

A Tale of Two Developments: Editorial, Volume 7, Part 3

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It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. (Dickens, 2004)

Introduction

Welcome to the Fifteenth edition of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*. This issue we are delighted to bring once again a selection of new thinking and insights, drawn from emerging scholars from across the disciplinary spectrum.

Firstly, I would my thanks to everyone who passed along compliments on the publication of January's special issue (**Exchanges, 2020a**). As I said at the time, this issue was the culmination of over a year's work by a lot of different contributors, not least of which our first intake of associate editors. Consequently, I was delighted to witness such a wave of positivity on social media and in conversations concerning the issue as a whole and many specific articles too. Five months on from publication, I am pleased to report the issue's contents are continuing to grow in terms of their readership, reach and visibility, which makes all the effort feel worthwhile. If you haven't already had the opportunity to peruse the issue, I would really encourage you too, as there are many surprises in this heady volume.

Here Am I, Where Are You?

Congratulatory mode to aside, it probably will not have escaped the notice of regular readers that this issue of *Exchanges* is appearing later in the year than we would normally prefer. Sadly, the reason for this is not an excess of celebrations following our special issue launch, but rather the impacts from the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and subsequent lockdown in the UK and internationally. Since early March, the *Exchanges* office has decamped to my home office, and while I have regularly worked from home over the past decade, shifting to entirely home-based operations has impacted on

my activities. Not least among these being a reduced facility to informally engage with our local early career researcher and graduate student communities, many of whom have regularly supported *Exchanges* as contributors, editors and readers. I sincerely miss these casual, and often unplanned, encounters with our local contributor community not least for the motivational boost towards our endeavours they provide.

Despite the lockdown though, I am fortunate that the vast majority of my work on the journal can be successfully conducted remotely; including managing of my distributed team of editors, who at last count were located in five different time zones around the globe (**Exchanges, 2020b**). The particular challenges which arise alongside managing such a geographically diverse and distributed team is a vein of inquiry probably best mined elsewhere, likely in a future conference paper or other publication. Nevertheless, my editors and their work has also been impacted by the pandemic and local responses to tackle it. Some have been sequestered away from their homes and loved ones for months at a time. Others were able to travel, but now find themselves making a far longer stay at their terminus than would be ideal. They are a dedicated and knowledgeable assemblage of scholars, and a pleasure to work with, but they are only human. Hence, for most of them too there have been unexpected new work and life challenges to meet, all of which have understandably impacted on their editorial efficiency.

Then we have to consider our wonderful authors and reviewers around the world facing similar unknown daily challenges to their work, life and routines. I am regretfully aware of at least two potential contributors to the journal who have had to withdraw their work from consideration because of the impacts of crisis upon them. While I hope they will be able to revisit and perhaps resubmit at a later date, I quite understand that the global situation today is far from ideal for many scholars' labours.

Naturally, all of this has impacted on *Exchanges* in terms of our editorial efficiencies, contributor responsiveness and progress towards the new issue. Indeed, my first message to the editorial team as lockdown approached concerned the need for us all to continue embracing the journal's contributor supporting ethos. Hence, we have sought to be as considerate as possible where some individuals have required longer periods to respond to inquiries or conduct their intellectually productive labour. This expectation was borne out with numerous contributors reaching out to ask for more time; requests which we have granted in every case.

Oddly, by contrast a publisher I periodically review papers for myself has continued to frequently 'ping' me with regular reminders of the short timespans within which they *need* me to conduct my work.¹ Hence, interestingly, not every publisher or journal title has been working within as considerate a contributor community ethos as *Exchanges* during this crisis. Although, I should acknowledge our work is underwritten by a free-gold (aka *diamond*) economic model (**Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013**), meaning the journal is not expected to generate economic value for shareholders or achieve financial sustainability through author fees. *Exchanges* primarily seeks is to maximise the symbolic value and career capital for our contributors, institutional patrons and the journal itself. Consequently, the imperative to produce a tangible issue to strict deadlines is diminished, although not entirely removed. Nevertheless, working under such a counter-capitalism economic operational mode does create a less exploitative editorial modality than a more commercially constructed title.

However, what this editorial digression has been principally concerned with has been exploring why this issue is undeniably later than planned. With fewer articles being publication ready on schedule, some authors withdrawing their active participation and many reviewers needing longer to construct their critiques, we hit an impasse during the spring. Consequently, I took the decision to push back publication and return once we had sufficient articles ready to comprise a suitable volume collection. As of early June, I am pleased to discover we had achieved this content goal and final preparations for publication could begin in earnest.

