



BIRMINGHAM CITY
School of English

THE REVIEW

2019/20

Birmingham City University



WELCOME

THE REVIEW IS OUR RETROSPECTIVE OF THE YEAR. IT SHOWCASES THE OUTSTANDING WORK OF THE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND CELEBRATES THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF STAFF AND STUDENTS ALIKE.

Welcome to the School of English Review 2019/20. The Review is a celebration of your work and academic achievements over the last year. And what an extraordinary year it has been. We've moved home, become part of the Birmingham Institute of Media and English and spent much of the latter part of semester two in 'lockdown'. These changes have brought opportunities and

challenges alike and, as always, students and staff have risen to the challenge. More than ever, the Review encapsulates our commitment to sustaining a community in which academic staff and students can collaborate, in truly inspiring ways, to produce outstanding work.

English at Birmingham City University is a subject that encompasses the study of literature, language, drama and creative writing. We've seen you produce screenplays, poetry, prose and audio

drama; evaluate the history and forms of literature; dramatise and produce plays; and reflect on the place of the English language in our contemporary world. The work you've created is underpinned by the School's expertise in creative writing and our excellence in research in drama, literature and language. This knowledge and experience underpins and guides the learning and teaching on all of our courses and, along with our commitment to working with external partners, allows you the opportunity to explore the place of English in the wider world.

As a consequence of your studies you are becoming independent researchers, critical thinkers and creative practitioners who can apply knowledge, synthesise ideas and communicate these effectively in a wide variety of forms. As this year has shown, you're able to adapt to the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that come your way. We're enormously proud of you and the work we do as a School; we hope you'll enjoy the opportunity that the Review provides to celebrate it!

Dr Sarah Wood, Head of School



This past academic year has been one of change and opportunity. At the beginning of the year, the School of English moved into its new home in Millennium Point, joining colleagues in the School of Media to form the Birmingham Institute of Media and English. Midway through semester two, Covid-19 prevented face-to-face teaching on campus, so students and staff changed to online teaching. We made full use of the range of technologies available at the University to ensure thriving virtual learning communities. It was brilliant to see everyone find creative solutions to overcome this new challenge and succeed in their personal goals.

Personally, it has been my first year as Course Director for English and I've had the pleasure of welcoming a new group of undergraduate students to the University, overseeing a variety of new third-year modules, including 'Creative Non-fiction', 'Modernism and its Legacies', and 'Psychology in Victorian Literature', and exploring the impressive critical and creative work emerging from 'Collaborative Practice' and 'Work Placement' in year two, and the new final year 'Major Project' modules.

As you read through the Review, I hope you gain a sense of the inclusive and inspiring teaching and research environment here in English at BCU, and an insight into the excellent work staff and students have been engaged in over the past 12 months.

Dr Joseph Anderton - BA Course Director, School of English



There has been a lot of change this year for our students in the School of English and they have approached it all with such a positive and engaged attitude, it is really great to see that. It has been a brilliant opportunity for us to join with the School of Media, becoming the Birmingham Institute of Media and English, bringing together those students that found it tricky to collaborate with writing and production. Having them all housed in the same Institute now opens the door to a world of collaboration and new friendships. I hope from here we will see a lot more self-produced work from our keen students and I look forward to what next year will bring for them.

Ceri Osborne - Student Success Adviser



COMMUNITY



SHULAMIT FERBER
(Year 3)

Being a School of English ambassador has been an incredible experience and has provided me with the opportunity to give back the same support I received when I first started at Birmingham City University.

From answering questions over the phone about the facilities to giving advice about student life on Open Days, I have enjoyed assisting incoming English students in understanding their course as well as showing them what opportunities the English Department has to offer. By helping students, ambassadors ensure that everyone will feel welcome right from the beginning of their degree.

In this role, I have strengthened important skills for the workplace such as teamwork and communication. This is such an important and rewarding job and I would highly recommend students become ambassadors and continue inspiring students to make the most out of their degree and time at university.



