

**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY**  
**CENTRE FOR RESEARCH**  
**INTO GENDER AND**  
**OTHERNESS IN THE**  
**HUMANITIES**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
FEBRUARY 2019 -  
SEPTEMBER 2020



# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Governance; membership; website; administration	4
Studentship	6
Events	7
Research activities	11

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# INTRODUCTION

The support awarded in 2019 by the US Charitable Foundation towards The Open University's Centre for Research into Gender and Otherness in the Humanities is immensely generous and much appreciated by the University and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. We thank our anonymous donors very much indeed for this funding. To be spent over a four-year period, it is enabling successful completion of all three objectives noted in the funding bid:

- To set up The Open University (OU) Centre for Research into Gender and Otherness in the Humanities (GOTH) within the School of Arts and Cultures, including appointment of the Centre's Director, Committee and Advisory Board and creation of a website to communicate information to 50+ GOTH members and beyond.
- To award GOTH's first fully-funded three year doctoral studentship to an outstanding candidate who eagerly anticipates joining the Centre in October 2020. (The bulk of the funding is allocated for this purpose).
- To initiate and run an ambitious, vibrant and attractive annual research events programme.

We very much hope you enjoy reading about the progress of these objectives throughout the report and look forward to updating you in the future, as the project progresses. Other highlights in this year include:

- GOTH as proactive and constructive contributor to the wider Faculty's external engagement initiatives, for example with a short video for the University's International Women's Day celebrations (8 March 2020).
- The creation of the GOTH Committee and Advisory Board. The committee seeks to offer events that bring together colleagues from all faculties of the University in innovative, enjoyable and research-productive ways. This year this included our successful and well-attended GOTH Launch, our first GOTH awayday, Critical Reading Group and Networking Workshop, which all proved popular.

# GOVERNANCE; MEMBERSHIP; WEBSITE; ADMINISTRATION:

Following a selection procedure involving several candidates, Dr M A Katritzky (FASS, English) was appointed Director of GOTH in May 2019.

In June 2019, the GOTH Committee & Advisory Board were appointed.

The Committee has three formal annual committee meetings and stays in touch regularly in between. All decisions relating to GOTH events are agreed by the Committee, in close consultation with the Advisory Board (Internal). Members of the Advisory Board (external) provide expertise on GOTH matters falling within their own research areas, to colleagues and students on request.



**Members of the GOTH Committee and Advisory Board with Executive Dean Ian Fribbance**

## **GOTH Committee:**

- Dr M A Katritzky – Director of GOTH; Senior Research Fellow in Theatre Studies
- Dr Christine Plastow – GOTH Web & Media Manager; Lecturer in Classical Studies
- Dr Gemma Allen – Lecturer in Early Modern History
- Dr Clare Taylor – Senior Lecturer in Art History

## **GOTH Advisory Board**

### **External Members**

- Professor Pavel Drábek – Professor of Drama and Theatre Practice, University of Hull
- Professor Natasha Korda – Director of the Centre for the Humanities and Professor of English, Wesleyan University
- Professor Noémie Ndiaye – Assistant Professor, Dept of English, University of Chicago
- Dr Hole Rößler – Acting Head, Research Planning & Projects, Herzog August Library

### **Internal Members**

- Professor Suman Gupta – Professor of Literature and Cultural History, The Open University
- Professor James Robson – Professor of Classical Studies, The Open University
- Dr Shafquat Towheed – Senior Lecturer in English, The Open University

## **July 2019:**

Colleagues and postgraduates from all faculties of the university are invited to receive information on events by signing up for GOTH membership. Current membership is over 50.

## **August 2019:**

Christine Plastow (GOTH Web & Media Manager) set up the GOTH blog and website.




