



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

RES_oEARCHER

Research News from the Leeds School of English

Winter 2026



ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- News: inaugural lecture, book launch, PGR symposium
- Awards, prizes, and fellowships
- Publication news
- Funding successes
- Impact activities and public engagement
- Seminars and workshops
- Recent PhDs and MRes
- Upcoming research events in the School

Welcome back, RESoEARCHERS!

In this issue of *RESoEARCHER* we'll be showcasing the many achievements, activities, and events from across the School of English from the second half of 2025, and looking ahead to some of the forthcoming publications and presentations through which colleagues will be disseminating their research.

RESoEARCHER aims to celebrate the School's research culture in its widest sense, and to continue to foster an inclusive and welcoming intellectual community. Alongside information about members of staff, you'll find updates here about a number of current and former postgraduate researchers' publications, activities, and impact initiatives, together with details of recently awarded PhD and MRes degrees.

We draw your attention in this issue to our colleagues' many successes both with external awards for literary and practice research and in competitive internal funding schemes, and to two conferences taking place in May and June.

We would also like to recognise and celebrate the extensive contribution made to our research community by **Martin Butler** who retired recently. And we wish to mark the sad news of the passing last September of **Jane Plastow**. Further responses to Jane and her achievements can be found within this issue.

To contribute stories to the next issue of *RESoEARCHER*, email Matt Woodcock, Research & Impact Support Officer m.woodcock@leeds.ac.uk



RESEARCH NEWS

Inaugural Lecture

On 12 November **Julia Snell** presented her inaugural professorial lecture, 'Language Diversity and Social (In)justice'. Julia articulated the different ways in which linguistic injustice manifests in education – from dialect discrimination to deficit thinking about the language and abilities of underprivileged children – and reflected on the consequences for teachers and pupils.

Drawing on research conducted over 20 years, Julia shared her attempts to challenge deficit-based views of working-class children's speech and to promote dialogic approaches to teaching and learning in classrooms. The lecture's large audience was comprised not only of colleagues, family, and friends but of 122 Year 13 students and 19 teachers.

A recording of the lecture can be found on the LAHRI website.



Remembering Jane Plastow

Professor **Jane Plastow**, who has died at the age of 66, was a fearless and funny colleague and friend. She was also a highly respected scholar and theatre-maker who earned an academic reputation for her contributions to community-based theatre, African studies, and global development. This was underpinned by a series of well-regarded publications, including *Community-based Arts, Research and Activism in Uganda: We Are Walukuba* (2025), and *Somali Musical Theatre* (2026). She co-produced research and collaborated with communities and individuals in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Having completed her BA at the University of Manchester, she taught first in The Gambia and then Ethiopia before returning to Manchester for her PhD and starting work at the University of Leeds in 1994. Based in her beloved Workshop Theatre in the

Poetry@Leeds

In autumn 2025 **Kimberly Campanello** took up the directorship of Poetry@Leeds (previously known as the Leeds University Poetry Centre), a role held previously by **John Whale**.

Poetry@Leeds is the University's longstanding hub for research, impact, and teaching in poetry. Its members' work and active programme of activities reflect the powerful insights – across disciplines, time periods, languages, and cultures – to be gained from researching and writing poetry in a university environment.

Poetry@Leeds is managed by **Matt Howard**; further news about its members' research and activities is available at <https://poetry.leeds.ac.uk>

Caster Cultural Fellowships

Douglas Caster has very generously agreed to fund a further five two-year Cultural Fellowships in Poetry. Following on the success of the previous programme of Fellowships, we will be relaunching the scheme this year, with a view to having a new Fellow in place in September.

This is fantastic news for the School, and is also testament to the outstanding work of our Creative Writing team—including **Matt Howard** and **Zaffar Kunial**, both of whom have held Caster Fellowships in the past.

School of English, while also leading the Leeds University Centre for African Studies (LUCAS) for a decade, she became Professor of African Theatre in 2006. We miss her.