ANISHAH AHMED
(Year 3)

To be able to guide first year students in the same way my own student mentors did for me when I first came to BCU was such a rewarding experience. Welcome Week was my most memorable time at university and I got to relive that two more times and help bring it into fruition. I've loved watching first years grow into confident and capable students. I still bump into them around campus and they share their experiences with me and let me know how relieved they are that they chose BCU.

Being a student mentor really has made me feel that there is a sense of community in the School of English and I would really recommend that people sign up as a student mentor. It is a role I proudly put on my CV and if I could, I would experience it all over again.

OUR STUDENT AMBASSADORS ON THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN ENGLISH.



JAY JONES
(Year 3)

Being an ambassador for the School of English has been such an amazing experience! I have been able to work with other peers and lecturers, which has increased my confidence and developed my public speaking, which I've been able to incorporate into my lectures and seminars. A highlight of becoming an ambassador for the School of English is being able to share my experience and journey with others who plan to start theirs. I'm able to give them advice and support, which could help them with their decisions and future choices at university.

Everyone has been so welcoming and has made a real effort in making me feel comfortable; I feel right at home here! I want others to experience the inclusivity and warmth that the School of English community offers, which is what drew me in to deciding to study at BCU.

OUR ACADEMIC STAFF TAKE AN ACTIVE LEAD IN RESEARCH, WORKING ON PROJECTS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY IN COLLABORATION WITH ACADEMICS ACROSS INSTITUTIONS IN THE UK AND INTERNATIONALLY.

Our research is central to our engagement with the subject and not only helps to shape the discipline's future, leading it into new and innovative areas, but is also the foundation of our students' experience. Our curriculum is research-informed in its content and delivery, and students inevitably work closely with academics who are world-leading in their fields.



Dr Islam Issa being awarded the prestigious Times Higher Education award for Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

DR ISLAM ISSA

Dr Islam Issa's research won him a University Extra Mile Award for the second year in a row; this time the highly commended Researcher of the Year. But the highlight of the year was being awarded the prestigious Times Higher Education award for Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, for his Stories of Sacrifice exhibition about World War One.

This year, Islam also presented his first TV documentary, Cleopatra and Me on BBC Four, which was Pick of the Week in What's On TV magazine and Pick of the Day in nine national newspapers/magazines. He also continued to make appearances on BBC Radio 3 including as presenter of Free Thinking.



PROFESSOR DAVID ROBERTS

Professor David Roberts's new edition of William Congreve's comedy, *The Way of the World*, appears in the New Mermaids series in July 2020. His essay on Shakespeare and Terrorism appears in a Routledge collection, *Terrorism and the Arts*, this summer, while an interview with the designer Ravi Deepres featured in *New Theatre Quarterly* last August.

Other assignments have included an essay for the Royal Opera House on inheritance comedy, in between writing short and longer fiction. His essay on Beethoven and Shakespeare was Editor's Choice in the June 2019 issue of *The Cambridge Quarterly*. In his spare time, David recently completed a term as chair of the board at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.



DR SERENA TROWBRIDGE

In 2019, Dr Serena Trowbridge guest-edited a special issue of *Victoriographies* and contributed a paper entitled 'The very sky and sea-line of her soul: Nature, destruction and desire in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poems'. These poems include the manuscripts which were exhumed from Elizabeth Siddall's coffin, a dramatic event which featured in a wonderful BBC Radio 3 programme in October 2019 featuring Lily Cole, and to which Serena contributed, based on her 2018 book *My Lady's Soul: The Poetry of Elizabeth Siddall*. Celebrating the bicentenary of John Ruskin, as well as Siddall's poetry, Serena has given a number of public addresses at venues including the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery and Ashmolean Museum.



PROFESSOR GREGORY LEADBETTER

This year Professor Gregory Leadbetter completed his next poetry collection, *Maskwork* (to be published by Nine Arches Press in September 2020) and critical essays, including "'The Mother of Lies'? Poetry, Fiction and Truth' in *The Craft* (Nine Arches Press, 2019) and 'Hare and Hound: Ends and Means in Coleridge's Letters' in *Romanticism and the Letter* (Palgrave Macmillan 2020), with several others forthcoming.