## March 2020:

The Centre received a dedicated email address (FASS-GOTH-Admin@open.ac.uk) and administrative assistant (Shelley Mercer). This welcome arrangement was disrupted by the Covid-19 health crisis. For now, we are grateful to the Faculty's Office Manager, Shazna Muzammil and her team (Laura Collins & Gemma Sherriff-Jones), for continuing valuable administrative support.

Gender and Otherness in the Humanities

Just another WordPress site

# Gender and Otherness in the Humanities



**GOTH Website:**  
<http://fass.open.ac.uk/research/centres/goth>

## Clare Taylor awarded Paul Mellon Centre Mid-Career Fellowship

Posted on 6th April 2020 by Christine Plastow

We're very pleased to be able to congratulate [Dr Clare Taylor](#), Senior Lecturer in Art History and a member of the GOTH Steering Committee, on her receipt of a prestigious [Paul Mellon Centre Mid-Career Fellowship](#) to work on her project 'Gilt Leather Rooms: Decorating with Leather Hangings in Britain, c.1600–c.1800'. Clare describes the project's scope as follows:

*Embossed, gilt and painted leather is a material which both attracts and repels: on the one hand its glittering, tactile finish and complex and colourful patterns can be admired for their visual effects, on the other the idea of hanging animal skins on the wall seems at odds with twenty-first century environmental concerns. However, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gilt leather hangings were at the centre of a global trade, a trade which involved networks around design, making and hanging. The skills and products of specialist tradesmen enabled gilt leather to rival other costly wall treatments, as well as protecting the surfaces of furniture, covering screens and upholstering seating.*

**Recent Posts**

- Clare Taylor awarded Paul Mellon Centre Mid-Career Fellowship
- International Women's Day 2020 – Shakespeare AND Cavendish
- GOTH away-day and exhibitions round-up, Spring 2020
- The first GOTH Networking Workshop
- A successful launch event for GOTH

**Recent Comments**


**Archives**

- April 2020
- March 2020
- February 2020
- November 2019
- October 2019
- September 2019

## International Women's Day 2020 – Shakespeare AND Cavendish

Posted on 8th March 2020 by Christine Plastow

To celebrate International Women's Day 2020 (8th March), our director Dr Peg Katritzky appeared in this video discussing ShAC, 'Shakespeare AND Cavendish', a research strand within GOTH that seeks to restore female dramatists of the early modern period to their rightful place in the canon alongside Shakespeare. Watch the video to learn more about ShAC and the importance of women playwrights like Aphra Behn and Margaret Cavendish for the history of British drama.



International Women's Day - Gender and Otherne...

Watch later Share

Dr Peg Katritzky celebrates IWD introducing ShAC (Shakespeare AND Cavendish)

# STUDENTSHIP

The bulk of the initial GOTH award is towards the costs of one fully-funded doctoral student attached to the Centre for the three years 2020-2023. The studentship was advertised in October 2019, see **Appendix A** for a copy of the advertisement.

Following dozens of enquiries and applications, and a rigorous selection procedure, the Selection Committee unanimously chose this candidate:

Name:	Christopher Dobson
Topic:	The Othering of Jews and Muslims in Early Modern English Theatre
Start date:	October 2020
Doctoral supervisors:	M A Katritzky & Jonathan Gibson

Christopher Dobson looks forward to joining us in October 2020. By then, the School of Arts and Humanities will have several doctoral students with GOTH-related research interests, including two also co-supervised by GOTH's Director: Sharon Wiseman (Text and Performance: Symbolism, Myth and Acting the Truth in the Plays of Nathaniel Lee and Thomas Otway) and Kim Pratt (Monsters as the 'Other': A Defence of Polyphemos from Homer's Odyssey to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein).



# EVENTS

## First GOTH Awayday

GOTH holds an annual awayday, which took place on 15th May 2019 in the form of a visit to Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire to examine the contributions of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury (better known as 'Bess of Hardwick') through her architecture and design projects, textile work and correspondence.