Gaining Visibility

There are certainly lessons here for us as a journal, and as a consequence of Covid-19 for the higher education publishing domain as a whole. What has been welcome during this period, is that we have continued to receive articles with a pleasing regularity over recent months. In many respects recently we have actually been receiving more submissions than the comparable time last year, which is deeply gratifying. However, with *Exchanges'* withdrawal from physical conference appearances, a number of which were planned for 2020, my largest fear was the title would become invisible to some potential authors. Which is why there has been increased effort deployed towards maximising our social media presence and activities over this period. Hence, it is with great pleasure that I can announce we are no longer limited to our previous twitter, blog and Linked.In group, which are now joined by *The Exchanges Discourse* podcast (**Exchanges, 2020c**).

In a personal capacity, I have been a podcast producer for some years now, racking up my hundredth episode in May 2020.ⁱⁱ Hence, launching a podcast associated with the journal to complement the blog has long been an ambition. I believe my office whiteboard stands silent testament to this, with the word podcast written on it, since I relocated there last September. The podcast benefits us by continuing to expand on the journal's mission to '*encourage intellectual exchange and debate across research communities*', in between published issues (**Exchanges, 2020d**). Podcasts have undoubtedly come of age in recent years in terms of popularity and access and speaking with friends and colleagues during lockdown has certainly reinforced this impression. Moreover, our podcast hopefully serves to increase our visibility for potential contributors, and readers, within the academic and public spheres, essential for our continued operational health. Thankfully, all of this activity can be very successfully achieved off-site from our institutional offices.

What will *The Exchanges Discourse* cover then? The intention is for it to highlight journal developments and within the scholarly publications field, alongside discussing forthcoming and current calls for contributions. Like the blog, episodes are intended to be spurred by events and encounters relating to the journal, which should make for an eclectic and engaging range of discussions. Episodes to date have been concerned with introducing the journal's mission, examined our submission policies and most recently discussed ways to avoid having manuscripts declined. Future episodes currently in preparation will see me joined by other contributors, including special issue leads, editors, authors and other key figures relating to the journal. I am hopeful we might also be able to feature conversations with some of our local scholars too.

Nevertheless, I have a range of topics outlined which we will explore in future episodes, and I suspect one of these will likely be a guide to the contents of this issue you are currently reading. I also welcome suggestions for future episode topics or potential guests. You can find *The Exchanges Discourse* podcast on its host *Anchor.fm* (**ibid**), as well as on other streaming sites including *Breaker*, *Google Podcasts*, and even *Spotify* too, by searching for it by name. I hope you will consider listening to an episode or two in the near future.

For now, let us turn our attention to consider the academic articles which comprise our latest issue.

Articles

In this issue, I am gratified that we are able to bring our readers once again a selection of topics from across the disciplinary spectrum: from Shakespeare, to pedagogy through cryptocurrency and haptics, there is a smorgasbord of delights on offer. Curiously, through sheer serendipity, a number of these papers touch on areas of my own personal and professional interest, which has made my own editorial processes a touch more pleasurable this time around.ⁱⁱⁱ We are especially delighted though in this issue that we are able to open with four peer-reviewed articles.

Firstly, Theo Plothe responded to our call for papers related to ‘in-between spaces’ with his piece intriguingly entitled *Bearded Dragons at Play: YouTube videos and the haptic interface of Ant Smasher*. Here, Plothe explores and examines the role of bearded dragon lizards playing computer games in terms of both how they represent a ‘personification of their owner’ while also acting as conduits for play, providing ‘a channel for gamers’ to enter into the ‘boundaries of gamerspace’. Taking as the core of its analysis a myriad of online videos centred on these computer gaming lizards, Plothe considers what light these shed on the relationships extant between gaming and play, by human and non-human actors ([1](#)).

Our next piece, from Paul Wilson, deals with an issue close to every editor’s heart. While the piece was submitted in response to our fakery and deception themed call, planned for our next issue, given the delay in this issue arriving and the interest in this field, there seemed little value in delaying its publication. Hence, in *Academic Fraud*, Wilson provides an overview and insight into both fraudulent activities conducted within the academy and the counter measures deployed to detect them. Illustrated through a number of exemplar cases, he explores the deleterious effect such fraudulent conduct can have through undermining academic integrity, potentially creating a generalised distrust of ‘expert culture’. While Wilson explores the steps to detect and minimise fraudulent academic output, he acknowledges detection methods remain imperfect, and how only through cultural shifts in academic practice can authentic academic rigour and scholarly discourse within research endeavours be maintained ([14](#)).

