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# E42

EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE | Issue 04



## When Worlds Collide

DR PETER WRIGHT REVEALS  
THE RULES OF ADAPTATION

As games consoles replace hide and seek and Facebook becomes the new virtual street corner, E42 looks at why children's freedom to play has all but disappeared

# PLAYING OUT?

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP

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**A** child of 20 years ago will have fond memories of playing outside with friends, going on long bike rides, the only rule being 'be home before it gets dark'. A child today has a mobile phone in case they get lost from their parents' view and can play indoors, on a computer, on their own. So, when we think about children's freedom to play, it appears?

Play is a serious issue. In its Play Strategy, published in December 2008, the government set out its ambition to make the UK "the best country in the world for children to grow up". Backed by an investment of £235m in new play centres and support for play in communities, the strategy seems to be putting play back at the heart of children's physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

But why does simple playing need to be the subject of a 'strategy'? Why has it become so difficult for our children to play what should come so naturally? These and many other questions were the focus of the second Early Years Annual Conference at Edge Hill, which took place in May. Based around the theme of 'playfulness', the

play – and the lack of it – for both children and adults.

"The idea came from the poet, Peter Dixon, who spoke at our first conference," says Jo Albin-Clarke, Senior Lecturer in Early Years (EY) and conference organiser. "In one of his poems, he says 'let our children be', and that really struck a chord with many EY practitioners. So, this year, we decided to make play the focus of our conference as it is central to so much of what we do as teachers, carers and supporters of the children's workforce.

"We chose 'playfulness', rather than 'play' as our theme because we wanted people to think about the subject in a different way," explains Jo. "During our practical sessions, we had delegates playing in the woods behind Edge Hill, for example. It's all about playing with your thinking, pushing boundaries and rediscovering your own playful nature as an adult. That will then, hopefully, impact on the way we use play with children as EY practitioners."

As well as Edge Hill Chancellor, Professor Tanya Byron, the conference heard from leading childhood expert, Tim Gill, whose book, *No Fear: Growing up in a Risk Adverse Society*, prompted much debate when it was first published in 2007. In the book, Tim warns of the dangers of "wrapping children in cotton wool" and claims lack of play is detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

**"You cannot expect children to grow up into healthy, resilient, responsible adults if they are brought up unable to make mistakes and learn from them."**

"Children's lives have become increasingly controlled and overseen by

community," says Tim, "and this is severely restricting their everyday experiences and discoveries.

"Children are not being given the freedom to learn through living, which sometimes involves making mistakes, scraping your knees and falling out with other children. Unsupervised play is essential for children to develop life skills. You cannot expect children to grow up into healthy, resilient, responsible adults if they are brought up in isolation, unable to make mistakes and learn from them."

Tim believes there are a number of factors that have contributed to the current restriction on childhood freedom. The increase in traffic over the last 30 years is a major problem, not just because of the danger of being run over but also due to the amount of time children spend in cars.

"Walking to school used to be the norm," says Tim, "but a recent survey showed that the number dropped from 80% in 1971 to just 11% in 1990. This is partly due to the fear of 'bad things happening' if children walk to school on their own, but also a sign of the way modern life is changing. Children often get dropped at school on the parent's way to work.

"Aside from the obesity issue, children don't learn road safety skills from walking to school so their parents are then more anxious about them walking. It's a vicious circle."

The media must also shoulder some of the responsibility, according to Tim. Sensationalist reporting of crimes against children increases parents' fears and suggests that these incidents are more common than they are.

"Parental anxiety has grown in recent years despite there being no real increase in the number of crimes committed. The media seems to present a world where there is a paedophile on every street corner waiting to snatch children who are out on their own. In reality, child abductions by strangers are very rare; the sad truth is children are far more likely to be abused, or have major accidents, in their own homes."

So, what can be done to change attitudes towards children and allow

"First, we have to recognise the seriousness of the problem," says Tim. "We are in danger of creating a generation of children who are overweight, lacking in social skills and unable to take responsibility for their own actions.

"Change has to come from the top, with more child-friendly policies and an emphasis on supporting children in their development rather than just

'protecting' them. We need to stop viewing children as vulnerable or they will come to see themselves as victims.

"We need to improve play and recreational spaces and empower people who work with children to take risks without fear of litigation. We need to make our neighbourhoods and communities more child-friendly. We need to support parents so they feel able to give their children back some of

the freedoms that they enjoyed when they were young.

"Perhaps most important of all is the need to accept that it is natural for children to explore, take risks, make mistakes, seek adventure and test boundaries, and encourage them to do that." ●





# to play or not to play

asked four academics to discuss the importance of play – or the lack of it – using their field of expertise



## Paul Reynolds

Lecturer in Sociology and Social Philosophy

Psychologists see play not as a marginal activity between the serious domains of work, home life or education, but as a social avenue of socialisation and learning of social norms, rules and values.

Playing games inculcates within the player the need to operate within social rules and respect cultural conventions. In sport, playing promotes our co-operative living in society and teaches us to 'play the game'.

One of the problems of this learning is controversial in what impact it has on children. For example, there was a lively debate in the 1960s and 1970s around the way competitive games often promoted individualism over social obligations and so undermined bonds of social solidarity. Those who took that line would argue the individualism and disdain for welfare that characterised those in need displayed in the 1980s and 1990s was, in part, a result of what young adults learned through play – putting themselves first and winning at games.

Another sociological view of play is that it encourages conformity and provides an outlet for energy that might be better spent on addressing social inequalities and ills.



## Judith Ashley

Senior Lecturer in Public Health

The obesity issue is a complex one. However, people are getting fatter almost everywhere in the world. The World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts there will be 2.3 billion overweight adults in the world by 2015 and more than 700m of them will be obese.

The spread of childhood obesity is alarming experts. Recent figures from the Department of Health (DH) show that 15% of children aged 2–10 were obese in 2007.

One of the major problems, according to The National Obesity Forum, is an increase in leisure activities that are physically inactive and often socially isolating.

In 1994, 46% of children played school sports for more than two hours per week, but by 2004, this had fallen to 33%. Watching TV is now the most popular 'play' activity for children of all ages, with over a quarter of 11–16 year olds watching more than four hours a day.

The health consequences of childhood obesity include conditions such as type two diabetes, hypertension, cardiac problems, sleep apnoea and, ultimately, a shorter life expectancy. Psychologically, obese children may experience bullying and may suffer from low self-esteem and depression.

In January 2009 the DH launched its £75m *Change 4 Life* initiative, which aims to improve children's diets and levels of activity. It will be interesting to see if that has an impact on the UK's rising childhood obesity levels.



## Dr Liz Connors

Senior Lecturer in Psychology

An assumption widely held by psychologists has been that play must serve some important developmental function. Trying to establish the exact functions and benefits of play have, therefore, preoccupied play researchers. One prime developmental function is that it allows children opportunities to practise skills and roles they are likely to encounter in adulthood.

