

## Cambridge Writers, 1564-1848: From English Renaissance Drama to the Rise of the Novel

### Overview:

In the 800 years since the University of Cambridge was founded, many renowned literary thinkers have passed through the city. This course will focus on a selection of writers – poets, playwrights, and novelists – who studied and worked in Cambridge between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as one or two notable figures from outside the university who have had a formative influence on the study of English literature at Cambridge.

Classes will cover works written by the playwrights William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe; the poets John Donne and Andrew Marvell, as key figures amongst those poets later dubbed ‘the Metaphysicals’; Wordsworth, Coleridge and ‘Romantic’ poetry; and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novelists Laurence Sterne, Daniel Defoe, Jane Austen, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë. We will also consider the usefulness of the notion of a ‘canon’ of English literature (amongst which all of the works discussed would normally feature), and arguments for and against studying lesser-known works and writers.

Each class will begin with a brief talk on the topic at hand, in the style of a lecture, followed by group analysis and discussion of extracts and poems, as in the format of a standard Cambridge seminar. Extracts will be supplied in the classes. Students might wish to read or look at some of the longer works in advance, but there will be no expectation that everyone has read the works under discussion in full.

### Outline:

<i>Early Modern Drama</i>	Extracts from Shakespeare’s <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>The Tempest</i> , and Marlowe’s <i>Doctor Faustus</i> .
<i>Metaphysical Poetry</i>	Selections from John Donne, Andrew Marvell and Katherine Philips.
<i>The rise of the novel</i>	Extracts from Sterne’s <i>Tristram Shandy</i> and Defoe’s <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> .
<i>Romantic Poetry</i>	Selected poems and extracts from Wordsworth and Coleridge.
<i>Nineteenth-century novel</i>	Extracts from William Makepeace Thackeray’s <i>Vanity Fair</i> , Charlotte Brontë’s <i>Jane Eyre</i> and Jane Austen’s <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .

**Dr Rebecca Varley-Winter** completed her PhD in English at Cambridge in 2015. Prior to that she completed an MA at King's College London, and her BA at Cambridge, both in English Literature. A book based on her PhD research, *Reading Fragments and Fragmentation in Modernist Literature*, is published by Sussex Academic Press (2018); her debut poetry collection, *Heroines: On the Blue Peninsula*, is published by V. Press (2019). She teaches English Literature as a visiting tutor/lecturer for Middlebury-CMRS, the London College of Creative Media, and the University of Cambridge.