

Spotlight

The newsletter for English Faculty
Alumni



December 2020 | Issue 7

Welcome to the Spotlight Alumni Newsletter.

We were delighted to be able to welcome students to Oxford for Michaelmas term with a hybrid of online and in-person, socially-distanced teaching. Our Faculty members have navigated new technologies and adapted their teaching to ensure all students were able to participate in lectures and seminars, whether they were able to attend face-to-face in Oxford or could only be present virtually. The corridors of the English Faculty St. Cross Building at Manor Road have been strangely quiet by comparison with the usual bustle of term, but the English Faculty Library has also re-opened and a steady stream of students and researchers have worked there in sociable distance.

Despite the continuing challenges, we've had much to celebrate over the past months: Professor Colin Burrow was one of 86 new Fellows of the British Academy in the Humanities appointed in July 2020; Professor Marion Turner was awarded the Rose Mary Crawshay Prize from the British Academy for her book *Chaucer: A European Life* (Princeton University Press, 2019); and Professor Santanu Das won the 2020 ESSE Book Award for Cultural and Area Studies in English for his book *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Our public engagement activities have also continued, with two Professor of Poetry events in November led by Alice Oswald: [a public lecture on the theme of Lines](#), and [a collaborative, interactive event](#) which saw 500 participants

receive a poem in the post to be opened at midnight and read to coincide with the full moon on 30 November. Everyone could participate since Alice's reading of the poem preceded by a magical dance performance was filmed and live streamed also at midnight. Both Alice's lecture and the 'moonviewing' dance/poetry reading can be watched online via the [TORCH YouTube channel](#).

We also worked with TORCH and the Humanities Division to create a [Ten-Minute Book Club](#), which aimed to offer a quick and accessible way into some of the greatest writing by extraordinary writers from all backgrounds. Featured books included *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *The Interesting Narrative* of Olaudah Equiano, and 'The Knight's Tale' by Geoffrey Chaucer and 'Emily' by Patience Agbabi. You can [browse all instalments of the book club on our website](#) and read more about the project below in Spotlight on Research.

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Spotlight on Research



Ten-Minute Book Club

“Tuesday morning, at eight o’clock, I crossed the threshold of the White House
for the first time.”

(Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*)

“He had come nearer the edge of the sea and wet sand slapped his boots. The
new air greeted him, harping in wild nerves, wind of wild air of seeds of
brightness.”

(James Joyce, *Ulysses*)

“In those sombre forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he
saw himself,—darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint
revelation of his power, of his mission.”

(W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; all taken from excerpts for the Ten-
Minute Book Club)

Literature can be a way to open doors and to cross new thresholds: to expand

our horizons even while our physical movement is limited. Intrigued by a reported 2020 rise in ‘virtual’ book clubs, Ten-Minute Book Club (TMBC) sought to use reading to facilitate this travel and spark emotional connection. A lockdown idea from the Faculty of English and Professor Karen O’Brien, Head of Humanities at Oxford, TMBC provided weekly resources for book clubs, with one key difference: rather than a full novel, the text each week only takes about ten minutes to read.

At a time when the pressures of lockdown made long, intense stretches of reading harder, TMBC was designed to access the benefits of reading but with no huge commitment and no prior knowledge required. For ten weeks in Summer 2020, (August-September), Ten-Minute Book Club shared a new text on the web and through social media channels. You can browse it anytime on the English Faculty website: <https://www.english.ox.ac.uk/ten-minute-book-club>.

The ten weekly excerpts feature introductions, ‘DIY bookclub’ questions, and further reading suggestions, all written and compiled by experts from Oxford’s Faculty of English, in text or audio form. The texts are chosen from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so that free links to the full texts could be provided. A mixture of well-known works and literature that deserves more prominence, these works foreground the global history of literature in English, highlighting authors from all over the world, including New Zealand, Ireland, the Caribbean, India, the United States, and the UK. TMBC came into being during important international Black Lives Matter protests as well as during the pandemic – two defining events in our collective experience. In choosing the writers to highlight for this project, the project sought to speak to the urgency and importance of working to decolonise the curriculum.