As a developmental psychologist, I have a keen interest in understanding how children develop the ability to deal with risk and adversity in their everyday lives and what makes children resilient to risk. I believe that children's play experiences, particularly physical play, have an important role. By allowing children to develop the essential qualities of resilience, such as competence, self-efficacy and self-esteem we can prepare them for later difficulties and challenges they may encounter in life. Recent research suggests that the risky and challenging situations that children might encounter through playing outdoors can provide excellent opportunities for the development of resilience.

Studies have shown that, from a very young age, children gain great satisfaction from testing themselves in risky and challenging physical activities which, when successfully negotiated, cultivate an 'I can do it' attitude. However, such activities tend to be discouraged by parents – especially in girls. The longer-term benefits of challenging or 'risky' play need to be balanced against parents' natural desire to protect their children.



## Graham Smith


Associate Head of Physical Exercise and Coaching

Play is what children, not adults, do best. They like 'big' activities – running, jumping, climbing and shouting – that are not usually 'accepted' in normal school environments. Some schools have banned children from playing conkers, riding bicycles, splashing water and making daisy chains.

Playing games is primarily about fun but it can help children acquire gross and fine motor skills, develop communication with others, increase self-reliance and responsibility, enhance self-esteem through problem-solving and engender a desire for lifelong participation in physical activity.

Much contemporary debate concerning child play is not really about children – it is about adults who seem to assume that playgrounds and parks belong to them and that children must behave in an 'adult' way when playing there. As a result, play opportunities are gradually being eroded, with children's lives becoming regimented to comply with adult time scales, transport schedules and expected behaviour traits. The safest option seems to be home computer play in preference to healthy exercise and fresh air.

It is true that children who have an active childhood are more likely to be physically active adults and a reluctance to encourage children's engagement may subliminally permeate a sense of ambivalence towards play and healthy lifestyle choices. ●



THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE  
DEPARTMENT AT EDGE HILL IS  
DEALING WITH SOME OF THE  
BIGGEST ISSUES CONFRONTING THE  
PLANET TODAY

DANGEROUS  
DECISIONS

**F**rom the erosion of our  
to the green credentials  
our office blocks,  
understanding the  
environment – and our  
impact on it – is becoming a  
global necessity.

Climate change, conservation, biodiversity, green energy, pollution, carbon footprint – these are concerns that have an impact on everyone, from the man on the street to the huge corporations and world governments. With environmental issues moving up the political agenda, and many large organisations including green issues as part of their corporate social responsibility statements, graduates who are able to bring science and society together to tackle environmental issues are increasingly in demand.

Study of the Earth and its systems is nothing new at Edge Hill, but the introduction of a new degree programme – the BSc in Environmental Science, starting in September – is reinvigorating the subject and bringing it more in line with current and future employer needs.

“This new programme is an enhancement of our Geo-Environments course, but there is more to it than just a simple refresh,” says Head of Natural, Geographical and Applied Sciences, Nigel Richardson.

“Government, media, industry and public interest in environmental issues is on the rise, so there has never been a better time to be an environmental scientist. There is an increasing need to understand and manage the environment and evaluate the interactions of its components, including humans, and we are hoping to tap into this with our new degree.

“We want to reignite interest in the subject and offer a degree programme that reflects society’s changing needs.”

A recent report into the state of Environmental Science (ES) provision in higher education institutions, *Mapping Environmental Science Landscape*, presented the perfect catalyst for a change in Edge Hill’s ES provision.

and that many courses don't place enough emphasis on practical and applied aspects of the subject, or equip graduates with key professional skills, such as report writing and negotiation skills.

The report also suggested that better graduates come from courses with a vocational element and recommended more practical experience in the field for students.

The report dovetailed completely with our own thinking and addressed our concerns about Edge Hill's ES provision," says Nigel. "It gave us the opportunity to refocus the content of the course and plug some of the gaps in skills that employers had identified. The recommendations have shaped our new course, making it more practical and employer-focused.

Students will now graduate with a fantastic skills package. They will acquire the core skills and knowledge to enable them to go on to careers in environmental consultancy or management, for example, but also transferable skills such as communication, presentation and IT."

Based on a survey of environmental science providers, employers and professionals, the report predicts a rise in students opting to study ES in the next five years. Alongside the media attention about environmental issues, the report highlights the opportunities presented by increasing EU investment as one of the main drivers for growth.

With EU mandatory requirements for both governments and industry open up exciting challenges for environmental scientists," says Nigel. "Laws relating to air and water quality, pollution, carbon emissions and waste management are becoming more and more stringent so graduates with relevant vocational skills and knowledge will be required to ensure organisations comply with them."

One of the key issues for the future is sustainability. Whether it relates to energy, buildings or agriculture, the ability to maintain balance within the Earth's systems is paramount. The report highlighted sustainability as a future trend that needs to be addressed within ES and it is a major focus of the new course at Edge Hill.

