Martlet

Newsletter of Pembroke College Cambridge
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Keeping Open Views

The Master, **Lord Smith of Finsbury**

Contents

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If you stand by the Porters' Lodge and look across the street – and even better if you walk down Mill Lane towards the Mill pub – you'll see a magical transformation happening. Our Mill Lane development is racing ahead, on time and on budget, and it is already looking really impressive. We took over the newly refurbished meeting and seminar rooms in 4 Mill Lane last summer, and they have been in regular use ever since. We have now, just, taken over our new auditorium, created out of the old (and now re-cleaned) United Reformed Church, and again we are already using it, with real benefit to the activities of the College. Everyone says we've managed to design seats that are both practical and comfortable, able to be used for lectures and talks but also for concerts and relaxed listening to music. Meanwhile the new gatehouse is taking shape, having emerged from its scaffolding just a few weeks ago, and with it our exhibition space above the entrance which will enable us to showcase to the wider world what Pembroke is, does, and has. And before we know it the whole first half of the site, including the first courtyard, will be finished; and we're looking forward to showing alumni round on the weekend of the Benefactors' Garden Party in mid June.

At the same time, work has begun on the second half of the site, the creation of the Ray and Dagmar Dolby Court, with a hundred new student rooms and a lovely sunken lawn in the middle. All the demolition has happened (the Mill Lane Lecture Block is no more). All the foundation piling has been done. The archaeologists have come and dug and investigated, and found one or two bits of Victorian brass; nothing to hold up the development for. And the accommodation blocks, forming three sides of an open courtyard, are now rising from the ground, astonishingly quickly. We are anticipating completion of the second phase (and therefore of the whole scheme) in the summer of next year. This is all incredibly exciting.

The 'open courtyard' point is a really important one. I've always believed that one of the glories of Pembroke's original site is that there are no completely enclosed courtyards. You look through to, and flow into, spaces beyond where you are standing. It's what makes the feel of Pembroke so green and open and welcoming. And I was determined that the same principle should apply across the road, in our new site. It does. There are no closed courtyards; and the feel will, I hope, be very much the same as it is for our current College.

Whilst all of this wonderful development work has been going on across the road, our students have been relishing the fact that life is pretty much back to its pre-Covid normal. They've been throwing themselves into all sorts of activity. The Choir sang Evensong for a broadcast on Radio 3. The men's first football team are now in the Cuppers final. Pembroke Players have been holding a succession of hugely successful 'smokers' (no-one of course smokes!). Greg Doran, the outgoing Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, came and gave an enchanting talk about cherishing and directing Shakespeare. Lord Simon Stevens, who ran NHS England until 2021, came and talked about the future of the NHS. Sir Peter Stothard – former Editor of *The Times* – came and talked on lessons in economics and politics from Crassus. And when, last May, we unveiled the new portrait of Jo Cox in Hall (a glorious evocation in white by Clara Drummond) her sister Kim Leadbeater came to do the honours, and her parents, her

husband, and her two children were all able to be here for the occasion. It was a very moving event.

There's been much talk in Parliament and the press in recent months about freedom of speech in Universities; and the government have put a bill through Parliament to protect it. (Though I suspect the impact of the bill will be more declaratory than practical.) I believe passionately in the value of free speech to a University setting. There should be no 'cancel culture' of any kind – either from those in the tabloid media who want to shut down things they don't approve of, or from those of a more radical bent who want to 'no-platform' speakers. Listening, debating, contesting, testing ideas against others: these are the things that make a University a vibrant place of thought and exploration. Disagree, by all means; but go, listen, and then argue. This is why I'm really proud of Pembroke Politics, our student society that invites speakers to come and talk; the speakers range from right across the political spectrum. And frequently our students give them a hard time. Rightly so.

I can't finish without recording a very sad note. As regular *Martlet* readers will know, our 'Gossip' columns have been gathered and edited over recent years by our much-loved Emeritus Fellow, Colin Wilcockson. Colin sadly died on 1st March this year at the age of 90. It was Colin who gave me my very first supervision, when I came up as an undergraduate in 1969. He was a brilliant teacher, and one of the kindest, warmest, wisest people you are ever likely to meet. And above all, he always had a twinkle in his eye. We'll miss him sorely. I went to visit him, at home, a few weeks before he died; and there he was, confined to an armchair, but still joking and smiling and quoting passages of poetry to me. The same old Colin. He was truly one of a kind.

The Art of Community

Simon Learmount, Pembroke's Curator

Simon Learmount is a Fellow of Pembroke, College Curator, and an Associate Professor in Corporate Governance.

We are tremendously lucky to be surrounded by wonderful artwork at Pembroke. When I mention my role as College Curator people often first ask me about the portraits in Hall – but I immediately want to draw attention also to our beautiful buildings: the intricate seventeenth-century plasterwork and wood carvings in the Old Library and Chapel; the stained glass; the medieval illuminations and literary manuscripts in the library; one of the finest collections of domestic silver in the world; even the original cartoons from the *Martlet* – the treasures all around us are, quite simply, remarkable.

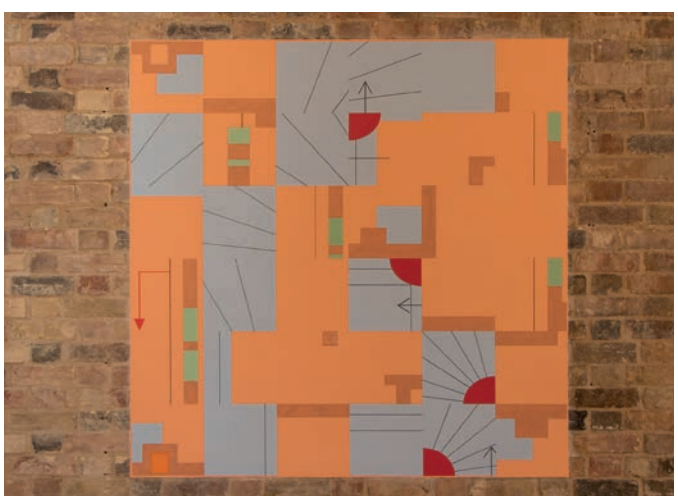
This 'heritage' collection of art provides a lens through which to view Pembroke's history and culture, and offers insights into the ways in which the College has evolved over almost 700 years – important moments and contributions have been captured in many different ways and provide telling reminders of cultural, political, and social change over time.

But Pembroke is not a museum – it is a living, breathing and, dare I say, daring community in which art continues to play an important role. It is important that Pembroke's art is not stale – it shapes our everyday individual and collective experiences and continues to be a source of intellectual, emotional, and even therapeutic stimulation (especially important as I write this in the lead up to exams!). Nor should it be predominantly male (and pale!). Art should inspire every member of the College Community, now and into the future. It should stimulate emotional and intellectual curiosity, promote creativity and self-expression, and offer new perspectives on the world around us.

PHOTO CREDIT: SALLY MARCH

The new George Tjungurrayi painting.

PHOTO CREDIT: SALLY MARCH



Alison Turnbull, foyer oil painting 'Up and Down in the Void (A)' 2023.

To this end the College has accelerated its commissioning and collecting of new art in recent years – generously supported by benefactions from alumni. No longer do the paintings in Hall mainly commemorate former College Masters; over recent years we have added portraits of the following: Kamau Brathwaite (1950), the Barbadian poet and founder of the Caribbean Artists Movement; Emma Johnson (1985), the pre-eminent clarinettist; Jo Cox MP (1992) the passionate campaigner and activist who was tragically murdered in 2015; and – soon to be unveiled – a stunning life-size portrait of former British Ambassador to Myanmar, Vicky Bowman (1984) painted by acclaimed Burmese artist Htein Lin.

In the new Mill Lane Development we have recently hung a shimmering painting by George Tjungurrayi, the well-known indigenous Australian artist. In Foundress Court we now have the imposing Henry Moore sculpture 'Figures in a Shelter'; John Farnham's 'Crescent Figure' lies at the end of the Avenue opposite the entrance to the library; Nigel Hall's 'Natural Pearl' sits beautifully outside Senior Parlour; and two stainless steel sculptures have been intriguingly placed – one by William Pye amongst the borders of Red Buildings gardens and the other by Austin Wright high-up facing outwards onto Tennis Court Road (encouraging passers-by to 'look-up').

The most exciting new opportunity to expand and push forward the way we think about art in College has come with the development of the new Mill Lane site. The original development brief determined that we should create 'the best possible environment to attract the best minds and nurture their excellence so that they can go out and change the world'. Which, we felt, not only meant we needed to make sure the architecture and overall environment measured up, but also that there was a holistic and coherent vision for art across the site. To this end the College engaged a lead artist to work with us and the architectural design team. Alison Turnbull's works and vision are now, as I write, being unveiled to reveal stunning enhancements to the new courtyards and buildings.

