

April
—June, 2020

THE PORTICO LIBRARY

Quarterly



Events,
Exhibitions
& Treasures
from the
Collection



Quarterly
April—June, 2020

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Cover Image
Christine de Pizan (1364 – c. 1430) illustrated
by F. W. Fairholt, *The archaeological album:
or museum of national antiquities*, Thomas
Wright, 1845.

Opposite
Plates illustrative of the researches and
operations of G. Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia,
Giovanni Battista Belzoni, 1820–22.

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NOTE FROM THE LIBRARIAN

'We lived in Houghton-le-Spring,' writes Jessica Andrews in her Portico Prize winning novel, *Saltwater*, 'an old colliery town comprised of a Kwik Save, a Greggs and a library full of gory crime novels.' Substitute Kwik Save for Sainsbury's and Houghton-le-Spring sounds similar to Mosley Street, given The Portico's endlessly entertaining collection of Victorian crime novels.

Announced 23 January, Jessica becomes the youngest recipient of the prestigious award with a book described by Portico Chair, Lynne Allan, as being 'full of optimism...a tender tribute to women across generations and an important exploration of women's lives today.' Andrews, along with the five other shortlisted authors, received annual honorary membership and it's great to see so many of them using the Library as a place to write and research.

If you're looking for a quiet spot to read or a refuge to escape the daily rush of the city, why not consider joining the Library as a member and become part of The Portico's 200-year-old history? We have beautiful spaces to work in, WiFi and access to daily newspapers and journals, plus a café for your caffeine, cake and wine needs. By joining you'll also be supporting the Library's important charitable activities. You don't have to be a member, though, to access the Library or get involving in our exciting public programme of events and exhibitions – please read on to find out more.

Dr. Thom Keep
Librarian

LIBRARY NEWS

The start of 2020 has brought exciting opportunities to share our collection and heritage with people beyond the Library's walls and to learn what the region's residents want for The Portico's future. On 1 February we joined local community group Let's Keep Growing for a creative ideas session with young people at Longsight Library, allowing many who'd never heard of The Portico to explore a selection of our 18th and 19th-century nature books and illustrations. The images they found will form a new mural in their community alleyway allotment, inspiring pride in the local area and sparking conversations around the city's history.

Another of our partners, Venture Arts, supports people with learning disabilities to create and share new artworks. Having included several Venture Arts artists in recent Portico exhibitions, we were thrilled to welcome a group tour for their studio users on 13 February. Our visiting Exhibitions and Programmes Assistant Apatat Jai-in Glynn chatted with the

group about what they would keep and what they would change at The Portico Library and about the books and artworks on display. *SCROLLS*, a ceramic sculpture by Venture Arts artist Barry Anthony Finan, was presented as the award for the Portico Prize 2020, won by Jessica Andrews with her debut novel *Saltwater*.

Also in February, we were visited by members of Back on Track, a local learning centre for adults going through a period of recovery or rehabilitation. Plus, we embarked on a new collaboration with The Happy Museum Foundation, who help museums and archives respond to the challenge of creating a more sustainable future. Through a series of workshops and public activities, this project aims to embed the values of cooperation and compassion that the vast majority of Manchester's residents share in all the Library's work.

James Moss
Exhibitions & Programmes Curator



Right
Members of Back on Track at The Portico Library.

WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

On two afternoons in November 2019 I ran a mini Garden Centre Monsters workshop project, supported by Lydia Burke from Venture Arts.

I was offered these workshops due to the fact that some 3D pottery figures that I have made were on display at The Portico Library as part of an exhibition "Second Nature: What is 'nature' anyway?". The figures are called The Garden Centre Monsters. I was inspired by my voluntary work at Hulme Community Garden Centre and Beatrix Potter's stories to make my own garden centre characters and stories.

My first workshop was quiet due to really bad weather. Since it was quiet some of the Library staff decided to come over and try my workshop project. I told them all about my monsters and even demonstrated how to make them. It was really good fun.

My second workshop was a very busy session. I first told each of my groups about my Garden Centre Monsters and then showed the children where they were located in the exhibition. Then I

gave the children and their parents a choice of some stories to be read to them. From this the children could create a Garden Centre Monster or invent their own monster. Many of the children and parents chose to make their own monsters, which I thought was pretty interesting.

As we completed the monsters I talked to the children and parents about what they wanted to call the new creatures for The Portico. We decided on "the Wild Bunch", a group of metropolitan monsters who live in the Library itself, some of whom are related to the Garden Centre Monsters.