Bridget Bennett

Director of Research and Innovation, School of English



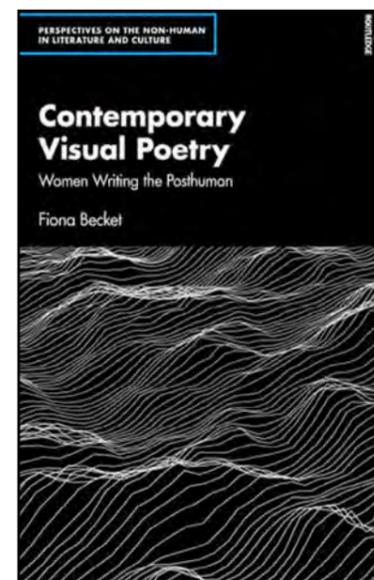
Jane Plastow, left, working with the community group We Are Walukuba in Jinja Uganda. Photo credit: Dr Katie McQuaid, UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, School of Geography.

RESEARCH NEWS

Book Launch

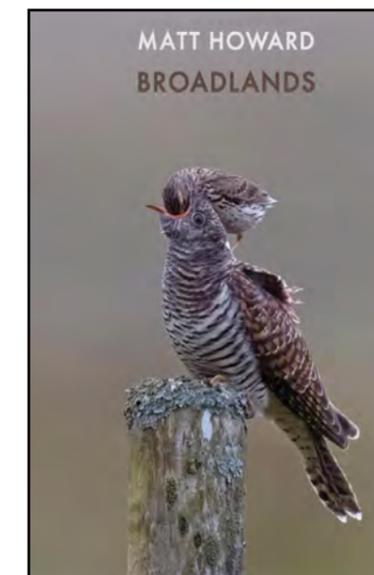
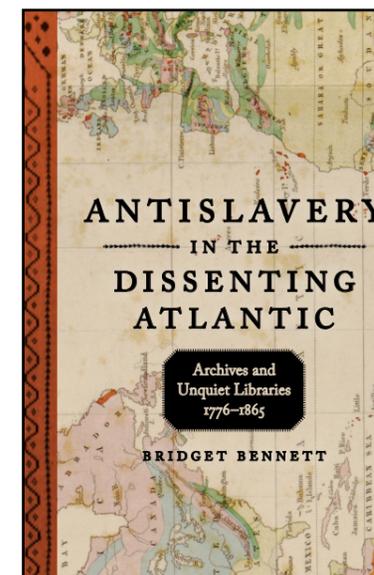
The School of English continues to host a series of book launches. Last December, Poetry@Leeds organised an online book launch for **Fiona Becket's** new monograph *Contemporary Visual Poetry: Women Writing the Posthuman*, published by Routledge.

For further launches, see 'Forthcoming Events' below and the School's website.



PGR Symposium

The first School of English PGR Symposium took place on 11 November, organised by **Sophie Fennelly**, **Natalie Hopwood**, **Zijian (Frank) Cui**, and **Jay Kerslake**. The event comprised of 9 full-length papers, 4 three-minute thesis talks, and a keynote from interim PGR Director **Richard Salmon**. It was really well attended and received very positive feedback about the value of bringing the PGR community together to both showcase ongoing research and foster peer engagement. There have already been expressions of interest in running a symposium next year and it is hoped that this event will inaugurate a new tradition!



AWARDS AND PRIZES

Bridget Bennett's book *Antislavery in the Dissenting Atlantic: Archives and Unquiet Libraries, 1776-1865*, was selected by the American Studies Association as the winner of the Shelley Fisher Fishkin Award for International Scholarship in Transnational American Studies.

J.R. Carpenter's poetry collection *Measures of Weather* was shortlisted for the Laurel Prize 2025. A poem from the collection was also highly commended by judges of the Forward Prizes and is included in the Forward Book of Poetry 2026.

Matt Howard won the 2025 Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) book prize for poetry for his collection *Broadlands*. Matt's poetry collection *Resident*, produced during his tenure as poet-in-residence at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield, came out in August 2025.