Alison has searched through the College archives to draw inspiration. She has discovered original Waterhouse drawings of the College Library, and has admired a glittering new colour palette amongst the collection of minerals bequeathed by Meredith Dewey. One result: striking new paintings applied directly to the plasterwork in the new foyer space that will serve as a principal access point for the new site. Alison has also engaged with current Fellows to understand complex scientific patterns that can bring life and intrigue to geometric design. The result: courtyards with York Stone paving that is specially cut to create a Voronoi transformation contrasting with the more formal surrounding paving treatment; also, at the centre, a porcelain mosaic again drawing on Waterhouse's spiral motifs. The contrasting conceptual approaches, one based on found historical image and the other on mathematical process, are aimed at adding a new layer of meaning to the new public spaces.

In addition to Alison's work we have also just unveiled two striking 'light paintings' by Ardyn Halter (1975) – contemplative, calming, colourful works that will, I am sure, delight everyone who sees them. We will also be able to display our existing treasures properly in the stunning new Mill Lane gallery space, which is to be opened later this year with an inaugural exhibition that brings objects from Pembroke College's collection into dialogue with work by emerging contemporary artists. We will additionally soon be able to enjoy the truly magnificent new auditorium which will be launched with a specially commissioned, forward-looking dance performance that responds to the College's history and existing spaces.

Unquestionably, art at Pembroke has never been in better health, and I feel there is no better time to have been Pembroke's Curator. Our collections continue to remind us of our history and past achievements, but the newer work complements, builds, and expands upon this to enrich and inspire current and future generations of Valencians – and make everyone feel part of this dynamic, vibrant community.

An Incredible Journey

Ned Lebow reflects on his life and career from orphanhood to becoming an Honorary Fellow of Pembroke

To the best of my knowledge, I was born in Paris sometime in 1941. I was rescued by a French policeman from the first roundup of foreign Jews in France in July 1942, hidden briefly in a suburb, and then in a village in the south. The Jewish underground arranged to smuggle me and other Jewish children across the Pyrenees into Spain, thence to Lisbon, and finally by ship to New York City. Almost a hundred of us were offloaded at night with the immigration officials looking the other way. I was sent to an orphanage, and then adopted by a childless, middle-aged, Jewish couple. They were wonderful parents to me and a baby boy they adopted at the end of the War. My earliest memories are of family – including an uncle in uniform – neighbours, and other kids on our tight-knit block of terraced houses in Queens. My first political memories are all war-related: blackouts (dad was a block warden); armed allied merchant vessels in the harbour flying different flags; President Roosevelt's death in April 1945; and VE day a month later. I dreamt for a while in another language which then disappeared.

Not surprisingly, my childhood dictated my choice of career. I wanted to know why World War II and other wars had broken out, why people were trying to kill me and my family, and what could be done to protect other children from the horrors of war and racism. I can look back with some satisfaction on a career of fifty-four years as a university professor in which I found some answers to the questions that troubled me. I also learned that answers rarely result in solutions – at least in the social world. In *Why Nations Fight?* (Cambridge, 2012), I discovered that since 1945 some two-thirds of states lost the wars they began. An even higher percentage, whilst militarily successful, failed to achieve the political goals they sought.

Photo of Ned Lebow from around 1945.

The majority of leaders involved failed to conduct any kind of reasonable analysis of the likely costs and gains before drawing their swords. They were supremely overconfident, emotionally aroused, and held thoroughly unrealistic expectations about the willingness or ability of their adversaries to oppose them. They ignored relevant and available evidence, side-lined officials who sounded alarms, and generally surrounded themselves with like-minded people. Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is only the most recent example of this phenomenon. Drawing on research in political psychology, some of it my own, I have sought to explain this destructive pattern of behaviour and what might be done to avoid it.

In related research, I documented how perceived opportunities and needs prompt leaders to commit themselves to aggressive foreign policies and then deny warnings that their policies are likely to fail. The most effective way of preventing war is to select good leaders, and this is not always in our power. Nor can we take confidence in a specific type of government. Contrary to the claims of some liberals, democratic states do not necessarily produce more peacefully inclined leaders than dictatorships or authoritarian regimes. Since 1945, democracies have been both the most warlike *and* the most peaceful kind of government. Contrary to realist and liberal theories of war, I have tried to document how matters of national status, which buttress the self-esteem of leaders and publics, are the principal source of war. Those matters are currently at the root of the Sino-American conflict, and the principal motive for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Another of my long-standing research interests is political order. In 2018, Cambridge published the final volume of my trilogy, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*. Drawing on political theory, comparative politics, international relations, psychology, ethology, and classics, it offers an account of order as both an emergent process and the result of conscious efforts – although often with unintended consequences. I offer propositions about the formation and evolution of political orders and why and how they decline. I identify long- and short-term threats to political order that have to do respectively with shifts in the relative appeal of principles of justice, and the lack of restraint by elites. I explore the consequences of late modernity for democracy in the United States and authoritarianism in China. My trilogy forges new links between political theory and political science through the explicit connection it makes between normative goals and empirical research.

I continue my scholarly activities in retirement. This year I have published books with the University Presses of Cambridge and Oxford on the nature of knowledge, and a comparison of Chinese and Western conceptions of justice and their implications for international relations. The latter is co-authored with a younger mainland Chinese scholar, Feng Zhang. I also published my first novel and book of short stories. I am finding fiction a liberating experience and a means of presenting my ideas to a broader audience.

I am very grateful to Pembroke College for making me an Honorary Fellow. In the fourteen years I have been associated with the College, initially as a Visiting Scholar, and then as a Bye-Fellow, I have thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from my intellectual and social interactions with colleagues. I hope I have made some small contribution in return.

Seeing to the Forest for the Trees

Anil Madhavapeddy writes about working to halt global tropical deforestation

Anil Madhavapeddy is Professor of Planetary Computing at the Department of Computer Science & Technology, and the Director of the Cambridge Centre for Carbon Credits (4C) over at the Cambridge Conservation Initiative. He's been a Fellow of Pembroke College since 2015.

As I write this, I'm watching a troupe of spider monkeys call to each other as they leap among giant strangler figs, gazing at scarlet macaws feasting on their fruits and flying over the horizon, and dodging industrious leafcutter ants feeding the fungus at the heart of their underground nests. I am deep in Costa Rica, exploring one of the most magical regions of our world – the moist tropical rainforest.

Tropical rainforests are home to two-thirds of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, while only covering around 5% of the globe's land surface. This century has seen us steadily decimate these regions around the equatorial belt by cutting them down for logging and agriculture. Around 0.5% of tropical forest cover disappears annually, meaning that we have the realistic prospect of losing not only a huge carbon sink crucial for arresting global temperature rise, but also face a collapse in the biodiversity of species that is vital for the robustness of our ecosystems. The varied life in these rainforests is a source of wonder that will never return to future generations once lost in ours.

As a computer scientist, in 2019 I started exploring how to contribute to playing my part in addressing this problem. The first idea I had with my colleague Srinivasan Keshav was to build technology for rapidly planting trees. Upon consulting our colleagues Andrew Balmford (Zoology) and David Coomes (Plant Sciences), they gently drew a simple analogy to help set our priorities straight: when your house is on fire, you don't call in the decorators until you quench the flames. It should not be our top priority to plant new trees while existing irreplaceable centuries-old rainforest is simultaneously being clearcut in the name of human industry!

My conservation colleagues started using satellites to monitor more scalably the state of forests from space. They were frustrated with the difficulty of handling the vast amount of digital data transmitted by the satellites, which are on the order of magnitude of petabytes (a modern laptop has perhaps a terabyte of storage, so this is over a thousand times that). This was the perfect angle for a computer scientist like myself to finally be useful, and so in 2021 with a charitable donation from the Tezos Foundation we established an interdisciplinary group called the Cambridge Centre for Carbon Credits (4C), based just opposite Pembroke College in the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.

Our goal is to figure out how to finance the change in land use towards sustainability, such as via the intensification of agricultural areas to spare forest. Deforestation mostly occurs because local people make income from cutting it down, selling the timber and growing crops on the land. Protecting tropical forests is unlikely to be successful unless there is a strong financial flow towards deforestation frontiers that promote alternative livelihoods, allowing the local people to be given adequate economic incentives to conserve old-growth forests. An example of one such impactful nature-based solution (NBS) project is in Sierra Leone, where there has been an effort since 2011 to grow sustainable cocoa without cutting down the precious old trees in the Gola Rainforest.

The current primary mechanism for funding NBS incentives from the private sector is the voluntary carbon market (VCM). The VCM allows organisations to balance the climate harm from necessary residual CO_2 emissions with equivalent climate benefit from an NBS intervention. They use 'carbon offsets' that represent the equivalent carbon sequestration potential to the climate harm caused from necessary emissions. Each carbon offset is tied to an NBS project that is measured for its additionality (the extra extent to which CO_2 was sequestered as a result of the intervention), adjusted for leakage effects (the negative externalities resulting, such as shifting deforestation elsewhere in the world), and discounted for the impermanence of the resulting sequestration over time. NBS interventions work alongside technology-based removal of CO_2, but NBS have the significant co-benefits of improving biodiversity and local livelihoods in the global south.