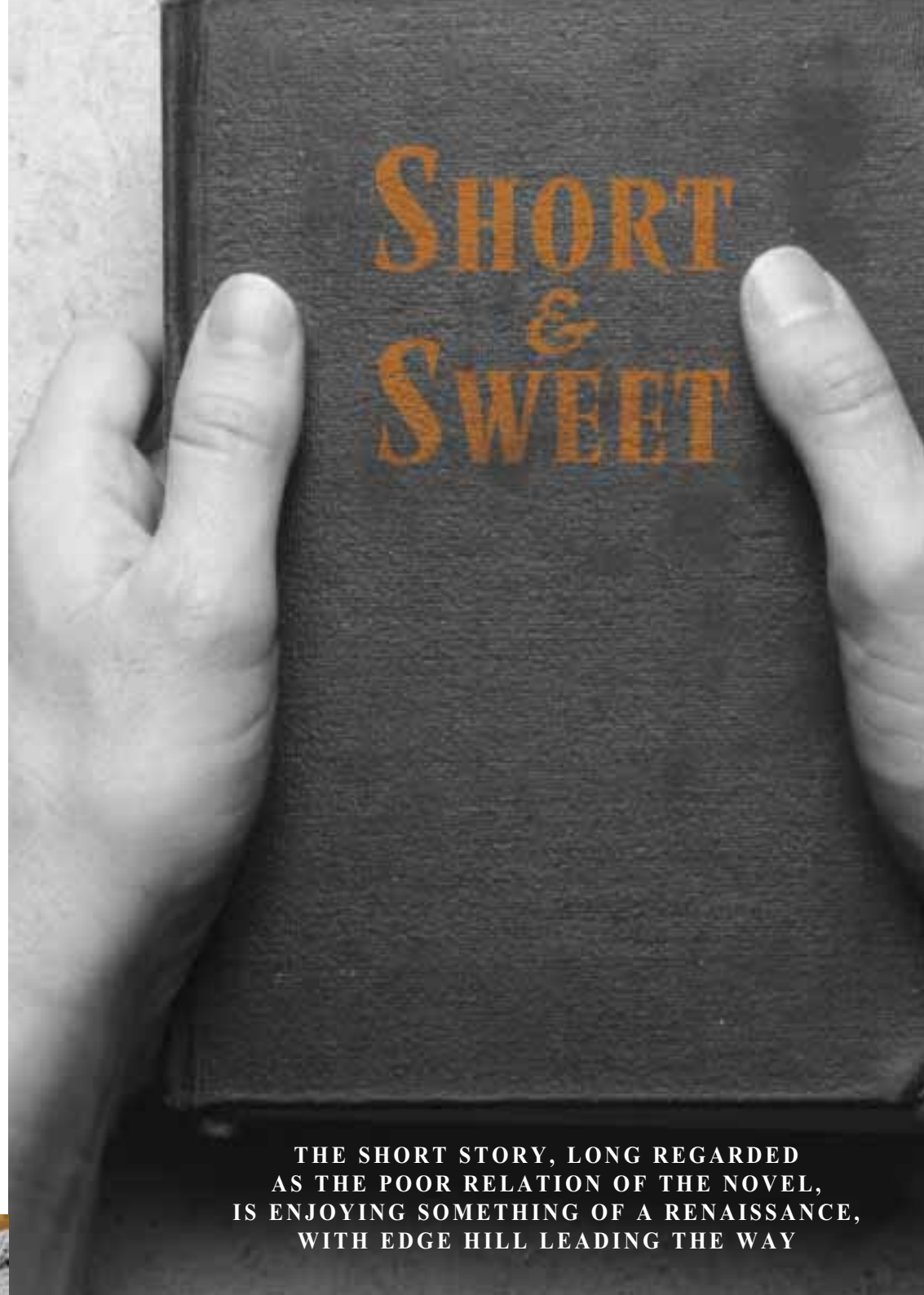
"We are currently using more resources than we are able to sustain," says Nigel. "We now need a massive collective effort to restore the balance and that means finding new ways

of heating our homes, growing our food, planning our towns. There is a need for more science-based approaches to understanding the impact of human activity on the planet's systems and potential ways to reverse the damage.

"Environmental science has the ability to deal with those big future issues because of its multi-disciplinary nature. It brings together aspects of physical geography, geological science, environmental science, ecology, biology, human geography and environmental chemistry to identify, understand and potentially resolve the major environmental concerns of today's society." ●

"We now need a massive collective effort to restore the balance and that means finding new ways of heating our homes, growing our food, planning our towns."

THE SHORT STORY, LONG REGARDED AS THE POOR RELATION OF THE NOVEL, IS ENJOYING SOMETHING OF A RENAISSANCE, WITH EDGE HILL LEADING THE WAY





**Uniquely, the Edge Hill University Short Story Prize is awarded for collections of short stories, rather than individual narratives, and is open to all genres – from science fiction to literary texts.**

g this year's judges is internationally acclaimed writer Keegan, whose *Walk the Blue Fields* won the prize ear.

level of intensity in the short story is very high," says . "It's a very difficult form. One of the things that is most it is that it seems easy. People think because it's short, nor, so it's wonderful to see the short story being rated in this way and treated as something other than a art.

short story is not a comforting read. Often it can be disturbing. As Frank O'Connor said in his book, *A Writer's Voice*, the short story is more about holding your n than breathing."

petition co-ordinator, Dr Ailsa Cox, believes the short form is making a gradual but steady recovery in the of literature, following a protracted period of decline.

Edge Hill Prize is awarded to collections of short stories courage publishers to promote these volumes, and I this is happening because we are seeing more and short stories reviewed in the literary and national press," Ailsa, a Reader in Literature and Creative Writing at Hill.

"A good short story is vital, intense and exciting. It grabs you emotionally and when you finish reading, makes you think about the world a little differently. William Boyd described the short story as a "nail bomb", while A. L. Kennedy said it's "small like a bullet is small". Although these are violent images, they vividly capture the punch that the short story delivers."

The form enjoyed its golden era before the advent of radio and, especially television, with writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Rudyard Kipling and F. Scott Fitzgerald prospering from writing short stories for large circulation magazines.

"Even as late as the 1960s, John Updike was making a living from short stories and they have tended to prosper more in the USA than over here," says Ailsa. "However, there are grounds for optimism."

"*The Sunday Times Magazine* is now publishing a short story every week and *The Independent* has published short stories for a while. There's lots of activity on the web and major publishers, as well as small presses, are showing increasing interest in the form."

Another positive indicator is that a writer such as Helen Simpson is about to publish her fifth collection of short stories without having been pressured into writing a novel.

"This shows that it's possible to make a literary career out of writing short stories. There won't be an overnight explosion to worry the likes of Dan Brown, but there are signs that people are getting fed up with being offered the same stuff from novels," adds Ailsa. "The short story is a refreshing, electrifying alternative. It lives in the moment and is immediate and contemporary in a way that a novel can't be."

“William Boyd described the short story as a “nail bomb”, while A. L. Kennedy said it’s “small like a bullet is small”

## THE 2009 SHORT (STORY) LIST

**Chris Beckett**

*The Turing Test* (Elastic Press)

These 14 stories feature robots, alien planets, genetic manipulation and virtual reality, but their centre focuses on individuals rather than technology. They deal with love and loneliness, authenticity, illusion, and what it really means to be human.

**Gerard Donovan**

*Country of the Grand* (Faber and Faber)

Donovan's stories magnify a 'New Ireland' as it copes with the rewards and pressures of its fresh success: immigration, midlife crisis, adultery and divorce, a lost sense of place and history, and, of course, what to do with all that prosperity.

**Anne Enright**

*Yesterday's Weather* (Random House)

A series of stories about women stirred, bothered or fascinated by men they cannot understand, or understand too well. This book features characters who are haunted by the ghosts of the lives they might have led.