He also contributed the entry on the moon in world literature for the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, and appeared in two programmes for the BBC: *Everything is Connected: George Eliot's Life* (BBC Four) and *One to One* (BBC Radio 4). Gregory was also commissioned to write new verse for the BBC Radio 4 feature, *Write Brummie*. Five of Gregory's poems from his previous collection, *The Fetch*, were set to music for piano and voice by the American composer and pianist Eric McElroy, and the song-cycle received its premiere performance at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford, in November 2019.



DR ANDREW KEHOE AND MATT GEE

Dr Andrew Kehoe and Matt Gee have continued their research in Corpus Linguistics, designing software tools such as WebCorp to find patterns and trends in large collections of online data. In September 2019 they presented a paper at the BICLCE conference in Bamberg, Germany on the growing use of emojis online. They found that 15% of all tweets contain at least one emoji, with 'face with tears of joy' being the most popular by a wide margin. This emoji is often repeated many times in a row - up to 111 times in the data analysed.

Andrew and Matt also found that some individual emojis can have multiple uses. For example, the 'folded hands' emoji can be used for thanking, pleading, praying or giving a high five, and they found examples of all of these uses in their data. The research demonstrated the growing importance of emojis in online communication, with 5 billion emojis now sent daily on Facebook Messenger.



DR GEMMA MOSS

Dr Gemma Moss has two chapters in edited collections out this year: one on classical music and literature in *Sound and Literature* (Cambridge University Press), and one on Forster and feminism in *Twenty-First-Century Readings of E. M. Forster's 'Maurice'* (Liverpool University Press). Gemma was a member of the steering committee to organise the 'Re-Orienting E. M. Forster' international conference at the University of Cambridge and continues to work on *The Cambridge Edition of E. M. Forster's Where Angels Fear to Tread*.



DR MARK MCGLASHAN

Dr Mark McGlashan works across several areas of linguistics and has undertaken several projects focusing on a number of topics this past year. His research examining the language of nationalist group the Football Lads Alliance and their followers on Twitter was published in field-leading journal *Discourse and Society*. He was invited to present this work to the Home Office's Cross Government Social Media Research Group.

As member of the steering group for the AHRC-funded research network on masculinity, sex and popular culture (www.mascnet.org), he has organised several international events on contemporary masculinities.



DR JOSEPH ANDERTON

Dr Joseph Anderton's journal article, 'Vegetating Life and the Spirit of Modernism in Kafka and Beckett' appeared in *Modernism/modernity* (November 2019). He was an invited speaker on Beckett and the Non-human at the Irish Studies and Cultural Theory Summer School at the University of Vienna (July 2019) and delivered a paper on homelessness at the 'Precarious Lives, Uncertain Futures' conference in Rome (January 2020).

Joseph has finished three articles for publication in 2020: 'Living Flesh': The Human-Nonhuman Proximity in Beckett's *Four Stories*' (in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*); 'Animal Image and Human Logos in Graphic Detective Fiction' (in *Animals in Detective Fiction*); and 'The Post-Millennial Rise of British Homelessness Literature' (in *Alluvium*).



DR ROBERT LAWSON

In 2019/20, Dr Robert Lawson was invited to the post of Junior Visiting Professor at the University of Jyväskylä (Finland). During that time, he worked on his monograph about language and masculinities in contemporary contexts, an edited volume on masculinities in digital spaces, and a special journal issue about technology, gender, and linguistic discrimination.

He published an article on gendered portmanteau words on Twitter with Dr Ursula Lutzky (in *Discourse, Context and Media*), an article on curriculum redesign in *English Studies* with Dr Sarah Wood (in *Educational Developments*), and an article about the history of language and masculinities studies (in *The Annual Review of Linguistics*).



In September, we welcomed a new group of first year and foundation English students to the University. The first week is all about learning key information about the University and your course, setting expectations, and meeting people (your peers, your personal tutor, and other staff members). It's tradition to have pizza on day one at the student-staff social.

