difference to sameness, what we may have to do is dismantle in the classroom the kinds of expectations we as western readers bring to Postcolonial texts: the demand for particular kinds of narrative unity, for example, or for a scepticism as regards myth, a particular harmonious flow to the language, or, as we have already said, for a general explicability.

One way of doing this may be by setting up what one might call intercalated modules. These could directly juxtapose metropolitan and 'Postcolonial' texts which are related thematically or topically to one another: thus teaching *Robinson Crusoe* and its many postcolonial intertexts, for example; or looking at boundary transgressions in a range of postcolonial, including British postcolonial, texts. These modules may be either core courses or options, but the point is that such courses cut across or shortcircuit centre-periphery models, and find ways of talking about Bhabha's anxiety of the irresolvable by staging borderline situations across the length of the course. Alternatively again, a course might focus on the reader reception of postcolonial texts, and foreground those books which have created particular kinds of cultural scandal and sensation, or which have been the objects of critique in their home cultures, such as those by Tutuola, Dangarembga, and Arundhati Roy.

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If postcolonial literature modules remain as singular constellated presences on English literature degree programmes, the impact of which never reaches outside the parameters of the module itself, some of us who invest in and teach the postcolonial may wonder if the effort is really worth it. It seems to us that although the issues considered above stem from important impulses to increase diversity on curricula, they perhaps represent a limited way to proceed when teaching postcolonial literatures and in setting up postcolonial curricula. Through no fault of their own, separate postcolonial literature modules may perversely safeguard the English curricula in general against the important political and cultural work that might result when postcolonial texts are taught as integral to courses on the literatures in English. In sum, such alternative work would comprise an intensive critical analysis and questioning of the frameworks

through which such courses are taught in the first place. Those of us responsible for constructing the form and content of degree programmes ultimately might ask ourselves exactly why we teach postcolonial literature: as an exotic and popular addition to a menu dominated by more readily digestible and available fare? or as an essential ingredient without which the study of English remains provincial, inward-looking and safely removed from the postcolonial's disruptive and transformative agency?

Anglo-America I Oxford and Rutgers

Kate Flint Rutgers University

When people ask me what I miss most about Oxford, I tell them - with some honesty - the architecture. Rutgers University's bustling urban campus in New Brunswick is a poor exchange for Radcliffe Square on a misty November evening, or the curve of the High early on a summer's morning. Our buildings are, at best, solid and functional on the outside, set around a grassy patch that soon becomes sparse and muddy in winter. Instead of college dining halls, there are the infamous Trucks - a corral of kebab vans. Inside our walls, classrooms and corridors suffer from shameful under-funding by our state legislature. Nor is the fabric the only thing that strains under the effects of a shocking statistic: that one of the richest states in the United States limps in 41st in the league table when it comes to financing its universities and colleges.

For Rutgers is no Ivy League institution, but the flagship university of the State of New Jersey. Some 98% of my own students come from the state; many commute from home (of our 32,000 students, only 13,000 or so live on campus); many hold down a job, and various kinds of family responsibilities, at the same time that they study. With this in mind, reading has to be assigned carefully: most students are willing enough, but have few spare hours to juggle. In turn, this puts a big onus on the Professor to make classroom time both profitable and enjoyable: we meet for 80 minutes twice a week, and class sizes are typically between fifty and seventy. In terms of ability, the students range from some of the cleverest I've ever taught, to those with serious writing problems - although our excellent, and rigorous, first year writing program, compulsory for all Rutgers students, tends to ensure that most have a very good grounding in essay planning and in composing an argument. We have a number of students who are from the first generation in their family to go to university, and the kind of ethnic mix that we only dreamed about in Oxford - which makes, on occasion, for some great debate about perspectives in reading. And our best discussions are energetic, spontaneous,

inventive. In the Fall semester of 2001, I was teaching - opportunely, if grimly - an undergraduate seminar on "Obsession". Having grasped the principle that criticism has readily adopted *Moby Dick* for all kinds of ideological ends, students spontaneously started a debate about Bush and Osama Bin Laden - who was Ahab, who the whale?

After teaching for twenty years in England, I've been accustomed, as in this account, to privileging my undergraduates when it comes to thinking about my university. However, in the US, this often seems to be an anomaly. Here, for those of us at universities that are designated as 'Research I', one's idea of commitment to the profession as a whole, and to one's research, often seems to over-ride the importance of undergraduate teaching. This is perhaps particularly true of public universities, where there is less up-front sense of responsibility to students and parents for recompensing them for the size of tuition fees. Research is what truly counts when it comes to getting tenure and promotion (and the hiring, tenuring, and promotion meetings are the most emotionally and academically charged of the entire year). Research profiles are among the factors that help attract top graduate students, together with location, and, a more sensitive issue, competitive scholarships and summer money. Our research is enabled, encouraged, helped in spirit, with generous funds for travel and books, and, above all, with time - and all of this without the pressure of the RAE or other acronyms breathing over our shoulders. Compared with the UK, our salaries are indecently good. In exchange, there's an understanding that we will not just continue to be productive on the page, but that we will serve academe at large - whether this means engaging in the tenure and promotions process by writing reports on the work of colleagues in other departments, sitting on national committees, giving advice to a number of grant awarding bodies, and - here I've found a big difference from my previous university - spending a good bit of time with graduate students not just in relation to their course work, their preparation for oral examinations (taken after intense

reading in their third year), and their PhDs, but assisting their own entry into the profession. Together, we work at polishing and refining their application letters and writing samples and proposed syllabi; giving them mock interviews, and holding their hands when they go - with their equivalent of mop or apple tree in hand - to the annual manic, crazy, maddening, and compelling academic hiring fair and multi-ring conference circus that is the MLA. Conferences count for a good deal in the US - in a large country, they are important not just in bringing us together, but provide regular opportunities to explore quite how porous the boundaries of our subject can be. Overall, both intellectual and institutional life here seem much more open and forward-looking. The cliché of America having a 'can-do' culture certainly holds true in our profession.

For 'profession' is, certainly, the right term. We are treated, regarded, and rewarded, as members of a profession, with a commensurate career structure, and it is a structure in which research and administration have their own separate respected paths. To be sure, there are plenty of committee meetings, but unlike the UK, they do not become a way of life, but actually serve to move things along in the department. And even if New Jersey should treat its institutes of higher education better, there are plenty in the general community who would agree. A couple of weeks ago, the guy filling my tank at a gas station asked where I was off to work. When I told him Rutgers, he gave a big smile - "That's wonderful! We salute you for what you do!" and high-fived me through the car window. That never happened in England.