**Shena Mackay**

*The Atmospheric Railway* (Random House)

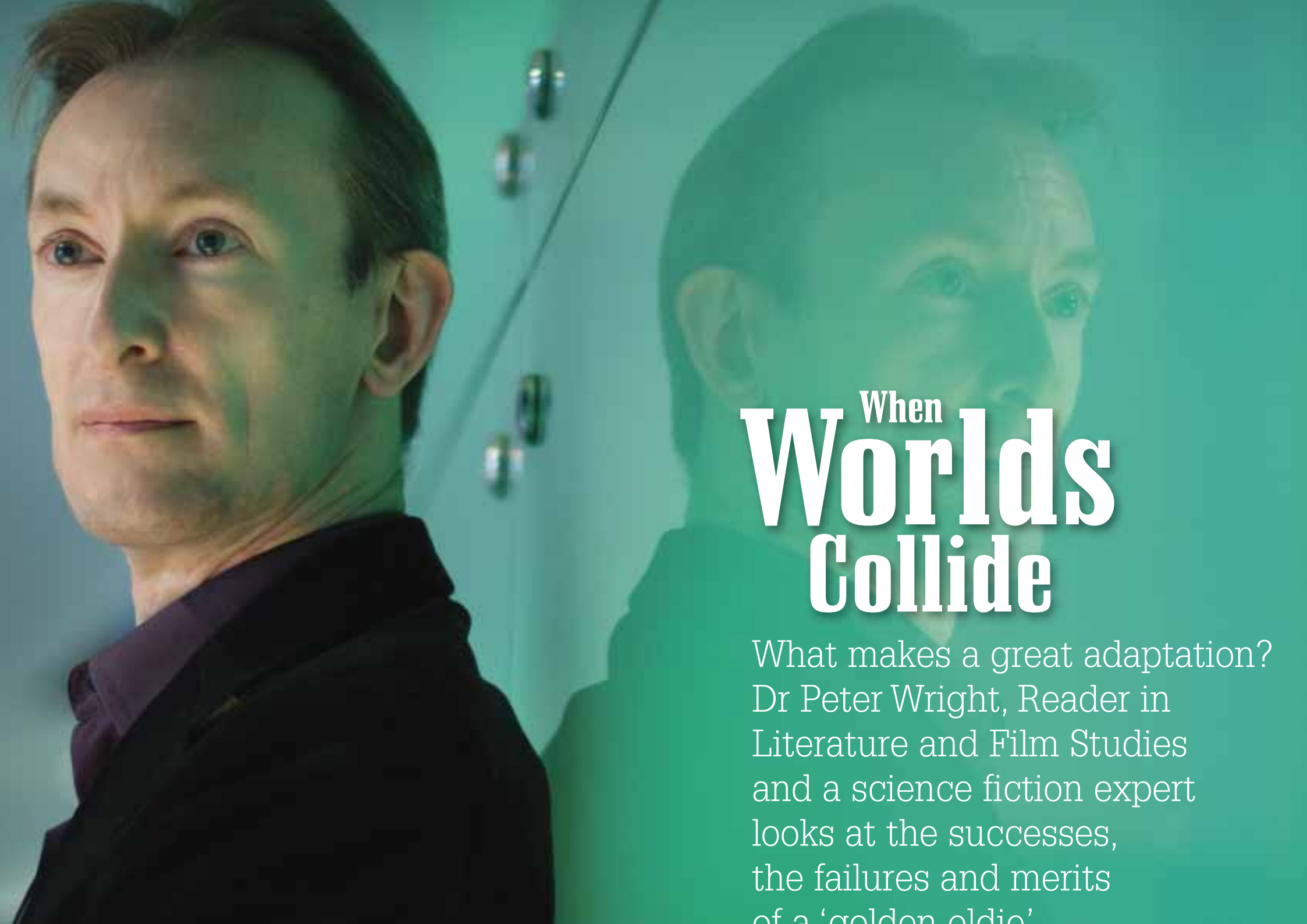
Contains 13 new stories and a selection of 23 more from previous collections of an author who is acclaimed as one of the best short story writers in the world. Her short fiction is characterised by underlying shadows, wit and sharpness of perception.

**Ali Smith**

*The First Person and Other Stories* (Hamish Hamilton)

Distinguished by Smith's ability to unearth flashes of truth and drama in the everyday, this collection sparkles with warmth and humour. In one story, a middle-aged woman converses with her 14 year old son. In another, a supermarket shopper finds a foul-mouthed yet beautiful child in her trolley.

**For further information on the Edge Hill Short Story Prize, visit [edgehill.ac.uk/english/CreativeWriting/NWSShortStoryPrize](http://edgehill.ac.uk/english/CreativeWriting/NWSShortStoryPrize)**



# When Worlds Collide

What makes a great adaptation? Dr Peter Wright, Reader in Literature and Film Studies and a science fiction expert looks at the successes, the failures and merits of a 'golden oldie'





"Directors and writers shouldn't feel compelled to adhere slavishly to the text – they should use their own perspective to produce something that engages the audience in a way that words on paper cannot."

**Where did your passion for film adaptations – particularly science fiction – come from?**

I saw Franklin Shaffner's adaptation of Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes* in the cinema when I was a child. The final image of the decaying Statue of Liberty had a very powerful effect on me. Several years later, I read Boulle's novel, re-watched the film and found myself fascinated by how ideas in literature can be expressed visually. It's this which inspired my current book, *When Worlds Collide: The Critical Companion to Science Fiction Film Adaptations*.

**What's the magic ingredient for a great adaptation?**

Courage. Good adaptations are precisely that: adaptations. They don't have to be completely faithful to the book, but should preserve its spirit and not simply turn the written story into moving pictures. Directors and writers shouldn't feel compelled to adhere slavishly to the text – they should use their own perspective to produce something that engages the audience in a way that words on paper cannot. Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall*, based on Philip K. Dick's *We Can Remember it for You Wholesale* gets the balance right, whereas Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* is a rather crude version of a very perceptive book.

**Are the rules of adaptation different for science fiction?**

There are some different challenges when it comes to science fiction. That sounds odd when you are talking about stories based far in the future or in other worlds, but the images have to convince the audience; they have to be in some way credible. Unlike fantasy films, science fiction cinema can't rely on a complete suspension of disbelief. The challenge is to balance the imagery with a strong narrative and produce something thought-provoking rather than just visually stunning.

**Are you sometimes disappointed when you see a film adaptation of a book you have liked?**

Yes, I'm afraid so, particularly when an intelligent, thoughtful novel is rendered cinematically striking but thematically dull. A good example is Kevin Costner's version of David Brin's *The Postman*. The book's a really interesting exploration of the power of myth set in a post-nuclear USA, but much of this was thrown out and the film became more of a star vehicle for Costner. I was also unhappy with *Imposter*, which was adapted from a Philip K. Dick short story. It's a lovely, tightly written story, but the film is mostly padding – something that's always a danger when you make a two-hour film out of a short text. In contrast, I thought the adaptation of *Children of Men* was phenomenal, both narratively and aesthetically.

**Which sort of book can't be successfully adapted?**

I think the biggest hurdle is scope. There are some excellent science fiction novels which run to enormous length, making them very hard to adapt successfully. Intellectual content can also raise problems. This would make something like *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons almost impossible to adapt, though I've heard there's a version in pre-production. The 'sole survivor' story is hard, but there are a few good examples. I'm certainly looking forward to seeing the adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* later this year, because it will be interesting to see how the lack of dialogue in the novel and the very bleak setting have been handled.