We had a fantastic talk later in the week from author Kerry Hadley-Pryce, who let us in on her experiences as a published creative writer. The Students' Union Fair offered lots of great social and club activities as usual (as well as the freebies!) and to end the week, we held the English Challenge Day, where students worked together in groups to produce videos, exhibitions and presentations on the history, music and food of Birmingham. It was an enjoyable start to the new academic year.





LITERATURE

Our English Literature course begins with the origins of Western literature and ends with the defining literary sensibility of the 20th century, Modernism. Along the way we study the themes and forms of conflict, from Dante to Kwesi Johnson; the great 18th and 19th century Romantics and Victorian writers; modern and contemporary literature that addresses issues of gender, sexuality, race and nationhood; and, of course, Shakespeare.

JO SHEMMANS (YEAR 2)

on 'The Romantics'

In the first semester of my second year, I've really enjoyed the content of the modules I've studied, in particular, 'The Romantics'. I chose Mary Wollstonecraft's travel writing as the focus of my assessed essay, as I've always wanted to learn more about her life and writing, but I could have easily chosen any of the works we studied, the content was so engaging. I learned so much about literature of the period, but also the political and philosophical influences, such as Locke's Empiricism.

My tutor was always available to give advice and feedback, and went out of his way to assist me in achieving my potential. Debate and discussion was encouraged as part of our seminars, and our input felt valued and welcome. My research and essay writing skills have developed considerably, and I feel more confident in expressing my own opinions. As a mature student at BCU returning to full-time education after nearly 30 years, I've found staff to be incredibly helpful and supportive of my progress. It's truly inspiring to be part of such a positive learning environment.



Second-year students on the 'Multicultural Writing' module

HARLEEN SAHOTA (YEAR 3)

on 'Modernism and its Legacies'

In my final year I took the 'Modernism and its Legacies' module. This module was very interesting as well as challenging as it allowed me to explore different complex theories and concepts. I had the opportunity to read texts that I wouldn't normally have chosen, and thoroughly enjoyed them. I was able to explore postcolonial theories in much more detail than I had previously, which has helped me a lot in my major project.

I have really enjoyed studying at Birmingham City University. The lecturers are always so helpful, supporting and encouraging. I have felt so supported during my university career and believe I have truly progressed in my studies. I am looking forward to further developing the new skills I have learnt and applying them to my major project and hopefully in my postgraduate career.

CREATIVE WRITING

Teacher and student team up for action movie

The Courier, an action thriller starring Gary Oldman and Olga Kurylenko premiered in Hollywood and the UK last Christmas and is now a video-on-demand and DVD hit around the world. The script was developed out of a BCU creative project with the brief to write 'Die Hard in a car park' and was written by Lecturer in Creative Writing, Andy Conway, who teamed up with MA in Creative Writing graduate, Nicky Tate. Off the back of the film's UK release, Nicky was picked up by WGM Atlantic Literary Group and invited to pitch her scripts to World Productions.

The Courier is just one of a number of feature film projects involving BCU screenwriting students that are making the journey from classroom to silver screen. In a similar vein, our Creative Writing department were particularly delighted to welcome guest author Kate Mascarenhas to our Creative Writing careers

panel this year. Shortly after graduating from our MA in Creative Writing course, Kate published her debut novel The Psychology of Time Travel with publisher Head of Zeus, and the film and TV rights were bought by AMC last year.



Poetry Birmingham launched by BCU students

In April 2019, with their Creative Writing MA winding down, Suna Afshan and Naush Sabah came together to collaborate on projects rooted in their love for poetry, its craft, and the desire to make a lasting contribution to

the literary culture of their city. They co-founded Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal as a periodical of contemporary poetry, published by VerseFirst, an arts organisation run by Adrian B Earle, a fellow graduate of the Creative Writing MA. Their efforts have seen them being nominated for the Saboteur Awards for Best Magazine and recognised by the Forward Arts Foundation. In March 2020, Suna and Naush also co-founded Pallina Press to take over the publishing of PBLJ from VerseFirst, and to introduce the Pallina Pamphlet Series. Pallina exists to bring the work of new and underrepresented writers to the poetry-reading public.