The full list featured excerpts from the following extraordinary pieces of literature in a wide range of genres, including novels, poetry, essays, short stories, and autobiographies: *The Souls of Black Folk*, by [W.E.B. Du Bois](#); *The Royal Ascetic and the Hind*, by [Toru Dutt](#); *The History of Mary Prince*, one of

the earliest slave narratives by abolitionist Mary Prince; ‘The Knight’s Tale by [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) and a reimagining of the poem ‘Emily’ by English Faculty alumna and celebrated writer [Patience Agbabi](#); *The Interesting Narrative* by [Olaudah Equiano](#); ‘The Fly’ by [Katherine Mansfield](#); *Behind the Scenes*; or *Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* by [Elizabeth Keckley](#); *Ulysses* by [James Joyce](#); *Frankenstein* by [Mary Shelley](#), and *Jane Eyre* by [Charlotte Brontë](#).

Ten-Minute Book Club draws on [LitHits](#), a digital reading project founded by Professor Kirsten Shepherd-Barr and Dr Alexandra Paddock, with an app due to be launched in 2021. LitHits provided the model for TMBC as a way to give readers quick, curated bursts of exciting reading. Interested readers can sign up to the LitHits mailing list via the website.

Led by Prof. Shepherd-Barr and Prof. O’Brien, TMBC resources were coordinated by Dr Paddock and Dr Erica Lombard, created by members of the Faculty of English, and supported by Oxford's [Great Writers Inspire](#), [Writers Make Worlds](#), the Faculty of English and the Humanities Division at Oxford University. Plans for a Season 2 of Ten-Minute Book Club in 2021 are underway.



Prismatic Jane Eyre

When and where was *Jane Eyre* written? And in what language?

The answers may seem obvious. But, in fact, Charlotte Brontë's novel has been written at least 631 times, in at least 59 languages, in places ranging from Addis Ababa to Zurich, Aleppo to Wuhan. By 1850 (three years after the book's first publication in English), a version was being serialised in Havana, Cuba; and translations had already appeared in Germany (three different versions) and Russia (again three), as well as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark. The book was first translated into Japanese in 1896, and Armenian in 1908. Since 1980, there have been 37 different translations into Persian, and – wait for it – 116 into Chinese.

What happens if we think of *Jane Eyre* not just as an English book, but as being made up of this enormous, multilingual, trans-temporal and transcultural cloud of textuality? And how can we even begin to study it?

To take the second question first: we can study it through collaboration, and with the help of new digital humanities techniques. My *Prismatic Jane Eyre*

[project](#), which is hosted by the [Oxford Comparative Criticism and Translation research centre \(OCCT\)](#), and was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council from 2016-20, relies on the participation of 32 other scholars, with a wide range of language competencies. Together, we look closely at aspects of the novel as they are remade in different tongues: recurrent key words like ‘passion’, ‘walk’ and ‘plain’; pronouns; addresses to the reader, like the famous ‘Reader, I married him’, and iconic passages, such as ‘the red-room’.

We trace how the text has interacted with different contexts – the particular feminist charge of its serialisation in a vegetarian magazine, *Zoophilo*, in Lisbon in 1877 (researched by Ana Teresa Marques dos Santos and Claudia Pazos Alonso); its impact on Japanese manga and anime since the 1960s (Yorimitsu Hashimoto); or the significance of the fact that it has never been translated into Swahili (Annmarie Drury).

Interactive digital maps, created by Giovanni Pietro Vitali, help us to keep track of the novel’s diffusion through space and time, and to understand it as an intersectional global phenomenon. In the – as yet fairly few – languages for which we have been able to source or create reliable electronic texts, digital stylistic analysis can also help us see what is going on in the translations, though, at the moment, it is still hard for computers to look comparatively across languages: this is ground-breaking, early work.

So what happens to *Jane Eyre* as a result of all this research? It is revealed as a text which is written, not just in English, but *in language* – which is to say, it is endlessly being re-imagined and re-expressed, in different places and moments, by different people, with ever-varying linguistic materials. Translation is not a matter of trying (and necessarily failing) to be ‘the same’ as the source text, but rather of remaking it for different purposes with different means. For instance, the reason why there are so many translations in Iran in the 1980s is that, after the revolution there (as Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Gould have found), *Jane Eyre* became a vessel for romance modes of writing and

reading which were otherwise banned.

Looked at from our global, multilingual perspective, the novel becomes a store of signifying potential which is realised differently in different tongues. Think, for example, of languages which make a systematic distinction between formal and informal 'you' (vous/tu; Sie/ du; Lei/tu, etc). For them, there is, or can be, a deeply significant moment in the novel which cannot be made visible in English in the same way: do Jane and Rochester ever call each other 'tu'? As Mary Frank has discovered, there are several places where the moment could be (and where translators have brought it into being.) This is just one instance of how English literature is not only in English, and of how studying it involves the interplay of many tongues.