**Modern films, especially adaptations of science fiction stories, rely heavily on computer-generated images. Is that a blessing or a curse?**

It's both! For science fiction cinema, it can be a real asset. But films can be overburdened with special effects, and splendid imagery often replaces good storytelling. We shouldn't forget that some classic adaptations, such as *Blade Runner*, had no CGI at all, yet it still looks remarkable and tells an engaging story.

I teach students who are part of the CGI generation. I find it hard to see the impact of the films made in the 1970s, for example. I try to encourage them to see beyond the wobbly sets – or wobbly spaceships – and to appreciate a film's thematic or ideological content. Better special effects do not necessarily mean a better film and some modern versions of older films aren't as good, despite the technical advances. It's an easy argument to win if you show the original *Planet of the Apes* against Tim Burton's recent remake.

**What do you make of the recent adaptations of graphic novels for the big screen?**

Graphic novels pose particular difficulties for adaptation. They are pre-visualised films and, in effect, storyboards waiting. That increases the pressure on the screenwriter and director to be visually innovative. *Watchmen* refuses to do this by framing much of its action according to Moore and Gibbon's graphic novel. It's more effective than *Spider City*, which proved simply turning a graphic novel into gorgeous moving pictures isn't enough.

**Do you spend all your time in the cinema?**

Surprisingly, no. Sometimes there's very little on which appeals to me. Hollywood seems obsessed with prequels and sequels and avoids 'niche' subjects because its primary interest is profit. Take the later *Star Wars* films: they look stunning but the story goes nowhere and it's a franchise that has been taken too far. I try to seek out independent films at smaller venues, something I encourage my students to do because there's some very good material out there if you know where to look.

**Read Dr Peter Wright's Guardian Unlimited blog at [www.guardian.co.uk/profile/peterwright](http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/peterwright). His film companion, *When Worlds Collide: The Critical Companion to Science Fiction Film Adaptations*, will be published next year by Liverpool University Press.**

**F**eminism and femininity are the new 'F' words. I would say all my students are feminists – they believe in equality for women – but they are reluctant to identify themselves that way. Feminism has acquired many negative connotations, which have been created by the media and partly by feminists themselves. I encourage my students to embrace feminism and tell them that you can be successful and powerful and still be feminine.

I always felt like a feminist, even when I was a child though I couldn't put a name to it. I had an epiphany when I was at university. In my first lecture on women's writing, the lecturer quoted the first line of the famous feminist work, *Madwoman in the Attic* – "Is a pen a metaphorical phallus?" I remember suddenly thinking, "yes, it is!", and I had to go back and reread all the classics from a completely different perspective. That lecture made me want feminism in my life and career.

**Contradiction is the keyword for 21st century feminism.** I do housework. I wear make-up and sometimes a short skirt. I want to be married and hope to have children. I'm also a member of a feminist association and have a weakness for shopping and fashion magazines. What does this make me? I don't believe I can be a feminist you have to be a certain way. There's not much tension between feminism and femininity that there was in the 1960s and 1970s. It's not black and white anymore and that's both challenging and exciting.

**I have mixed feelings about 'Girl Power'.** On the one hand it was positive for a generation of girls who found it was okay to be a girl, to get together with their friends and assert their femininity. It was all about being both powerful and feminine. However, the Spice Girls were, ultimately, a band manufactured by men as a consumer product and they presented a neatly packaged version of female empowerment that was acceptable to the media.

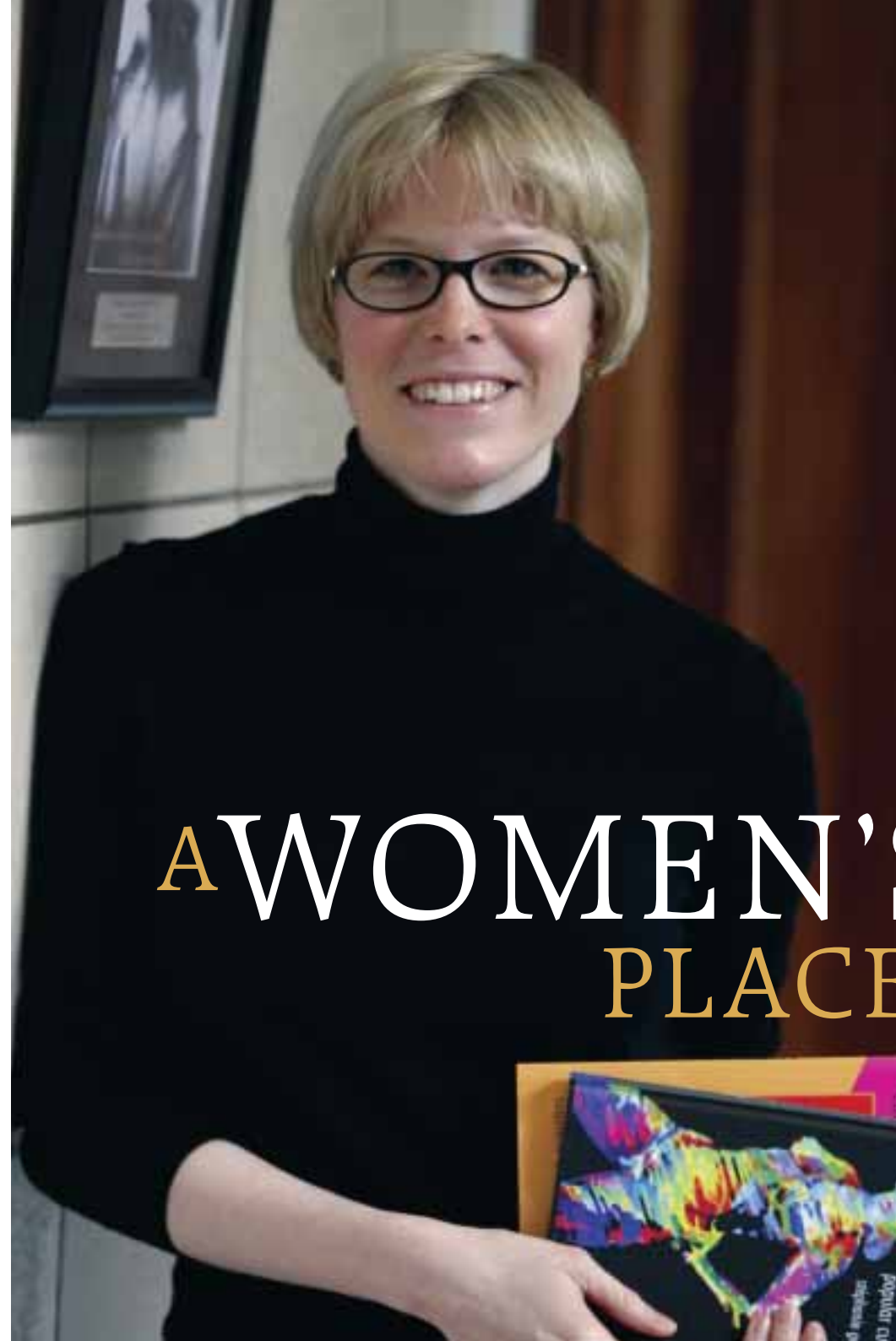
**I don't object to Katie Price as a role model for young women.** But I'd be worried if she was the only role model they had. She's not a particularly bad role model, but is she challenging any stereotypes or making girls think about what it means to be successful as a woman? Other role models have to be pushed and I don't see the media doing that. Hilary Clinton, for example, has been criticised on all levels, when we should be celebrating women like her.