EMILY GODBOLD

(Year 3)

With every single module on the Creative Writing course, I've evolved my writing style, and I've come on leaps and bounds. Not only that, but it helped me to branch out to styles I'd never even considered. I went from someone only really interested in novel writing, to someone who is submitting short stories for anthologies left and right.

It also, however, brought me towards the biggest advance of my writing career thus far. And it only happened within the second year of my course. This came from the Audio Drama module. Writing for radio had never been on my radar, and yet, by taking up this module, I ended up producing my script with a professional company in Brighton. My assignment script was then selected by the BBC and will air on Radio 3, something I still can't believe.

Even when I look at the framed front page of my script peppered with the signatures from all the actors, some of whom have come from previous roles in shows such as EastEnders, it feels like it was all one huge dream. This course has paved the way for my writing career. I've already been contacted with other offers, and look forward to making my impact on the industry with my creative writing.

LANGUAGE

Students on language modules have been examining the way language works and is used in the world around us. In modules such as 'Language in Action', 'Language in Society' and 'Language and Gender', the study of language is applied to everyday and professional settings, allowing our students to strengthen their understanding of communicative processes.

BETHANY ROWLEY

(Year 3)

Throughout my time at BCU I have chosen to do a language module each semester because I have grown to love how diverse the studies are from week to week. With each module I have gained new skills such as time management, creating research projects, archival work, learning to collaborate with external companies and establishments in order to fulfil an assignment brief. The language modules allow you to explore areas that interest you personally which allowed me to interact with the course in a more personal way.



One of the research projects I designed concerned itself with the Black Country dialect, which is where I was raised, and allowed me to explore the reason behind why people from the Black Country speak like they do, along with how our society perceives this dialect. The freedom given to students who take the language module allows independent skills to be formed in a different way to many other modules. The skills I have gained allow me to have increased confidence going forward after I graduate and have taught me how to work in different social situations with different organisations in a professional manner in order to complete my research.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the language modules and although I do a joint degree in literature and language, the modules I have elected have been heavily language based because of the diversity of the topics to choose.



DRAMA

The English and Drama course combines theoretical and practical approaches to theatre studies, allowing students to develop their presentation, writing and close-reading skills. We study theatre from a wide range of theoretical perspectives and historical periods. There are also opportunities for exploring plays in performance – for instance, this year’s Drama Workshop students have been working on a production of Patrick Barlow’s 39 Steps. Second and third year students have also visited local theatres to watch productions relating to their work in the modules ‘Contemporary Theatre and Theory’ and ‘Making Theatre: Practitioners and Performance’.

ANTHONY BRENT (Year 3)

I have found the drama course to be a good mix of practical and theory work. If like me, you enjoy a variety of different tasks, this is the course for you. One semester will have you waiting for Godot, while another will have you learning about interesting literary figures like Augusto Boal. Another semester even has you make your own version of a full play in a project called Drama Workshop, in which you can be a lighting technician, actor, or even director. There’s a plethora of roles you can choose from and there’s bound to be one that’s enjoyable for you.

Typically, I’ve always been a nervous presenter. I’ve always been able to present my work or presentations or act in front of others, but I’ve always done it nervously. However, I

recall at some point during my second year, waking up on a day I had a presentation and not being nervous about it. Since then I’ve never been nervous about presenting and I’ve even been, dare I say, excited to present. Not just in the drama classroom either. This skill transferred well to my postgraduate interview where I also had to do a presentation. In short, this course will help you develop skills that are applicable both inside and outside the drama classroom. It will help your confidence, teamwork skills, social skills, acting skills, and understanding of the theatrical world.



DALILA MONTEIRO (YEAR 3) on ‘Making Theatre’

‘Making Theatre’ was a module that focused on the work of theatre practitioners that influenced the way that theatre and the theories surrounding its elements shaped the way theatre was in the late 19th century, until today. We looked at the likes of Edward Gordon Craig, an experimental theatre-maker, Antonin Artaud, a visual artist and director that evoked theatre of cruelty, and many more!

I enjoyed this module because I got to learn more about how and why theatre played a big part in people’s lives at the time of each practitioner, and how it has influenced societal views on it. I enjoyed learning about Theatre of the Oppressed especially.