Our next two works were both prepared but unable to be included in time within our earlier special *Cannibalism* issue (**Exchanges, 2020a**), and we are deeply pleased to be able to present them to our readers. In the first of these Ronan Hatfull considers *Upstart Cannibalism in the BBC’s Shakespearean Biofiction*, considering ideas of ‘metaphorical cannibalism’ of Shakespeare’s life and works in the creation of fictional representations. Taking at its core considerations around the depiction of ‘The Bard’ within the tonally divergent representations within *Doctor Who*, *The Hollow*

Crown, Cunk on Shakespeare and *Upstart Crow*. The piece explores how the writers of these works construct their representation of Shakespeare, and their approaches to creating the feel of ‘authenticity’ within the actors’ portrayal through merging factual with fictional elements. *Exchanges* has been fortunate to regularly contain pieces relating to Shakespeare, and Hatfull’s fresh addition to this corpus is a very welcome and highly accessible one for scholars and more general readers alike (45).

Finally, Desmond Bellamy provides us with a review article in which he considers the manner in which cannibalism is perceived as a marker between ‘civilised and uncivilised’ societal forms. Within *A horrid way of feeding* Bellamy suggests how for social scientists, such a well-defined delineator represents a somewhat reductionist perception between societies. He stresses despite these perceptions how ‘*normative European humanist moralities*’ can still engender and enable uncivilised mores, bringing the use of cannibalism of a social shorthand for ‘uncivilised’ into question. This problematisation in turn also presents a challenge to perceptions of humanity’s ‘*inexorable progress*’ from savagery to civilisation (65).

Critical Reflection & Conversations

We then turn to our two wonderful editor-reviewed critical reflection and conversation contributions. Amy Hondsmerk provides this issue’s critical reflection piece, entitled *Playful Presenting*. In this article she examines, *The Present and Future History of Games symposium*, hosted in early 2020. Alongside a narrative framing of the discussions and papers presented, Hondsmerk also takes time to detail her personal engagement with the interactive elements at the event, before concluding how research within this explicitly interdisciplinary field might evolve over time. Notably, the paper is significant for *Exchanges* as the first we have published which formally acknowledges the coming impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic. A theme, I suspect, which will resonate in many of our future papers over the next few years (90).

Finally, Mairi Gkikaki and Clare Rowan are in conversation with Quinn DuPont in a piece entitled *DAO, Blockchain and Cryptography*. DuPont, a noted expert in numerous realms including cyber security policy, cryptocurrencies and blockchains, participates in a discussion focussed around the ‘*phenomenon of the Decentralised Autonomous Organisation (DAO)*’. In particular, the trio examine what are the implications from the DAO for society at large. The piece intriguingly offers insight into the tensions between technological and social determinism within the cryptocurrency realms. It also provides an accessible starting point for scholars new to this field in exploring it further (103).

Call for Papers: Challenge & Opportunity

It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule. (Tolkien, 2011)

As we enter into the third decade of the 21st Century, there are few people on the planet today who are not experiencing a period of unprecedented and inescapable change, uncertainty and challenge. The impacts from the Covid-19 outbreak on health, working and living conditions alone will likely dominate our individual lifeworlds for decades to come. Even leaving aside the unexpected consequences from confronting the pandemic, the world stands at a crossroads in so many other domains: seismic shifts in geopolitical conditions, climatic changes, economic turmoil, pervasive technology and splintering social life experiences are clearly evidenced globally. From black lives matters to presidential elections, through the emergence of artificial intelligence and recognising environmental tipping points to confronting systematic inequalities. We are, as the aphorism suggests, seemingly cursed to live in the most interesting of times.

However, are such bleak analyses constructed in a simplistic and reductionist way, simply confronting anxieties driven through media and public sphere's obsession with spotlighting the negative? Is there a more positive lens through which they can be viewed? Could these emergent crises actually represent challenges to be overcome or even present us with a glimmering dawn of unprecedented opportunity and renewal? Rather than starting into the eternal abyss, could the human race indeed be about to embark, embrace and engage with revolutionary opportunities for betterment? Albeit, potentially framed in pain of rebirth and renewal. Alternatively, are we witness to a sea-change which empowers counters to the ideals of enlightened liberal democracies freedom of thought and expression which have been largely axiomatic in recent decades?