Anglo-America II Teaching at Northern Arizona University

Lynne Hapgood The Nottingham Trent University

Over the last ten years, Higher Education in the U.K. has increasingly been influenced by what we are told is an American model, yet opportunities for academics to experience teaching in the United States, and to make an informed judgement about it, have diminished. Teaching exchanges, which used to be an accepted part of academic life, are now almost impossible to organise as the demands of the RAE and rising student numbers take their toll. Recently, I worked hard trying to find an exchange partner for an American friend, but possibility after possibility fell through until she finally decided to teach on a course for American students in Brighton. What a waste of cultural possibilities. So I count myself very fortunate to have done two exchanges, both at Northern Arizona University. What I learnt there still informs my teaching, initiated a research project, and, in my role as English Subject Leader at Nottingham Trent University (although this was an unexpected bonus), continues to give me an informed perspective on the changes that are currently being introduced into university education in Britain.

I'll begin with my own expectations. I had been warned that American students worked at a very low level, wouldn't read, couldn't write and took legal action about their grades. I am sure that is true \of some students in some places, just as it is true in Britain (with the exception, as yet, as legal action). What I actually encountered was considerable enthusiasm and commitment, a lot of hard work, regular attendance and thorough preparation: reading ten plays for the Shakespeare course, for instance, was not thought an unreasonable demand. I was taken aback and then delighted that my teaching problems were directing conversation rather than stimulating it, and providing a sufficient variety of teaching approaches to sustain interest

over a sixteen-week semester in which I saw my students twice a week for 2 hour sessions. What did cause me difficulty was that I taught 200 and 300 classes, which I mentally aligned with our Level 1 and Level 2 courses, but then had trouble when I discovered that students were no respecter of levels and I was faced with groups which included second, third and final year students. On average, the literacy level was no worse than in the Britain, but students were less competent when writing at length since they were rarely required to do so. Intellectually, the most pervasive weaknesses were lack of objectivity and imprecise terminology. They found it difficult to step back from personal responses ("Wordsworth is awesome"), and to abandon colloquial discourse in their writing ("Brutus is really flaky").

An enjoyable and engaging teaching experience was made possible by a number of contextual elements. Staff workloads and courses were confirmed by the previous February: three modules in each semester or two modules for those with administrative responsibilities. The timetable was organised in two blocks, Monday, Wednesday and Fridays (seeing students three times a week for an hour and a quarter) or Tuesday and Thursdays (twice a week for 2 hours). That left two or three days a week clear for other activities. Another important factor was that Faculty (that is, teaching staff), did not double up as teaching administrators. Students chose their options electronically and when the cap was reached, they chose something else. All decisions about options, dropouts, illness, absence etc. were decided elsewhere: all documentation, such as class lists, was produced centrally and posted to pigeonholes. Student feedback was organised by the students,



counted electronically and copied to Faculty. Marks were passed directly to a central office that later generated the student transcripts. All I had to do was teach. An American colleague was impressed by our External Examiner system when I explained it, but less than impressed by the fact that I was still attending Exam Boards a month after I had graded my last paper.

At the time, I found my unfamiliar power rather daunting, and the implications for fairness and consistent standards decidedly questionable. I set my own curriculum and assessment patterns for my module, changed and adapted as I went along, and had the final say about grading. When I anxiously sought a second marker for a fail I had awarded, I was asked “Do you think it failed?”, and when I replied “Yes”, I was told, “Well, then it failed.” Looking back from a position of heavy constraints, from lecture programmes set in stone, standardised learning outcomes, curriculum mapping and audit trails, I feel we have gone too far in the direction of what is now called accountability. I certainly feel our individual contributions to our student’s learning has been devalued. Finally, I had the time and space to get to know my students. The maximum size of the groups from 200 courses upwards was 30; the teaching spaces were large and well equipped; I met with each group of students twice a week and the semester ran an uninterrupted sixteen weeks from late August to Christmas. I was exhausted by the intensity of it all but appreciated the continuity and the opportunity to build a relationship with those I was teaching. When I told them on my last day that I was shattered, they just laughed and told me that I was the first professor to teach them every week with no muffin breaks. I clearly missed a trick there.

It took me some time to work out the larger administrative framework to which academics did contribute: the curriculum; research; staffing needs; development. The curriculum for majors in English was conventional and organised around American Literature, British Literature, Rhetoric and Writing, Linguistics and Comparative Literatures. Because of the university’s location in the American Southwest, it had a federal brief for American Indian education and there were a number of courses on American Indian literature. For those majoring in British Literature, the old joke ‘from Beowulf to Virginia Woolf’ held true in spirit, with a required number of credits to be taken in period studies. I taught Shakespeare, Romantics and Victorian Novel courses as part of that spine. The university was not a research university - that distinction went to Arizona State University in Tucson - but there was a positive research culture.

The timetable structure made research time easy to organise through the semester, and the long summer break, from May (‘turn your grades in and go’) to mid-August, gave staff who wished to research the time to do so. A notable feature of the summer was the departure of researchers to other parts of the States or Britain to use research libraries. The university supported those who wished to develop their research with sabbaticals but with a strong emphasis on raising funds and accountability.

Although what I have described probably holds true of most State Universities, each one must carry the additional cultural weight of its location. Northern Arizona University was distinctive for a number of reasons. The student intake was reasonably affluent; the location strikingly beautiful and safe. There aren’t many places where you can leave your wallet in a café and your colleague tells you not to bother to phone, ‘just pick it up on the way home’. There are even fewer places where you can drive to the Grand Canyon for a Sunday walk. I was told that parents of out-of-state students, who had to pay higher fees, sent their children to NAU for these reasons. It would be difficult to find a more congenial teaching context. On the other hand, few of the home students had travelled outside of Arizona, or, if they had, not farther than New Mexico, Colorado or California. A tiny number had visited Europe; most were not really aware of Britain at all. It wasn’t long before I told everyone I came from London - the one place that struck a chord. For a teacher of British Literature, this cultural context had its attractions but also its frustrations. Students took the Romantics to their hearts: in the middle of the San Francisco mountains, the idea of nature was, indeed, second nature to them, but the grim stories of urban poverty in the nineteenth-century novel were simply sad stories disconnected from historical realities. They loved Shakespeare because knowing his plays has social cachet in the States, but I was disconcerted that they shied away from discussions which raised questions about sexuality. Challenging religion, which stirs little controversy over here, was virtually taboo. As one of my students, appropriately named Sunshine, said, ‘When you go home, you must take the spirit of unity with you’. They were, in general, very resistant to European scepticism.

It is difficult to unpick personal memories of an enjoyable, challenging and surprising teaching experience from the larger context of American university education. However, what I have never forgotten and wish we could replicate here in the U.K., is the superbly efficient administrative systems geared to freeing Faculty to teach and research; the high level of resources at even a small State University like NAU, and student recognition that working hard is something to be proud of.