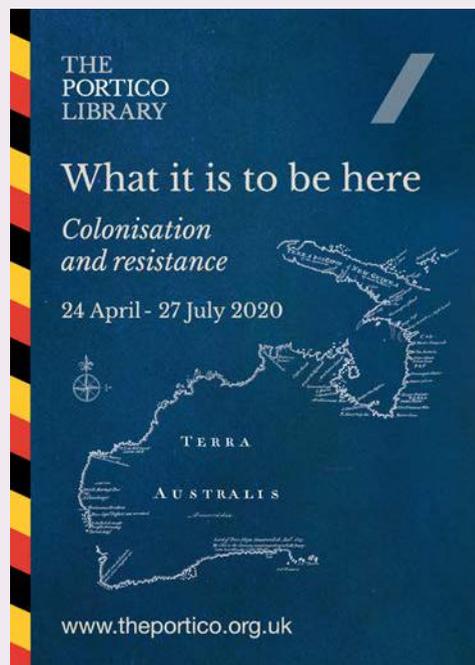
It was at the end of these two sessions I thought that this is what I actually wanted to do as a career: run my own workshops because I enjoyed it and I felt alive. The Portico is a sweet little gallery; with the dome over you it feels like you are in a lantern. It has a gentle atmosphere and I hope to volunteer here in the future.

Louise Hewitt
Artist at Venture Arts



Right
Play-doh models made at Louise Hewitt's Garden Centre Monsters workshop.

EXHIBITION



Exhibition Tours

British Sign Language with Jennifer Little

– Sat, 6 June 2020, 11:30am–1pm

Free, Drop-in

Audio-described with Ann Hornsby of Mind's Eye Description Services

– Mon, 15 June 2020, 5:30–7pm

Free, Drop-in

Free public preview:
Thurs 23 April, 6–8pm

April 2020 marks 250 years since Lieutenant James Cook arrived, uninvited, onto Gweagal shores at Kamay (Botany Bay) in what is now Australia. For the local Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, this event changed everything, dispossessing them of their homes, lands and governance for the benefit of the newcomers and those far away in Britain. *What it is to be here: Colonisation and resistance* considers how this process of colonisation and First Nations people's resistance to it continue to this day.

The Portico Library's collection includes first editions of Cook's journals, historical maps and related documents that record the first of these encounters from the point of view of the colonisers. For this exhibition, we share the words of present-day Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders through the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017). This groundbreaking artwork calls for constitutional reforms "to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country".

We will also present materials documenting a unique relationship that is now being forged between First Nations Australians and the people of Manchester: in 2019, Manchester Museum became the first UK institution to unconditionally return sacred artefacts to their traditional custodians in Australia. The objects are going home.

EVENTS LISTINGS



An Italian Tomb Raider: Giovanni Belzoni's Egyptian Adventures, 200 Years On

– Thurs, 2 April 2020, 6:30–8:30pm

Tickets: £6 (includes wine and nibbles)

200 years after the publication of Belzoni's seminal book of adventures, Egyptologist Dr Campbell Price reflects on his methods and discoveries, and their subsequent reception in Europe.



Moments that Made Manchester

– Sat 4 April, Sat 2 May, Sat 20 June 2020, 10am–12pm

Tickets: £13

These 2-hour sessions will uncover the famous and the lesser known stories behind Manchester's Radical history, exploring the lives of Friedrich Engels, Elizabeth Gaskell, Alan Turing, the Chartists and others. Full information on our website.



Don Quixote at The Portico

– Weds, 8 April 2020, 6:30–8pm

Tickets: £5

Following a period of research at The Portico, Dr Esther Gomez-Sierra leads a discussion on the character of Don Quixote, using books from The Library's collection to animate the session.



Film screening: The Madness of King George

– Thurs, 9 April 2020, 6:30–8:30pm

Tickets: £6 • Concessions: £4

Alan Bennett's Oscar-winning comedy drama depicts the harshness and hypocrisy of 18th-century mental health treatments. See it in the Manchester's original Georgian library alongside our exhibition 'Talking Sense: The changing vocabulary of mind and brain'



Bookbinding: A Crossed Structure Notebook

– Weds, 22 April 2020, 10am–4pm

Tickets: £60 (includes lunch)

A one-day workshop with experienced local bookbinder, Barry Clark, to create an A6 crossed structure notebook – a useful, non-adhesive binding developed by renowned binder Carmencho Arregui.



Film Screening: TERROR NULLIUS by Soda_Jerk

– Thurs, 7 May 2020, 6:30–8pm

Tickets: £4

Free for students & unwaged

Highly acclaimed political satire and eco-horror road movie TERROR NULLIUS offers a re-writing of Australian cinema and an un-writing of its national mythologies.



What it is to be Speared

– Thurs, 14 May 2020, 6:30–8:00pm

Tickets: £4

Free for students & unwaged

Dr Ian Henderson of the Menzies Australia Institute explores the significance of the relationship between Australia's first Governor, Arthur Phillip, and Bennelong, the first Aboriginal man brought to England.