For this interdisciplinary research meeting "Celebrating Bess of Hardwick", our keynote presenter, Susie West joined the GOTH committee (Gemma Allen, Peg Katritzky, Clare Taylor, Christine Plastow). Susie gave us rich and detailed insights into Bess of Hardwick's input into the architecture of the Old and New Halls. Hardwick textiles, furnishings and correspondence were respectively covered by Peg, Clare and Gemma, speaking directly in front of the originals. Christine expertly guided us around the "We are Bess" exhibition of modern female responses to Bess's life. The day considerably extended our impressions of Bess of Hardwick's incredible creativity and provided an inspiring opportunity to share OU research.



This picture is of cutwork wall hangings designed by Bess and variously called 'Virtuous Women', 'Heroines and Virtues' or 'Noble Women of the Ancient World'. GOTH Director Peg Katritzky has worked on the importance of these pieces as Bess's homage to women as textile producers, and she was able to tell us a lot about the specific resonances of each scene.

Bess of Hardwick and Mary, Queen of Scots' shared knowledge of English and European embroidery techniques represents a significant transnational cultural transfer. The exhibited hangings depict Penelope, Lucretia, Zenobia, and Artemisia, and a lost fifth hanging showed Cleopatra.

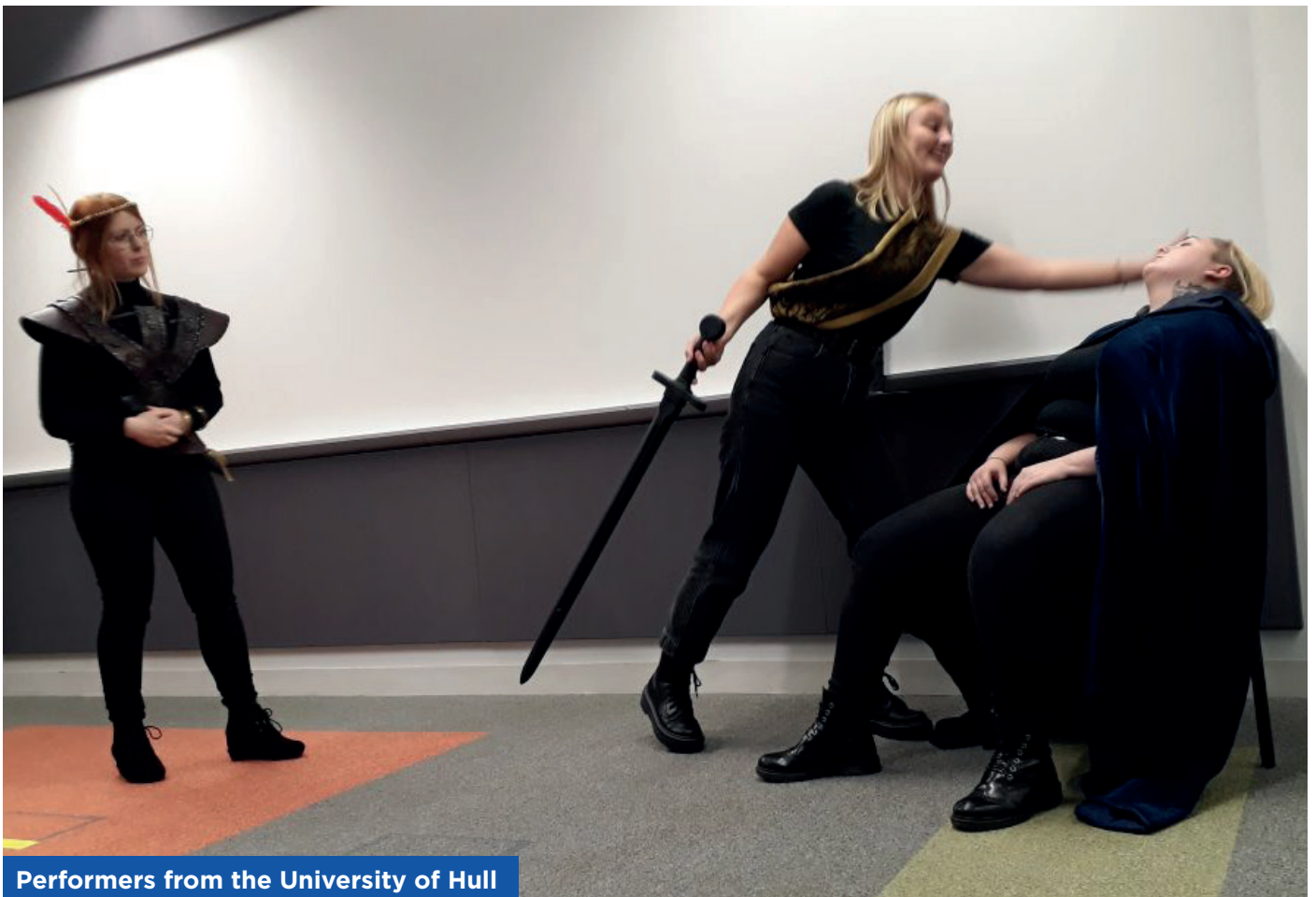
## GOTH Launch

On Thursday 24th October, GOTH held its official launch event at Walton Hall. The event celebrated the foundation of GOTH with an afternoon of dramatic performances followed by a wine reception. Introduced by the Executive Dean for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Professor Ian Fribbance, several dozen OU colleagues enjoyed excellent performances of excerpts from:

- The Orestes Project - Christine Plastow and By Jove Theatre Company
- Aphra Behn's play The Young King, or The Mistake (1679) - Pavel Drábek and students from the University of Hull