Anglo-America III

Teaching in the UK and the USA

Regenia Gagnier University of Exeter

(Regenia Gagnier was Professor of English at Stanford University from 1982-1996 and joined the University of Exeter in 1996.)

1. Working Conditions and Workloads. In my experience, faculty and staff at research-led universities in the UK and the US have comparable contact hours: between 4 and 8 teaching hours/week during 2 to 2½ terms. Postgraduate modules count equally with undergraduate, and PGR supervision accrues relief from other teaching. While the actual teaching contact hours may be comparable, British staff have less time for research due to British methods of assessment. If British staff could do one thing to lighten workloads and give them more time for research, I would recommend that we abandon assessment methods developed for a more luxurious age and adopt those developed for greater access, i.e. Grade Averages or what in the sciences is called algorithmic assessment. Assessment is the one area where British staff make work for ourselves.

After 7 years, I am convinced that Grade Averages benefit students and employers as well as staff. The last minute politicking of exam boards is conducive to arbitrary marks, and the classification system gives imprecise information to employers. Students and employers are much securer in knowing that the final award reflects achievement averaged consistently over time and a range of tutors rather than momentary arbitration, and employers will know precisely how good a 1st has been achieved: a 70% just grasped or a 90% wonder.

2. Teaching Methods. With the exception of small liberal arts colleges, whose mission is normally teaching rather than research, in US universities lectures predominate in the first year and small seminars in the last. In year 1, experienced faculty often lecture 4 days per week for coverage of material (supported by IT), and small sections are led by postgraduate teaching assistants, who work individually or in smaller groups on students’ reading and writing. As the students begin to specialise, their seminars are led by faculty. Both faculty and teaching assistants have weekly scheduled office hours, which are sacrosanct, and these are where individual students can have attention focussed on them: it is for this more than anything else that they pay high fees. The main difference in the UK is that TAs are not looked on by the undergraduates as a valued, continuous part of the research community but rather seen as less than staff. This must be addressed at the level of student perception.

3. Students’ tastes and preferences. The dominant category of literature in US universities is Anglophone rather than English, perhaps a linguistic domain rather than a national literature. In the so-called Culture Wars of the 1990s, the inclusion of US American Literatures on Western Culture syllabi caused the furore.

4. Relationships with the wider community. Students in the US are implicitly raised to be citizens of a market democracy. They express their political will through their market choices, both free and constrained.



They “choose” their university education on the basis of their freedom to pay the fees (see 8 below) and once at University they spend their first two years in general education whose implicit goal is to prepare them to maximise their potential across a range of options. They have two years of general education before specialising (“majoring”) in English. Because there is less bureaucracy, faculty can teach in immediate response-mode to events. Teach-ins are normal during times of crisis; in the first Gulf War, I changed my syllabus at the last minute from the 19C Novel to the Literature of War. At the postgraduate level, think tanks bring together scholars across the humanities to work on issues of social concern: race and ethnicity, Islam and the West, sex discrimination, ecology, citizenship, etc.

5. Administrative loads. The worst shock for faculty coming from the US to Britain is the planned or audit culture that gives rise to excessive paperwork and simulacra. The US system is market oriented. Both have serious faults. A third way between them would be desirable.

6. The Syllabus. See 4 above. With less bureaucracy required, US syllabi are more flexible. While perhaps rectifying historical abuse and laxity, British regulation on progression, benchmarks, customer “contracts” and so forth can also impede creative and cutting-edge teaching. In the USA, curricula are often politicised (see the “Western Culture Wars”), not by the academics so much as the media.

7. Relations between Departments. A combination of single honours and financial devolution impedes interdisciplinary studies in Britain. In the US, students can take any courses/modules they like so long as over 4 years they accrue the credit requirements of the major, without the intricacies of cross-subsidisation.

8. The Place of Research. In the US there are 5 tiers of higher education. Rich private institutions like Stanford, Cal Tech, MIT, and the Ivy League for the ruling class; big public (state-supported) universities for top faculty and students; public and private 4-year colleges; 2-year community colleges; and the new for-profit universities like DeVry who respond directly to the needs of business. These are differentiated by the degrees they award and by fees. Stanford currently costs around \$40,000/annum for fees plus accommodation and expenses, while San Francisco State University costs \$2,500/annum (fees only) for home students. To my knowledge, all universities have need-based scholarships, especially the élite. Finally, there are the new private business or IT colleges for specific training rather than education or building. Research is central to the mission of the top 2 tiers; secondary but important to the third; peripheral to the last. Teaching loads correspond: lighter at the top, heavier in the community and training colleges.

9. The Nature of ‘English’. On both sides of the Atlantic, English enjoys toleration in content and method, and is selected by students as reflecting a traditional liberal education and as less instrumental.

Anglo-America IV

Nottingham and Maryland



Craig A. Hamilton University of Nottingham

Most of us would fail an exam that tested our ability to define 'English Studies' accurately. Those who went to this year's 'Condition of the Subject' conference looking for such a definition no doubt returned home empty-handed. This helps explain why I have yet to find the large English Studies association that I have been looking for since moving here in spring 2001. Americans have the ADE, the Europeans have ESSE, and there is the SAES in France. Even the Belgians have the BAAHE, while French Lecturers here have the Society for French Studies. Meanwhile, the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes enters its fourth decade of existence. The British Association for English Studies? Nowhere to be found. And despite our esteem for philosophers, the recent formation of the British Philosophy Association might not teach us anything. If 'English' is too hard to define, then this may be why no single organization can represent it. But if generalizations about our subject are tough to make, then so are comparisons. Shakespeare was right in calling comparisons odorous, so how can anyone compare English Studies in the UK to English Studies in the US? Well, you manage to find a way when the editor of the *CCUE News* asks you to. Thus, what follows below are some personal remarks about (1) the nature of English, (2) the syllabus, and (3) working conditions.

1. For starters, nobody where I teach now—the University of Nottingham—becomes an 'English' student by chance although many do so where I taught before—the University of Maryland. Britain's fifteen-year-olds probably know they need an 'A' grade in English in the GCSE and the 'A' level exam if they want to study English at Nottingham. American university students, by contrast, might be twenty years old before they decide to become English 'majors' because they must spend their first two years taking classes from many different departments. Therefore, deciding to study English is either a deliberate choice or a desperate one.

If you have been 'weeded out' of that prerequisite philosophy class that all future lawyers must take, then why not do an English degree instead? Crudely put, that is how some students end up in America's 'user-friendly' English departments. At Nottingham, however, this is impossible, because students arrive here specifically to 'read' English. This situation prevents Lecturers from experiencing a Dead Poets Society moment: having a student tell you eagerly that he wants to do an English degree after spending a semester in your poetry class. When this happens (as it sometimes can in the US), it can be a wonderful experience. Here, however, such a scene may never happen.

