Study Day

**Magic and Enchantment in Literature**

**Dates**
Saturday 27 January 2018

**Times**
10.30–17.00 (private view from 17.00)

**Location**
Knowledge Centre Theatre

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**Morning session**

10.15  
Doors open

10.30  
**Welcome and Introduction**
Dr Emma McEvoy, University of Westminster

10.45  
**Powers and Precious Objects: Magic in Antiquity**
Professor Barbara Goff, University of Reading
Magic in antiquity is a fascinating and important subject which allows us to see the ancient world in a number of different lights. Barbara will compare some literary representations of magic with actual papyri and inscriptions that Greeks, Romans and Egyptians used to curse or charm their neighbours.

11.20  
**Enchanting Early Modern Theatre**
Dr Gwilym Jones, University of Westminster
The theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries was heavily invested in stage magic. From fairies and spirits, through magic potions to wizards and witches, the playwrights of the period kept returning to the themes of magic and enchantment. Gwilym will show how this interest in magic developed, what it meant to the audiences, and what props and devices the acting companies had at their disposal to stage their special effects.

11.55  
Short break; tea and coffee

12.10  
**400 Years of the Lancashire Witches**
Professor Catherine Spooner, Lancaster University
The trial of the Lancashire witches in 1612 was one of the most notorious in British history, and had a huge influence on how witchcraft was represented in centuries to come. Catherine will look at a selection of depictions of the witches in literature, art and popular culture, and show how over the course of 400 years they have been transformed from fearful or despicable figures to objects of comedy and sensation, historical victims of oppression, and finally, tourist attraction.

12.45  
Q&A plenary with morning contributors

13.15  
Lunch (not provided)
Afternoon session

14.30  The Magic (or Lack of it) in the Works of J R R Tolkien
Dr Stuart D Lee, University of Oxford
J R R Tolkien’s novels and tales set in his Middle-earth – The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, and The Silmarillion – set out a blueprint for subsequent fantasy writers to follow. But can they be considered as simple ‘sword and sorcery’ tales purely aimed at escapism? Whilst there are swords, how much sorcery do his Middle-earth tales contain? Stuart will look at Tolkien’s views on magic and enchantment, and the role magic plays in Tolkien’s mythology.

15.05  Charms and Portals from George MacDonald to Alan Garner
Alison Bailey, British Library
Alison will consider the rich tradition of British children’s literature about magic, from George MacDonald’s The Princess and Curdie to Alan Garner’s The Weirdstone of Brisingamen, by way of E Nesbit, C S Lewis and other authors from the late 19th century to the early 1960s. The focus will be on the mechanisms of enchantment and the methods of transition from the real to the magical world, with reference to some relevant works from the Library’s collections.

15.40  Short break; tea and coffee

15.55  Witches, ‘Bitches’ or Feminist Trailblazers? The Witch in Popular Culture
Dr Chloé Germaine Buckley, Manchester Metropolitan University
The witch is often praised as a figure who pushes boundaries, breaks rules and challenges patriarchal authority. Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s Willow and Disney’s Maleficent are two oft-cited examples of the ‘feminist’ witch. In popular Gothic horror texts of the 20th and 21st century however, the witch can be a deeply ambiguous symbol. Chloé will consider how the witch frustrates attempts to co-opt her to a particular political agenda and suggests that, given the current rise of anti-feminist sentiments, the ambiguity of the witch is something to be wary of rather than celebrate.

16.30  Q&A plenary with afternoon contributors

17.00  Close; private view of Harry Potter: A History of Magic begins

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Evening Private View of Harry Potter: A History of Magic

Our study is followed immediately by a Private View of the Harry Potter: A History of Magic exhibition in the main Library building. Admission is by timed-entry ticket, which will be distributed on a first-come/first served basis on the day.

The available entry times are:

17.00-17.30
17.30-18.00
18.00-18.30

Exhibition entrance is for attendees of the study day only, and cannot be transferred to another date.
Contributors

**Emma McEvoy** is senior lecturer in the department of English, Linguistics and Cultural Studies at the University of Westminster. She has published widely in the fields of Romanticism and the Gothic, and is the author of *Gothic Tourism* (2016), and co-editor, with Catherine Spooner, of the *Routledge Companion to Gothic* (2007). She is currently working on a project on Romantic-period tourists in Britain.

**Barbara Goff** is Professor of Classics at the University of Reading. She has published extensively on Greek tragedy and its significance both in the ancient and the modern world, with special reference to postcolonial rewritings of tragedy in Africa. She has also written on gender in antiquity, on Greek political thought, and on ancient poetics.

**Gwilym Jones** is Lecturer in English at the University of Westminster. His research interests are in Shakespeare and early modern theatre history, especially representations of the environment and stage soundscapes. He is the author of *Shakespeare’s Storms* (2014), which won the 2016 Shakespeare’s Globe Book Award.

**Catherine Spooner** is Professor of Literature and Culture at Lancaster University. She has published six books on Gothic literature, film and popular culture, including *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2014), *Contemporary Gothic* (2006) and *Post-millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic* (2017). She also contributed to the volume accompanying the British Library's *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* exhibition (2014). In 2012 she co-organised a major international conference commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Lancashire Witch Trials, and she is currently researching the Lancashire Witches’ cultural afterlife.

**Stuart D Lee** is a member of the Faculty of English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford, and Merton College. He is the co-author of *The Keys of Middle-earth: Discovering Medieval Literature through the Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien* (2015); and he edited *A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien* (2015), and the four-volume collection *Critical Assessment of Major Authors: J. R. R. Tolkien* (2017). He is jointly organising, with Carolyne Larrington, Oxford’s Summer School in Fantasy Literature (to run September, 2018).

**Alison Bailey** is Lead Curator, Printed Heritage Collections 1901-2000, at the British Library and has a particular interest in the Library’s collection of children’s literature. She has been a co-curator of a number of exhibitions relating to books for children and has contributed to the Library’s ‘Discovering Literature’ website.

**Dr Chloé Germaine Buckley** is a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her publications include *Twenty-First Century Children’s Gothic Fiction: From Wanderer to Nomadic Subject* (2017), *Telling it Slant: Critical Approaches to Helen Oyeyemi* (2017, co-edited with Sarah Ilott), and various chapters and articles on aspects of the Gothic, including children’s fiction, the Gothic child, the Weird, gender and the Gothic, and representation of Witches in popular culture.