Submissions

Hence, for the issue of *Exchanges* scheduled for publication in Spring 2021, we invite authors to submit original, exciting, insightful manuscripts for publication consideration inspired by this *Challenge and Opportunity* theme from within their own research or field. Authors are encouraged to consider contributing pieces which address any aspect, perspective, development or individuals related to this theme. Manuscript submissions as potential peer-reviewed research articles, or alternatively as critical reflection or conversation pieces, would all be welcomed under this call. While submissions are invited from all disciplinary perspectives, we would

be especially pleased to receive manuscripts from previously under-represented fields or geographic regions within *Exchanges*.^{iv}

As an interdisciplinary journal with a wide scholarly readership, authors should seek to write their manuscripts so as to be suitable for a general academic audience. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to unpack, delineate and expand on any potentially 'disciplinary niche' language, terms or acronyms used. Ideally, authors should seek to incorporate some element of interdisciplinary thinking or perspectives, or outline the broader scholarly relevance of their work, within the manuscript.

Deadlines

**Submission deadline for peer-reviewed articles:
1st November 2020.**

**Submission deadline for conversations and critical reflections:
28th February 2021.**

The details of this call will be available on *Exchanges'* site. Authors are also encouraged to contact the Editor-in-Chief ahead of submission to discuss their article ideas or outlines. However, this is not a prerequisite for submission. Please see our author guidance for more information on writing for *Exchanges* (2020e).

Call for Papers: (Open, Ongoing)

Additionally, *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal* welcomes submissions throughout the year on any subject, with no deadline. Manuscripts which are accepted as articles will be subsequently published in the next available issue of the journal. This open call for papers is in addition to our frequent themed and special issue calls. We therefore invite original, unpublished, manuscript contributions from researchers or practitioners based within any discipline, working anywhere globally, which fulfil our standard [article format requirements](#).

Open Call: No submission deadline.

We are happy to consider research focused or review articles which will undergo peer-review. We also welcome submissions of interviews with key scholars or critical reflections on important scholarly events, conferences or crucial new texts, each of which will undergo internal (editorial review) scrutiny only. More information on all of these article formats requirements are available in our author guidelines. Likewise, the Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board members are always happy to explore article ideas further with potential authors.

Submissions

As *Exchanges* has a core mission to support the development and dissemination of research by early career and post-graduate researchers, we are especially pleased to receive manuscripts from emerging scholars or first-time authors. All manuscripts should be submitted via our online journal portal, which will guide authors through the submission process.

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/submission/wizard

You will need to create, or already have, an *Exchanges* account to facilitate our communication with you throughout the editorial processing of your work. For help with your submission, please see our online guidance (**Exchanges, 2020e**) or contact the [Editor-in-Chief](#).

Exchanges has an expressly multidisciplinary, global and largely academic readership, and as such, has strong interests in work which encompasses or straddles disciplinary boundaries. Manuscripts providing an introduction, overview or useful entry point to key disciplinary trends, discovery and discourse are often among the most frequently accessed publications in the journal. Therefore, prospective authors are strongly encouraged to consider tailoring their manuscripts, narrative, thought and analysis in a mode which addresses this broad audience. For interviews and critical reflections, authors are especially advised to highlight the importance of disciplinary discourse or interviewees' scholarly contributions to the global academy, society and the public at large.

Fees, Access & Author Rights

Exchanges is a diamond open access (**Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013**), scholar-led journal, which means there are no author fees or reader subscription charges. Authors also retain copyright over their work but grant the journal first rights of publication as a submission requirement.

Forthcoming Issues

Our next regular issue of *Exchanges* (volume 8.1) was tentatively scheduled for late autumn 2020, although given the continuing Covid-19 impacts I suspect this will be pushed back to the year's end to give all our contributors sufficient time. This issue will hopefully include the remaining papers on theme of fakery and deception, along with our regular selection of academic thought, discussions and insights. There is still plenty of time to submit a critical reflection or conversations piece in time to appear in this issue; ideally no later than the end of September 2020.

As things currently stand, 2021 is shaping up into being a very busy year, which if all goes to plan, will be seeing the publication of five issues of the journal. Given we have only previously produced two issues a year before, this is a major step forward for the journal.^v This all begins in January 2021 with our next special issue, containing work celebrating and inspired by the Utopian Studies Society 2019 conference on *Utopia, Dystopia and Climate Change* (USS, 2019). As editorial work on these papers is well underway, I can assure readers that this will be another extremely exciting issue to read.