Having said that, the UK higher education system still has one advantage over the US one. Because of the very high cost of studying in the US, students may tell you that they want to study English but that they have to study something 'more practical' instead. If they don't, their parents will cut them off financially. Such exchanges - which I often overheard as an undergraduate - transform an English degree

into a bitter family quarrel. Some parents may think English degrees are not practical, but at least students here have apparently won the practicality argument with their parents before arriving on our campus. Students may be anxious about what they will do when they leave here, but they know exactly what degree they are doing when they get here. It sometimes even seems like students who arrive to study English at Nottingham have somehow internalised the motto of Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia: 'Training for life, not a job'.

2. This leads me to the syllabus, which is where that 'training' is embodied. From *Beowulf* to *Midnight's Children*, students in the US and the UK are often asked to read many of the same texts. The debate over whether or not the syllabus should be 'broad' or 'deep' occurs with equal fervour in both the UK and the US.

Therefore, deciding to study English is either a deliberate choice or a desperate one.

But staff everywhere have refrained from lengthening the academic year even though the number of texts that students must read has increased thanks to the canon wars. 'Just read Tennyson for next week' has become 'Read Tennyson *and* Hemans for next week'. Whether or not the reading gets done is another matter, but a week still only has seven days in it. On another note, while students in the UK and the US write many essays, there is more overt instruction in essay writing and creative writing in American universities than seems to be the case here. Quite literally, the teaching of writing in the US is the English department's main business. In contrast, here it remains the teaching of literature. Another notable difference is 'English language' studies. Because the topic is popular with 'A' level students, in Britain they are better prepared for classes on literary linguistics than American students ever will be. At Nottingham, this means we can easily balance literary studies with language studies for our undergraduates - something often only possible with graduate students in the US.

3. As for working conditions, everyone in the UK knows that salaries are low and living costs high when compared to the US in general. However, English Lecturers on 'B' scale salaries make what many Assistant Professors of English make in the US. At the top, however, it is different. For example, this year *The Times* ranked the University of Nottingham 13th while *US News and World Report* ranked the University of Chicago 13th. But the University of Nottingham is not England's University of Chicago because of the salary a Professor of English at Chicago can earn. Moreover, since the

Chicago Professor does not have to undergo an RAE audit every five years, she can earn more yet publish less than her Nottingham counterpart. What is more, she will never have to fill out one of those 'Transparency Review' forms for the government either.

That said, the Nottingham Professor may teach less than her friend in Chicago. Both Professors will probably spend seven hours a week with students (including the office hour). But a British Professor may do this for only two terms a year (i.e. 20 weeks) whereas an American Professor may have to teach for two semesters a year (i.e. 30 weeks). Pastoral care arrangements are also different. One person in the US might have the task of being 'undergraduate advisor' rather than having students assigned to various personal tutors throughout the

department. When it comes to graduate students, the Professor at Chicago may worry far less about their command of the language than might be the case here. In the US, however, there is lots of marking to do throughout the semester. Here, English students often write just one essay worth 100% of their mark at the end of a semester, which reduces the time spent on marking. Furthermore, since terms and semesters can never be harmonized, there are more breaks here than in the US even though the academic year in both countries is about 30 weeks long. Unfortunately, the time not spent in the classroom here must be dedicated to research lest one fails to meet the next RAE target. Maybe this is why one of my colleagues here seemed happy to retire last year. A Professor I know well in the US who retired two years ago certainly was not.

Revisiting Twentieth-century Englishes I

Revisiting Empson: Successive Fireworks of Contradiction



Ian MacKillop University of Sheffield

Last summer I gave talks at conferences on Leavis and on Empson. The Empson conference was populous and professional at Sheffield University (where Empson's old department is now housed in 'Sir William Empson House') and the Leavis conference was intimate, even familial, held above Leavis's old teaching room at Downing College, Cambridge. The respective social atmospheres illustrated relative levels of survivability, Leavis as 'brown familiar ghost', a critic-in-waiting and Empson the more genial productive presence thankfully alive today for people interested in all sorts of subjects. But there was something slightly strange about this because I thought of Empson to have some rather old-fashioned qualities, which I will outline here. After that I will comment on some things which are indubitably not out of date in Empson, some things which are alive and needful now. One such thing let me say initially about Empson's bequest to our profession: Empson gave us a prose. To call it a poet's prose is true (he knew it was) but unhelpful because this accounts for the pleasure but implies inaccessibility. How can one 'write poetic' oneself? None the less, the imaginative subjectivity of this prose, with its unexpected vocabulary, its capacity for handling a poem stanza by stanza as if the author were writing stanzas himself—these are such things which could refresh the writing or ordinary practitioners like oneself. Let me go back, though to the old-fashionedness of Empson.

In *Lucky Jim* the idiotic Professor Welch, Head of the History Department, would boom into his telephone "History speaking!" It is said that William Empson at Sheffield University would call his opposite number with 'Is that History there?' Now, Empson did not

have a madrigal group from which junior lecturers absented themselves at their peril, but he did have the professional silhouette of the Old-Style British Prof, the Prof who was his subject. So, however what? Did not Empson transcend job description? Didn't he merely happen to be a Professor, one who paid his dues to university life, but was essentially just Empson, the critic of genius? What matters surely is his treasure chest of analyses, against which a professional silhouette is trivial. Empson as a type? Come, come.

But let us entertain the idea of Empson as Old Style British Prof or 'Canon Empson', one meaning of 'canon' being member of a 'religious community or knightly order'. Empson was a sound servant of his order or chapter, which he called 'Eng Lit'. He certainly disliked *déformations professorales*, notably disdaining sanctimony in its ranks, like a churchman who finds religiosity distasteful. He did have a mission to fumigate the temple by 'sanitary efforts', as he called them. But though he drove moralistic neo-Christians from the temple, he did not wish to pull down the pillars, let alone build the temple elsewhere - which set him apart from Leavis, who certainly wanted that. In the 1920s both Leavis and Empson had Cambridge trouble, Empson for his contraceptive escapade, Leavis for lecturing on *Ulysses* and asking Mr. Porter of Galloway and Porter to put it on sale. The offences were typical: an individualistic offence in Empson's case and an institutional offence in Leavis's. Their subsequent plights were typical, too. Empson was sent down and 'did the decent thing'. He left the country ('cooled his heels out East').

Leavis had a warning from the Vice-Chancellor and Cambridge seniors rallied to get him a post in the provinces at Leeds University, which he refused, and Bonamy Dobrée (definitely an Old Style British Prof) was appointed. Leavis stuck it out obstinately in Cambridge, where he annoyingly founded his own chapel in the very precincts of the English Faculty. People said Leavis had his own English school 'inside' Cambridge; he would have immodestly agreed. Such a project would never have occurred to Empson, who was to join the established church, or knightly order, as Prof at the northern civic university in Sheffield. (Leavis never became a Prof in Cambridge, but he did so at the new University of York - interestingly not in an English Department but one of 'English and Related Literature', an appropriate final destination for the Modernist who said that Dante should be part of the English literature university curriculum.)