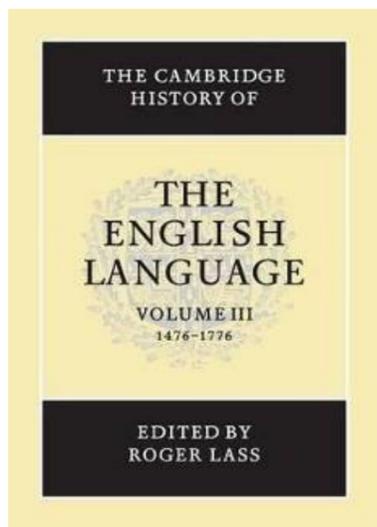
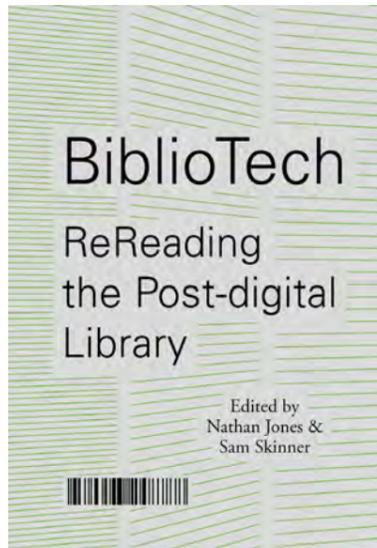
Jess Richards's *When You Find That Thing You've Lost, Will You Dare To Lose It Again* was a finalist in the New Flash Fiction Review Annual Awards 2025. Jess's flash fiction *if you lock god in one room* was longlisted for the Mslexia Flash Fiction Competition 2025. Her poem *A Bird from Everywhere* was longlisted for the Mslexia Women's Poetry Competition 2025; it was in the top 3% of entries and shortlisted for the poetry category of the Bridport Prize 2025. Her flash fiction *The Opposite of Helplessness* was in the top 4% of entries and shortlisted for the flash fiction category of the Bridport Prize 2025.

Caitlin Stobie was shortlisted for the Morland African Writing Scholarship.

FELLOWSHIPS

Alexander Thom has been awarded the 2025 S. Ernest Sprott Fellowship, for an amount of ~£23,750, in support of his research on the displaced in English drama, 1575-1625.

David Wylot won a fellowship for The Pantzer Visiting Scholar in Descriptive Bibliography programme hosted by The Lilly Library, Indiana University Bloomington, to support research for the project 'Setting the British Novel: 1957-1984'.



SCHOOL OF ENGLISH PUBLICATION NEWS

Simon Armitage's latest poetry collection *New Cemetery* was published by Faber & Faber in September.

Fiona Becket's new monograph *Contemporary Visual Poetry: Women Writing the Post-human* was published by Routledge in September.

Bridget Bennett's "'A Volume of a 'Different Hue': Transatlantic Print and the Making of the *Aurora Borealis*, a Quaker Literary Annual', is appearing in *Early American Literature* 61.1 (2026). She spoke on this research at the BrANCA conference in Paris in December.

J.R. Carpenter's chapter 'Library of Wind' appeared in *BiblioTech: ReReading the Post-digital Library*, ed. Nathan Jones and Sam Skinner (Torque Editions, 2025).

Marco Condorelli's textbook *An Introduction to the English Writing System* is in press with Edinburgh UP and scheduled for publication in December this year.

Amelia DeFalco's journal article, 'Reading Robots: Representation, Interpretation, Design', is forthcoming in *Culture, Theory and Critique*.

Mel Evans's chapter on the 'History of English in the Digital Age' (co-written with Caroline Tagg) was published in *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Volume 3*.

Paul Hammond co-edited with Nicholas Hammond and Joseph Harris *Racine's Late Greek Tragedies: Essays on 'Iphigénie' and 'Phèdre*, to be published by Brill in April 2026. The collection includes Paul's essay, 'The Endings of Iphigenia', and **Denis Flannery's** essay, 'Simon Stone's *Phaedra*: Adaptation, Reading, and Care in the Making of a New Play'.