– Professor Matthew Reynolds

The interactive maps, and much of our work in progress, can be found at <https://prismaticjaneeyre.org/>; the book of the project, which will be integrated with the website, should be published in open-access format by about the end of 2021. A list of participants is at <https://prismaticjaneeyre.org/people/>. Prismatic Jane Eyre was funded by the AHRC 2016-20 as part of the Open World Research Initiative research programme in Creative Multilingualism: <https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/>.

Illustration: *Jane Eyre* translations worldwide.

Spotlight on Staff



Professor Dirk Van Hulle

1. Which book has had the biggest impact on you?

Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. The sheer energy emanating from that book is phenomenal. It is the first book that suggested to me the possibility of literary enactment; the possibility of showing rather than telling, of letting the language be 'in twosome twiminds' rather than using it to tell in so many words that someone is in doubt. Or as Beckett put it, Joyce's writing 'is not about something; it is that something itself.'

It is also through Joyce's notes that I discovered Beckett. Beckett read a few books for Joyce towards the end of the writing process of *Finnegans Wake*, notably a German book on linguistic scepticism. Eventually it had a much bigger impact on Beckett's work than on Joyce's.

2. What do you do in your spare time?

If I can't kayak or play badminton, I like to go hiking, for instance in the Ardennes.

3. Describe your ideal day.

My ideal day would be a sunny Bloomsday. Wake up with the sound of birds. Get up early. Put on some piano music by Satie. Make a cup of coffee for the love of my life. Have breakfast outside in the early sun. Talk without any sense of time. Have only one project to focus on, say, the transcription of a manuscript by Samuel Beckett. Be absorbed in this work for a few hours. Make a sandwich. Go for a long walk. The destination is a beautiful lake. No wind. The water surface is a perfect mirror. Go for a swim. Return. Expect a few good friends. Prepare a barbecue to celebrate Bloomsday. Have a beer together. Talk until the sun sets, and long after.

4. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would that be?

In Paris. I like the anonymity of the big modernist city. And baguettes.

5. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

GP, to save lives, until I discovered I fainted when I saw blood. Then agricultural engineer, to help stop the desert from expanding, until I discovered I was really not good at chemistry.

6. Who had the greatest influence on you during your childhood?

Bert and Ernie from Sesame Street.

7. Who were your childhood heroes?

Asterix and Obelix.

8. What teacher had the greatest impact on you?

The last of the Jesuits at my school. He encouraged us to help younger kids with their homework. When we tried to use this as an excuse to ask for an extension of the deadline for our own homework, he categorically refused.

9. Do you have pets?

No. My children once asked to have a goldfish. When it died, we had to bury it. We did not have a garden, so we buried it among the flowers on the balcony. That was the end of the short pet episode.

10. What is your favourite music?

Bach's cello suites.

11. If you could have dinner with five famous people from history, who would they be?

I would prefer to have dinner with each of them separately. First with Samuel Beckett, in one of his favourite places in Paris, the Closerie des Lilas for instance. It would probably be a silent meal, and it wouldn't be after a glass of Jameson that we would start talking – but from that moment on non-stop until the early morning. Then with Mary Shelley to talk about how she wrote *Frankenstein*. Then with the Marquis de Sade and Simone de Beauvoir, to find out about the dark side of Enlightenment. And finally with Leonardo da Vinci, in his atelier, among his notebooks.

12. Describe yourself in five words.

'Something is taking its course.'

13. What do you like most about your job? What do you like least?

Most: the opportunity to work with manuscripts and trace the way my favourite authors have created their characters. Least: the administration that only seems to grow with automatization.

14. Why are we here?

They say it has to do with our parents' having had sexual intercourse. Anyway, 'You are on earth, there's no cure for that.'

15. If you weren't a member of the English Faculty, what would you be?

Screenwriter; or more probably: member of the Modern Languages faculty.