For this system to work, the measurement methodologies for these geographically dispersed projects must be consistent and accurate. Currently though, they rely on highly manual methods; assessors often only visit project areas once every 5-10 years to gather data, processed by international analysts and auditors. Existing methodologies are therefore hard to quantify, hard to verify and hard to scale to the global levels needed. At 4C, we've been creating an independent verification process for nature-based solutions, founded on project audit methodologies that are scientifically rigorous and accurate, and satellite data that reduces the need for manual measurements and site visits. The resulting assessments are based on modern statistical methods and are more cost-effective than existing techniques, and offer a path to building scalable portfolios of high quality carbon offset projects that are globally comparable.

We've also been working on deploying these methods for use by the University. Our sustainable travel policy requires us to take the lowest emissions option. When air travel is unavoidable, we wanted to have a credible carbon offset scheme available to compensate for these necessary emissions. The University first commissioned a working group in 2020 to form a strategy, and 4C then took up the baton to provide recommendations on a growing portfolio of projects. While the University has some UK projects, the bulk of the global projects came via NGOs in the Cambridge Conservation Initiative such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The main thing that's leapt out at me in the past few years is how much we'll all have to work together to make a dent in the climate and biodiversity crises, and the Pembroke community is no exception. If you're interested in contributing, or have questions, then do drop me a line <avsm2@cam.ac.uk> the next time you're in College!

Voyages by Voice

Connie Bloomfield-Gadêlha, Draper Fellow, on her research into traditions of oral poetry

Rural Northeast-Brazil, known as the *sertão*, is home to *cantadores*, inheritors of West African and indigenous oralities and troubadour traditions brought by the sixteenth-century Portuguese to Brazil. Graeco-Roman mythologies accompanied troubadours across the Atlantic, instigating classical transmissions and receptions both far removed from the study of classical texts in Europe, and within social systems possessing startling parallels to those producing archaic Greek oral verse.

Cantadores are travelling popular poets who compete in improvised, sung contests. They demonstrate their skill through extraordinary displays of erudition on subjects ranging from ancient history and philosophy to agriculture to astrology. Especially before the late twentieth century, a large proportion of *cantadores* were illiterate, and the classical material survives through patrilineal oral transmission. In the late nineteenth century, with the introduction of the printing press in Northeast Brazil, these oral verses began to be printed and sold as chapbooks with woodcut print covers.

These chapbooks are known as either a *folheto* or a *cordel* (plural *cordéis*) from their display on strings in marketplaces. In this process, narrative poetry began to replace the extempore improvised competitions. However, *cordéis* are still intended to be performed, and many of their consumers were (and to an extent still are) illiterate, buying a *cordel* for a literate family member to read aloud.

As a classicist, it was the resemblance between these Brazilian traditions and the oral poets of the ancient Graeco-Roman world that first ignited my curiosity. In the 1930s, Parry and Lord's ground-breaking studies on Yugoslav epic singers transformed our understanding of Homeric poetry, and it seemed that Northeast-Brazilian oral poetry could provide an important postcolonial parallel. I spent months in remote areas of Brazil where this poetry still flourishes, interviewing poets, making recordings and collaborating with archives and universities across the country. As I began to immerse myself in the poetic traditions of the region, it became clear that the connection between Northeast Brazil and Graeco-Roman antiquity was far richer than I had imagined.

Northeast-Brazilian popular poetry developed from a complex tapestry of global traditions, and the poets perform a profound concern with antiquity. These poetic traditions have typically been studied as antiquated folklore that resulted from the isolation of the Northeastern *sertão* from the modernising developments that impacted the rest of Brazil. However, the poetry demonstrates sophisticated engagement with transatlantic philosophical, intellectual and theological developments from antiquity, throughout Modernity and into the present day. Popular poets understand their relationships with world history through the metaphor of a journey, drawing on the peregrinations, past and present, that underpin the Northeast-Brazilian way of life: troubadours, cattle drivers, travelling poets, travelling priests and messianic preachers, explorers, colonisers, refugees, transatlantic immigrants, enslaved Africans, and economic migrants fleeing drought-induced poverty. This provides a crucial popular perspective on Northeast-Brazilian history, which complicates narratives of historic immigration, the transition to Brazilian independence, and the regionalism that, to a large extent, still characterises Brazil in the modern day.

Poetry is an invaluable reservoir of popular histories. Following poets' use of classical European elements maps an intricate story about the movement of knowledge, religions and people across the world. Preserved along with Graeco-Roman elements are popular memories of the medieval interactions between the Iberian peninsula and the Arab world; the expulsion of Jews, Muslims and Travellers from the area after the Catholic Reconquista in the fifteenth century and their relocation to Brazil; and the exchange of knowledge, particularly Neoplatonism, between eastern and western Europe via Byzantium at the end of the Middle Ages, which laid the foundations for the Renaissance Humanism that was embedded in Northeast Brazil by the Jesuits.

At times, the ways that Northeast-Brazilian popular poets use classical antiquity reflect how Graeco-Roman myth became a vehicle for Renaissance European religious conflicts between Catholicism and Protestantism to control the 'New World'. Likewise, references to classical antiquity in Northeast Brazil often reflect how it was appropriated by European colonial powers to conceptualise, document and colonise the Americas and its peoples, and to enact dehumanising violence during the transatlantic slave trade. Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly, the popular poetry reveals the close dialogues between Northeast Brazil, New York and France during the revival of ancient thought in the New Age religions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Theosophy and Spiritism. One popular immigration story even asserts that the indigenous Northeast-Brazilians descend from archaic Phoenician navigators, or from the original population of Atlantis.

In this migration-based popular conception of history, all journeys lead to the *sertão*; Northeast Brazil becomes the centre and culmination of this historical web of cultures and conflicts. This understanding of the *sertão*'s relationship to the world is underpinned by the Renaissance belief that Brazil was the realisation of the Biblical prophecy of the promised land, asserting Brazil as the centre of God's new kingdom on Earth. These messianic strains were central to the popular Northeast-Brazilian psyche in the nineteenth century, when major millenarian movements awaited the apocalypse in the *sertão*, sometimes imagined through the voices of mythical figures such as Tiresias.

Tracing these stories through popular verse reveals the incredible historical breadth and depth of Northeast-Brazilian popular traditions. It also uncovers a deeply ambivalent relationship to classical Europe, in which uses of classical antiquity seem to be depositories for the complex historical tensions that are now central components of the region's inheritance and identity. This research can only hope to scratch the surface of how Graeco-Roman antiquity works within such an ancient and vast tradition; the *sertão* and its poets have many more stories to tell.

Connie Bloomfield-Gadêlha completed her PhD at King's College, London in 2022. She has recently co-edited a volume on time in ancient Greek literature with Edith Hall (forthcoming with Oxford University Press, 2023), and is currently preparing her first monograph on receptions of ancient cultures in Northeast-Brazilian popular poetry.

One Hell of a Lecture

Nicolò Crisafi on the 2022 Keith Sykes Lecture

Dr Nicolò Crisafi is the Keith Sykes Fellow in Italian and Director of Studies for Modern Languages at Pembroke College. He is the author of *Dante's Masterplot and Alternative Narratives in the 'Commedia'* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

The Keith Sykes Lecture is an annual tradition named after the longstanding benefactor of Pembroke College and Italian Studies at Cambridge, Mr Keith Sykes. Thanks to Sykes's generosity, and through the organisation of Pembroke's Academic Associate Dr Giulia Boitani, this tradition resumed on 26th October 2022 with the lecture of a very illustrious speaker.

The speaker followed in the footsteps of a programme of experts in Italian Studies, broadly conceived, as eclectic as it is distinguished. Past editions of the Keith Sykes Lecture have catered to all tastes and have featured the Italian Presidents Giuliano Amato and Romano Prodi, distinguished academics such as art historian Gabriele Finaldi, Director of Italy's National Gallery, and the late historian Paul Ginsborg, and popular personalities, such as TV presenter Piero Angela, the Italian David Attenborough. And perhaps no-one catered to all tastes better than Antonio Carluccio – the chef was protagonist of a memorable *Serata Italiana* in 2015, a dinner open to all students of Italian, courtesy of Mr Sykes, and still fresh in the memory of many.

But man liveth not by bread alone, and so this year the Keith Sykes Lecture returned with another President: Prof. Roberto Antonelli, President of the Academia dei Lincei, and of innumerable other prestigious academies, societies, and foundations, due to his merits in the Humanities. Prof. Antonelli made his fame as Professor of Romance Philology at 'La Sapienza' University of Rome, where he became Head of the Faculty of Human Sciences and then President of the Ateneo federato delle Scienze Umane, delle Arti e dell'Ambiente.