**I've always had strong female role models in my life.** My mother and grandmother were very strong women who always worked for a living, so I was brought up thinking that was how life was. Growing up in Luxembourg, I enjoyed a relatively privileged upbringing. I never thought that this was an excuse not to engage with feminism, nor do I think that it is detrimental to my being a feminist. Being privileged doesn't mean you have to be ignorant.

**I wonder why women today aren't angrier.** There is a lot of complacency, especially among students. They think there is equality because they're at university and don't see inequality at first hand. But there is still a gender pay gap – women are paid on average 20% less than men across the EU – and attitudes to motherhood, particularly single mothers, and childcare are deplorable. And that's before you consider the global context. Every 10 minutes, a woman gets raped somewhere in the world. Women are suffering from trafficking, violence, poverty, honour killings. To think that we're there, that we've got equality, that feminism is somehow redundant, is ridiculous.

**Edge Hill's links with women's rights mean a lot to me.** Some of the most vocal and active members of the suffragette movement were teachers or students here and that is very inspiring. I'm proud that Edge Hill is hosting this year's Feminist and Women's Studies Association Conference at the Bluecoat in Liverpool. The conference is looking at the transitions in feminism from early feminists like the suffragettes to what feminism might look like in the future. Feminism has certainly changed in the new millennium and the conference gives us an opportunity to discuss those changes. We don't need to all agree on what feminism is, but as long as we practise conflict constructively we are engaging in feminist work. ●

*Stéphanie Genz's latest book, **Postfemininities in Popular Culture**, is available now, published by Palgrave Macmillan.*



# SECRET AGENTS

FOOTBALL AGENTS

—

DEMONISED IN POPULAR  
MYTHOLOGY AS PARASITES  
AND PARIAHS

—

MAY BE HEADING FOR  
AN ERA OF ENLIGHTENMENT





ents are as keen  
anyone else  
olved in football  
rid the game  
unscrupulous  
leagues who  
nish the reputation  
the profession,  
king their job  
the more difficult.

**F**ar from seeking to mystify their activities, many agents welcome the introduction of regulation, openness and dialogue with players, clubs and governing bodies such as UEFA and FIFA. So says Roberto Branco Martins, General Manager of the European Football Agents' Association (EFAA), who recently delivered a public lecture at the University's Centre for Sports Law Research (CSLR).

He claims agents are as keen as anyone else involved in football to rid the game of unscrupulous colleagues who tarnish the reputation of the profession, making their job all the more difficult.

"We are recognised by the European Commission and its national members as part of the national football structures, and seek to participate in the sound regulation of agents and to combat corruption and criminal activities in sport," says Roberto.

"Efficient and enforceable regulation is only achievable with the support, participation and consent of the organised collective of players' agents, in a spirit of transparency and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders in football."

Professor Richard Parrish, the CSLR's director, welcomes an open and rigorous debate on the role of agents in football.

"Roberto's speech was very much from the agent's perspective, but nonetheless he didn't deny that there are problems with agents," says Richard. "This is why they have got to be regulated. The current situation is not sustainable."

"But their main objection with the current state of affairs – and this is something I agree with – is that you can't have regulation without first having a discussion with all the stakeholders on what the issues are, and how best they can be resolved."

At present, FIFA, the global governing body, simply imposes a regulatory system on agents, which does little to solve problems and, in some cases, makes matters worse. "This is an unusual situation because you have agents, who are a group of private individuals, being regulated by another private body. Usually, only the state, or an organisation with a state mandate, can regulate a professional group," says Richard.

"These regulations are not necessarily a bad thing in themselves, but they are counterproductive in that they don't resolve the issue of unlicensed agents, who can still operate."

"There are licence exemptions for lawyers and family members of players, which means an unlicensed agent can carry out all the negotiations for a transfer deal, then simply pass the file across to a qualified lawyer to complete it. This looks above board, when in fact it's doing anything but tackling the root causes of the problem."

Challenges against FIFA's right to impose regulations – notably the 2006 Piau case in the European Court of Justice – have failed, partly due to a presumption that the football agency profession is inherently corrupt. However, Richard believes the situation has moved on and there are now grounds for a negotiated settlement between FIFA and the agents.

## Sports law expertise has global reach

Set up only two years ago, Edge Hill's Centre for Sports Law Research (CSLR) has already established a strong international reputation as a source of legal expertise and academic excellence.

As well as advising organisations in the EU and beyond, the CSLR has published four books, contributed numerous journal articles and sent representatives to international conferences on various aspects of sports law.

In the teaching arena, the centre offers a postgraduate LLM degree in international sports regulation.

"The Masters degree is principally for people who work in sports administration, for football clubs, or sports lawyers" explained CSLR director, Professor Richard Parrish. "Since many sports have professionalised themselves, there is a corresponding need for organisations and sporting bodies to be much more professional administratively and legally."

One of the CSLR's most high-profile roles has been advising the European Commission on social dialogue in professional football and professional cycling, as well as the European Parliament's internal market inquiry on UEFA's 'home-grown' players rule.

"Our report to the European Parliament was controversial because our comments on home-grown players were picked up by the media. We looked at incompatibilities between European law and governing bodies and the report was debated in the European Parliament, which led to a counter-report called the Belet report."

The CSLR report suggests that UEFA's rule on home-grown players, which stipulates eight of a 25-player squad must be locally trained, is at odds with European law because it constitutes 'indirect' discrimination.

"UEFA's legal point is that there is no discrimination on national grounds because, say, an English club could locally train a Spanish player. However, there would be a residency requirement because commuting would not be possible and we believe this is indirect discrimination because it privileges one group above another," explained Richard.

"To be fair to UEFA, they have presented a strong case as to why there should be home-grown players and they have made an effort to engage with European law. This is more than can be said for FIFA's 'six-plus-five rule', which says club teams must have at least six players qualified to play for their country, which is blatantly discriminatory and directly in conflict with European law."

