

Saturday 5 August, 2.00 – 5.00pm

'Romantics – thou shouldst be living at this hour'

An afternoon of talks by John Strachan, Jonatan González, Jonathan Quayle and Yasmin Solomonescu

Wordsworth among the Fascists

'Most serious-minded people are now Wordsworthians' declared Aldous Huxley in 1929. This talk shows how Wordsworth fell along serious-minded but most unsavoury company in the next decade, examining the way in which the British Union of Fascists contrived to see Wordsworth, in the words of a 1939 article in the fascist magazine *Action*, as 'William Wordsworth - National Socialist'. This was part of a contemporary fascist tendency to see English literature as 'proving the essentially British character of our creed': 'we should be the first to honour such names as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats'. This lecture discusses a notable misuse of the English canon of poetry, and of Wordsworth in particular.

Professor John Strachan is Pro Vice-Chancellor at Bath Spa University

Wordsworth and Spain

This walk will show how Wordsworth and his writings have been reimagined in Spain throughout history, with his afterlife during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) occupying a central position. Exploring the connections of his writings with this Iberian nation, alongside an interesting range of artistic and historical materials, this talk will offer a space to reconsider the theory and practice of reworking Wordsworthian texts across different cultures and periods.

Jonatan González is a PhD student at the University of La Rioja researching Anglo-Spanish literary relations and the reception of British Romantic poetry in continental Europe. His thesis examines the afterlife of William Wordsworth in nineteenth and twentieth-century Spain.

'A crisis is now arriving, which shall decide your fate': Crisis and Hope in Percy Shelley's Poetry

How should we respond to political and social crises? This question is at the heart of a number of Shelley's works. If we respond in the right way, he suggests, it might be possible for a crisis to become a catalyst for meaningful social change. But for this to happen, we must first be inspired by the belief that things could be different; many of Shelley's poems hinge on his vision of a future that is free of tyranny and oppression. This talk will explore how Shelley writes about crisis in a number of his early poems, and reflect on his belief that, when faced with the threat of impending disaster, what we really need is hope of meaningful social change.

Jon Quayle is an AHRC-funded PhD student at Newcastle University. His research is focused on Percy Bysshe Shelley and utopian literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

'Thelwall! Thou shouldst be living at this hour.'

2017 marks 220 years since the poet and political reformer John Thelwall visited Wordsworth and Coleridge in Somerset, realizing a brief but powerful intellectual communion that marked each one's writing for years to come. This talk will shed new light on the poetic ramifications of that meeting for Thelwall and Wordsworth. Taking inspiration from Wordsworth's sonnet "London, 1802," the talk will also ask what lessons that intertextual conversation, particularly Thelwall's contributions to it, might hold for us "at this hour," when the sense of "inward happiness" seems to elude us once more.

*Yasmin Solomonescu is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana. She is the author of *John Thelwall and the Materialist Imagination* (2014), co-editor of *Thelwall's novel The Daughter of Adoption* (2013) and of the collection *John Thelwall: Critical Reassessments* (2011).*

Cost: £10 (free to Thelwall Society Members)