But to me Antonelli will always stand out as emblematic of Italy's finest tradition of literary critics. He has published over two hundred books and essays, both in leading role and in collaboration. Most admirably, he unites his expertise in the field of Romance literatures and languages across medieval Europe with the consciousness of an intellectual who engages with modern writers. The Keith Sykes lecture on *Dante and Pasolini* was an example of this marriage of two muses.

While Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) needs no introduction nowadays and is widely held as the founder of Italian literature, there was a time when his name was not a source of national pride but of embarrassment. A few decades after his death, Petrarch was already mocking Dante's admirers, 'ignorant people in taverns and public squares'. The poet's reputation languished for centuries, with Voltaire memorably claiming that he was no longer read in Europe because his *Divine Comedy* was replete with allusions to people and events long forgotten.

Different times brought different readers. In the wake of the French revolution, some began to re-interpret Dante's fiery temperament in light of a Romantic fascination with passion and personality. Others saw his commitment to Italy's language and politics as announcing the revolutionary season of Risorgimento that was to lead to the nation's unification in 1861. Upon seizing power the following century, Fascists duly seized the myth of Dante as a national poet, while the Church claimed him as a theologian. In overt opposition, anti-Fascists highlighted the anti-establishment militance of Dante's later years, when he wondered Italy as an exile from his hometown Florence and a fierce critic of the Pope. Passionate, political, nationalistic, or anti-establishment—Dante was once again as popular as ever.

PHOTO CREDIT: SALLY MARCH

Prof. Antonelli delivering the Keith Sykes Lecture.

It is a testament to the plurality of inspirations and talents of Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975) that his engagement with the Florentine poet over thirty years responded to virtually all facets of his personality emphasised by readers of the preceding one and a half century. Antonelli's lecture sifted through Pasolini's writings, correspondence, and interviews to produce a fascinating and paradoxical picture of this engagement over his career. Like Dante, Pasolini emerged from this investigation as a poet who transcends the boxes that some critics have tied to put in. In his poem 'Le ceneri di Gramsci' (1957), Pasolini called this trait of his 'the scandal of my self-contradiction'.

Self-contradiction is found in Pasolini's tremendous confidence in his grasp of history but also in his feeling history's prisoner ('But just as I have a hold on history, | so it has a hold on me', 'Le ceneri di Gramsci'). Similarly to Dante, he was constantly experimenting with a language for Italy but also seeking to make it as 'transnational', or in his terms 'transclassist', as the visual language of cinema ('Conversation with Jon Halliday', 1968).

Pasolini ultimately realised that the lessons of Hell can only be learned in the first person. His novel *Divina Mimesis* made him the protagonist of his own journey to the afterlife. The novel was published in a rush a few weeks after his murder. As incendiary a figure as the Dante he so admired, Pasolini also made many an enemy. In an interview from his later years, he had condemned everyday indifference and do-goodery stating that, in contrast, 'those who carry the cross are constantly risking their life' ('Interview by Clemente Ciattaglia', 1971). Antonelli paused for the audience to reflect on the significance of these words. He then concluded the lecture with Ciattaglia's comment on his Pasolini's words: 'returning to Dante allows Pasolini to continue hoping in literature in the very moment when literature and the world seem definitely lost and in crisis.' These seemed as auspicious words as any to mark the recommencement of the Keith Sykes Lecture.

An Idle Scholar

Flora Scott-Barrett (2016) on Interning at the United Nations in NYC

Through the Eric Idle Scholarship, Pembroke offers one graduate the opportunity to spend four months working in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) at the UK Mission to the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York. I was the very lucky recipient of the scholarship in 2020 and, after two years of COVID travel bans, I was finally able to take up the internship last Autumn. I had the most fascinating, unforgettable – and at times totally surreal – four months.

On my first day, I was taken along to a meeting in the Security Council chamber on the situation in Libya. Quite apart from the initial novelty of sitting behind our Ambassador with the UK name plate, it was fascinating to see the dynamics in the Council. When I first entered I was given a firm handshake and a business card by one of the Russian delegates, only for his Ambassador to deliver a speech about how the UK had caused the Libyan civil war. I initially found this juxtaposition of personal civility and thinly-veiled public criticism quite jarring, but it was soon clear that regardless of the world outside the Security Council, decorum was the thing keeping all parties at the table.

In the following two weeks I witnessed the outpouring of condolences after the death of the Queen. It was interesting to see what respect she was held in as a diplomat in her own right, even by countries which had fought for independence from the British Empire. I manned a book of condolences in the UN building and spoke to many diplomats who came to us with vignettes about when they'd met her and what she symbolised.

Shortly afterwards we were launched into the UN General Assembly (UNGA) High Level week, and half the UK Cabinet, including Liz Truss in her brief window in office, swooped into New York for a week of back-to-back speeches. The week was frantic but fascinating. In the first in-person UNGA since COVID, there was a sense that real life had resumed and the buzz around the UN was tangible. I saw Heads of State in the lobby of our office, greeted Foreign Ministers, including a Saudi Prince, and escorted a Minister to a conference hosted by two Nobel Peace Prize winners and the US Deputy Secretary of State. My background in Arabic at Pembroke gave me an opportunity to help translate in meetings between the FCDO Middle East Director, the founder of the White Helmets, the leader of the Syrian Interim Government, and Syrian civil society organisations in support of those 'disappeared' by the Assad regime.

There were a few moments of the UNGA week which can only seem farcical in hindsight; the panic in the office when we were told that the PM had left her dental retainer in No.10 and her flight was being held until her Special Advisor could collect it, the near miss of a diplomatic incident involving mismatched flagpoles, and the rite of passage of being stuck for half an hour at a crossroads whilst Biden's motorcade passed.

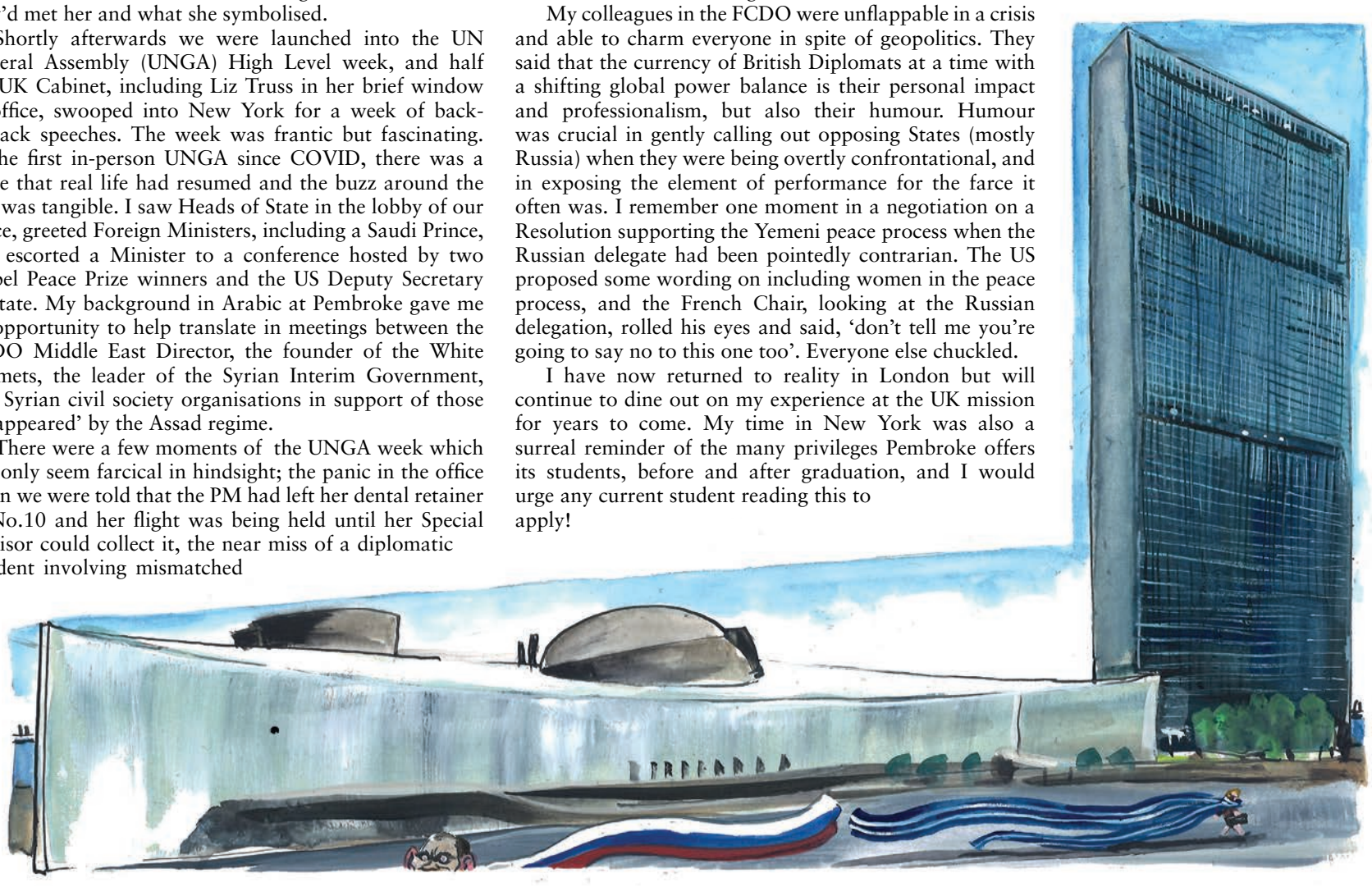
The Russian invasion of Ukraine permeated every discussion, and supporting Ukraine was the primary focus of everything the UK Mission did. One particular highlight for me was helping to track lobbying efforts across the FCDO's global posts for a General Assembly Resolution condemning Russia's annexation of four regions in Ukraine. Once the initial resolution was vetoed by Russia in the Security Council, it was amazing to witness the global Foreign Office system galvanised into action to persuade other States to vote on the right side of history.