"Another reason why the Piau case failed was that the court found there was no professional body for agents which could be consulted. Now, we have the EFAA and it's time agents were properly consulted," Richard.

"The ethos of the EU is that all stakeholders in an industry should be consulted. The EU is promoting its social dialogue agenda, which represents the employment provisions of the European Treaty and is a way of enabling employers and employees to get together to discuss common problems."

"In terms of professional football, there has been some real progress with the formal social dialogue committee set up in 2008. It is chaired by UEFA and comprises representative bodies for clubs and players. I believe it's entirely possible for agent-related issues to be discussed in the dialogue committee in a way that would satisfy all parties and comply with European law." ●

# A Dog's Life

Edge Hill student Geoff Smart talks to E42 about living on campus with a visual impairment and how both he and his guide dog, Asta, were made to feel right at home



**“My ultimate ambition when I leave Edge Hill University is to become a stand-up comedian, although I haven't yet decided whether to include my guide dog, Asta, in the act. She'd make a brilliant straight guy – or rather straight dog – but there would be a good chance of her falling asleep and snoring, like she does in lectures. I'm now in my third year studying Creative Writing and Drama and my time here has been fantastic. Asta has always been an essential part of the experience and I think we've both enjoyed ourselves at Edge Hill.**

Because I'm visually impaired I needed a university with specially adapted accommodation, as well as campus facilities that would enable me to take a full part in student life. I got all that here – and more.

One of the things that drew me to Edge Hill was the really friendly atmosphere among the students. This is important if you have a visual impairment. Also, if you're studying drama you need the people around you to be a little bit whacky.

I come from Sunderland and when I first arrived at Edge Hill I felt quite shy because I was a long way from home, but the friendliness quickly shone through. Asta was a huge help too, because people would come up to me and say what a lovely dog she is.

She comes everywhere with me, including lectures. She never makes a fuss or barks, but she does fall asleep and snore, which can be entertaining.

The tutors and staff have always been very helpful. They will take the time to do handouts for me in extra large print so I can read them more easily, and the library staff are great at helping me get what I need.

The campus is excellent and easy to get round. There are a couple of bits with no pavement, but it's not too bad and after a while you get used to it. The pedestrian areas around the western campus are particularly good.

Accommodation has never been a problem and I've had en suite rooms since I arrived, with special blinds because my visual impairment means I'm light-sensitive.

Hopefully, I'll graduate at the end of this term and then I'd like to do a Masters degree in screenwriting at Boumemouth or Salford, and eventually become a screenwriter.

There is no module in comedy and so far my experience has been limited to open mic nights in Sunderland. When my course finishes though, I plan to spend more time developing my act – and deciding

## ROOMS, LOOPS AND DOG LOOS

Some 6% of Edge Hill's student population has disabilities and the University goes to great lengths to help them feel at home.

Campus facilities cater for people with specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia and dyspraxia, hearing and visual impairment, mobility difficulties, mental health issues such as Asperger syndrome and autistic spectrum disorders, 'hidden' disabilities, such as, diabetes and hearing conditions.

When a disabled student comes to live on campus, a multi-agency approach ensures that accommodation meets his or her needs. Typically this means liaising with social services, care agencies and charities (such as Guide Dogs for the Blind) to make sure the student has the best possible support.

Adaptations to accommodation are routinely done on an individual basis, while all lecture rooms are accessible, with lighting that can be modified for students with visual impairments. Portable hearing loops are also available in lecture rooms built with these facilities.

A good example of the University's commitment is the 'dog loos' built for the guide dogs living on campus. These are compounds with easily washable paving and are situated across the Edge Hill site.





## **When a school is placed under special measures it's time for drastic action – and failing schools are considered to be no place for newly qualified or trainee teachers**

**H**owever, a groundbreaking partnership scheme involving the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University has changed all that and, for the first time, trainee teachers are actively involved in getting a school back on track.

Fosse Primary School in Leicester was placed under special measures last year, after Ofsted judged it was failing its pupils. The school was severely criticised for poor teaching standards and its children were underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's Year 5 teacher turned to Edge Hill for help. He had trained at the University and contacted the Dean of Education, Robert Smedley, for advice on raising classroom standards.

It was a unique opportunity and one Robert was keen to capitalise on. "As soon as a school is put into special measures, it cannot employ newly qualified teachers or take trainees on placement," explained Robert. "Yet when I was approached, I could see that by harnessing the talents of our staff and the enthusiasm of our trainees, we could make a big difference at Fosse Primary.

"We came up with a scheme that involves our trainees as an enrichment exercise. They are not on formal teaching placement but are a vital part of the programme we devised to help raise teaching standards at the school."

Staff from the Faculty of Education and 20 trainee teachers devised new strategies to improve teaching standards, culminating in a one-off 'mathematics day'. They put together a series of special maths-based activities, which were tried and tested by a group of youngsters from the school who spent an enjoyable day at the Edge Hill campus.

Robert said: "This has been a fantastic opportunity for us – we now have a model that I hope we can use with other failing schools across the country. By offering consultancy from our experienced staff – and by tapping into the enthusiasm of our trainee teachers – we think we can play a part in turning around the fortunes of other schools under special measures.

"When I first visited Fosse Primary School, I was encouraged by the attitude of the children there. The school was obviously going through a tough time but the children were keen to learn and we are delighted to be able to help them."

Ofsted has said that improvements have now been made at Fosse Primary School and the *Times Educational Supplement* carried a story about the school's innovative partnership with Edge Hill. In addition, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) has picked up on the initiative and is funding a research project looking at the impact of the work on classroom standards.

Robert added: "It is satisfying to see the positive progress being made and the partnership has certainly been of benefit to both sides. Our trainee teachers have benefited enormously. Normally they would be allowed no contact with a school in special measures, but this project has given them direct contact with both the staff and the pupils. It has been an inspiring and invaluable experience which will stay with them for a long time." ●



Could dance be used in the campaign to combat obesity?  
Can drama rehabilitate patients and help  
them overcome serious illness?

# Performance on PRESCRIPTION

It's a compelling thought. The academic links between performance and health are being strengthened with the unveiling of a new course at Edge Hill that will give drama and dance students the chance to explore opportunities in the healthcare sector.

Performance and Health is due for launch in 2010 and should open new avenues of interest for Edge Hill's performing arts students. And far from being a highly specialised niche, it is initially a growth sector, according to Phil Christopher, the university's Head of Performing Arts.

Phil said: "There are various areas where performance can be used in a health context. There is a big emphasis on dance as a way to tackle obesity, for example, and it may also help with mental health problems. Drama can be used particularly with young audiences, perhaps to deliver health promotion messages in schools, and performance practitioners can work alongside clinical staff in many aspects of supporting illness or aiding recovery.