Dirk Van Hulle is Professor of Bibliography and Modern Book History at the University of Oxford, chair of the Oxford Centre for Textual Editing and Theory (OCTET) and director of the Centre for Manuscript Genetics at the University of Antwerp. With Mark Nixon, he is co-director of the *Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* (www.beckettarchive.org), series editor of the Cambridge UP series 'Elements in Beckett Studies' and editor of the *Journal of Beckett Studies*. His publications include *Textual Awareness* (2004), *Modern Manuscripts* (2014), *Samuel Beckett's Library* (2013, with Mark Nixon), *The New Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2015), *James Joyce's Work in Progress* (2016), the *Beckett Digital Library*, a number of volumes in the 'Making of' series (Bloomsbury) and genetic editions in the *Beckett Digital Manuscript Project*, which won the 2019 Prize for a Bibliography, Archive or Digital Project of the Modern Language Association (MLA).



Dr Lucy Powell

1. Which book has had the biggest impact on you?

William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* blew my mind in my first year as an undergrad, that there is so much cogent meaning there for the mining in so few, punctuated words on a page. Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* was another kind of awakening, of how urgent and eclectic literary criticism could and should be. *Tristram Shandy* is still the most generous hearted, brilliant and hilarious book I have ever read, and began an unrequited love affair with the eighteenth century that I am still in the throes of. And *Middlemarch*, first, last, always.

2. What do you do in your spare time?

Yoga or knitting (very badly) while listening to podcasts.

3. Describe your ideal day.

Hours of uninterrupted reading, yoga, and some knitting that turned out quite well in the end.

4. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would that be?

Is it wrong to say Oxford?

5. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Happy; a creative writer. Two irreconcilable desires.

6. Who had the greatest influence on you during your childhood?

My dog; my parents.

7. Who were your childhood heroes?

My dog; Virginia Woolf; Lucy van Pelt.

8. What teacher had the greatest impact on you?

Andrzej Gasiorek at Birmingham University for some unknown reason thought that I was good at literary criticism. I've been trying to justify his belief in me ever since.

9. Were you popular as a teenager?

Yes. (No. Of course not. I was reading.)

10. What is your favourite music?

Bonnie Prince Billy, Laurie Anderson, Beethoven.

11. If you could have dinner with five famous people from history, who would they be?

I would love to have Emily Dickinson over, although she'd hate every cursed minute of it and shut herself in a cupboard for the duration, George Eliot, see above, Aphra Behn, James Baldwin, though it would have to be summer, so

that we could keep all the windows open to let the cigarette smoke out, and Mary Wollstonecraft, who by all accounts was always excellent company at dinner, even when ill or chronically depressed.

12. Describe yourself in five words

I can't do that.

I can describe myself in a story. Once, I interviewed a tightrope walker. She was tattooed from head to foot, had a shaved head, and was as graceful as silk on a tightrope. She never used a safety net. I asked her, 'aren't you afraid?' and she said 'I'm afraid all the time. Every hour, of every day, of every year, I am afraid. It's only when I'm up here that that emotion makes sense. It's a huge relief.'

Somehow, this anecdote made sense of my entire life.

13. How would your friends describe you?

Late.

14. What do you like most about your job? What do you like least?

I love making sense of difficulty, when the photograph develops in the darkroom into something recognisable and real that you can show to people. I hate not being able to find sources that feel crucial, or, after a long search, discovering that they aren't.

15. Why are we here?

Why are we here? To ask questions?

16. If you weren't a member of the English Faculty, what would you be?

I have a long-cherished fantasy about being a yoga teacher, but my inability to tell my right from my left would make this a challenge in more ways than one. I like to think I'd be podcasting and writing, but the truth is I'd be applying for jobs wherever I could get one. I feel outrageously lucky.

Dr Lucy Powell takes up a three-year Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship in the Faculty of English in January 2021. She will research birds and the global imaginary in the long eighteenth century. Her previous project looked at prison cultures in eighteenth-century novels, and is the subject of her forthcoming book – *British Prison Fictions: the prison and the novel, 1718-1780*.

Spotlight on Students



Ann Ang

I enrolled in 2018 as a DPhil student at Wadham College, Oxford. My main area of research is contemporary Anglophone writing after 1990 from India, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia. I delve into how reading postcolonial literatures in English reconsiders how the language itself has been reinvented

to express historical sensibilities, beyond popular conceptions of English as a borderless, neutral and global language. It is a research question that I could formulate only by coming to Oxford, and understanding that the broadest conversations about the Anglophone are also the most essential in understanding how world literature continues to shape the cultural discourse of border regions and under-theorised regions like Southeast Asia. My work has spiralled out into considering English as a minor literature in Malaysia, Singlish as a cultural discourse in Singapore and the trope of the Filipina migrant worker as generating a postcolonial and transnational poetics.

