

Newsletter



Literature and Ethics

For many years moral philosophers have made the assumption that literary texts have no significance for ethical reflection beyond projecting one possible source of examples of moral problems.

This fits philosophy's long-standing hostility towards literature dating back, at least, to Plato whose expulsion of the poets from his Republic is often cited as a founding gesture of the discipline. Some recent writers on ethics, however, contest this assumption.

Neo-Aristotelean theorists see the novel as a medium in which their approach finds its most suitable expression. Proponents of moral perfectionism see literary techniques as indispensable in achieving their desired relation to their readers. Others of no particular theoretical affiliation see literary texts as exemplifying the internal relation of reason to imagination, feeling and sensibility in fundamental modes of moral thought.

Taken as a whole, these arguments suggest that a moral philosopher's evaluation of the ethical significance of literature reveals fundamental features of their conception of ethics in general, of the relation between moral philosophy and

other philosophical concerns or questions, and hence of philosophy itself. Indeed, recent conversations about literature and ethics tend to focus not on general questions about ways in which literature is capable of enriching moral philosophy but, instead, on the quite specific question of whether literature can inform moral philosophy by directly contributing to moral understanding.

Unequivocally, we can see this understanding in literature over the centuries. Greek tragedians, for example, struggled to come to terms with a world where man's choices were worked out within a universe restrained by the place of the Gods, the Furies and fate.

In this sense, Shakespeare, as another example, addresses issues which work to assert our common humanity. He often challenges the arbitrary boundaries set up by gender and xenophobic considerations of his time, asserting a human not an ontological basis of the ways in which

we live our lives. Shakespeare, therefore, addresses the moral behaviours which contribute to cohesive communities by looking at such issues as the irresponsible pursuit of power and the effects of the duplicity, jealousy and egocentricity that underscore this pursuit.

The ethical basis of a writer like William Blake is based around what restricts and what stultifies our imagination; what causes the "mind-forged manacles" that work to oppress body and soul.

The ethical underpinning of JRR Tolkien's fantasy world (and I suspect George RR Martin's) was predicated on fighting against those powers that are motivated by greed and egocentricity. He was concerned with the consequences of this for both people and the natural environment they live in.

In similar vein, West Australian writers like Randolph Stowe and Tim Winton muse on the ethics of living within a harsh (and

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once alien) environment and the nature of the communities this creates. In such musing, they assert a unique place for the continental wisdom, learnt over thousands of years by Indigenous Australians.

Historically, the Centre for Ethics at Christ Church has pursued the dynamic between literature and ethics, involving our boys and wider community in such explorations. We have attracted to the school writers

like David Malouf, Tim Winton, Bruce Dawe, Helen Garner, Lucy Dougan and Jon Doust. We have encouraged visits from literary academics such as Kieran Dolin, Dennis Haskell and Christopher Wortham to share their insights.

It is our hope that such visits provide our boys and the Christ Church community in general, an ongoing opportunity to consider ethical behavior so often debated

and foregrounded in Literature. Centered, as it is, around questions as to what makes a good citizen, what might make a good life and, above all, to see the absolute necessity of keeping the imagination open, unfettered and, therefore, subject to healthy moral and spiritual growth.

Simon Hunn

Director of the Centre for Ethics

Dennis Haskell

Emeritus Professor Dennis Haskell AM is the author of eight collections of poetry, the most recent *Ahead of Us* and *What Are You Doing Here?* He was co-editor of *Westerly Magazine* and an Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Western Australia.

He is the recipient of the Western Australian Premier's Prize for Poetry, A. A. Phillips Prize for distinguished contribution to Australian literature and an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from The University of Western Australia. He has served as Visiting Professor and Poet at universities throughout Europe, the USA and Asia. In 2015, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to literature, particularly poetry, education and intercultural understanding.



J.P. QUINTON

J.P. Quinton was born and raised in Perth's 'rich and romantic country' near Bassendean. The Swan River and rivers in general are a preoccupation in his writing. James has had poems published in *Westerly* and *Cottonmouth* and has self-published three chapbooks.



Paul Litherland

Paul Litherland, the owner of Surf Online Safe, is a former West Australian police officer who served for over 20 years. During this period, he regularly visited schools across the state conducting 'Stranger Danger' talks and worked with the Constable Care program.

In addition to his policing career, he has been working exclusively with young males and females for the past 18 years as mentor and coach within the Western Australian Football League.

Paul worked within the Technology Crime Investigation Unit, a section internationally recognised as one of the leading technology crime divisions in the world. He was working specifically with children and their families who were either the victims of online crime or the offenders themselves. He personally dealt with

the victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying, grooming and predatory behaviour.