From this word curriculum we can turn to 'canon' in its non-ecclesiastical (and here metaphorical) sense to syllabus, to the 'valued file'. There are two sorts of canonistas, that is, Eng Lit academics with attitude to the agenda: there is the canonista benign and there is the canonista aggressive. People think of Leavis as canonista aggressive, because received opinion is that he narrowed the curriculum, Leavis's repertoire being supposedly 'narrow', a weird view of one who wrote on Blake, Bunyan, Eliot, Hardy, Hopkins, Lawrence, Montale, Pope, Shakespeare, Swift, Tolstoy, etc., etc., - and, of course, wrote on Empson, too. But the real function of the canonista aggressive is to *add* to the canon and restructure it, and Leavis was definitely canonista aggressive being such a one for agenda, for selections for prioritisations, for systematisation, with its discernment of 'lines' and 'traditions'. In Empson and we find the canonista benign, pretty well taking the landscape of literature as it came, burrowing here and buffing there, worrying and teasing, but never wanting to play the part of the Capability Critic: he who alters woods and hillsides or demolishes a hamlet for the sake for the sake of a vista. He was happy enough for Eng Lit to continue in what he called 'its sturdy, placid way'.

Having been awarded a scholarship by Leavis, I was later appointed as a lecturer by Empson in the late 1960s at Sheffield University. The English Literature Department syllabus was published annually in a Faculty of Arts *Handbook* which, Empson would say, 'tells the kids which the books are'. The list was not often changed or augmented and was not noticeably 'Empsonian', give or take (say) Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Leavis, on the other hand, was a great curriculum-constructor, for instance in one of his best books, *Education and the University: A Sketch for an 'English School'* (1943) and in his edition of two essays by John Stuart Mill from *The Westminster Review*, called *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge* (1947), with a long introduction on how to study the nineteenth century. I don't think such scheming would have appealed at all to Empson. There is his selection of Coleridge's poems, with its drastic presentation of *The Ancient Mariner*, but this is more of an academic polemic rather than a proposed set-book, rather on the lines of Leavis's proposed edition of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* with *Deronda* left mostly out. This is textual experiment ('what-would-it-look-like-if?'), rather than curriculum-construction.

If it is true that Leavis was aggressive and Empson benign, was Leavis then authoritarian and Empson liberal? Not exactly, because as Old Style British Prof Empson did have a monumental authority. It simplifies, but is basically true to say that in the old civic universities the Professor was the subject he taught, with the help of assistants. The point should be surrounded with caveats. As a personality, Empson shrank from self-assertion, but essentially and *structurally* the Old Style

British Prof was boss in a sense in which Leavis never was and not because Leavis was an un-chaired Cambridge figure. Even Oxbridge Profs were not Old Style British Profs, who were a distinctly British provincial phenomenon and called with edgy humour 'barons'. You would think that, in terms of institutional authority, the Oxbridge Profs would be even more baronial, but the biographies of provincial Profs who moved to Oxbridge, like L. C. Knights or Frank Kermode, show that this was not the case. They found the ancient universities exasperatingly complex and devious. They thought they had a chance of 'getting something done'. Far from it. Oxbridge was very different from the civic universities in which the Old-Style British Prof was magnificently in charge. The Oxbridge Professoriate, with a capital P, not the academic establishment as a whole, is comparatively non-magisterial. Probably it is the college system into which the Faculty system is locked which makes its institutions less hierarchical.

Again I must be cautious. Though he was the boss, 'Empsonian' did not dominate at Sheffield. He represented the established church in a way that is demonstrated by his letter of application to Sheffield University. He stated in it that 'It may be felt that my published work has been rather specialized, but I would try to provide what was wanted in the post and not merely indulge my specialities'. (This is the time of *The Structure of Complex Words*, which possibly is specialized in its detail, but its matter would surely have been intelligible to undergraduates; and there would have been no problem with pages of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.) By 'what was wanted in the post', he meant straightforward handling of the body of English Literature as widely recognised and commentary that was not too close to his own thinking. Walter Raleigh felt something similar at Liverpool University in the 1880s. He said that if he became intensely interested in a subject he was teaching it would 'be much too absorbing and exhausting to myself, but also much too good... for my class. I made some remarks on Poetry in general which cost me more than fifteen matter of fact lectures, and they laid down their pens and smiled from an infinite height'. This is a long way from today's assumption that university teaching is supposed to be close to research (cutting edge research at that), that the newest ideas should be incorporated swiftly into the curriculum, and that the author on which the academic is working should be canonised, put in a modularised 'sans parole or quittance'. You cannot imagine an academic today believing that his or her PhD work is too 'specialized' for undergraduate consumption. The gap has been closed between professionalism and apprenticeship. But in days gone by the old style Prof had his own studies and separately taught 'what was wanted in the post'. I say studies not research because research belonged more to the Leavisian academic tradition than to that of OSBP. F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis were both doctors, but it was by no means normal in the 1920s for the young academic to proceed upwards by means of research and doctorates; Empson of course didn't. The Leavises, on the other hand, saw themselves as researchers. They identified with research students, employing them, as it were, as contributors to their journal *Scrutiny* - indeed on one occasion a contributor was an undergraduate. The Leavises were professionals, rather like today's young academics who wanted their 'research-led' discoveries to be part of the curriculum. They felt that the academics, graduates and undergraduates were all 'in it together'. Leavis wrote a good deal on the student predicament (for instance in *Education and the University*). All of this was a long way from Empson with his sense of himself and specialisms, and 'the kids'. Leavis promoted or canonised new or young authors in an un-Empsonian way. An Empson would not have promoted a young William Empson.

I have been saying that Empson's structural position in academe made him an Old Style British Prof, but old-style in this formula does not mean conformist, and emphatically does not mean irrelevant today. I promised some points about the needfulness of Empson and here are two.

The first good or necessary thing for today is Empson's tone or one of his tones. I mean his bluntness. His lack of my-learned-friendism, and chairmanly decorum or smuggerly is still exhilarating. It has been infectious, and profitably could still be. We have it used by Christopher Ricks on a reprint of *Milton's God*:

'Most provocative', drawled the Miltonists in 1961, and turned aside to smother an irritable yawn. The phrase was a useful bon mot with which to shunt a disturbing book up a cosy little siding, and the trick seems more or less to have worked. A very important book by a very important critic was swaddled.