It's a fairly new area but one which I believe will grow. The launch of the new course complements our existing approach. We always encourage our students to see performance in its widest sense because they might end up as teachers or as health workers; we know that performing arts graduates don't just aspire to be theatre directors or to be appearing in the theatre. Their chosen careers can be very varied."

Combining performing arts and health issues may be new for higher education, but the government has already thrown its weight behind a campaign to strengthen the links between the two sectors. The Department of Health and Arts Council England collaborated on a publication called *Dance and Health*

The new Performance and Health option at Edge Hill is not a training course for therapists and is not a professional qualification in its own right, but rather a chance for performing arts students to use applied performance in the non-traditional context of health.

Phil added: "Our graduates can go on to follow many career paths and should be aware of the connections performance arts can have with the health sector, because it could open up previously unexplored opportunities. I think there is growing interest in what we are doing, even though the connections between performance arts and health may not be immediately obvious to many.

"Because of that, our task now is to communicate the aims of our new course, to explain just what it is all about and which students might benefit. It's an exciting development for performance arts practitioners and for the department."

In addition to the launch of Performance and Health, the department has a foundation degree in Theatre, Applied Drama and Creativity, offering students an opportunity to develop vocational skills. Edge Hill also won a grant from the Knowledge Transfer Fund to help create an online applied performance network, hosted by social networking site Ning, and will hold a mini-conference for its 100-plus members, employers and other professionals.

For news on performance arts in the broadest context, log on to [www.palink.ning.org](http://www.palink.ning.org). ●



## A Dramatic Experience

A recent example of how to combine theatre with caring professions involved using drama in the social work setting. It clearly demonstrated the power of performance in communicating messages to diverse audiences.

The project at Edge Hill focused on a case study developed by the service user and carer consultation group, which has been working with staff and first year BA social work students. They developed a scenario based on real life experiences, which was then adapted by the performing arts students.

Dr Valerie Gant, from the Department of Social and Psychological Sciences at Edge Hill, said: "It was a really powerful piece of community drama which engaged with both the students and the service users and carers who attended.

"The drama offered them all a chance to experience some of the challenges faced by social workers in contemporary society and explore ways of working with people in a variety of difficult situations."

The feedback from the audience was extremely positive and it is hoped that this type of collaboration will be repeated in future years.

# A Public Duty

**Students from Edge Hill's Public Relations degree course have lent a hand to a cash-strapped community theatre by co-ordinating a PR campaign as part of their course assessment.**

The students were set the task of raising the profile of the Valley Community Theatre, based in Netherley, Liverpool, which works with young people at risk of dropping out of education.

The project had two main objectives – to raise awareness of the youth theatre and its work, and to promote the venue as a facility for hire, with students on all three levels of the PR course working together.

The students' work culminated in a major networking event, where the young people involved in the theatre showcased their acting skills in excerpts from some of the productions. The event was compèred by Dean Sullivan, formerly of *Brookside* and now a high-profile presenter on a local radio station.

Paula Keaveney, programme leader in Public Relations, said: "It's important for the students to experience the real-life pleasures and frustrations of working with a real client. We also like to choose a client like a charity so that we are giving something worthwhile to an organisation or community. This event will have made a great difference to the theatre's ability to raise its profile and hopefully raise some cash." ●



# Many Happy Returns

**E42 is celebrating its first birthday by scooping a prestigious national award.**

E42 has won an Award of Excellence at this year's British Association of Communicators in Business (CiB) awards – a professional body for staff involved in communications. The magazine is also in the running for a second award – the Class award for the category of News Magazines – alongside publications from Lloyd's, Serco, Hiscox and Tarmac UK.

Despite being only a year old, E42 impressed the CiB judges, who described the magazine as "a Venus flytrap – the appearance encourages the reader to pick it up and open the pages and, when drawn in, you can't get out again as you must read on."

Editor Mary Bernia said: "We're delighted that E42 has been recognised with this award, particularly against such strong competition. To receive such complimentary feedback from the judges was also really encouraging – it shows the magazine is being well-received and that the hard work of everyone involved in the publication has really paid off."

To be added to the mailing list for E42 or to request additional copies, email [e42@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:e42@edgehill.ac.uk). Alternatively, articles can be viewed online at [edgehill.ac.uk/e42](http://edgehill.ac.uk/e42). ●



# Rewarding Excellence



**New excellence scholarships in honour of two historic events at the University have been announced.**

The installation of Edge Hill's Chancellor, Professor Tanya Byron, and the visit of black civil rights campaigner, the Reverend

Jesse Jackson, to Ormskirk last year will be marked with awards worth £4,000 to outstanding students.

The Jesse Jackson Scholarship recognises students who have shown a commitment to promoting equality, diversity or equal opportunities in the areas of race, disability, gender, sexuality, religion, poverty or age. There are three categories that students can enter – Teaching and Learning, Health and Wellbeing, and Inspiration.

The Chancellor's Scholarship awards students who help raise the profile of the University through activities such as peer mentoring, leading a sports team or volunteering in the community. The winner will also receive a personal letter from Professor Byron as part of their prize.

Speaking about his scholarship, Reverend Jackson said: "I am honoured to support the launch of the Jesse Jackson Scholarship. Edge Hill stands as a shining example of opening the doors of opportunity to the nation's youth, an example that educational establishments across the world can learn from.

"I had a truly memorable reception from both the university and student leaders, who left a deep impression on me. I hope to return to Edge Hill sometime soon in the future."

# Summer 2009 Listings

## EVENTS

### Campus Tour

**6 July 2009**

A guided campus tour for prospective students with the chance to hear a current undergraduate talk about university life and the application process.

*Booking required:*

[edgehill.ac.uk/study/events](http://edgehill.ac.uk/study/events)

### Summer Performing Arts School

**Monday 24 – Friday 28 August 2009**

Workshops including drama, music, new writing and movement for children aged eight to 12 years old.

*Booking required:*

Rose Theatre box office 01695 584480

[Rose@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:Rose@edgehill.ac.uk)

### Open Event

**22, 27 August 2009**

A taste of the Edge Hill experience, with talks from staff and students, guided tours of the campus and a look around student accommodation.

*Booking required:*

[edgehill.ac.uk/study/events](http://edgehill.ac.uk/study/events)

## CONFERENCES

### Inter-Professional Healthcare Education Conference

**Thursday 9 July 2009**

A conference designed to explore health and social care professionals working and learning together.

*Booking required:*

Carol Wright 01695 650941

[carol.wright@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:carol.wright@edgehill.ac.uk)

### Teachers' and Advisers' Conference

**Wednesday 15 July 2009**

A full day conference to help teachers and careers advisers prepare their students for applying to university.

*Booking required:*

Ruth Slater

[educationliaison@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:educationliaison@edgehill.ac.uk)