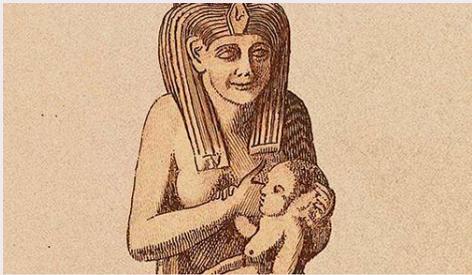


Your Family in Australia: public drop-in session

– Sat, 30 May 2020, 12:30–3pm

Free

Manchester residents comprised some of the first people to be sent as convicts to Australia in the 1700s. Find out if your family members were among them at this free public drop-in.



Breastfeeding and Wet Nursing in the Ancient World

– Weds, 6 May 2020, 6:30–8pm

Tickets: £5

Free for students/unwaged

Across human history, societies have attached importance to behaviours and expectations around the visibility of breastfeeding. This talk by Dr April Pudsey offers a social and emotional history of breastfeeding in Antiquity.



Pop-up studio with Gang of Five

– Sat, 9 May 2020, 10am–11am

relaxed / autism-friendly,

11am–3pm, All welcome

Free

This local collective will create an interactive pop-up studio making art for all! Create your own artworks and display them in our exhibition space. Look out for another event with GOF in June.



The Chanteuse at The Portico

– Fri, 29 May 2020, 6:30–8:30pm

Tickets: £25 (buffet included)

For this intimate event, The Chanteuse (Lucy Hope) performs a repertoire of songs with lyrics by authors including Kasuo Isguro, Arthur Rimbaud and Leonard Cohen. A buffet of selected French cheeses and wines is included.



Manchester Libraries Festival

– Thurs, 11 – Sat, 13 June, 2020

Free

The Portico Library will be hosting a range of different events as part of the Manchester Libraries Festival. Keep up to date with the festival programme at The Portico on our website.



LIBRARY TREASURES

Don Quixote at The Portico

The treasure trove that is The Portico holds a number of surprises for those interested in *Don Quixote* and its author, Miguel de Cervantes. The Library plays an intriguing part in the literary transmission of what has been considered the first and ultimate modern novel.

Numerous authors have been entranced by the mock-chivalric adventures of *Don Quixote's* fictional hero and the real-life exploits of its heroic author. Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* understood Cervantes's literary innovations and upped the ante with prophetically Monty-Pythesque absurdism. Henry Fielding admired the novel so much that he wrote *Don Quixote in England* – a political comedy which expanded the story to include an array of English characters. While Dyonisius Lardner – the then-phenomenally famous scientist and compiler – dedicated considerable space in his *Cabinet Cyclopaedia* to the facts of Cervantes's life, the passionate and shrewd 'Mrs Oliphant' – Margaret Oliphant, a real-life Jo March – plunged

with gusto into this author's psyche with her *Cervantes* biography.

All these books can be read at The Portico, some uniquely: for instance, the volume of Lardner's *Cyclopaedia*. Various editions of the novel itself are also available; interestingly, that which even the Spanish Inquisition found acceptable was, at times, amended in the later English translations. Some of these copies include beautiful illustrations by Gustave Doré and Ernest Marriott.

It is a privilege to be able to dive into this treasure and explore its readership at The Portico. The newly restored *Stranger Books* might throw some further light into this matter. The available borrowing records point to a reading public interested in Spanish culture; and sometimes past readers have left us tangible traces: a chapter entitled 'The Cradle and the Grave of Cervantes' in John Hay's *Castilian Days* appears to be the most read in the book...

Dr Esther Gómez-Sierra
Researcher



To discover more about Don Quixote and its author, please join us for Esther's lecture 'Don Quixote at the Portico' on Wednesday 8 April. All welcome – see page 7 for more information.

Left and Opposite
Illustrations by
Gustave Doré in
The History of
Don Quixote by
Cervantes, 1863.

INTERVIEW WITH GLEN JAMES BROWN

The £10,000 Portico Prize is awarded biennially to the book that best evokes the spirit of the North of England. Glen James Brown's debut novel *Ironopolis* was one of six titles shortlisted for 2020. Glen spoke to Portico Library Kitchen Manager Joe Fenn about his work, the North and Northern writing.

Can you describe *Ironopolis* in your own words?

Ironopolis takes place in a huge fictional post-war housing estate over the course of sixty or seventy years, from its peak in the 1960s to its more recent decline. It follows three generations of residents whose lives overlap and is told from six perspectives, all tied together by different threads.

What is your relationship to those stories—is the book semi-autobiographical?

I believe everything you write – every single person, character, situation – is you. Some part of you, or reflection of you. So, in that respect it's all me. But it's also about imagination and trying to find what is true for everybody. So, there's little bits of stuff, twisted and turned.

Your book is very localised. How do conceptions of the broader region of the North factor into your writing?