Paul set about targeting schools in his local area offering presentations based on his experience, knowledge and insight into the dangers of the online world and what our children can do to protect themselves. Paul chose to leave the Western Australian Police to pursue his dream of educating, and now presents to over 300 schools across Australia as well as over 50 business and government



Dave Warner

Dave Warner was born in Western Australia, attended Aquinas College and graduated from the University of Western Australia with a B.A. (Hons.), majoring in psychology. Dave has formed a couple of bands – his first being “Australia’s first punk band.”

After *This is My Planet*, Warner diversified from writing and performing music full-time and started writing plays, novels and screenplays.

In 1982, his revue, *The Sensational Sixties* started to tour large suburban hotels. Written and produced by Warner, the show was successful. In 1987, Warner managed and wrote songs for a female trio, *Pleasure Principle*. He performed and wrote a one-man show, *Australian Heroes*.

Dave wrote many film scripts as well as writing more than 10 episodes of *McLeod’s Daughters* and an episode of *Packed to the Rafters*.

Warner has written both fiction and non-fiction - novels such as *a City of Light*, *Footy’s Hall of Shame* and *Big Bad Blood*. *River of Salt* his latest novel, it is to be published in 2019.

Dr Ethan Blue

Dr Ethan Blue was first inspired to pursue history by his high school teacher and later by professors at the University of Virginia and the University of Texas. A multi-award-winning teacher and regular nominee for the University of Western Australia’s Excellence in Teaching award, Dr Blue’s work has been crucial in expanding knowledge and understanding of complex social and historical issues.

His contributions to the local and international community have included supervising the archiving of records from the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee of Western Australia at the State Library of Western Australia, and extensive research into the history of incarceration and deportation.

His first book, *Doing Time in the Depression* and his second major book project, *Seventeen Stops on the*

Deportation Special, will document the history of mass deportation.

Dr Blue’s research now focuses on incarceration and policing, immigration control and border protection. As people are displaced by war, climate change and economic insecurity, tracing the history and consequences of these processes provides a foundation that’s necessary for making informed decisions today.



Jonathan Doyle

Jonathan Doyle is an author, global speaker, motivator, businessman and entrepreneur who has spoken around the world to more than 300,000 people on topics such as peak performance, relationships and leadership.s.

Jonathan has always been interested in why some people live amazing lives of contribution and success and why so many struggle with lost ambitions and unfulfilling relationships.

These questions have driven him to deliver live seminars, complete years of

post-graduate study in education and relationship studies and to continue an endless quest for insights, ideas and systems that can help us break through our barriers into a new level of life, service and purpose.

Over the last two decades, Jonathan has had the privilege of travelling around the world to work with a wide range of organisations, universities, not-for-profits and individuals at seminars and conference events.

Jonathan’s journey began after working for a few years in the education sector. Shortly after he married, both Jonathan



and his wife launched their own website and started dreaming big.

As a husband, father, friend, author and entrepreneur, Jonathan keeps finding himself interested in the journey of “... what’s possible...”



Chris Wortham

After 30 years at the University of Western Australia, Chris Wortham retired as Emeritus Professor at the end of 2005. Since 2009 he has been the Professor of Theatre Studies and English Literature at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle. Publications include editions of *Everyman*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Marvell's *Pastoral and Lyric Poems*. He has published numerous articles on Shakespeare and is currently working on a book to be titled *Shakespeare's Maps*.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - TERM 2 2019

| DATE | EVENT AND TOPIC | SPEAKER | TIME | LOCATION |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Every Thursday | Christ Church Credo | The Rev. Nick Russell | 1.00pm | Q1 |
| Wednesday 1 May | The Ethics of Modernity | Emeritus Professor Dennis Haskell | Day | Classroom |
| Thursday 2 May | Reading the Landscape | J.P.Quinton | Day | Classroom |
| Friday 3 May | William Blake and the Songs of Innocence and Experience | Kieran Dolin | Day | Classroom |
| Saturday 4 May | 6K Walk for Water World Vision | | | RSVP 9388 1148 |
| Monday 13 May | The Pursuit of the Inner Man | Jon Doust | Classroom | |
| Saturday 18 May | Red Cross Bindaring Unit | | Day | Enquiries 9442 1705 |
| Monday 20 May | Disorientation and the changing map of the world | Emeritus Professsor Chris Wortham | Day | Classroom |
| Thursday 23 May | Surf Online Safe | Paul Litherland | Day | Classroom |
| Thursday 23 May | Surf Online Safe | Paul Litherland | 7.30pm | https://goo.gl/V2sz8m |
| Monday 27 May | Seventeen Stops | Dr Ethan Blue | Day | Classroom |
| Tuesday 28 May | Co-operative learning | Greg Mitchell | Day | Classroom |
| Wednesday 12 June | Thinking Beyond Your Limits | Mitch Productions | Day | Classroom |
| Thursday 27 June | Building the Inner Man | Jon Doyle | Day | Chapel |
| Thursday 27 June | Thriving in Masculinity | Jon Doyle | Day | Chapel |
| Wednesday 3 July | River of Salt | Dave Warner | Day | Classroom |