



SCHOOL OF
English

WELCOME

This coming year sees a new academic year structure at Trinity. Freshers' week will begin Monday, 3 September 2018 and there will be an assessment period before Christmas and then again in late April. The new structure has several advantages but it also represents a significant change. Many of you will remember writing essays over the Christmas holidays, and this will now be a thing of the past. We will be encouraging current students to watch their time management so as not to face undue pressure writing assessments at the end of term.

We are very pleased to welcome several new members of staff to the School. Björn Quiring joined us in January 2018. An early-modernist, Björn has particular interests in Shakespeare and Milton. Also a noted Shakespearean is the incoming Professor of English Literature 1867, Andy Murphy, who comes to the School from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Finally, Kevin Power, author of *Bad Day in Blackrock*, the basis of the film *What Richard Did*, is also joining the School. There is a great deal of interest among students in creative writing, or literary practice as it is now sometimes termed, and we are glad to be able to offer more opportunities for students in this area.

This year also sees the first intake in an exciting new programme: a dual BA degree with Columbia University in New York. Students taking this degree spend two years in Trinity and then two years at Columbia. In their final two years they take a further 60 Trinity ECTS, some of which will take the form of an intensive sophister option taught by a member of the School in New York. It is a challenging and demanding programme, as it needs to be to merit the award of a degree from each institution. We were delighted by the interest from highly qualified applicants last spring when the programme launched, as we are by the calibre of the students who will begin their studies with us in September.

During Green Week last February, the Provost announced a campaign to eliminate single-use plastic from the Trinity Campus. As part of this campaign the School of English will no longer provide plastic glasses at the School water cooler. Not a major step, admittedly, but one in the right direction.

2018-2019 promises to be a lively year at the School with many stimulating events and readings planned. If you are in the Dublin area, keep an eye out for those that might interest you.



L-R: Hilary Pyle, PhD candidate Kabir Chattopadhyay, Sheelagh O'Neill, Mary Pyle and Head of School Prof Aileen Douglas at a reception to mark the first Pyle Postgraduate Bursary. Full story inside on page 7.

Aileen Douglas

Head of School

Dr Helen Conrad O'Briain Retires

Helen Conrad O'Briain retired in summer 2017. A much-loved teacher of Old English, Latin, Old Norse, Gothic, palaeography, and popular literature (especially Tolkien), a wide-ranging scholar who published (and publishes) on everything from *Beowulf* to M.R. James, she was at Trinity long enough to have taught several current staff members, but she began her academic career in the US.

Helen gained her BA at what is now the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. In 1974 she took up a scholarship at Notre Dame, where she was the first laywoman awarded a Master of Medieval Studies (1976), and began Old English under the rigorous tutelage of Lewis E. Nicholson. After her MMS Helen worked on a PhD on landscape in the Middle English Harley Lyrics and Middle High German Minnesang. However, she then met her

husband, Pádraig, and moved to Ireland. Helen continued with her thesis and produced a full draft, but the birth of her daughter and her own ill-health eventually led her to abandon it.

In 1985 Helen took an extramural course with Archbishop George Otto Simms. "How can you go to your God knowing you have not finished your PhD?" he asked her, urging her to apply to Trinity. She submitted her thesis on *Beowulf*, supervised by J.D. Pfeifer, in 1990. That autumn she began teaching, and subsequently took on an ever larger role both in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, especially the MPhil in Medieval Languages, Literatures and Cultures. She supervised doctorates on *Beowulf*, Tolkien, Norse sagas, children's literature, and fantasy. She initiated (with Daniel Anlezark) the annual Kemble Lectures in Anglo-Saxon Studies (beginning

in 2005), was School Librarian (from 1992) and helped run the Trinity Book Sale (from 1997/8). Her office door was always open and she dispensed learning, kindness, and tea with equal generosity. Since her retirement she has been writing on world-building, among other projects.