Perhaps Ricks did not need to learn this manner from Empson in 1965, but in 2004 it seems possible that the young academic needs a nudge towards that manner, when there is such pressure to be 'professional' and opine with juvenile magisteriality. There may even be a bit of encouragement - to be human - to be gained from the cases when Empson loses his cool. (Some examples: losing his cool with Martin Amis: 'Maybe this is what was drifting round in the almost human brain of the reviewer'; with Roger Sale: 'The next mortal insult given me by Mr Sale, a body blow, is intended by him as generous praise'; with Geoffrey Strickland: 'The meanmindedness of anybody who can believe I did this feels to me quite sickening'.)

A second good or necessary Empsonian thing for today can be found, for example, in Chapter VIII of *Seven Types of Ambiguity* in which Empson 'pay[s] decent homage to the opposing power', that is, unity as against ambiguity. In this chapter he deals firstly with 'the conditions under which ambiguity is proper' (paragraphs 2-5), secondly with why understanding ambiguity is important (paragraphs 6-10), and thirdly with how we take in, or take on, ambiguity - 'the way in which ambiguity is apprehended' (paragraphs 11-18). This part of the chapter is, fascinatingly, about how we cope with the stage of not understanding poetry, the stage before making sense of it. Leavis once remarked that Empson had 'his terrible capacity for the intellectual game, for getting the ball back over the net, for never being at a loss'.

None the less, the notoriously clever Empson was a good commentator on what it is like *not* to grasp something, and, more than that, describe the sequential stages through which we pass, and which criticism should be allowed to track, before we 'make sense'. It is possible that today, it is not so easy for the people to admit the existence of these stages, these layers of understanding. Outcome seems to be all. At a simple stylistic level of writing an essay, it may be difficult for the ordinary student to admit the existence of the process-stages in reading, especially now there is a taboo on 'subjectivity', the use of the first-person singular being routinely banned by our assessment pedagogic nannies.

In his Chapter VIII Empson says under his third heading about 'the way in which ambiguity is apprehended' that 'the reading of a new poet, or of any poetry at all, fills many readers with a sense of mere embarrassment and discomfort'. But a reader with good faith, stamina or enthusiasm manages to control the probabilities (note well his paragraph 11 on this), and something become intelligible. Empson does better than explain the process by such phrases as 'control probabilities' (mine) or even 'coefficient of mobility' (his): he uses

wonderful similes of combustion and chemical reaction. (It would be interesting to know how often combustion similes are used in Empson's writing at large.) He says:

It is these faint and separate judgements of probability which unite, as if with an explosion, to 'make sense' and accept the main meaning of a connection of phrases; and the reaction, though rapid, is not as immediate as one is liable to believe. Also, as in a chemical reaction, there will have been reverse or subsidiary reactions, or small damped explosions, or slow wide-spread reactions, not giving out much heat, going on concurrently, and the final result may be complicated by preliminary stages in the main process, or after-effects from the products of the reaction. As a rule, all that you recognise as in your mind is the one final association of meanings which seems sufficiently rewarding to be the answer - 'now I have understood that'; it is only at intervals that the strangeness of the process can be observed.

I was reminded of this passage because I was reading a book by Tom Harrison, founder of Mass-Observation, called *Living Through the Blitz* (1976), about World War II in Britain. It is a study, using many interviews and diaries, of what really happened, under urban saturation bombing, and its relation to the reconstruction of what happened in the minds of individuals. Harrison uses part of this passage as one of three epigraphs about the acclimatisation of the incomprehensible, the unravelling the slieve of embarrassment, to return to Empson's word 'embarrassment', used of linguistic-aesthetic embarrassment. The interest of this passage and the matter surrounding it in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, is not in a claim for unity in poetry - seven chapters of ambiguities scattered by the arrival of the cavalry of unity - but in its understanding of confusion and the processes of focus, the relegation of possibilities, but also the activation of new-level suggestions in material in the course of being relegated.

The message of the epigraph in Harrison's book is not that the confusion of the Blitz time is found in literature too, but that literature can remind the sociologist of the problems of process in handling historical events. I think Empson's combustion metaphor has a more than accidental relationship to Harrison's subject, *Blitzkrieg* or 'lightning war' by bombing. The point is not just that any experience is hard to assimilate. Rather, it is shock experience that baffles comprehension. Is it conceivable that the shock of poetry is unrecognized among some of today's Profs? Possibly. This just one of the topics where Empson lives.

“The notoriously clever Empson was a good commentator on what it is like NOT to grasp something...”

Reflections of a Management Participant Observer on Teaching and Research



Regenia Gagnier University of Exeter

In Britain, the government is driving everything to a degree almost unimaginable since Soviet Communism. Government-funded Human Resources strategies with complicated systems of appraisal force an entire workforce into self-consciousness of itself as global competitor. First a corporation sets targets and then in self-appraisal employees 'align' their personal goals with the institutional targets. The recent White Paper recommends that pay be measured by this quality of 'alignment'. Self-appraisal is both public-between two or more employees-where it can provoke *shame* - and private, evoking an employee's anxieties about performance in relation to her peers, where it can provoke *guilt*. Collectively, we hover over that Americanised abyss, the atomised 'Fear of Falling' into the Residuum. This is not the corporate world only, but the University in contemporary Britain.

The RAE works like this. The Government set certain productivity expectations: numbers of publications, sometimes calculated in complex metrics or citation indices; amounts of external research funding from research councils or private third-leg income; numbers of research students per staff member, and so forth, all quantified and recorded in the vast machines of data management. Then each corporation or university finds its comparator set: the Russell Group for institutions with large scientific plant, the Group 94 for smaller research-led institutions, the largest set for the new, self-nominated 'modern' universities. Then, again, through analysis that is only possible with the internet and contemporary forms of statistical data management, each institution compares itself with others in its group. Who gets more research students per staff member, who gets more research council or private income, who has more published volume. These comparative data are represented in the League Table, in which institutions jockey for places. The places where we want to be constitute *our targets*.

The thing about targets is that they can never be reached. Precisely because they are always comparators, set in relation to others, everyone will continue to compete. Each time one reaches a target, another will threaten or exceed it, and so the outcome is not actual production of products-publications or research students or income-alone, but, more importantly, productivity itself: this was the government's goal from the beginning: to re-form a complacent workforce, or at least a force who worked to live rather than lived to work, into a continuously competitive and producing workforce.

In appraisal, the individual employee is made aware of the Institutional targets and is asked to reflect on how her personal goals are 'aligned' with the Institutional targets. She reflects not on the subject of her monograph but on the production of monographs, research students, income, and comes to see herself in relation to other producers of such things and processes. If the identity-politics critic shifted the focus from the text or object to herself or subject, in our recent culture of accountability we shift our focus from our discipline and our research to the processes of self-assessment. This is what I mean when I say that HR strategies, RAEs, QA and the rest have forced an entire workforce into self-consciousness of its production on the global stage. For it is the competitiveness of British universities in the global education industry and ultimately the competitiveness of Britain in the global economy that are driving the government's agenda.