Later in 2021 we have two further special issues coming out. The first is being developed in collaboration with SOAS University of London and Oxford University and will focus on the theme of *fictional representations of nerds and loneliness*. Following an open call for abstract, we have now commissioned the papers for this volume, and I am very much looking forward to receiving them later this year. My thanks to Dr Filippo Cervelli and Dr Ben Schaper for their efforts here, and I will be speaking with both of them in the near future as the subject of a future podcast episode.

Our other special issue will draw on the work of students and scholars who have been exploring the history and student experience relating to the arts faculty, in collaboration with the *Then and Now: Arts at Warwick* research project and exhibition (Warwick, 2020). My thanks here to Pierre Botcherby and Dr Kathryn Woods of Warwick and Goldsmiths, University of London for their support. Pierre and I will be in conversation about this issue in an already recorded and soon to be released podcast episode too.

Alongside these special issues, we will also be bringing you the regular issues of the journal twice a year as normal. Hence, there are plenty of opportunities for authors to contribute to our title, and we look forward to reading your manuscripts.

Acknowledgements

As always, my thanks to our authors and reviewers for their vital intellectual labour contributions towards creating this issue. Without you, the ability to produce a quality-assured, peer-reviewed, scholar-led publication would quite simply not be possible. Thanks also to our reader community, who play a key role in developing the debates and insights raised in each issue. I hope you find this issue as valuable and informative as previous volumes.

My particular thanks to the Editorial Board, for their input and comments, along with their dedication, focus and commitment they each bring to producing this interdisciplinary research organ. In this respect, I would like to welcome our two newest Editorial Board Members, Dr Salvatore Monteleone and Dr Guilherme Sampaio, both from the Université de Cergy-Pontoise, France. Both have already started working on overseeing the editorial activities on submissions for our next issue. I hope you both find working on *Exchanges*, a valuable experience. I would also like to wish Dr Giannis Moutsinas, who has stepped down from Board, well in his future endeavours.

Practically, my thanks to Rob Talbot and Julie Robinson at the Warwick University Library, and Fiona O'Brien of the *Reinvention* journal for their continued guidance, technical insights and stimulating conversations. I'd also like to acknowledge the regular lockdown discussions between myself and my the IAS' John Burden for acting as a vital sounding board and ray of positivity during this remote working time.

Finally, my grateful thanks to our publisher, the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick for their ongoing financial and strategic backing for *Exchanges*.

Continuing the Conversation

In the meantime, remember *Exchanges* has a range of routes for keeping breast with our latest news, developments and calls for papers; not least of which being the recently launched podcast. Please do join in the conversation, as we value hearing the thoughts of our author and readership communities.

Editorial Blog: blogs.warwick.ac.uk/exchangesias/

Linked.In: www.linkedin.com/groups/12162247/

Podcast: anchor.fm/exchangesias

Twitter: [@ExchangesIAS](https://twitter.com/ExchangesIAS)

Alternatively, as Editor-in-Chief I am always pleased to discuss potential publications, collaborative opportunities or invites to talk about *Exchanges*, albeit currently largely via video link. Contact me via the email at the start of this article, or via the social media platforms.

Editorial Board Members

Dr Gareth J Johnson, Managing Editor-in-chief, Institute of Advanced Study, University of Warwick

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Dr Magda Zajackowska, WMG, University of Warwick, UK

Gareth has been the Editor-in-Chief of *Exchanges* for over two years, with a doctorate in cultural academic publishing practices (Nottingham Trent). He also holds various degrees in biomedical technology (Sheffield Hallam), information management (Sheffield) and research practice (NTU). His varied career includes extensive experience in academic libraries, project management and applied research roles. Currently, he is also the Chief Operating Officer of the Mercian Collaboration academic library consortium, and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. His professional and research interests focus on power-relationships within and evolution of scholarly academic publication practice, viewed from within social theory and political economic frameworks. He is an outspoken proponent for greater academic agency through scholar-led publishing, and an expert in distributed team management and effective communication practice.



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Endnotes

ⁱ Naming no names, but they're a large, and reputable open access publisher with a broad portfolio of titles under the aegis.

ⁱⁱ Modesty prevents me linking to the podcast here, but enquiring minds are most welcome to contact me for more details; although the subject matter is rarely academic in focus.

ⁱⁱⁱ I would like to note, that these papers have all successfully made it into *Exchanges* through their own scholastic merit, rather than any personal preference on my own part. As Editor, I am quite content publishing issues full of papers with limited appeal to my own interests, provided our Board and reviewers are content they are good enough.

^{iv} Please see our back issues for an idea of the areas and regions which have, to date, been less well represented within our pages.

^v The three issues due for publication this year will be our most ever, a record that will doubtless not last into the new year.