Helen Conrad O'Briain

Interview with Dr Amanda Piesse

Amanda joined the School of English in Trinity in January 1994. Employed primarily as a late medieval and early modern drama specialist, at the School's request she also introduced and developed the teaching of children's literature, and with Pádraic Whyte established the School's MPhil in Children's Literature in 2011. She was a winner of the Provost's Teaching Award in 2002, and elected to Fellowship in the same year; she served as Dean of Students 2012-2015, as a College Tutor 1996-2017 and as President of DU Players 2005-2017. She contributed articles and essays to journals and books in the fields of both children's literature and early modern drama and prose. Both of her children successfully completed their undergraduate degrees at Trinity, and her son is now a member of the academic staff and a College Tutor there.

AD: You served as a College Tutor and as Dean of Students and were particularly noted as a proponent of student welfare. What do you think are the most pressing issues facing university students today?

AP: I was so proud to be part of a College, and particularly a School, that took its students' welfare so seriously, and worked so hard to enable equality of access and support, genuinely invested in working with its students to provide every single one of

them with the opportunity to achieve their best potential. Latterly as Dean of Students I was offered real opportunities to work with all of the student services, students' unions, and clubs and societies, and my opposite numbers in the other Irish universities, to facilitate useful exchanges about students' experiences of College life and to be continually aware of how needs are changing all the time. Increasing openness, articulation and education around diversity and inclusion, and working for best practice around mental health and gender identification means, I hope, that there is no conversation that students and staff cannot have around whatever it is that needs to be discussed. That ongoing communication, and really listening to students' voices on student experiences, is I think the single most important challenge for the people making decisions about student life. I hope the College will continue to develop these provisions and particularly to be aware of the effect that a difficult financial climate can have on students having equal opportunities to focus on their studies.

AD: What are the most significant changes that you observed during your time in the School of English?

Within the School there was a significant shift (upwards) in the number of taught Masters courses. Across the Faculty and

indeed the College there was a real drive to think and collaborate in an interdisciplinary way, largely, I think, because of the advent of the Trinity Long Room Hub. Administrative changes meant that we moved from the three-term structure to semesters, a very different rhythm to the year, with an attendant curriculum review. These changes led to greater diversification of the School at every level, and some great conversations around texts and contexts and ways of learning and teaching and examining that we might not otherwise have had. College's move towards research themes across disciplines, while always leaving space for the individual researcher, prompted some extraordinary opportunities: the Irish-Scottish Academic initiative, for example; an evening lecture series on Science and



Amanda Piesse's last MPhil class

Interview with Dr Amanda Piesse (continued)

Literature; and historians, gender studies specialists, neuroscientists, engineers, sociologists and literary studies people coming together to collaborate on the ageing theme, with some really rich conference and teaching collaborations emerging out

of those encounters. I never did quite get reconciled to semesterisation; I missed the sense of the year beginning to wrap up, and reflecting on what had gone before, in the six weeks we used to have after Easter and before the summer exams.

To read the remainder of this interview, including Dr Piesse on the introduction of Children's Literature to the curriculum, please go to: <http://www.tcd.ie/English/news-events/news-alumni-newsletter-interviews.php>

Interview with Professor Gerald Dawe



Gerald Dawe

Professor Gerald Dawe retired in 2017 after almost thirty years of teaching Irish literature and modern poetry at Trinity College. Along with Professor Brendan Kennelly he established the MPhil in Creative Writing (1997-8) and was founder-director of the Trinity Oscar Wilde Centre (1998-2015). He was elected Fellow in 2004 and has been visiting professor at Boston College and Villanova University in the US and visiting scholar at Pembroke College, Cambridge. In celebration of his career at Trinity, Professor Nicholas Grene interviewed Professor Dawe for our Alumni Newsletter. Gerald has published over twenty books of poetry and prose, most recently, with Padraic Reaney, *Crossing the Sound: Poems and paintings from the west of Ireland* and *The Wrong Country: Essays on Modern Irish Writing*. Information on upcoming readings and events can be found on his Facebook page.

NG: One of your major achievements during your time at Trinity was the establishment of the Masters in Creative Writing – the first of its kind in an Irish university – and the establishing of the Oscar Wilde Centre for Irish Writing, which you directed for so many years. We had some sales resistance to that idea of teaching creative writing at the beginning, and I still sometimes get asked the question, 'can you teach creative writing?'. So how do you field that question?