It was a real insight into the levers of soft power the UK still has, despite its dwindling economic status and exit from the EU, and the extent to which the UK and its 'like-mindeds' can lean on bilateral relationships for something symbolic. I sat in on meetings between Barbara Woodward, the UK Ambassador, and Ambassadors of States liable to abstain on the vote, to witness how one of the UK's top diplomats exerts a quiet moral authority and leverages personal relationships despite often tense bilateral relationships. Eventually, it was a success, and despite a few States being swayed by their bilateral ties with Russia, or a generalised mistrust of a Resolution touted by 'the West', more States voted in favour of the resolution even than in the initial condemnation following the invasion. I got to be in the General Assembly Hall when the vote took place, with a prime view of the Russian Ambassador's evident chagrin.

My colleagues in the FCDO were unflappable in a crisis and able to charm everyone in spite of geopolitics. They said that the currency of British Diplomats at a time with a shifting global power balance is their personal impact and professionalism, but also their humour. Humour was crucial in gently calling out opposing States (mostly Russia) when they were being overtly confrontational, and in exposing the element of performance for the farce it often was. I remember one moment in a negotiation on a Resolution supporting the Yemeni peace process when the Russian delegate had been pointedly contrarian. The US proposed some wording on including women in the peace process, and the French Chair, looking at the Russian delegation, rolled his eyes and said, 'don't tell me you're going to say no to this one too'. Everyone else chuckled.

I have now returned to reality in London but will continue to dine out on my experience at the UK mission for years to come. My time in New York was also a surreal reminder of the many privileges Pembroke offers its students, before and after graduation, and I would urge any current student reading this to apply!

Flora Scott-Barrett read Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies at Pembroke from 2016-2020, and is now a Policy Advisor at the Department for Science Innovation and Technology.



Writing Russia since its Invasion of Ukraine

Conor Farrington (2004)

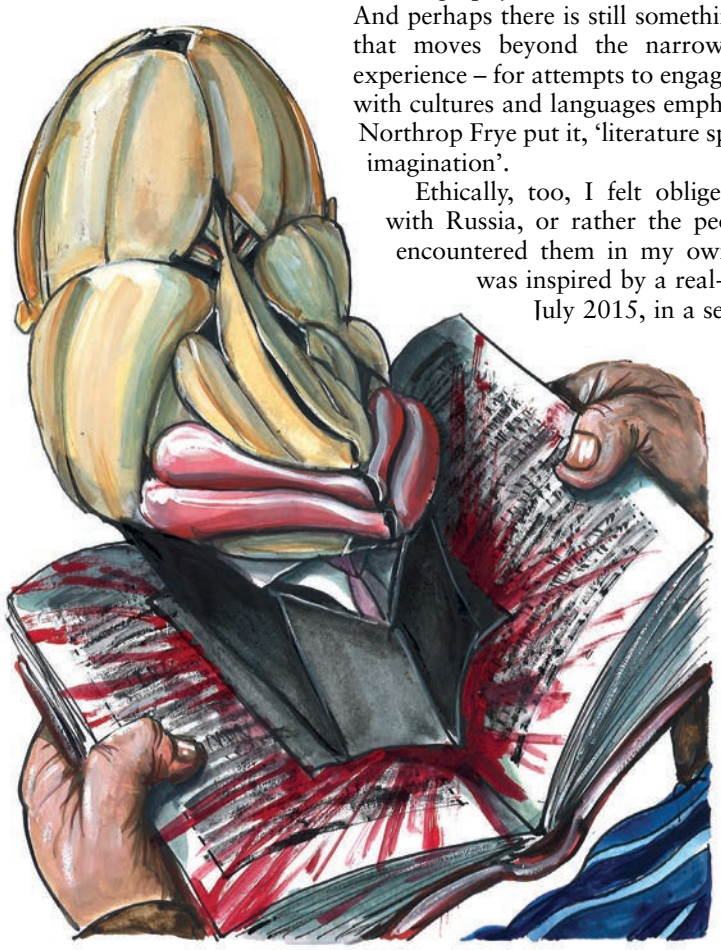
Conor Farrington is a Cambridge-based author with a series of novels based on and around the Trans-Siberian railway, published by Constable/Little, Brown. He is also a freelance writer, with words on music, literature, technology and politics in *The Guardian*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Science*, *Political Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Conor is currently a Bye-Fellow of Hughes Hall, following over a decade of teaching and research on technology and politics at Cambridge. He also runs communications for a climate-tech startup, SATAVIA.

In my novel *Death on the Trans-Siberian Express*, I describe my protagonist, Olga Pushkin, as follows: 'Her cheeks were broad, her nose stolid and wind-raw, her eyes deep-set and wary and wise. She had a face like Russia.' Russia, wary and wise? The book came out in November 2021, and three months later this description had already 'aged like milk'. The ink had hardly dried on my signed copies when Russian wisdom seemed a distant memory. It was war without the peace, and crime without the punishment; dead souls in deadly earnest.

As the Russian tanks mobilised, I was finishing a sequel, *Blood on the Siberian Snow* – but chronicling everyday life in Siberia lost its charm when set against reports of war crimes in Bucha and Mariupol. 'Russian literature [consists in] the phenomenal coruscations of the souls of quite ordinary people', wrote D.H. Lawrence – but what happens when those same people support a genocidal attack upon a neighbouring state? What new ethical duties might this impose upon those writing about Russian society?

One literary response could be self-censorship – disengaging with Russia and writing instead about other places closer to home. After all, 'writing what you know' has never been more popular. Sally Rooney recently declared that she couldn't imagine writing fiction set elsewhere than her native Ireland, prompting John Banville to remark that 'writers in Ireland now seem just to be writing about their immediate lives and the lives of their friends'. I also have Irish roots – so on this logic I should have abandoned Moscow for Monaghan, and Tomsk for Tipperary.

Not everyone agrees, however. Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro described this approach as 'the most stupid thing I ever heard… It encourages people to write a dull autobiography. It's the reverse of firing the imagination'. And perhaps there is still something to be said for writing that moves beyond the narrow confines of our own experience – for attempts to engage, however inadequately, with cultures and languages emphatically not our own. As Northrop Frye put it, 'literature speaks the language of the imagination'.



Ethically, too, I felt obliged to continue engaging with Russia, or rather the people of Russia as I had encountered them in my own travels. Olga Pushkin was inspired by a real-life Olga whom I met in July 2015, in a second-class compartment on the Trans-Siberian Railway between Nizhny Novgorod and Kirov. It was her face and name that came to mind when I had the idea for *Death on the Trans-Siberian Express* while walking my baby daughter to sleep one New Year's Eve. But there was a deeper, wider debt, too – lasting memories of everyday kindness to set alongside all the other recollections of warmth and hospitality and surprising grace along the endless tracks of the Trans-Siberian Railway. It is a comfort, in these darker days, to recall my encounters with ordinary Russians like Olga, and to cling to the belief that something other than Putin's atavism lies at the heart of this vast country – to the belief that its fundamental nature resides less in televised threats of nuclear war than in the soft, enduring words of Leo Tolstoy: 'The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.' And perhaps writing about Russia as it could be helps to efface the Russia that currently is. Perhaps, contra Sartre, essence could still precede existence in some productive way.

Nevertheless, settling the *why* still leaves the *how* – how best to engage, that is, with a dictatorial society drenched with propaganda. A good place to start is by engaging directly with states on the page, writing novels that deliberately foreground formal and informal politics and their complex entanglements with social dynamics. Perhaps reflecting my past as a political scientist here at Cambridge, my own books unashamedly take this approach, prompting *The Times* to describe *Death on the Trans-Siberian Express* as a 'colourful take on the corruption and tragicomic antics of Putin's kleptocratic state'. (If this is the starting point, perhaps the endpoint should be more writers in politics. There are plenty of fabulists at Westminster, after all – so why not add some professionals into the mix?).