The first performance was of an extract from The Orestes Project by By Jove Theatre Company. The performance was introduced by Christine Plastow, GOTH Committee Member and Associate Director of By Jove, who spoke about the company's work with myths and stories from the canon and their interest in themes of gender and otherness in presenting new versions of these stories. She then introduced the audience to The Orestes Project, an ongoing collaboration with Nancy Rabinowitz from Hamilton College, NY.

The afternoon's second performance was presented by Pavel Drábek and student actors from the University of Hull. Prof Drábek introduced the performance, The Amazonians, which was an extract from Aphra Behn's The Young King, or The Mistake presenting tragicomic scenes of female warriors and mistaken identities.



Performers from the University of Hull



## GOTH Critical Reading Group & 1st GOTH NetWorkshop: 30th January 2020

GOTH's first workshop gave members of GOTH and Health and Wellbeing an opportunity to meet and discuss current research and funding strategies. The program included:

- introduction from our Head of School, Richard Brown
- critical reading group on Feminism and Nationalism, led by Suman Gupta (Head of English).
- networking lunch for participants to informally learn about each other's work.
- 'lightning' networking session: each participant spoke for 2-3 minutes about their research interests and work relevant to the group.
- formal presentations: Kim Pratt (Classical Studies, PG) on her recent experience giving a talk about Classics to OU students at a prison in Staffordshire. Sally Blackburn-Daniels (English) on a new production of Vernon Lee's 'Ballet of the Nations', an allegorical satire about World War I.
- research funding panel: led by Shaf Towheed (English) and Gaynor Henry-Edwards (Health and Wellbeing).
- Closing tea: Display and discussion of delegates' recent of publications

The workshop allowed 19 delegates from 3 faculties to get to know each other's work, update their knowledge of funding opportunities and make connections for future projects, contributing to the growth of a strong community of like-minded researchers across the OU and beyond.