GD: Creative writing was just a term we used because it was current at the time, people understood what it meant, but I was always uneasy with the title. I mean, to me when you are involved in a master's programme or a PhD programme in literary practice or creative writing, what in fact you are doing is doing what has been done throughout the history of man and woman, which is gathering together people who have a particular interest in a particular art form and sharing how you do this by discipline and by the use of your imagination, your understanding of language and the marshalling and organising of your individual talent. I mean, going back through time painters have done it, as you well know dramatists have done it, actors have done it, it was just a time for the university to catch up with what had always been there. You think of Yeats and the group that associated themselves around himself and Lady Gregory. I mean they were in a sense workshopping or critiquing each other's work. Look at the letters they exchanged and so on but there was a kind of slight resistance here as there was across as other universities started to follow our lead. There was a sense, and I met it with writers both an uncertainty about what was going to come out the other end, but also a slight unease that the landscape would be populated by lots of 'creative writers', not novelists, poets and playwrights. There may be a cause for rethinking as a result of that, just what was

happening on the creative writing front. We were very, very clear in our minds. We were not producing writers to be teachers of creative writing. This was a practitioner course where what we were going to do - what they did in the Players Theatre, in the Samuel Beckett Centre and so on - we were going to produce writers. We weren't preoccupied with getting them back into the academy or back into the teaching line. We were looking for individuals who were lucky enough to get on that course to come out better writers, poets, novelists. We didn't have so many playwrights. We had a few. So I think we had a very clear plan, and if you remember back to 1995 when we first got engaged in all this, that we had a very clear plan that this was going to be a course for writers, and not for teachers of writing. And that model marked us out. It marked us out from 85-90% programmes in America, certainly from most of the ones that were running in England and Scotland, but we were unique and still remain unique in that regard here, 20-odd years later.

You can listen to and read the full interview here: <http://www.tcd.ie/English/news-events/news-alumni-newsletter-interviews.php>



Gerald Dawe and Dr Amanda Piesse

Class Notes

Hugo Walford

I went into Law straight after graduating from Trinity. I studied in London for two years (one year for a graduate diploma in Law, and one year doing my legal practice certificate - both at BBL Law School) and then training and starting work as a solicitor (qualifying in Sept 2014) at a private client firm called Farrer & Co (who are the Queen's solicitors). I found that the analytic and persuasive skills I had learned at Trinity's School of English supported me well in working as a lawyer - in English Literature, you take a book/poem/play, break it down and try to ascertain its meaning, and then seek to persuade your reader of that meaning. Law is essentially very similar - you are presented with a flurry of information and/or a series of events, which you need to analyse so as to determine the key legal issue(s) at play and form a view, and then persuade your client/a third party/the other side/the court that your view is right. At any rate, one thing certainly needed to change - my flowery, long-winded writing style had to be honed down and rendered far more precise - that was a bit of a learning curve!

In 2015, I moved to a larger law firm called Withers LLP where I have been working for just under three years in the Business Division, doing a lot of work with charities and not-for-profit organisations, and for those wanting to set these up. Here is my profile: <https://www.withersworldwide.com/en-gb/hugo-walford>

Vanessa Lee

After graduating from Trinity in 2013 in English and Drama, I got my masters degree in Theatre studies from the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon, France, in 2014. I completed my doctorate on French Caribbean Women Playwrights at the University of Oxford in 2017. I am currently working as a lecturer in French studies at Exeter College, Oxford, and Oriel College, Oxford (Trinity's sister college). I continue to pursue my passion for theatre by directing and writing plays, and I recently led my first script-writing workshop!

Laura Wilkinson

Laura is a broadcast journalist at Live Political Programmes at the BBC.

Leanne Cummins

For the last few years I've been a professional dance instructor and performer - specifically pole, aerial hoop and contortion! I've put a lot of what I studied in Pop Lit to use when creating more theatrical acts for competitions and events in Ireland and abroad. I've spoken numerous times on national radio about the future of pole dancing as a form of fitness and also as art.