Another starting point could be past literary engagements with despotism, such as Thomas Mann's modernist masterpiece and partial allegory of Nazi Germany, *Doktor Faustus*. Doing justice to Mann's account of the rise and fall of the fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn would take far more space than I have here, but some key points can be summarised as a vade-mecum for those writing about totalitarian states and societies. Mann emphasises personal culpability in Faustian downfalls, for example: the devil is literally in the details of Leverkühn's self-impelled descent into the perceived creative freedom of Nietzschean insanity, rather than existing as some external driving force that can serve (like NATO for Russia) as a scapegoat for all ills. Likewise, the narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, is complicit in his friend's fate, standing in for the 'serene' lip-service paid to humanitarian ideals even while societies fall into the chill totalitarian grip. Alongside culpability and complicity, Mann also adds another 'c': the disastrous consequences of dealing with the devil (however interpreted): Leverkühn suffers a final and irrevocable collapse into delirium, leaving Zeitblom to relate the cataclysm engulfing Germany as the Allies advance in 'devastating liberation'.

And yet, there is one fourth, final 'c' that Mann leaves in the text – a literal note of consolation, the high 'G' with which Leverkühn's last work, *Dr. Fausti Weheklag*, concludes: a reedy yet tangible symbol of grace, standing 'als ein Licht in der Nacht' (as a light in the night). By the end of the book, the no-longer-serene Zeitblom recognises the catastrophic outcome of Germany's embrace of Nazism, and in his anguished doubts that Germany 'could ever in future dare open its mouth on humane matters' we perceive the only grounds upon which this state of affairs could ever come to pass (as indeed it has). 'The blood-drenched state … that carried the masses along on a surge of ecstatic happiness', in Zeitblom's apt phrase, does not last forever. Perhaps we can still hope that wisdom might return to a post-Putin Russia, and even find there a society at last willing to be, in Leverkühn's words, 'on familiar terms with humanity'.

LGBT+ Life at Pembroke

Oscar Merlin Griffin (2021)

When I was in high school it was easy to feel like 'the only gay in the village'. I wasn't the *only* gay – my best friend was gay too – but when I came out a second time I was certainly the only trans kid in the village. When you feel like you're the only person like you, you aren't aware of the treatment you deserve from others. I allowed bullying to go largely unchallenged, and even accepted stopping P.E., as I didn't see a precedent for trans students in sports and neither did the school. I started an LGBT+ society but other students protested and it was difficult enough to meet safely, let alone get any real change passed in the school. The group had some successes – meeting with leaders of Stonewall and the education minister to influence LGBT+ education in schools – but it largely fell flat because no high school student has the capacity to take on that kind of uphill battle.

When I left high school, I retained this vigilant outlook: that to be out and queer was to be always having to fight back. I don't think my experience is particularly unique, and so for many queer students we arrived at university unsure of what to expect. But those of us who came to Pembroke were pleasantly surprised.

It's difficult to write about LGBT+ life at Pembroke, because compared to the drama of school there isn't much to say – which is a good thing! In our cohort, I don't think peers would even assume someone was heterosexual. A large percentage of students are queer, yes, but it's not something that others would care about, certainly not in the obsessive way kids often do in high school.

Poster advertising this year's Mx Pembroke drag contest.

As a Junior Parlour Committee LGBT+ Officer I expected a similar battle with administration like the one our group faced in school, but I found the majority of groundwork was already in place. Previous officers had established points of welfare support, and there were no immediately obvious College policies that desperately needed to change. Further improvements, like updating the College's flags and increasing the amount of money dedicated to the Gender Expression Fund, felt like great bonuses as opposed to urgent issues of survival.

College policy and College culture are tied up with each other, and both foster a welcoming environment for LGBT+ staff and students. The College environment of course is not solely down to the work of the undergraduate committee. We stand on the shoulders of giants, or rather, a giant.

I don't exaggerate when I say that a big selling point of the College for me was Chris Smith, the first openly gay MP in our country, and a lifelong champion of LGBT+ progress. While contact with a College master is not guaranteed, Lord Smith goes out of his way to be involved with the undergraduate community: hosting LGBT+ specific events such as drinks receptions and talks, but also hosting social evenings in the Master's Lodge each term for all students. He is involved in Diversity and Inclusion talks between the student body and Fellows, and spoke alongside Peter Tatchell in our LGBT+ History Month seminar. It was a great privilege to hear from two people who championed LGBT+ progress, albeit through different methods. The Master remains involved in current LGBT+ issues, such as his work with the Terrence Higgins Trust, working to combat stigma surrounding HIV. We are extremely lucky to have such a forward-thinking College body that is open to working with student representatives – some other colleges have not been as receptive to recent change.

Oscar Griffin is reading Classics.

Pembroke is an extremely welcoming environment, one in which a person's sexuality or gender identity does not impact their safety or wellbeing. In fact I believe the LGBT+ community is celebrated – for example, through quiet appreciations like our recent library display of LGBT+ books, and more flamboyant displays like our recent Amateur Drag Contest, 'Mx Pembroke'.

Through my work as a JPC wellbeing officer, I've been reminded that however safe and accepting the college environment becomes, many queer students will not find the same acceptance or understanding at home or elsewhere. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to help enable students' exploration of their identities and self expression within college.

Onwards and Upwards

Matthew Mellor, Director of Development

Regular readers of the *Martlet* will know its 'Gossip' column well. Its compiler, Colin Wilcockson, sadly died earlier this year. He was a much-loved and admired Emeritus Fellow in English Literature, and his teaching of the subject left a mark not just on his hundreds of former pupils, but on his colleagues on the Fellowship, whatever their subject. Colin was a Fellow of the College for very nearly 50 years, but to my mind always showed an almost childlike love of his subject. He also projected a warmth towards his students that, even in a place as supportive and friendly as Pembroke, really stood out. I will miss him and I know many others will too.

Continuity, such as Colin embodied, is not exactly a novelty in a Cambridge college. No doubt there are Fellows of other colleges who are even more long-standing than Colin. Indeed, there remain a few in Pembroke itself. It would be a mistake, however, to confuse 'continuity' with 'complacency' or to assume that one followed the other.

The people I am honoured and privileged to work with in Pembroke, and in Cambridge more widely, are not resting on their laurels. Those whose reflexive association of a Cambridge college is to an image of Lucullan feasts, or fusty sitting rooms that look like the gentlemen's clubs of London, labour under an outdated impression of what it is like. There is definitely still progress to be made, but progress is being made all the time.

It may well be a product of my limited imagination, but I cannot think of a better example of an institution with a commitment to progress than Pembroke. With our new facilities – that I might never tire of telling you about – we are able to make a contribution to the future like we never have before. It is not just about inspiring bright young people to apply, though that is a foremost consideration; it is about giving researchers, our Fellows, our graduate students, their collaborators elsewhere, a place to discover and develop ideas, to express them and, thereby, improve the world. This sounds grandiose, but … pay a visit to Pembroke when the whole Mill Lane site is complete (we hope and expect it will be by Spring 2025) and you will surely think it's irresponsible not to aim so high.

There are obvious contributions: for example, we have talented thought-leaders and researchers in many fields relating to the challenges of climate change; we can and aim to be a 'sector leader' in the student experience – academic and extracurricular – and in general wellbeing. We have a truly exciting opportunity with the development of LEAP ('Leadership, Engagement and Adventure at Pembroke') to enable our students to realise what their potential is, and then to attain that potential.

Our plans to expand the range of activity of the Parmee Prize could create generations of influential, entrepreneurially-minded Pembroke people. Think not just of the businesses that might be created, but of the improvements to our lives that they could make. Think of the charities into which swathes of Pembroke people go to work: people forget, when considering their charitable giving, that large numbers of those who work for these worthy charities and NGOs are graduates of places like Pembroke.

The beauty of a Cambridge college is that it can bring people of different perspectives, backgrounds and intellectual and academic disciplines together in creative ways. From wide reading and listening, it has become increasingly clear to me that while, bluntly, science can solve many problems, you need story-tellers to convince people of the value, even where one might believe it to be self-evident. In short, a multi-disciplinary place like Pembroke can remind everyone of what Higher Education means and why it matters.

There's a huge role you can play in that: the College will be thrilled to show you the new Mill Lane site. The public spaces will be open from this summer onwards, while the Ray and Dagmar Dolby Court is completed in readiness for occupation by students in 2024 or 2025. I want you to visit, to enjoy, and to imagine – are there things that you would like to see Pembroke do? that you could imagine doing with Pembroke now that the facilities are there? that you could see yourself doing in Pembroke?

You can link with the College by coming in person, and also by joining the Pembroke Online Community, if you haven't already done so. A huge proportion of alumni have joined it, and are active in building communities within the Pembroke community, just as they did when they were resident. They, you, can also help our current students by mentoring, advising, even giving opportunities like internships. Pembroke has the headspace and indeed physical space to do this now. Your imagination and new ideas are welcome and vital as we shape the coming years in the College and beyond it.