Towards the end of the module, collectively

we went to see a live theatre performance of Peter Pan. It was greatly adapted to fit today’s society and focused on issues such as family dysfunction, the working class, and pressures of being an outcast. I really enjoyed the play because it was set in what seemed to be a council estate; which for me created a sense of unity and realness – despite the flying and ticking crocodile!

NIYA NIKOLOVA (YEAR 2) on ‘Contemporary Theatre Theory’

‘Contemporary Theatre Theory’ studies a range of plays, classified as contemporary if premiered in the UK after 1968. Alongside each play, there is a theory included, which provides the needed critical understanding. The main purpose of the module is teaching the students to read a text and correctly apply the theory to it.

To make the module more entertaining there is a trip included. Students can choose a play, which is currently available at theatres in Birmingham, and watch the performance. Followed by a seminar on it, the students share their experience of watching the play and there is a full discussion on the plot, the scenes, the characters and the props.

There are many reasons why I enjoyed this module. First, there is a variety of plays, each one interested in a different problem of the contemporary society. For each play there is the relevant theory, provided for the students, which makes the assessments fully accomplishable, if being consistent. And most of all, the module provides an excellent knowledge of the contemporary theatre.

FOUNDATION YEAR

The Foundation Year is designed to help students develop the skills and knowledge essential for succeeding in future degree level studies. In the Foundation Year, we cover a wide range of topics in English, drama, language and creative writing. This year, students have produced some excellent work in all modules, reflecting their skills in research, critical analysis and creativity. Our current cohort of Foundation students have been an excellent addition to our School of English community as they are an incredibly enthusiastic and hardworking group. I am very much looking forward to seeing how their work develops as they now enter our BA programmes.

BENN DAVIES

on the Foundation Year

The lecturers favour growth over wealth, and inclusiveness over favourites. Regardless of my social or educational background, this year has been a whirlwind learning curve with plenty of space for original thought! Our lecturers encourage us to make a statement, form an argument, have our say.

English isn't new to me, but Englishes are, in which language, the who, how and why are explored. I now know what a glottal stop is. I listen for schwas when I'm drinking coffee on a Language and Creativity lecture break. What has been most valuable to me is my perception of criticism: making a judgement, stating an argument, and beginning a long but exciting journey of writing well.

EMILY MARLEY

on Foundation Year module 'Researching English'

Throughout the semester, we began to explore the aspects of many different literary criticisms, such as feminism, and how to use them to support our essays. We also learnt to question sources on their reliability, which helped to improve the content of our essays as it ensured we learnt how to avoid biased opinions influencing our interpretations, especially non-scholarly ones.

Furthermore, close readings of numerous texts challenged us to explore how much we allowed the context behind a text to infer our understanding and overall interpretation of it. For example, if we knew the context behind a poem, each line would be analysed in accordance to this and not a varied approach. Essentially, the module helped us to expand our critical thinking skills beyond what we learnt at secondary school and broadened it to include an inference from various viewpoints.





BETHANY SMITH

on Foundation Year trip to RSC

In a small-town, with quaint afternoon tea cafes, and barge boats on a river selling tours, sits the Royal Shakespeare Company theatre. On a dreary March morning, English Foundation students took a coach to Stratford-Upon-Avon to watch the RSC's new play, *The Whip*. The play doesn't shy away from the harrowing facts surrounding the fight and eventual abolition of the

slave trade. The cast reel you in with an intense delivery of historically sensitive topics before leaving you with a very real, present-day, message. For someone who hasn't seen a live play since high school, this trip was a great way to get back into the magic of the theatre.

It was interesting to compare the play to some of the material covered within the Literature in the World module of English Foundation. *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys was written as a feminist and anti-colonial response to Charlotte Bronte's, *Jane Eyre*, another book looked at in this module. The dramatic production of the play and fictional books covered within English Foundation, compared with the facts presented at the end of the play, shows how fiction can actually help us understand our lives and our history.