The research, presentation and debating skills I honed in Trinity have stood by me when defending my chosen field, and my passion for teaching and coaching others is rivalled only by my love for a good book.

Hannah Coogan

Hannah is a freelance television producer and journalist. She's created award winning programs in the UK, including episodes of *Dispatches* and *Unreported World* and is working on a major current affairs series for National Geographic to air in the summer of 2018.

Peter Tellar

I was teaching English as a foreign language for a while but switched careers and now work for a Multinational organisation in Hungary and teach Judo on the side.

Chloe Fagan

After completing my undergraduate degree at Trinity (majoring in German and minoring in English) I began working at the Goethe Institut Irland in 2012 as receptionist, and in 2016 was promoted to library assistant and webmaster. I help organise events such as Germany @ Home, where we put on a reading with one Irish author and one German author, and these have been very popular. We work to promote German literature and culture in Ireland as much as we can through other events and organisations such as Poetry Ireland and Words on the Street. My English degree has certainly been a great asset to me in this area.

Additionally, I am in the 5th year of my part-time PhD studies at Trinity in the German Department. I am researching the image

of Albania and Kosovo in contemporary German language literature. My research led me to develop a greater interest in Albania and Kosovo, and so I now spend more time focusing on Albanian culture, history, and literature (as well as learning the language) which is not necessarily directly related to my thesis but has become a great interest to me and I am aiming on exploring this area further (particularly with emphasis on Albania transitioning to democracy and working through its Communist past) when my PhD has been completed.

Oisín Fagan

Oisín has previously been published in *The Stinging Fly*, *New Planet Cabaret* and *Young Irishers* and his work has featured at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. He won the inaugural Penny Dreadful Novella Prize for *The Hierophants* in 2016. The same year his first collection *Hostages* was released by New Island Press.



Oisín Fagan

Ana Kinsella

I'm living in London and working as a fashion and culture journalist. I've written for publications including *The Guardian*, *The Sunday Times Style*, *The Pool*, *The Irish Times*, *Dazed* and other magazines. I've also written a handful of short films and am working on a full-length project. My website is <http://anakinella.com>.



Lisa Coen

Lisa Coen

Lisa is co-founding publisher at Tramp Press. Tramp has published award-winning authors like Sara Baume, Mike McCormack and Joanna Walsh. Lisa graduated from the School of English with a PhD in 2012.

Virginia Furness

I'm a journalist covering emerging markets, having known nothing about finance when I graduated from Trinity! Anyway, it was a learn-on-the-job sort of thing when I started in Hong Kong in 2013. I'm now back in London and the job has taken me to some pretty interesting places like Moscow and the Middle East and I've been lucky enough to interview influential figures from all over the world — finance ministers from Egypt, Ukraine and Sri Lanka to name a few — as well as senior government officials in Russia etc.

If any Trinity grads are interested in financial journalism, do put them in touch with me. The magazine is called *GlobalCapital*, which is part of Euromoney plc.

Kate Fanagan

I am a secondary school English teacher in Alexandra College in Milltown and have been working here for four years. I run the Junior and Senior Debating societies in the school and I am also the Transition Year coordinator.

Teresa Thompson

I am currently working as a social worker at a public hospital that primarily serves immigrant communities in Brooklyn, NY. My position is in a field-based program for adults living with severe and persistent mental illness.

Kevin Neville

I'm currently in the Northern Ireland Opera Studio in Belfast. I'm also working for Ireland's newly founded company Irish National Opera and will début later this year as Peter Schlemil in Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* which will tour nationwide. I was recently awarded the Christopher Lynch Bursary in honour of the late tenor from Limerick.

David Lydon-Staley

Since graduating from Trinity in 2011, I received my PhD in Human Development & Family Studies from The Pennsylvania State University. I am now a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, researching substance use and curiosity across the lifespan using network science methodologies.

Alice Keogh

I have had an eventful year. I just got married on 31-12-2016 and have had my first baby. Jack is 10 weeks old. I am on maternity leave from work.

Gráinne Clear

Gráinne Clear works as Publishing Manager and Art Director for Little Island Books, an independent children's publisher based in Dublin. After completing an MPhil in Children's Literature, she wrote and presented two children's literature series on RTE Radio, became president of IBBY Ireland for three years and joined the board of Publishing Ireland. She also works as a storyteller for children and adults.