In Memoriam: Colin Wilcockson

In response to news of the death of Colin Wilcockson, Emeritus Fellow of English and long-standing Editor of the *Martlet*'s 'Gossip' section, many alumni sent in tributes to him. What follows is an edited selection of the tributes. To see all of the tributes in full, please visit www.pem.cam.ac.uk/tributes-colin-wilcockson

I owe him a great deal, and years later, when I reconnected with the College, it was a pleasure to get to know him better as a mature adult and no longer the immature student I had been. He was a modest man, quietly sure of himself and a fine poet.

– Jonathan Mantle (1972)

I count being supervised and directed by Colin as one of the most entertaining and most valuable experiences of my life and it certainly helped to form me as a poet. Though he was the soul of kindness he was also swift to pounce on nonsense in a supervision or essay, but always with a twinkle. When one of us made the mistake of disparaging the 'Ignorant Middle Ages' in his presence, he fixed the culprit with his good eye and said sardonically 'That's the trouble with the Middle Ages isn't it? You have to deal with thickies like Thomas Aquinas!' No one made that mistake again!

– Malcolm Guite (1977)

I will always remember Colin's boundless enthusiasm, particularly for subjects dear to his heart such as Anglo-Saxon literature, and of course, as for many others, my picture of him will always be of him playing bowls with great gusto on the College green!

– Will Strafford (1982)

As Admissions Tutor back in the 80s, Colin was the very first contact many of us had with Pembroke. He was quite perfect for this role. With his engaging smile & spontaneous wit he embodied the warm, friendly & unpretentious character of the College and made any candidate's decision to join this special community a very easy one. Over the course of 50 years Colin left an indelible imprint on so many aspects of College life. Personally, I was always very grateful for his unwavering support for music at a time when the College was better known for rowing & rugby.

– John Davison (1982)

What a charming man Colin was – he persuaded me to apply to Pembroke over five glasses of sherry and a wide-ranging discourse. I didn't regret it. He was truly a polymath with extensive modern languages and a scholarship worn lightly but built on a lively and broad enthusiasm which could, with a twinkle in his good eye, tie Mozart's operas to Anglo Saxon etymology. Supervisions with him were sparkling and often cheekily off syllabus, as they should be. I had the pleasure of seeing him in 2022, after many years, when we viewed the Barrie Cooke/Ted Hughes archive – he still glowed with enthusiasm. He will be remembered fondly and missed by a great many.

– Peter Illingworth (1983)

I studied English in the first year of women at Pembroke. From our first meeting, I appreciated Colin's warmth and openness, particularly to those of us entering this new and traditionally male world: with Colin, I always felt welcome and I always felt equal. Colin was generous and hospitable and seemed genuinely to care about us all. I'm sure he will be greatly missed.

– Kate Beales (1984)

Colin was a friendly, approachable presence at Pembroke, someone we all felt we could turn to for advice and encouragement. In fact, his nickname when I was a student was Uncle Colin. There was nobody more alive to language's subtlety and subtext and I shall miss very much our chats about all things literary, which could range from Welsh poetry to Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the novels of Zola. He will be sorely missed, both by his students and the wider college community.

– Emma Johnson (1985)

Colin or 'Professor' as we fondly called him. was not only a friend but an integral part of the Bentum-Williams family. Our parents, ourselves and our children all knew Colin. Those who did not get the chance to see him heard stories of his kindness and the support he and Pam gave to us during our time studying in Cambridge. Colin, your Ghanaian family will miss you!

– Barbara Bentum-Williams Dotse (1986)

Colin's Puckish enthusiasm once led us on a high-speed trip from Pembroke to visit a church in Hertfordshire which featured medieval graffiti about the bubonic plague. As Colin zoomed along, I asked why the car kept bleeping. It was a speed limiter, he said, but the quicker we got there, the quicker it would stop!

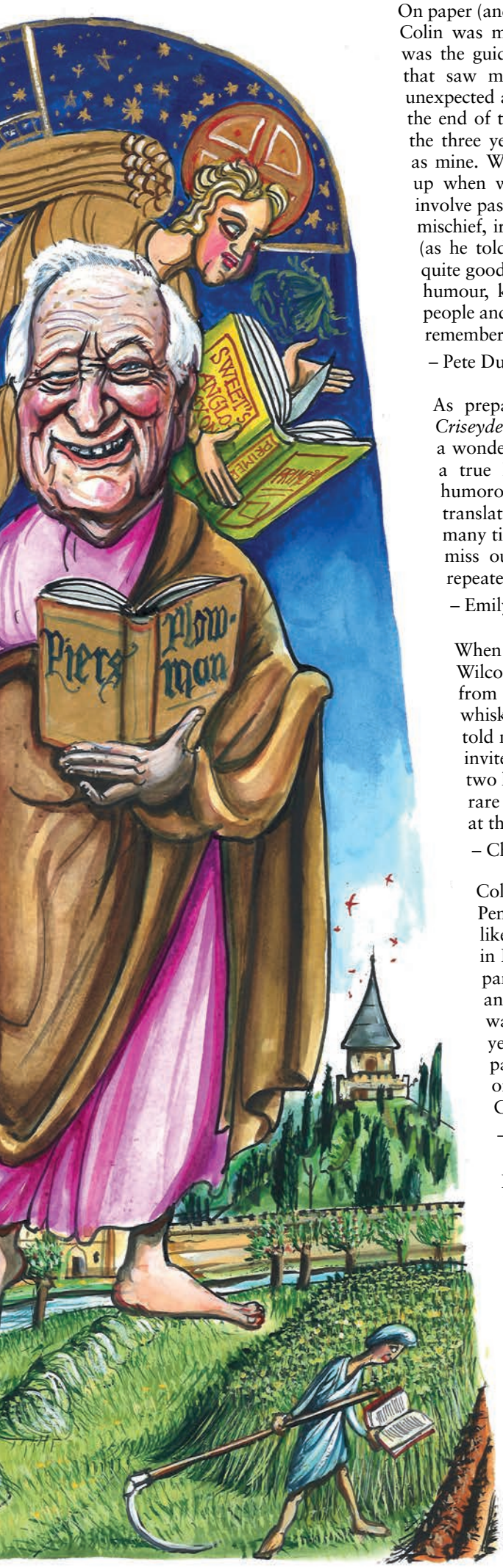
– Rebecca Lloyd James (1986)

More than thirty years after I left Cambridge I can still hear Colin's voice reciting Caedmon's poem as recounted by Bede. His deep love for and commitment to literature was matched by his care for his students. He was kind and sympathetic where needed – and a taskmaster when necessary too. I learned much from studying with Colin, not just about medieval literature but about life more broadly.

– James Wood (1988)

When I wrote my first novel, his teaching room in D staircase featured as a safe and happy place of learning. When I received my presentation copies, it was to him I sent the first one. Throughout my adult life Colin has always been there. It's hard to comprehend he's gone. And sad. I shall miss him immensely.

– Elisa Lodato (1998)



On paper (and there was much of it over 3 years) Colin was my Director of Studies. To me, he was the guiding light of patience and support that saw me through tough times after the unexpected and premature death of my Dad at the end of the first year. Success at the end of the three years was as much his achievement as mine. We always stayed in touch and met up when we could. He very much liked to involve pastries when we did. He tolerated my mischief, irresponsibility and laziness because (as he told me years later) I was sometimes quite good at my subject. I will remember his humour, kindness and incredible interest in people and their accents. But most of all I will remember the permanent twinkle in his eye.

– Pete Duff (1989)

As preparation for studying *Troilus and Criseyde* Colin told us to fall in love. He was a wonderful scholar of medieval literature, a true Pembroke man and a kind and humorous teacher. I've used his facing-page translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* many times teaching A-level English. I will miss our correspondence and his often-repeated invitation to dine at Pembroke.

– Emily Pomeroy (1989)

When I arrived with my luggage, Colin Wilcockson was the first person (aside from the Porters) I met in College. He whisked me away to his rooms for tea, told me about Everyone in College, and invited me to a Fellows drinks, all in two hours. Over the years I admired his rare ability to be amiable and scholarly at the same time. A true gentleman.

– Christine Hansen (1990)

Colin was the reason that I came to Pembroke. He reassured me that a girl like me (from a non-fee paying school in Liverpool) could very much have a part to play in a college like Pembroke and encouraged by him, I applied and was offered a place the following year. His warmth, kindness, and passion for the poetry and beauty of Middle English, particularly Chaucer, guided my studies hugely.

– Hester Macdonald (1991)

I have fond memories of Dr Wilcockson pointing out all the rude bits in whichever poem we were reading and chuckling to himself as he did so. His sheer enjoyment of the subject was infectious.

– Jenny Robbins (1993)

Colin was a lively reminder to me that literature is more alive when shared in the air. In mediaeval times, one read aloud even when alone. From the start, Colin's supervisions involved this airing of the text. His and our reading aloud created a sense of occasion: the learning process became action. I think that by sharing, not teaching, he taught more. Colin also had a useful sofa... If you reached your hand down into the seat-well, beneath the cushions, you could pull out nice pens, coins... even a silver ring. Just as he asked you a tricky question, you could produce one of these to divert the conversation. Phew!

