

Counting on Collaboration, Accounting for Success: *eSharp*, *The Kelvingrove Review*, and *Historical Perspectives*

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Good afternoon and welcome to this event, a triple celebration, to mark the tenth issue of *eSharp*, the first issue of *The Kelvingrove Review*, and the launch of the Supplement for *Historical Perspectives*. Taken together, these established and emerging postgraduate ventures are helping students to take the first steps towards a professional career and providing the building blocks for a public profile: conferencing, editing, essaying, reviewing, and work-in-progress seminars.

My name is Willy Maley, and I'm the Graduate Convener for the Department of English Literature.

One of the keywords for academic study today is 'interdisciplinary'. We like to punish disciplines by knocking their heads together. Like 'synergy', interdisciplinary studies suggests a coming together. It appeals both to the PhD student engaged in pioneering and often solitary work, and to the market-minded who want to see universities as corporate bodies rather than a honeycomb of discrete zones. Engels famously remarked that modern universities are Protestant monasteries, and there is still the imprint of the cellular and the monastic existence in the transition from pulpit to lectern.

I like interdisciplinarity because one of the glues that bind different disciplines together is theory, and while in English Literature theory has had a bad name at times – someone once described it as 'philosophy done badly' – it's hard to imagine

interdisciplinary work being conducted without a solid foundation in theory.

It's instructive though to bear in mind that as well as academic and intellectual advantages, there are social and emotional factors at stake in the kind of networking that *eSharp* encourages and exemplifies, and that both *Historical Perspectives* and *The Kelvingrove Review* also promote. I was interested to learn that loneliness lay behind the founding of *Historical Perspectives*. Loneliness is the spur to many a lively collaborative venture. (I'm thinking of editing the *Cambridge Companion to Loneliness*.) The loneliness of the long-distance researcher, the solitude of scholarship, the isolation of individual academic inquiry can be overcome by a sense of solidarity not just with workers in one's own field, but through an awareness of the myriad ways in which what we do has correspondences and resonances with other adjacent fields, and sometimes in surprising places.

To give just one example: I had a strange experience recently when a knock at my door turned out to be a visit from a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Finance. One of the recent narratives in my own Department is that we were thrown out of the Tower and into the Gardens - hardly The Fall, though we did protest at the time as it was badly timed and widely known as 'the wrangle in the quadrangle'. I was one of the wranglers, though admittedly where we are now is better for our students - and for us. (I'm up on the deal. My old office was like a phone-box; my new one is a basketball court.)

My visitor, then, was from the very Department that had evicted us from our ivory tower. However, Dr John McKernan had come not to gloat about the exalted position he now occupied in the

West Wing of the Gilbert Scott Building with that stunning south-facing view, but to ask me about possible collaborations around creative writing and literary theory. Now, I've collaborated in the past with archeologists, critical legal studies experts, and historians, but in my insularity I'd never considered English Literature and Accounting and Finance as in any way compatible.

It transpired that Dr McKernan and I had, among many shared concerns, an equally avid interest in deconstruction. Dr McKernan was the author of "Doing the truth: religion-deconstruction-justice, and accounting", which appeared last year in the *Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Accountability*. His wider research interests lie in interdisciplinary perspectives on accounting and accounting regulation – philosophical and psychological; accounting objectivity and truth; accounting ethics; accounting and religion; accounting and deconstruction. I like to publish widely, if not wildly, and I'll be submitting in due course to this journal that has newly shown up on my radar.

So it looks as though we were not thrown down into the Gardens in vain (granted, as Falls go it was a pretty soft landing). This was no victory for hardheaded accountancy over the sponginess of Jane Austen. Mammon has been smitten by the muse. A new course on Literature and Accountancy is in the offing. Interdisciplinary collaboration beckons. The spirit of English Literature lives on. We have been moved, but we have also been the cause of movement in others. That old adage, 'There's no accounting for taste', is clearly out of date. We'll soon have a double-entry system for Shakespeare. But seriously, that one incident reminded me of the fact that interdisciplinarity is more than a buzzword, it's a fact of life for most of us.

eSharp has been a terrific example of the interdisciplinary impulse in action, and of an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to academic writing. Its focus on conferences as the springboards into publication, as well as unique opportunities to foster and foment ideas, to compare notes, and to cure loneliness is salutary. *The Kelvingrove Review* is a new kid on the block, but by homing in on the review as a key element of apprentice work for fledgling and future academics, it offers a marvelous means of engagement and intervention that is absolutely vital. *Historical Perspectives* has as its purpose networking and instilling a sense of community among graduate students working in the histories, and for me its preoccupation with work-in-progress, as a crucial forum for the development of ideas, is enormously impressive and definitely the best way for postgraduates to develop their arguments and finesse their findings in the companionable context of critical but constructive peer review.

So here we are, the tenth issue of *eSharp*, the first issue of *The Kelvingrove Review*, and the fifth year of *Historical Perspectives*. It was Lord Kelvin, Chair of Natural Philosophy at this University, who in 1883 declared: 'I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind'. I've never liked that line. When I filled in my TAS form last year and saw that quote on the website I thought to myself, 'So that's why we were banished from the Tower together with Classics and Philosophy. We couldn't be counted on, so we were counted out'. But since that visit from John McKernan I'm inclined to wonder whether creativity, theory and literature aren't after all in safe hands

still in the Gilbert Scott Building. Maybe Lord Kelvin was right, and the only bookkeeping that matters is accounting. Still, I prefer Einstein, who insisted that: ‘Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts’. There is much tangible evidence of the practical and productive nature of the enterprises that we’re celebrating this afternoon, but there are a lot of qualitative factors that could be overlooked if all we were doing was counting.

Yeats was fond of a Gaelic saying: ‘Contention is better than loneliness’. He well knew the pros and cons of engagement with the public sphere, and the importance of mentoring and of collective endeavor. Every mentor is a tormentor too. *eSharp*, *The Kelvingrove Review* and *Historical Perspectives* – these three postgraduate initiatives stand as excellent examples of the valuable work that can come out of collective, collaborative, communal, and yes, contentious labour. They’ve offered an outlet for razor-edge research and stiletto-sharp conversation between students working across the disciplines. Here's to contention, and fruitful collaboration.