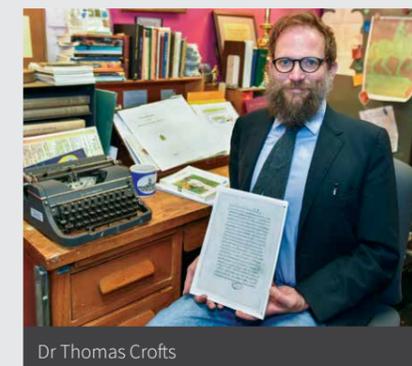


Gráinne Clear

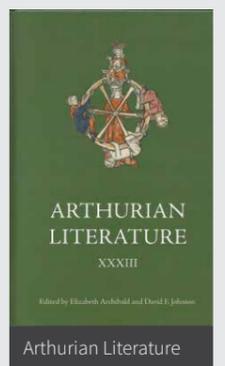
Class Notes for upcoming newsletters can be sent to english@tcd.ie

Alumnus Publishes First English Edition of Rare Arthurian Poem

Dr Thomas Crofts, graduate of the MPhil in Anglo-Irish Literature (1992) and Director of the Minor in Classical Studies at East Tennessee State University, discovered a reference to the poem, *The Old Knight* in a footnote in a text about Italian Arthurian poetry that piqued his interest. During his research, Dr Crofts found three editions of the rare Greek Arthurian poem, but none in English. Crofts co-translated the poem with Dr Dmitra Fimi and their edition, with a critical introduction and images of the original poem, can be found in the journal *Arthurian Literature* XXXIII (2018).



Dr Thomas Crofts



Arthurian Literature

A Year in Pictures



Dr Brian Cliff publishes monograph on Irish Crime Fiction

Dr Brian Cliff, Assistant Professor in the School of English and alumnus of the MPhil in Anglo-Irish Literature, published a monograph, *Irish Crime Fiction* in July 2018, which explores the strength of home-grown crime fiction. The book is part of the Palgrave Macmillan Crime Files series and was launched by Dr Cliff with author and alumnus John Connolly on 25 July in the Gutter Bookshop in Dublin. Dr Cliff was the co-organiser of Irish Crime Fiction: A Festival in 2013 at Trinity, which included panels and readings with 18 Irish and Irish-American crime fiction authors.



Dr Brian Cliff with author and alumnus John Connolly

Prizes & Awards

Orlaith Darling, a Senior Sophister student in the School of English, was the recipient of the 2017/2018 Edward Millington Stephens prize for her essay on Molly Keane's novel *Good Behaviour*, food, and self-help. The Edward Millington Stephens prize, founded in 1972 by a bequest from Mrs L.M. Stephens, is an annual composition prize awarded by the School of English for an essay on an aspect of the Anglo-Irish Literary movement.



L - R: Head of School Prof Aileen Douglas, Orlaith Darling and Dr Paul Delaney

Sally Rooney Recipient of the Young Writer of the Year Award

TSM alumna Sally Rooney was the first Irish author to be awarded the prestigious Times/Peters Frasers Dunlop Young Writer of the Year award in 2017. The prize was awarded for Rooney's debut novel, *Conversations with Friends*, published by Faber. Rooney was named as the new editor of Dublin-based literary magazine *The Stinging Fly* in November 2017 and her second novel, *Normal People*, has been nominated for the longlist of the 2018 Man Booker prize. *Normal People* will be published by Faber & Faber in September 2018.



Sally Rooney

Kabir Chattopadhyay was the first recipient of the Pyle Postgraduate Bursary. The bursary is awarded to a final-year PhD student in English and is supported by Sheelagh O'Neill in memory of her grandfather William Fitzroy Pyle (1907-1989), who was a professor in the School of English. Kabir is currently completing his thesis, titled *The Ring, The Wand and The Sword: The Role of Objects in Articulating the Dynamics of Power in 20th Century Children's Literature* under the supervision of Dr Pádraic Whyte.