Working in the contemporary period means that research is a living practice, which resonates well with my own academic and professional experience prior to coming to Oxford. After completing an honours degree in English at the National University of Singapore, and an MA in English at the University of Pennsylvania, I was part of the education service in Singapore for nine years, teaching English language and literature to secondary school students. Classroom pedagogy is about how practice generates its own forms of knowledge. This is probably also related to my on-off identity as a poet and writer of short stories. Similarly, my research engages with a fast-evolving body of material and I look to contemporary writers' own theorising about their work as a means of generating new approaches to literary study.

Being in Oxford meant that I was able to attend many seminars and talks at the Faculty of English, and at various colleges. These became part of the rich milieu in which the issues of the day, from the George Floyd demonstrations to urgent appeals for climate change action, informed the direction and rigour of my thinking. There are many, but two are especially important to me: the Postcolonial Writing and Theory Seminar at the Faculty, and the Alternative Curricula Reading group, whose convenors have been generous in allowing me to propose speakers and topics for discussion. With funding support from my college and the faculty, I was able to attend and present at the American Comparative Literature Association's annual meeting in 2019, and the Institute

of World Literature in 2020.

There is an energy to being in Oxford, and I don't think I ever lacked opportunities to participate, or initiate events based on my interests. The graduate English community at the Faculty organises a yearly conference, and the graduate-organised mentoring and professional development programmes are a great help for new students. Having been Editor of the peer-reviewed, open-access graduate journal, *Oxford Research in English*, I can say that English graduates are eager to learn and serve as part of their scholarly apprenticeship. While I will spend most of my third year working hard on my thesis, I know I'm still part of a shared effort by young scholars to continually renew the conversations stemming from our research.

Ann Ang is a third-year DPhil candidate in English and the title of her thesis is "No Other World? Postcolonial Inheritance in the Anglophone World Writing". She was the winner of Wadham College's Rex Warner Prize for poetry in 2019. She is also the editor of two recent literary anthologies Poetry Moves (2020) and Food Republic (2020), both published in Singapore.



Katie Friedli Walton

I had a funny journey to Oxford. Coming from a state-school where I never felt particularly academic (I was always the weird arty one instead) I originally didn't apply to universities. First and foremost I'm an actor, and I planned on leaving school, working, and later auditioning for drama schools. However, as a result of surprising A-Level results, I was encouraged by a teacher and my parents to go to the open day. Meeting Sos Eltis in her office at Brasenose, and realising the walls of her office were shelves stuffed with plays, made me realise this could be quite exciting...! Still, I applied unsure and unable to really see myself at Oxford. It just felt like something not quite for me.

I found interviews a fun experience – the chance to essentially get a free stay in a castle, and talk to real, fascinating, experts about plays, literature, culture; intricacies of Shakespeare's stagecraft, contemporary feminist playwrights, even Aubrey Beardsley illustrations – niche passions of mine – with people who actually shared them and knew so much.

Getting the offer was such a plot-twist. I felt shocked and grateful, but was really unsure if this was what I wanted. Hearing about opportunities for student-drama played a big part in my decision in taking the offer rather than following my longing for drama school.

Now I think, appreciatively, that Oxford was the right choice, despite finding the first year a real struggle. Turning 20 on Matriculation made me super aware of being two years older than many first-years, and I struggled with the insularity of academia and the difficulty and style of scholarly essays. I didn't feel academic enough, and felt hopelessly under-read on canonical and classical texts. However, as I learnt how to navigate the rollercoaster of Oxford life, I've realised I love the way you are just thrown into learning; totally immersed in stories from all times and places – you can follow sparks of interest, and learn so much you'd never otherwise experience.

I dived into drama: cuppers (an intercollegiate drama competition) at the Burton Theatre, a brilliantly gender-bending production of *The Roaring Girl* in the Pilch Studio, even a big Greek tragedy at the Oxford Playhouse. Something unique Oxford has given me are invaluable opportunities to develop my director side, and devise and collaborate with incredible peers. Directing a tights-filled *Twelfth Night* for Brasenose Arts Week was a joyful highlight. Now I'm on the OUDS (Oxford University Dramatic Society) committee, and we're using the sad covid-enforced pause in creating live theatre to focus on making drama more diversity-conscious, including designing new committee roles. Oxford drama needs to move towards becoming more representative, accessible and welcoming for people of all backgrounds, just as Oxford, and indeed the theatre industry, does. As OUDS events rep, I loved holding an online panel celebrating Black Women in Theatre & Film, hosting Joan Iyiola and Ethosheia Hylton; two incredible professionals I was lucky to work with during second-year vacation, on the short-film *Dọlápọ is Fine*, which excitingly has just been released on Netflix.