– Bill Carslake (1994)

When I arrived at Pembroke from Calcutta, quite fresh off my Air India flight, little did I expect the flood of warmth and welcome that would greet me in the form of Colin Wilcockson. Colin was our academic supervisor. But more importantly, he was the leader of our merry little tribe. From poetry reading nights in the Thomas Gray Room to Pooh Sticks tournaments off a bridge on the Cam, Colin was always there for us, in our fullest experience of College life. I cannot imagine our time at Pembroke without him. Thanks to Colin, et in Arcadia ego.

– Arnie Guha (1994)

My favourite memories of Colin involve the wonderful evenings he hosted in The Thomas Gray room in which we shared readings of our favourite poets for no reason other than the joy of celebrating a communal love of literature. These are memories I shall cherish always and I am profoundly grateful to Colin for helping to create them.

– Tom Smith (1995)

Colin once told me of literary analysis, 'You have to feel it in your heart before you can ever think it in your head'. It's some of the best advice I ever received, for academia and for life. Reading the news of his passing saddened me greatly, but also reminded me of how thankful I am to have known him.

– Graham Rogers (2009)

When I was a child, I was a writer. I filled my free time with composing poems, short stories, riddles, and unfinished novels. By the time I met Colin in the spring of 2011, however, I hadn't written anything outside schoolwork in years. Colin understood that it was an issue of confidence. When you spend your days studying the great minds of English literature, how can you dare pick up a pen? But Colin had the remedy: I still repeat his tongue-in-cheek mantra, 'I'm a bit of a genius', before writing any song lyric or line of prose. I will miss him dearly, and I hope that I can continue to immortalize him by telling everyone I know about his story about mistaking Glaswegians for Germans, how he got me to drink coffee for the first (and only) time, and his infectious love of all stages of the English language.

– Olivia Harding (2010)

I called him Uncle Colin because that is exactly how it felt to me. He was my father's brother from another mother. Not only was Uncle Colin responsible for my coming to Pembroke College to do my PhD, he also ushered me into one of the four major intellectual paradigms with which I have organized my scholarship since then. To think of Uncle Colin is also to have to think in superlatives: he was the most generous, the kindest, and the funniest and most self-deprecating man you could ever think of. He practised an ethics of compassion and care that extended to everyone, irrespective of gender, race, or sexual or religious orientation. And so, I will remember Uncle Colin as one who had not a jot or a tittle (words that would meet his approval) of malice in his everlasting soul. If we can imagine that a better life lies just beyond the boundary, it was surely made for him. May He Rest in Perfect Peace.

– Ato Quayson (1991) former Pembroke PhD student and Fellow

Gossip

From the *Gossip* Editor

Pembroke College takes its responsibility under the GDPR for processing your personal data safely, appropriately and with transparency. Please be aware that as the Martlet is published online any contribution to the Gossip will be publicly accessible. If you would like to know more about our data protection policy and privacy notices please go to www.pem.cam.ac.uk/dataprotection. If you have any questions or concerns please contact dpo@pem.cam.ac.uk.

We have used the form of names with which letters have been signed, and have throughout omitted titles. The date above each entry is the date of matriculation.

N.B. When sending in a Gossip entry (*180 words maximum please!*), do please indicate your matriculation date, and, if possible, that of other Old Members you mention. Deadline for contributions to the 2024 *Martlet*: 18 March 2024.

Gossip should be sent to me, Sally March, by email: <Sally.March@pem.cam.ac.uk>.

Notification about published books should be sent to:
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1954
Eric Middleton writes: 'It is some 70 years since I entered Pembroke, played my violin in the Dean's Musical Evenings, boxed for Cambridge and played cricket for Pembroke (incidentally bowling out David Shepherd...). I should like to thank those who sent me their 'Special Places' – 'Thin places' as the Celts called them. They were included in my latest book, *Surprised by the Spirit* – copies still available from me. May I ask if any past or present members would be willing to send a response to the following question: 'Where in your life have you had an almost spiritual encounter or experience?' I should be most grateful for any further emails for my next book, *Awareness of the Spirit*. Please send responses to <eric.middleton2@btinternet.com>.

1958
Bernard Adams writes: 'I can record two recent publications: *The Hangman's House* (Andrea Tompa's *A hóhér háza*), which was long-listed for the Oxford–Weidenfeld translation prize 2022 – in which it was the only Hungarian title – and a re-translation of the famous 1845 Hungarian classic *The Village Notary* (József Eötvös's *A falu jegyzője*). I usually recommend reading a passage from my work as a help with insomnia, but these two will encourage the patient to stay awake!

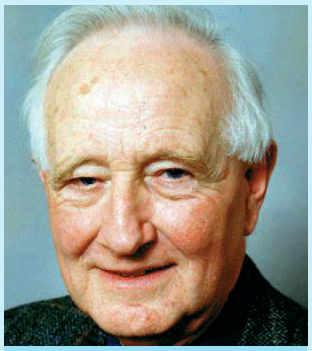
1961
Stephen Nash writes: 'I left Diplomatic service in 2002. Having been Ambassador to Georgia, Albania and Latvia, I now chair the Anglo-Albanian and the British Latvian Associations; we also set up the British Georgian Society and widened the scope of the Anglo-Albanian, originally founded by Aubrey Herbert ('the man who was Greenmantle') and Edith Durham in 1912, the year of Albania's independence from Ottoman rule. Pembroke – in particular Dr James Hickson, the great nephew of Edith Durham – helped by giving us access to the Old Library for our 2016 symposium on Scanderbeg, Albania's fifteenth-century national hero. We are at present working for an Edith Durham blue plaque in London for the 'first female war correspondent' and author of anthropological works such as *High Albania* (1909). Our focus on Latvia has sharpened since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and we were much impressed by the words of our lecturer this January: Dr Artis Pabriks, a former Latvian Defence Minister, insisted that the Ukrainians should not be left to fight alone for their independence as they are in essence fighting for all of us'.

1965
David Carrington writes that 'Fifty years after leaving Pembroke, I would like to report my first literary composition has been prepared for publication. I have led a life of infinitesimally small significance in an unremarkable suburban environment, and now have written my Last Will and Testament. I anticipate a substantial delay before the publication date is finally confirmed'.

1979
Aidan Wallis writes: 'In August 2022, the Gregory King Society met at the College with the seven Pembroke economists of 1979 reunited for the first time since their graduation. Travelling variously from Africa, Asia, North America and (slightly less long distance) within the UK, Johnny Andrews, Jacky Foo, Neil Jerome, Stephen Prowse, Rashid Pertev, Aidan Wallis and Steven Winram resumed conversations started in 1979 and enjoyed the extensive college accommodation. Many topics were covered and toasts were made to the College; to Michael Kuczynski and absent friends; and to Gregory King (arguably, the first econometrician who gave his name to the fledgling society of Pembroke economists and to Gregory King's Law)'.

1983
Philip Godfrey writes: 'I continue to teach, perform and compose music. My most recent stage musical, written with young performers in mind, is *Labyrinth of Life*, based on the legend of Theseus and the minotaur; it received its (excellent) first performances at a North London school in 2022. My *Fortune Green Service* (evening canticles) for upper voices & organ was premiered recently at Ely Cathedral by the Girls' Choir, and will be published by Encore Publications. I still play the organ, including recently at a funeral at which the Right Reverend Peter Wheatley (matriculated 1966?) presided'.

Poet's Corner



Colin Wilcockson, Emeritus Fellow in English, 1932-2023.

Sagittarius: Archer of the Year's End

Soft shadows shade my garden from the flame
Of last leaves flickering on the chestnut boughs:
I fear the winter archer's ice-shaft aim.

Past is my age of dreams which have no name,
Too late fulfilling promises and vows:
Soft shadows shade my garden from the flame.

Now quiet acceptance without praise or blame,
Ambition lost that its brief fame endows:
I fear the winter archer's ice-shaft aim.

So let this garden to the world proclaim
That past and future shall not grief espouse:
Soft shadows shade my garden from the flame.

Conkers bright-gleaming in a childhood game
Conjure up spirits, memories arouse:
I fear the winter archer's ice-shaft aim.

Defiant verses strive yet to declaim
Dream-visions caught in moments while I drowse:
Soft shadows shade my garden from the flame –
I fear the winter archer's ice-shaft aim.

Martin Rowson statement:

I'm very proud of my association over two decades with *The Martlet*, producing cartoons for each issue since 2000. However, a recent cartoon I drew for *The Guardian* about the resignation of Richard Sharp as Chair of the BBC inspired in me nothing but mortification and deep deep shame. In composing the cartoon, I blithely supplied my cartoon Sharp with various accessories which, wholly unintentionally, taken together were subsequently read as anti-Semitic tropes. *The Guardian* withdrew the cartoon the morning it was published and I have apologised unreservedly on my website (you can read the full apology here: www.martinrowson.com/).