The process, leading, as it has, to increased productivity, is also transforming the product qualitatively. The British Academy and Arts and Humanities Research Board has already realised that there will be too many 'first books' for University Presses to publish. Discussions about journal publication replacing monographs are ensuing and the official recommendations of the MLA on that topic have now been published. But the AHRB, soon to be AHRC, expects to fund 'response mode' individual research leaves with only part of their fund. These are the sort that are supposed to result in the traditional research-intensive, deep-background monograph. The rest will be distributed through 'managed' projects. These are the very large research grants that fund institutions or 'centres of excellence' on particular topics or areas. They bring money, students, research teams, and massive bureaucracy. Their output is closely monitored. All institutions compete for them. Research institutions will be those who get them.

If I were advising the young lecturer, I would say, do good work on a topic you love. Do it carefully, for in a world of quantity, quality will remain distinctive, even though the audience who will recognise it will diminish by and by. However, 'align' your work with others in pursuit of some larger project, headed up by some distinguished academic whom you respect, for adaptation to the 'managed project' is the optimal survival strategy.

Now some may think that the response to brain-numbing management-speak might be the brain-drain to the Americas. The US is richer, and therefore times must not be so numbingly dreary and hard. But on whose backs is it richer? Elite institutions in the US charge up to \$40K per annum, and at that price they can teach what they like and are only accountable to parents and their Boards of Trustees. I hope that we will not support that degree of inequality as a solution to the numbing down of bureaucracy.

But of course only the naivest of the brain-drained could imagine that the relative autonomy of a handful of elite US institutions from the culture of accountability is representative of US academia generally. In "Account, Accounting, Accountability" (*Profession* 2002), the Dean of Liberal Arts at California Polytechnic State University Harold Hellenbrand calls 'excellence' that term of "no content-as the word is used today in universities."¹ And his paper suggests how the charismatic characters, dramatic incidents, and narrative satisfaction that have informed humanistic histories of our discipline are being replaced by the culture of accountability (= accounting). "The effort to show excellence is fundamentally about making an account, a narrative that inspires public credulity. But this account now must function without hero, plot, incident, and setting-the usual trappings of stories that engage us. Modern... self-consciousness converts narrative protagonist and antagonist into 'partners', plot line into 'continuous improvement', and incident into goals, principles, performance areas, and quality indicators, all in a cyclical time line that substitutes for chronology" (81). He concludes, "Unfortunately, the noise of excellence makes it difficult for colleagues to believe that there actually is institutional space for them to judge maturely what is the good, what its evidence can and cannot be, and who the audience for this account should be. Resentment against the threat of what will happen if we don't assess (we will be punished), if we're not proven excellent (we will be cut), if [not] everybody is represented by a number in a merit index (we will earn less) corrodes the will to judge. Increasingly, chairs must distinguish performance indicators... from the call to exercise judgement" (82). What he is saying is what everyone knows who currently sits on promotion committees: the culture of accountability drives us to calculate volume of productivity rather than exercise judgement of quality.

The feminist philosopher Gillian Howie has argued that "students are now educated within a system that promotes a form of thought antithetical to the recognition of 'otherness': a prerequisite for any substantial thought about diversity... Abstraction, selection, simplification... are also the markers of a cognitive orientation that recognises the individual object as, and as nothing but, its concept. Where thought is unconcerned with an object's sensuous articularity there is little or no chance that difference or diversity will be recognised."² This is why the very process of audit, quality assurance, performance indicators of excellence and the rest may defeat the very goal of widening access that is their putative agenda. Howie traces definitions of quality from Aristotle to Adorno to our contemporary institutional definitions of excellence: "a programme of organisational change designed to engender and sustain a culture of continuous improvement based on customer-oriented definitions" (142-43). The move from British Standard 5750 quality management system that rose from defence spending, whose essence was administered documentation, to Total Quality Management, that takes the needs, desires or requirements of the purchasers as starting point, was swift. Academics as professionals in charge of their own disciplines were disempowered in the name of empowering their students-now called customers.

We see this eclipse of critical *judgement* as colleague after colleague fiddles with accounts, accounting, accountability. I'm accustomed in my scholarly work to distinguish between the Fine and the Good. The Fine concerns taste, or tastes, and the ability to make distinctions when faced with different objects. The Good concerns not our relations to objects of taste but our relations with others and our ability to put others before our own needs, tastes, and desires. I've made my entire scholarly career trying to sort out the historical relations between the Fine and the Good, or aesthetics, ethics, and politics. What I have been talking about here throws us into another domain: the Fine, the Good, and the Excellent.

Orwell famously wrote that if you want to see an image of the future it is a boot stamping on a human face forever. Our immediate future is a grind of targets, continuous productivity, and league tables. In its way it is as bleak as the mechanical grind of *1984*, whose bleakness, I have no need to remind CCUE members, grinds on against a background of continuous wars in Asia, Eurasia, and Oceania.

Yet I want to conclude with a more positive image. Gerald Graff has argued that at least since the eighteenth century, classics and then English have vernacularized their subjects, spinning off subspecializations, responding to new technology (communications), social need (ESL), and cultural change (American studies, women's studies). The sheer exuberant ability of our discipline to adapt-our resilient ability to absorb living cultures from popular to mass to identity politics also provides the very niche markets the government wants. If we wanted to play the excellence game, we could show that English students (now in management speak) "have a high satisfaction index, that their costs beat the campus mean, that some sector of the program satisfies regional need, that their graduates... score low on white-collar crime and show a comparatively high return on state investment in their education" (Hellenbrand, 87). If we want to play this game, we can win it on grounds of efficiency and "customer" satisfaction.

But the only way that we can win it is precisely not to cut ourselves off from that very base, contact with which has caused our longevity and attractiveness to students. More than other disciplines, we cannot tolerate the separation of research from teaching. For it is teaching-teaching women, teaching mature and working people, teaching children of immigrants-that provides us with the cultures whose analysis is our lifeblood³. It is arguable that Grand Theory has given way to historicism in our research because at a deep level we intuit that the structures of feeling we inhabit must counteract the distortions of excellence and accountability. History is in those warm human bodies and still undisciplined minds to which the system of data management is but sounding brass and tinkling bell.

1. Harold Hellenbrand, "Account, Accounting, Accountability," *Profession* 2002 (New York: MLA, 2002): 80-89.

2. Gillian Howie, "A Reflection of Quality: Instrumental Reason, Quality Audits and the Knowledge Economy," *Critical Quarterly* 44:4 (Winter 2002): 140-48, see 140, 146 for quotations.