As I write this, I've just handed in my paper 6 coursework, the first official submission of my degree! I absolutely loved Simon Palfrey's Possibilities of Criticism course; I felt I could finally pair creativity with the rigorous academic training of the last two years. As a third-year, I'm only now for the first time feeling any sort of confidence in my work and ideas; I'm so grateful for that. I've felt academia stretch my brain – it's exciting to feel myself become more eloquent, versatile, agile. Studying here has ridiculously and joyfully widened my frames of reference, taught me how to handle intense pressure and hard work, and how I can think more critically and articulately about language, learning and life.

Katie Friedli Walton is a 3rd year at Brasenose College.

Spotlight on Alumni



Dhruti Shah

“In India, there is a beast called the manticore. It has a triple row of teeth, the face of a man, and grey eyes; it is blood-red in colour and has a lion’s body...”

What English literature student at Oxford wouldn’t fall in love with such a vivid description as that?

Astonishingly it’s 20 years since I matriculated at Mansfield College and was exposed to the wonder that is the MS Bodley 764 Bestiary. Neither myself or my tutor Lucinda Rumsey had any idea about what journey her copy of this wonderful guide to animals would lead to for me.

A state-school pupil, I applied to Mansfield due to its reputation for nurturing young journalists. That was always the dream – to tell the stories of other people and have an insight into their lives.

But dreams are never straight forward. They include strange diversions, metaphors and messages and often a lot of lessons and processing. Studying English at the best university in the world was certainly an achievement. It was never an easy process and I learned a lot beyond the tutorials and lectures, the constant essays and work hard, play hard ethos.

I absolutely loved the Bestiary and sitting in Lucinda’s room drinking constant cups of tea and eating malted milk biscuits (which we referred to as cow biscuits) was a sanctuary. I was able to look at children’s literature for my dissertation so that was an amazing opportunity.

Back then, there was also a module for our final assessments which a small number of us took up called E-literature. We had to learn to make a website from scratch. Stuart Lee was responsible for us then and the chance to play with language and an emerging digital sphere was something that I am still grateful for. Of course for that module, I created a website focused on the Bestiary – animals galore.

After a short stint travelling, I returned to my first love of journalism and worked in local newspapers. There I spent a few years working my way up the ladder and learning the importance of accountability and community. I then turned up at the BBC where I've been for the past 12 years. I've moved around the organisation working in most departments. I've worked for the website, Panorama, Newsbeat, World Service, newsgathering and elsewhere. I have worked on stories including natural disasters, terror attacks, tales about people doing good things to help their communities, and a whole lot more. I am often found to be writing though. In fact last year I worked in Washington DC as the BBC News social specialist writer where I covered stories emerging on the social beat. As long as I could find an angle where the stories I worked on made people think differently, I'd achieved my goal.

Outside of work life, I have a lot of extra curriculums. It's a habit I honed at Oxford and one I have continued with. I am an Ochberg Fellow with the Dart Centre for Trauma and Journalism and do a lot of work with the organisation to implement best practice when it comes to dealing with sensitive stories. A few years ago I was selected for a Rotary Peace Fellowship and moved to Thailand to study peace and conflict resolution. I am on the Board of The John Schofield Trust which helps young journalists to find mentors and I also do a lot of teaching and training.

But now, I'm embarking on a new adventure. While working in the Business Unit as a social strategy lead, I had a small idea. I'm used to dreaming big so when I couldn't find a beginner's guide to business that was fun and included animals; I decided to create one. I teamed up with another journalist called Dominic Bailey and for the past four years we've been working on our own bestiary.

We've tracked down animal metaphors used to explain market behaviour, money matters and the financial world. It's our first book and it's called Bear

Markets and Beyond: A bestiary of business terms. We take readers on a safari meeting cash cows, bull markets, unicorns, gorillas and more. We've got fun, quirky illustrations and there's a bit of etymology going on too. It's amazing to think that twenty years from my first exposure to a bestiary, I'm now the author of one.

Stay in touch

We love to hear about what our alumni have been doing. If you'd like to write an alumni profile for our website, please do get in touch with us at comms@ell.ox.ac.uk.