Identity-wise I don't think I can escape it. The social and political forces of the region have shaped my politics and worldview: the Thatcher years, the decline of shipbuilding in Newcastle and other industries elsewhere. It made sense for me to put my book somewhere in the North so I could explore those issues and try to think of something new or relevant to say.

Finally, did you find similarity amongst the shortlist? Is there a common theme in Northern writing?

I think it's the same anywhere. It's people. If a writer is worth their salt they can make characters come alive. If you want to write about the North, you make sure that the characters are not just 'Northern' but they're real characters who just happen to be in the North. If you look too closely at anything like that it just becomes a mess of contradictions.



ADOPT-A-BOOK

History of the Origin and Rise of the Republic of Venice by W. C. Hazlitt, 1858.

A recent visit to the Lagoon City and its ancient 1000 year old buildings prompted me to search for more information in The Library's collection. Happily, there are over 100 relevant titles and the one I fancied – an account of Venice from 1858 by English lawyer and writer William Carew Hazlitt – was discovered in the hidden corner of the reading room. Finding all four volumes suffering from old age, meaning the bindings had become so brittle that they disintegrate on opening and are in urgent need of repair, I sponsored their restoration to enable future readers to enjoy them.

I could not wait to study the volumes and I have to say they make very entertaining and informative reading. The language of those years is so rich and colourful, it felt like being given a poetry lecture or enjoying an opera in Verona.

The author emphasises the effective workings of a very sensible group of politicians, who work tirelessly to protect

Venice's historic buildings rather than constructing new ones. In the early 15th century, the Doge's Palace burned down for the third time. The most influential architect of the day, Palladio, suggested a complete rebuild in the new style of the Renaissance (a plan of which still exists in their archives). But the city fathers thought better of it, opting to restore and preserve the work of previous generations. Today we can get a feeling of the life and the ideas of Venetians in past centuries, instead of enduring just another Palladian house behind the next bend in the road! This echoes Ruskin's opinion about Venice's architecture; another fabulous must read in our Library titled *The Stones of Venice*, which has also recently been adopted.

When the restoration of Hazlitt's book is complete, these books should be at the top of the research list of study for the contemporary traveller. I hope they will be available for the summer.

Martin Siebert
Portico Library member

Right
From *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. 3, 'The Fall' by John Ruskin, 1853. With illustrations by the author.

Opposite
The Portico Prize shortlisted authors. From left to right: Graham Caveney, Jessica Andrews, Benjamin Myers, Adelle Stripe and Glen James Brown. Ray Robinson not pictured.



VOLUNTEER'S STORY

I still remember more or less stumbling into The Portico Library whilst on my way to the neighbouring Art Gallery when I first visited Manchester back in 2013. As an art historian with a keen interest in architecture and working in special collections, how could I not be amazed by such a place?

Around a year ago I left Switzerland, where I had been living for quite some time, to settle permanently in Manchester. To become acquainted with my new environment, The Portico seemed an ideal place for me to volunteer. With its Georgian roots and the busy programme of exhibitions and events around its collections, the Library allows one to engage with both Manchester's vibrant social and literary history and with the city's contemporary cultural life. My expectations were more than fulfilled. Since my very first day I was retrieving books in preparation for exhibitions or upon request for members or readers.

Right
Filine Wagner and
Freddy Hankin in
The Portico
Library's Reading
Room.

But there was a whole other world to discover literally hidden behind the Portico's clock: up in the attic, the Library's archive slumbers. I was entrusted to survey and inventory a recent acquisition from a former member of The Portico who was actively involved with the main and book committees for around two decades. Going through the materials, I gained first-hand insights into the processes of what seems a pivotal time in which a lot has been done to change the Library from a more exclusive institution to a lively place of exchange. But the engagement with the archive allowed for much more than only satisfying my curiosity. In conjunction with The Portico, and with the Library's great support, I undertook a diploma in Archives and Records Management at The University of Liverpool, which has paved my way to finding a job in the archival world.

Filine Wagner
Volunteer



ADVERT

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84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester,
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HOUSE

The Portico Library

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Opening Times

Monday & Friday:
9:30am–4:30pm

Tuesday–Thursday:
9:30am–5:30pm

Saturday:
11am–3pm

View up-to-date
temporary closures
on our website.

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We want to make The Portico Library welcoming for everyone, but there is lots more to do to make our 200-year-old listed building accessible. In 2018, we commissioned an Access Audit, supported by the National Lottery, and are working towards implementing its recommendations.

To enter the Library, please press the intercom button next to the green door on Charlotte Street. Parking is available nearby.

Currently, there are 32 steps from the main entrance to the library and no lift. A stairlift is available via a portable ramp and there is a step-free toilet in the next-door Berlitz language school. Staff are always available to help.