Workshop participants enjoying the network lunch

## Future Events

In 2020-21, it is our aim that the regular GOTH events will be joined by one or more group theatre visits, and an annual GOTH Research Symposium. This two-day residential event for OU and external delegates will focus on the Centre's current major research strands:

1. book history and women's writings
2. textiles and interior decoration
3. ShAC ("Shakespeare AND Cavendish": focusing research on female as well as male contributions to early modern drama and performance culture)

However, the remaining events for this year's program are sadly cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- GOTH Critical Reading Group 2: Digital Comics (Francesca Benatti), planned for 26/3/20
- GOTH London Awayday, V&A Kimono exhibition (Clare Taylor), planned for 15/5/20

During this away day we intended to pick up the textiles theme again in relation to gender and otherness at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London's South Kensington, examining the treatments of the wrapped body within different global traditions. The tour would have focused on the upcoming exhibition 'Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk' with a Curator's introduction before we view the show.

The full draft 2020-2021 programme is currently as follows; wherever possible, online replacements will be offered as required:

DATE	EVENT
1 Oct 2020	Autumn Committee Meeting (MAK)
Wednesday 21 Oct 2020 Oxford Playhouse	The Oxford Greek Play (lead: CP) Group visit by GOTH members and students. Tickets provided, own travel arrangements/expenses.
3 Dec 2020 10am - 4pm OU campus	2nd Joint GOTH-Health & Wellbeing NetWorkshop (MAK) & Reading Group 2, Digital Comics (lead: Francesca Benatti) OU delegates only.
10 Dec 2020	Winter Committee Meeting (MAK)
TBC 28 Jan or 4 Feb 2021 11am - 4pm London	2nd Awayday Queen Elizabeth Exhibition, London, BM (lead - GA) Tickets & travel expenses. Maximum 15. NB: exhibition ends 21 February 2021
TBC 18 or 25 March 2021 1-2.30pm & 2.30-3.30pm OU campus	Reading Group 3 & Spring Committee Meeting (2.30-3.30pm) RG3: lead & topic TBC (Reading & Wellbeing?)
13-14 May 2021 OU campus or external location TBC (depending on funding)	1st GOTH Research Symposium (MAK) Guest speakers & external CFP; 3 panels: 1. women's writings (GA) & book history (ST) 2. Textiles & interior decoration (CT&CP) 3. ShAC: early modern drama & performance culture (MAK)

# RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Since 2019, the Centres Research Director has undertaken the following activities:

## Published research:

- M A Katritzky & Pavel Drábek (eds), *Transnational Connections in Early Modern Theatre*, Manchester UP, 2020 (Drábek & Katritzky, "Introduction", 1-19; Katritzky, "London and The Hague, 1638: Performing quacks at court", 114-138).
- M A Katritzky, "Margaret Cavendish's Female Fairground Performers", in Jan Sewell & Clare Smout (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Women on Stage*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 151-175.
- M A Katritzky, "The itinerant healer as a stage role: its origins in religious drama", in Eva von Contzen & Chanita Goodblatt (eds), *Enacting the Bible in medieval and early modern drama*, Manchester UP, 2020, 81-103.
- M A Katritzky, "Stefanelo Botarga and Zan Ganassa: Textual and visual records of a musical commedia dell'arte duo, in and beyond early modern Iberia", *Music in Art* 44 (2019), 83-104.

## Research visits:

- 1-15 August 2019: Herzog August Library, Wolfenbüttel, Germany.  
Topic: the itinerant healer on the medieval religious stage from a gendered viewpoint, focusing on the contribution of female patrons and writers to establishing this non-biblical figure in biblical drama.
- 4 December 2019, Chicheley Hall  
Health & Wellbeing PRA Writing retreat.  
Topic: as above.  
Result: article in press, expected publication date 2021.