Grace Marsh (PGR, English) had three poems from her MA published in *The Polyphony*.

Emily Middleton's chapter on adaptations of Dickens's works, 2012-2020, appeared in the *Wiley and Blackwell Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. D. Paroissien and L. Litvack. Emily co-edits the Digital Forum of the *Journal of Victorian Culture*; the latest forum, 'Where next for digital Victorian Studies?', is now available for advance reading.

Jay Prosser's article 'The Jewish Mahallah of Singapore as a Site of Transcultural Memory' was published in *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* 15.1-2 (2025 for 2024), 1-43.

Jess Richards's shortlisted flash fiction *A Large Pot, Used for Cooking Very Slowly* was published in the Bath Flash Fiction Awards Anthology (Volume 9). Her shortlisted poem *Watching Perfume Ads with the Sound Off* was published in the *Aesthetica* Magazine Awards creative writing anthology 2025.

Richard Salmon's edited book on the early history of the Society of Authors (1884-1914) is now contracted for publication with Cambridge UP.

Alison Searle published 'Paradises Lost: Innocence and Excremental Whiteness in John Milton and James Baldwin', *Literature and Theology* 38.4 (2025), 269-83; and (with Jo Sadgrove) 'Organizational Identity and Decolonizing Care: Archives, Mission, and International Aid', *Mission Studies* 42.1 (2025), 6-30. Both articles are available Open Access.

Kate Simpson's poem 'Bilaterian' appeared in a volume celebrating the 30th anniversary of *Photoworks*. Her poem explores photography, the evolution of sight, and the future.

Wei Zhou published 'Vivien Eliot, *The Criterion*, Autobiografiction', *The Journal of T. S. Eliot Society (UK)* (2025), 1-33.

FUNDING SUCCESSES

Kimberly Campanello received an Ignite Award to support activities based on her ongoing translation of Dante.

Amelia DeFalco won LAHRI Pump Priming funding to support development of a funding bid linked to her research project 'Building robots for care: Designing inclusive, accessible care robots with difference in mind'.

Yara Rodrigues Fowler (PGR, English) is part of a six-person collective, The New Common Sense (TNCS), awarded a £3,000 Literature Matters Award by the Royal Society of Literature. (Other members of the collective include Guy Gunaratne, Jessica Gaitán Johannesson, Christina Neuwirth, Bridget Minamore, and Hussein Kesvani.) TNCS will begin as a podcast series interviewing writers shaping the radical political imagination through literature in Britain, expanding to include in-person events delivered with community organisers and indie bookshops around the UK with an emphasis on locations outside London. TNCS aims to create a new literary commons, renewing the case for the role of literature in our everyday lives and our shared future.

Jay Prosser was successful in applying to the 2025-26 LAHRI Network Grant scheme for his Rethinking Jewish Cultural Heritage network. Jay recently also received an award from the University's Digital Research Creativity Fund for Accelerator Funding for his project 'Digitally Reconstructing a Desecrated Holocaust Torah Scroll'.

Julia Snell and **Stuart Murray** were both successful in the 2025/26 HEIF Maturing Impact Funding scheme. This was a highly competitive process run within the University, and the School of English received 2 of the 5 grants awarded to AHC

IMPACT AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Kimberly Campanello read from her ongoing translation of Dante on BBC Radio 4's *The Verb* on 12 October. Kimberly also gave performances at Ledbury Poetry Festival and at Il Nodo Ch'io Vidi, Festa dell'Emmigrante, held in Volturara Appula, Italy. Kimberly's poetry collection, *An Interesting Detail*, launched in York in July, and featured in events at the Kildare Readers Festival, the Festival of Italian and Irish Literature in Ireland, and at York Centre for Writing.

The University of Leeds Poetry Showcase at the Ilkley Literature Festival on 18 October featured **Kimberly Campanello, Charlotte Eichler, John Whale, Maia Elsner, Matt Howard,** and **Zaffar Kunial**.