3. According to John Guillory, much of what constitutes criticism in the twenty-first century emerged out of contexts in which the teaching of the literature was precisely the object or issue in question: the major works of the practical critics in England, LA Richards and the Cambridge School, and the New Critics in the US. Deconstruction was being worked out by Paul de Man in the early 1950s when he was a preceptor in the Harvard humanities courses taught by Reuben Brower, who popularised the term "close reading", arguably still the most methodological (and pedagogic) protocol of our profession. Even cultural studies can be traced to the project of adult education among the Birmingham theorists of the 1950s and to particular issue of the relation between literature and literacy (*Profession* 2002, 168).

Obituary

Professor Kate Fullbrook (1950-2003)



Kate Fullbrook, who died at 52 in July 2003 from breast cancer, was an eccentric and outspoken English professor who for two decades campaigned forcefully, tirelessly and often humorously on behalf of Britain's new universities and of the value of a liberal education for all. She was also the author of several influential books.

She was born Kathleen Warrens in 1950 in Sheboygan Wisconsin, the daughter of an arc-welder father whose formal education ended at the age of eleven. Her parents dreamt of better things for their three children but only within limits. When with encouragement from her teachers Kate applied for university, she encountered determined parental opposition. So on the night of her high school graduation she decamped from the family home by a busy freight line and went into hiding for the summer.

That autumn she enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. It was 1968 and Madison was a noisy focal point of the social and political questioning unsettling Nixon's America. Immediately at home in this hothouse of intellectual, cultural-and-chemical-experiment, Kate quickly made friends in what for her was a wonderful new world. Her sensitive readings of texts and fluid prose attracted the attention of her English and Philosophy professors, who encouraged her to aim higher than the school-teacher she hoped to become. Meanwhile she earned top marks, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and played in an all-women rock band. But not without cost. Kate supplemented a partial scholarship (and eventually help from her parents) through working nightshifts at Burger Chef, cleaning toilets in a men's dormitory and identifying zooplankton in the lakeside limnology lab.

Graduating from Wisconsin with highest honours, she learned that she was the unanimous first-choice of the English department for their federal government research studentships.

But a month later she was told that her profile did not fit the requirements of the scholarships, something which Kate with her background found all too easy to believe.

It probably had more to do with her known association with anti-Vietnam activists, notably Edward Fullbrook, whom she married in 1972. Kate's self-confidence was shattered by this blow; apparently debarred from an academic career, she worked behind a cash-register for several years.

After a period of travel, and now in Europe, she found courage to give academia another go. An MA at Queen Mary College in London in 1976, was followed by a PhD at Newnham College in Cambridge. Before completing her dissertation, Kate was appointed to a

lectureship at the College of St Mark and St John in Plymouth, where she taught English and discovered talents for academic diplomacy and effective representation of an undervalued area of higher education.

Her next job, as Principal Lecturer and subsequently Head of Literary Studies at Bristol Polytechnic, involved Kate in the complex, fraught processes of transition to 'new' university status in the early 1990s. It was in this context that she became a founder member (from 1989) of the Standing Conference on English in Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education (SCEPCH). Following the merging of the polytechnic and 'old' university systems in 1992, Kate was a passionate advocate for solidarity and mutual support, a cause which she argued eloquently as joint Chair of the Council for College and University English (CCUE), the body formed to represent the subject nationally and internationally. That CCUE has become one of the strongest and least factional of the university Subject Associations is in no small part due to Kate's determination, diplomacy and sheer good humour.

Those who worked with her remember her irrepressible gaiety - the way she would break into a song (always hilariously appropriate) from an old Busby Berkeley musical on the way to a meeting; the silly doodles, increasingly outrageous, on too-lengthy agendas. Deeply modest herself, Kate simply giggled at self-importance or pretension in colleagues. Sceptical of the claims of authority and establishment, she nonetheless learned to operate effectively within their structures; she took the hard decisions people in positions of responsibility have to take and she took the flak that goes with that without complaint and with absolute discretion. Not the least of Kate's achievements (and one at which she used to marvel ruefully) was her success as an administrator, as Head of Literary Studies and later Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of the West of England in Bristol. Never forgetting both the new chances and the closed doors of her own early experiences, she found many unobtrusive ways of supporting students and colleagues, creating opportunities and encouraging the less confident.

Kate's professional generosity was a by-word: it marked all her work

Kate's professional generosity was a by-word: it marked all her work for UWE, but was called on by institutions around the country: she was a tireless and much-valued external examiner, assessor, validator of

The moral commitment, the powerful political conscience, the great compassion which she brought to all her work are all there in the subjects and the title of her PhD on 'Henry James and Matthew Arnold: Consciousness, Morality and the Modern Spirit'.

degrees and programmes for both new and old universities. She wrote for *The Guardian* and the *THES* on the future of academic humanities; she did stints on the British Academy's Research Board, as a member of the Quality Assurance Agency's benchmarking Group for English, and as a panel member for American Studies in the last Research Assessment Exercise - all without compromise to the academic values and freedoms to think and write for which she stood and spoke up in the face of growing threat to universities of the accountancy culture.

These values are explored in all Kate wrote. She helped to found the Anglo-American literary journal *Symbiosis*, and embodied its transatlantic mission in her own life and work. Her special interest in, and commitment to, Modernist fiction by women produced her first two books, on Katherine Mansfield (1986), and *Free Women: Ethics and Aesthetics in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction* (1990). Important revisionist readings in *Simone de Beauvoir*, and *Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre: The Remaking of a Twentieth Century Legend*, written with her husband Edward, established them both as sought-after speakers at conferences on Existentialism. But the moral commitment, the powerful political conscience, the great compassion which she brought to all her work are all there in the subjects and the title of her PhD on 'Henry James and Matthew Arnold: Consciousness, Morality and the Modern Spirit'.

As graduate students pondering our futures, the meaning and the value of the profession we seemed somehow to have chosen, these were the touchstones of late-night conversations through litres of paint-stripper wine. It's poignant, and precious, to remember now our eager embracing of James's 'The Middle Years', where a writer faces the knowledge that he will not have an old age. At the end of the story he reflects on the nature of achievement:

"It is glory - to have been tested, to have had our little quality and cast our little spell. The thing is to have made somebody care... We work in the dark - we do what we can - we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."

That modesty, that doubt, and that passion were Kate's. With days to live, she involved herself in intense discussions with colleagues and friends (how often the one became the other) about a strategy document she knew she would not see implemented. And somehow, she found ways to laugh. From Wisconsin days to the final sad weeks in Bristol, Kate pushed herself to the limits of her always frail physical strength. It was a courageous life, and a deeply generous one; just, for Kate, and for the rest of us, far too short.

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