TRIPS

MADINA OUTAMA

on First Year trip to the Botanical Gardens

During our first semester, as part of the Foundations of Creative Writing module, we took a short trip to the Botanical Gardens. As one of our assessment tasks was to write a personifying piece about a plant, it gave us a brilliant opportunity for gathering inspiration. Usually, our one-hour lectures would be followed by a two-hour seminar, in which we'd have group discussions on the topic covered for that week.

This trip blended both lecture and seminar into one, the productive element also giving us the chance to write more spontaneously.

The gardens themselves were home to a variety of plants; they ranged from the tropical hibiscus to huge cacti filling a greenhouse hot enough to leave us sweating by the time we emerged. We were encouraged to photograph whatever we found interesting, as well as to refer to a pack of writing prompts. Being only a few weeks into our first semester, the trip provided the perfect opportunity to get to know each other. More than one conversation began while observing the peculiar 'monkey cups' (a plant with long tendrils and wide leaves designed to hold in water), not to mention the peacocks trotting about!



LAURA SEDDIGH ON THIRD YEAR TRIP TO MOSELEY BOG

Nothing fits the Nature Writing module more than our trip to Moseley Bog, the inspiration for J. R. R. Tolkien's Mirkwood. It was a wonderful experience as nature writers to escape from the four walls of the classroom and break out into real wilderness - an enjoyable, bonding experience to share with fellow classmates. Usually, we only get to work together for a few hours in class, but this trip allowed us to share ideas and gain knowledge from each other in an informal setting. Moseley Bog itself is a beautiful place and sparked so much writing inspiration with its dense forest and varied wildlife. I loved how freeing this module was, as we could write poems, a piece of creative non-fiction or build material for our commonplace book. A day at Moseley Bog contributed largely to the success of my final assessment.



THIRD YEAR MAJOR PROJECT LAUNCH AWAY DAY

Third year students gathered at the Birmingham and Midlands Institute in February to launch the major project. This module offers our students the opportunity to undertake a large piece of independent research in the form of traditional projects like the academic dissertation or in more novel configurations like the drama workshop, undergraduate conference or media portfolio. Depending on their chosen degree programme, students are able to choose between the following projects:

- Advanced Poetry
- Dissertation
- Drama Workshop
- Undergraduate Conference
- Media Portfolio



Representing a culmination of three years of hard work, these major projects enable students to pursue and make advances in topics and disciplines of personal interest to them. Working under the guidance of academic subject specialists and industry practitioners, students gain the skills to become truly independent researchers and practitioners.

TRIPS

SOME OTHER TRIPS...

Second-year students on a trip to watch the play *Gaslight* at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham.



Third-year students on the 'Gothic' module visited Horace Walpole's 18th century Strawberry Hill House and Gardens in West London.



ICCW

THE INSTITUTE OF CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITING (ICCW) HOSTS VARIOUS IN-HOUSE AND PUBLIC EVENTS THAT OFFER A WEALTH OF OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR STUDENTS TO ENRICH THEIR LEARNING AND DEVELOP THEIR CONTACTS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CULTURE, AS WELL AS TO PUBLISH IN THE ICCW'S OWN ANTHOLOGY SERIES.

Under the directorship of Professor Gregory Leadbetter, the Institute of Creative and Critical Writing (ICCW) brings students in the School of English an outstanding programme of guest speakers every year.

We held six masterclasses for students of the MA in Creative Writing with novelist, dramatist and Visiting Lecturer Helen Cross, novelist Amanda Smyth, and Professor David Roberts, and a workshop for creative writing students on writing reflective commentaries with Anna Lawrence.

Everyone in the School was also invited to guest seminars with the poet and critic Vidyan Ravinthiran, the writer and broadcaster Ian Marchant, the poets Suna Afshan and Naosheen Pervez (founders and editors of the Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal, and graduates of our MA in Creative Writing!), the Mexican poet, critic and translator Mario Murgia, the poet, critic and biographer Grevel Lindop, and a writers' panel with novelist Kate Mascarenhas (also a BCU alumna!), poet Suzannah Evans and poet, dramatist, memoirist, producer and CEO of Writing West Midlands, Jonathan Davidson.



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