J.R. Carpenter performed at BBC Contains Strong Language and Poetry in the Aldeburgh Festival.

Tony Crowley was interviewed by Michael Rosen for BBC Radio 4's *Word of Mouth* programme on 15 January 2026.

Brett Greatley Hirsch attended a production of *Fair Em* by Lord Denney's Players at the MadLab Theatre, 6-8 November, in Columbus, Ohio. The production used the draft modern-spelling text of the play from the edition he's preparing for Digital Renaissance Editions. The production was professionally filmed and the recording will be made available on YouTube in the near future. Brett also gave a plenary paper, '[Un]Fair Em[endation]: Perspectives from Editing the Play', at the mini symposium on *Fair Em* hosted by The Ohio State University's Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

The lecture-performance 'Memoirs of a P.O.W.', by **Christiana Gregoriou** and **George Rodosthenous** (School of PCI), featured in the Impact Acceleration Account Showcase event held on 19 January 2026. Part of this project involved production of related free learning resources for schools, which use the World War II memoir of Christiana's grandfather as a way in to teaching students at Key Stages 3 and 4 about war writing, prisoner experiences, and the value of recording and studying life stories.

Natalie Hopwood (PGR, English) presented a guest lecture at Ashville College, Harrogate in October, on 'Monsters in Literature', to the Year 6s and Year 7s, coordinating with one of Ashville's English teachers, Jess Frieze, to run the lecture as a conclusion to the Year 7s' studies on monsters. The aim is to continue engagement between the college and University with further sessions on this topic.

Zaffar Kunial's 'The Groundsman' featured on the *History of England in 24 Poems* (BBC Radio 4).

With Alix Brodie-Wray (LAHRI) and Matthew Treherne (Pro-Dean for Research and Innovation, AHC), **Matt Woodcock** recorded a podcast 'From Messy Middle to REF Ready: Building Impact Case Studies' for a new AHC series on Impact in the Arts and Humanities.

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Based on her work on unquiet libraries, **Bridget Bennett** was invited to be on the opening panel of the University of Leeds Knowledge Futures Symposium in July where she discussed libraries and knowledge futures with Christopher Smith (Executive Chair of the AHRC) and Amina Shah (National Librarian and Chief Executive, National Library of Scotland). This ongoing strand of work is being further developed in a bilateral collaboration with colleagues at Leeds and at the University of Rochester, New York where the Frederick Douglass papers are held.

The first event, an online symposium for Black History Month, 'Archives across the Atlantic: Unearthing Black History', attracted an international audience of over 100. It will be followed by a Wikipedia event for Frederick Douglass Day (February 2026). Other events focusing on Open Research approaches to archives are being planned, all of them online. Further details to follow.

In November, **Mel Evans** co-organised the second workshop of the AHRC-funded Curiosity project 'Shakespeare and Early Modern Proverbial Culture' (PI: Richard Meek, University of Hull). The workshop included presentations from **Jane Rickard**, a session looking at proverbial materials in the Brotherton Cultural Collections, and a Playhouse Lab reading of Henry Porter's play *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*, which includes a character who speaks only in proverbs. The project conference takes place on 1-3 July 2026 at the University of Hull.

Denis Flannery gave a talk in November, entitled 'Bowie/Frankenstein', to the University's Philosophy society in an event co-organised with Leeds Album Review.

CONFERENCES AND KEYNOTES

Bridget Bennett was on a keynote panel at the British Association for American Studies (BAAS) conference, reflecting on the status of the *Journal of American Studies* as a revealing archive of American Studies in Britain. Her talk will be published in *JAS* in 2026. She has delivered several presentations on her book *Antislavery in the Dissenting Atlantic* since it first appeared, including at the University of York and as the annual Thoresby Lecture. She will be speaking about her book at the American Literature Research Seminar at the University of Oxford in February 2026.

Mel Evans presented a keynote, 'What letter's that? Exploring style and literariness in early modern fictional correspondence', at the Letters and Literature conference, The Open University in November.