## Presentations:

1. TITLE: "A pot of Butter and a pickl'd Herring is all your Riches": Othering the Dutch on the early modern stage. (Aphra Behn & John Dryden).  
1 – 22 February, 2019, Radboud University, Nijmegen (conference: Foreign eyes on the Republic: European perspectives on the Republic and the Dutch in the long 18th c).
2. TITLE: The generic and the specific: visual representations of conjoined twins 1450-1750.  
28 - 30.03.2019, Historisches Kolleg, München (conference: Visual representations of the body in health and disease in the early modern period, 1450-1750)
3. TITLE: From holy hermit to court beast: the sacred and profane spaces of Juan Guarín.  
3-4 April 2019, Trinity Laban Conservatoire, London (OU MEM annual conference: Medieval and Early Modern Spaces and Places: Experiencing the Court)
4. TITLE: Transnational connections in early modern court performance: Jacobean masques and a Dutch wedding of 1638.  
April 11 – 12, 2019, London, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (conference: Performance, Royalty and the Court, 1500-1800)
5. TITLE: Margaret Cavendish's Fairground Performers: Gender and otherness on the early modern stage  
15 - 18 Apr 2019 Themes: Centre for Visual Arts and Research (CVAR), Nicosia (Conference: Othello's Island 2019: 7th Annual Conference on Medieval & Renaissance Studies).



6. TITLE: The Hardwick heroines: virtuous wives and widows? Or Bess of Hardwick's homage to women as textile creators? 15 May 2019. 1st GOTH Awayday: "Celebrating Bess of Hardwick"
7. At the 13th International Margaret Cavendish Society Conference (Trondheim, 6-9 June 2019), I spoke on: Gender and otherness in early modern performance culture: letter 195 of Margaret Cavendish's "Sociable Letters".
8. At the annual Theater Without Borders Conference (24 June 2019), as guest speaker of Wesleyan University's Center for the Humanities (CFH) and Fries Center for Global Studies, I spoke on: "'Mountebanks, Monsters' and Transnational Spectacle: Revisiting Margaret Cavendish's Texts"
9. At the 16th Triennial Colloquium of SITM (Société Internationale pour l'étude du Théâtre Médiéval, University of Genoa, 8-13 July 2019), I spoke on: Commedia dell'arte costumes at the 1585 Stuttgart wedding.
10. At the workshop "Shakespeare's Characters Transposed: Iconography, Adaptations, Cultural Exchanges and Staging" (Trento, 11-14 November 2019), I spoke on: Visualizing the other: Caliban's body in Shakespeare's "The Tempest" and its afterlives.

**Presentations planned but not delivered (all events cancelled or postponed due to coronavirus):**

- 22nd Biennial New College Conference on Medieval & Renaissance Studies
  - > Sarasota, Florida, 11-15 March 2020
  - > TALK: Performing Gender and Otherness in the Texts of Margaret Cavendish
- OU Medieval & Modern Research Group Annual Conference – Medieval and Early Modern Spaces and Places: Courtly Encounters
  - > London, 23-24 March 2020.
  - > TALK: Italian stage costumes at German court weddings
- 8th Annual Conference on Medieval & Renaissance Studies
  - > Nicosia, Cyprus, 6 - 10 Apr 2020
  - > TALK: The medieval spice-merchant scene: recovering the female contribution.
- Theater and Empire (Annual Workshop: Theater Without Borders)
  - > NYU Madrid, 25-30 May 2020
  - > TALK: Italian commedia dell'arte at German court weddings
- Workshop: 'Remarkable women': Female patronage of religious institutions, 1350-1550
  - > Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 4 June 2020
  - > TALK: Female patronage of the spice-merchant scene: art and drama 1000-1600
- Conference (co-organizers: M A Katritzky & Ian MacLaren): 2nd Alexander von Humboldt UK Scotland Meeting
  - > University of Glasgow, 10 June 2020
  - > TALK: title TBC
- Workshop: Renaissance Academic Drama and the Popular Stage
  - > University of St Andrews, 11 - 13 June 2020
  - > TALK: Reconsidering the popular drama of 'English' Actors in Shakespearean Europe
- Invited guest lecturer: Marlborough Embroiderers Guild
  - > Kennet Valley Hall, Lockridge, Marlborough, 11 July 2020
  - > TALK: The needlework collaboration of Mary Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick.



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