L - R: Hilary Pyle (Fitzroy Pyle's daughter), Kabir Chattopadhyay, Sheelagh O'Neill (Fitzroy Pyle's granddaughter) and Mary Pyle (Fitzroy Pyle's daughter in law) at a reception to mark the award in Trinity.

Mark O'Connell Awarded Wellcome Prize



Mark O'Connell

Dr Mark O'Connell was the recipient of the prestigious 2018 Wellcome Prize for his book *To Be a Machine: Adventures among cyborgs, utopians, hackers and futurists solving the modest problem of death*. The £30,000 prize is awarded annually to a work of non-fiction that engages in the topics of medicine, health or illness. O'Connell's book is an exploration of transhumanism and mortality. Mark O'Connell completed his PhD in the School of English on the writing of John Banville and was awarded Irish Research Council funding in 2008 and again in 2011/2012 for a Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Trinity Alumni Online

As a Trinity alumnus, we'd like to help you make the most of being part of a community of over 115,000 Trinity graduates around the world. We know how important it is for our alumni to stay connected and how valuable networking and mentoring opportunities can

be for career advancement. With this in mind, we would like to invite you to join our new platform, Trinity Alumni Online. This platform will help you to connect with fellow alumni as well as current Trinity students, allowing you to give and receive career advice. It's easy to use

and a great way to stay connected to Trinity. To register go to www.trinity.aluminate.net

Mentoring events by the industry sector will take place on campus from 25 – 27 September 2018.

Upcoming Events

Philanthropy in the School of English

The School of English has been involved in fundraising for a number of different organisations through our annual Christmas Pub Quiz. In recent years the event has raised much needed funds for the Peter McVerry Trust, the Andrew Grene Foundation and the production of Verbal Sun, a poetry collection in braille, print and spoken word for NCBI. The most recent pub quiz supported the

sponsorship and training of a puppy named Jack for Dogs for the Disabled. Thank you to our alumni, staff and students who have supported these projects and organisations through our annual quiz. Information on the 2018 annual Pub Quiz will be announced later in the year on the School social media channels.



Jack the puppy

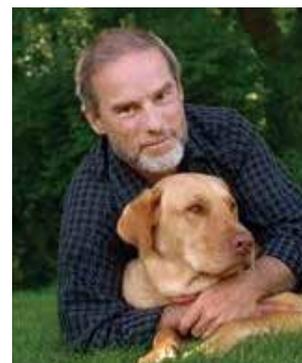
School of English Celebrates 200 Years of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

The School of English, in conjunction with the Trinity Long Room Hub and the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, are delighted to be celebrating the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* by taking part in the international Frankenreads festival. Events in College will include lectures, a One-University-One-Book initiative, a book giveaway, a poster

competition and a screening of Danny Boyle's 2011 Royal National Theatre production. The celebration will also include a full reading of *Frankenstein* on 31 October 2018. For more information on Frankenreads events taking place at Trinity College Dublin visit <https://frankenreadstrinity.wordpress.com/>

Marley and Me author John Grogan to speak at Trinity

John Grogan will give a public reading in Trinity on Wednesday 3 October at 6:30pm in the Thomas Davis Lecture Theatre, Arts Building, Trinity College Dublin. Further information will be available online at www.tcd.ie/English



John Grogan

Get Involved

Trinity has a long tradition of outreach and community engagement. To find out about the numerous ways you can get involved with Trinity both at home and abroad, please visit tcd.ie/alumni/volunteer

Upcoming Events

Evening Lecture Series

For the latest details about our annual lecture series please visit www.tcd.ie/OWC/evening-lectures

Other Events

www.tcd.ie/alumni/events

Class Notes

Do you have any news or updates that you would like to share with your fellow alumni? Submit your news with an image, subject of study and year of graduation to alumni@tcd.ie

For more information please visit www.tcd.ie/alumni/news-events/publications

tcd.ie/English

School of English,
Room 4013/4015/4024,
Arts Building,
Trinity College Dublin,
Dublin 2, Ireland.
T. +353 1 896 1111
E. english@tcd.ie
Facebook: facebook.com/tcdenglish