During the autumn semester, **Natalie Hopwood** (PGR, English) reconvened the Old Norse Reading Group. The group is open to medievalists and non-medievalists alike, and for all levels of expertise. Old Norse has a long history within both the School of English and the University more widely, and the aim of the reading group is to keep this tradition alive through fortnightly meetings to engage with and translate Old Norse sagas.



Emily Middleton ran a webinar in collaboration with Gale and Research Information on teaching humanities in the age of AI.

English PGRs **Jack Rondeau** and **Alberto Andrés Calvo** started a contemporary reading group, Theory Now, that discusses recent developments in literary, critical, and cultural theory. The reading list consists of texts published after 2020 and includes influential books by Anna Kornbluh, Timothy Bewes, or Alenka Zupančič. To sign up to their mailing list, email Jack (ll6j4r@leeds.ac.uk) or Alberto (fkrk8490@leeds.ac.uk).

With Joanna Philips (School of History) and Alix Brodie-Wray (LAHRI), **Matt Woodcock** organised sessions at Leeds IMC in July focusing on engaged research and medieval studies.

Brett Greatley-Hirsch gave the inaugural lecture, "Who Called Shakespeare an 'Upstart Crow'?" for a series co-sponsored by the English and Anglo-American Studies Shakespeare Lab and the Digital Humanities and Literary and Linguistic Studies Lab at Sapienza University, Rome in October

Christiana Gregoriou delivered an invited lecture, 'On the haunted afterlife of prisons: A Critical Case Study into UK Crime-related Dark Tourism', at the University of Leeds's Centre for Criminal Justice Studies series, at Glasgow University, and as a keynote at Aston University in January 2026.

Alison May gave a workshop on Authorship Analysis at the School of Language Sciences, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in December. The workshop was presented with Alison's former PhD student, Mashael Alamr.

CONFERENCES AND KEYNOTES CONTINUED

Emily Middleton spoke in Teesdale on Charles Dickens's life before and after he visited the area to explore conditions in the 'Yorkshire Schools' he satirised in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Stuart Murray gave the keynote at the 2025 Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies conference on 'Affect, Health, and the Textual Body' in October. He gave an invited paper, 'Remembering Kafka's Bodies', at the annual Memory Studies Association conference in Prague in July.

José A. Pérez Díez presented a seminar, 'Where next? Editing early modern drama in the twenty-first century', at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon in November.

Jay Prosser presented his research on shoe soles cut from a desecrated Torah scroll at Charles University, Prague and at the Swedish Holocaust Museum, Stockholm.

Julia Snell gave a keynote (with Ian Cushing) in September at a joint National Education Union/ UK Literacy Association conference on 'Literacy in Primary Classrooms'.

Caitlin Stobie will be speaking with her co-author Kharys Ateh Laue on their collaborative creative practice at the University of Oxford's Postcolonial and World Literatures Seminar in February.

RECENT PHDS

The following PGRs in the School of English have recently completed their viva and we've received the exam reports. Congratulations to everyone!

Bushra Alsulami, 'Freedom and constraint in Saudi women's writings' (supervisors: Alison Searle and Kamal Salhi).

Eyad Houssami, 'Infiltrating ecology: The rise of industrial agriculture in modern Lebanon, 1950-1960' (supervisors: Graham Huggan and Fozia Bora).

Alfie Howard, 'Animal speech and perceptions of threat in human-animal narratives from Kipling (1894) to Kivirähk (2007)' (supervisors: Graham Huggan, Diane Nelson, and David Higgins).

Clive Lawrence, 'Mulvaney: A practice-based enquiry into how an original verse play dealing with current political concerns might be created for contemporary theatre' (supervisors: John Whale and Adam Strickson).

Katerina Liontou, 'Early romantic disaster writing and present-day climate change' (supervisors: David Higgins and Andrea Taylor).

Neko Mellor, 'Reading with the body: embodied encounters with the chronic pain narrative' (supervisors: Amelia DeFalco and Stuart Murray).

Maria (Sam) Panopoulou, 'Autotheorizing Greek queer survival: A PhD by creative practice - Memoir' (supervisors: Jay Prosser and Ruth Holliday).

Emma Pickering, 'Hearing silences: Disability and voices in the spaces of postcolonial literatures and film' (supervisor: Stuart Murray).

Kate Sayers, 'Tense and tendencies: a linguistic analysis of verbal data from people with low mood' (supervisors: Mel Evans and Anna Madill).

Xueni Yang, 'From hybrid beasts to anthropogenic mutants: Rethinking the monster in a post-natural world' (supervisors: Nick Ray and Graham Huggan).

MASTER'S BY RESEARCH

Jennie Gilman, 'The virtual realities of contemporary post/ apocalyptic fiction' (supervisor: Stuart Murray).

COMING UP IN THE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

RESEARCH SEMINAR: ROBOT CARE FUTURES

Thursday 29 January from 9:30-11:00 (GMT)

Organised as part of the 'Reimagining Lifecourse' project at Keio University X Dignity Centre, Japan and the School of English's Medical Humanities Research Group, this free seminar explores robot care, asking what possibilities it may offer for futures of care and how it may contribute to care with dignity. Speakers include Mark Paterson, Luna Dolezal, **Amelia DeFalco**, and Sarah Falcus. Register before 17:00 (GMT) on 27 January 2026, using this form. For enquiries, contact Katsura Sako (k.sako@keio.jp).

BOOK LAUNCH: PAINTING HISTORY

Wednesday 4 February from 17:00-18:30

A launch for **Tony Crowley's** *Painting History: The Murals of Northern Ireland, 1908-2024* will take place in the School of English foyer at 10 Cavendish Road on the university campus. Tony will be in conversation with **Kate Spowage**. Admission is free but please reserve a place for in-person attendance here. Remote access via Teams is available using this link.

ENDA WALSH IN CONVERSATION

Tuesday 10 March

The School of English will be hosting an event, to be chaired by **Denis Flannery**, with Irish playwright Enda Walsh, focusing on his collaboration with David Bowie on their musical play *Lazarus*. Further details to follow.

INAUGURAL LECTURE

Wednesday 13 May

We currently have one professorial inaugural lecture planned for the spring semester, to be delivered by **Jim Mussell**. Further information on this will be available later this semester.

BACLS CONFERENCE

Wednesday 20 May

The British Association for Contemporary Literary Studies is holding its first postgraduate conference in the School of English. PGRs, ECRs, and MA students keen to progress to a PhD are invited to submit 250-word abstracts (and a 50-word bio) for a 10-minute paper on contemporary literature, culture, or criticism. There are no registration fees. BACLS is not restricted to Anglophone literary studies, and 'British' refers to the location of the organising scholars, rather than the association's range. Contact: **Alberto Andrés Calvo** (fkrk8490@leeds.ac.uk).

POETRY'S ENVIRONMENTS CONFERENCE

Tuesday 9 – Thursday 11 June

Poetry@Leeds have a dynamic conference planned, as well as public events with local and national partners. Keynotes and plenaries include **Simon Armitage**, with more exciting speakers to be announced soon. The conference will take place at Cloth Hall Court in Leeds city centre and at Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall on the university campus.

REGULAR RESEARCH EVENTS

In addition to the individual events listed above, we have the **New Inklings** research conversations, **Research Café** sessions, and the **Research M[]tters** seminar series. The School's **peer-to-peer developmental reading** programme will also be running as usual this year. Further research-related initiatives, support, and resources will be announced as the semester progresses.



RESoEARCHER is produced twice a year. Issues are circulated in winter and summer. The next issue will appear in summer 2026. A call for contributions will be announced towards the end of the spring semester.

There is a lot taking place in the School of English, but you can always keep track of forthcoming events on our website.

Previous issues of *RESoEARCHER* can be found on the School's website by using this QR code:



Matt Woodcock, Research & Impact Support Officer
m.woodcock@leeds.ac.uk