

Announcer: [00:00:03] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen. [00:00:06][2.7]

Ian Grosz: [00:00:22] Hello and welcome to this first episode in the second series of From the Old Brewery, a podcast that highlights the research of students and staff at the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture at the University of Aberdeen. My name's Ian Grosz. I'm a Ph.D. research student in creative writing here at the school, and I'm talking today with short fiction author and Reader in Early Modern Literature and Creative Writing, Dr. Helen Lynch.

Helen is also the director of the Word Centre for Creative Writing and its annual WayWORD Literary Festival, and we'll be talking to Helen in just a moment about that. I'm also joined by Bea Livesey-Stephens, a recent graduates in linguistics and language and, for the last couple of years, Bea has been one of the interns at the WORD Centre. We're going to talk to Bea after we've spoken to Helen about her experience with that, so welcome both! How you doing? [00:01:11][49.5]

Helen Lynch: [00:01:12] Hello. Thank you. Nice to be here with you. [00:01:14][2.3]

Ian: [00:01:14] Good, good. You there Bea? Bea is joining us remotely. She's on a remote link. Are you there, yeah?...Oh, great. Okay. Well, thanks for coming in.

I know you've both got really busy schedules, so I appreciate the time you've taken to come and talk to us. So, to start with you, Helen. Could I just...could you just tell our listeners a little about...a little bit about, sorry...your role here at the university and your current research?
[00:01:36][21.6]

Helen: [00:01:37] Okay. Well, I'm Reader in Early Modern Literature and Creative Writing, which means I teach creative writing and I teach literature and so my research is in sort of 17th century politics and poetics and Milton and things like that, and gender and that kind of stuff. So yes, that's what my academic writing's about and otherwise, I write short fiction though I am contemplating, after much bullying from everybody as why you don't write a historical novel since you spend all your time doing research in the 17th century, which is probably a good reason not to write an historical novel based on the 17th century...But I might try that.
[00:02:13][36.2]

Ian: [00:02:13] Have you just, ehm..have you just been finishing off a book at the moment, is that right? An academic work? [00:02:17][3.5]

Helen: [00:02:17] Finishing off is a...is a touchy phrase. I have been...I have been attempting to finish off, I guess. [00:02:23][6.6]

Ian: [00:02:24] Okay [laughing] And what can you tell us about that? Are you allowed to? Are you allowed to tell us? [00:02:27][2.7]

Helen: [00:02:27] Oh, yeah. So no, my, my Netflix insist that I don't tell you about that. Coz they're going to make it into a movie. Yeah. [00:02:33][5.4]

Ian: [00:02:34] [laughing] No, of course. [00:02:34][0.5]

Helen: [00:02:35] [laughing] No, it's...it's...it's about, well, it's about 17th century politics and poetics again, but it's about images of voice and public speech in the 17th century. And the way these intersect with metaphors that are often gendered metaphors, like needlework and gardening and yeah, other things...needlework, gardening, cosmetics. [00:02:59][23.8]

Ian: [00:03:00] Stereotypes...? [00:03:01][0.3]

Helen: [00:03:01] It's kind of interesting because these are also areas in which there were massive shifts in the 17th century: social and political shifts. So, it's really looking at that, but also in relation to writers like Shakespeare and Milton and Spencer. [00:03:14][13.2]

Ian: [00:03:15] And how that comes through the literature of the time.. [00:03:17][1.7]

Helen: [00:03:17] Yeah, so there's quite an interesting sort of...quite a lot of gender bending interest in the ways that writers self-identify and envisage themselves as...as writers: in a kind of interestingly, sometimes non-binary, sometimes gender swapping way. So that feeds into some of that. So that's what I'm writing about. [00:03:38][21.1]

Ian: [00:03:39] That's fascinating. So, is it a long...is it a very long process? Or, are you given like, six weeks to... [00:03:45][6.0]

Speaker 3: [00:03:46] [laughing] Yeah...It would be a lot less long if I didn't spend my research leave having Covid, but yes, yeah you get research leave, but not nearly often enough. I think we need research leave about 50% of the time that would be lovely, yes. More research leave! [00:03:58][12.1]

Ian: [00:03:58] So this brings us on nicely to the next question really, which is that you've published..also published two short story collections: *The Elephant and the Polish Question* in 2009, and then *Tea for the Rent Boy* in 2018, which is excellent. I've got that and really enjoyed it. But you know, how do you manage, then, that..that split between teaching, academic research, and trying to manage to write short story collections? [00:04:23][24.8]

Helen: [00:04:25] Well, ehm..the sad answer is that I don't. But the plan, the original plan, which worked quite well for a while, was that somehow if I was trying to avoid one of them, I would at least do the other one. Yeah. [laughing] So when I was, you know, procrastinating about my academic research, I would write a short story and that has actually happened quite a lot. But yes, in terms of, I mean, in terms of balancing it with marking and writing and marking and teaching, is an issue. And obviously running a festival because that just involves an enormous amount of practical hands-on admin and communication and things, and that's all time sensitive. I mean, everybody who does research or any kind of, sort of, creative project, knows this: that there are things that you have to do by tomorrow and those things get done. And then there are things that you really, really want to do and ought to do and would love to do, but they just, kind of.. [00:05:14][49.1]

Ian: [00:05:15] Just goes to the bottom of the pile. [00:05:15][0.7]

Helen: [00:05:15] Kind of, yeah. So..do I manage to juggle? I think I did for a while, but at the moment I'm struggling with that. [00:05:22][6.6]

Ian: [00:05:22] So, okay, that's a good honest answer. So, I suppose what we're trying to get a sense of - and there's a lot of postgraduate researchers and early career researchers listening - is that time allocated by the university or do you just..you manage it yourself? It's just..it's time that you manage yourself. [00:05:39][17.1]

Helen: [00:05:40] Well, I think like a lot of jobs that have this wonderful benefit that you don't have to be at your desk from 9 to 5. You can do the work whenever you like as long as you get it done. The problem is that there's nobody really regulating how much workload gets piled onto them. So, we all work evenings and weekends and you know, and I don't know how people do that if they have small children or even any children or other things - caring responsibilities - I don't know, because my children were big by the time I started trying to do it. I just..yeah, it's, it's like..yeah, I mean the

workload is an issue. That's obviously why we've been on strike quite a lot... [00:06:15][35.4]

Ian: [00:06:17] [laughing] Fair point. Fair point. So just to talk then, moving on about...to the WORD Centre itself, can you tell us what the WORD Centre is - the centre for creative writing - what...what its focus is and it's...its output and activity? [00:06:30][13.2]

Helen: [00:06:31] Okay, so, well, the WORD Centre came about, I think, in 2014. I had worked at Aberdeen University as a...as a teaching fellow and a teaching assistant on zero-hours contracts for many years, and when I became employed full time, which I was very happy to do, I thought that we really ought to put together something - because there was lots of talk about, you know, public engagement and then this other word 'impact' started to be bandied about, and it was ridiculous how much we did - and that was to collect it all together, really, so that you could..A:so that you could see it, and I mean, the problem is, people, the problem is you're required not just to do stuff, you're required to describe it so that other people can know you've done it, which is quite annoying, I have to say, because it's a full time job doing it, never mind describing it afterwards for forms and reports and all these things, but it was also the case.. [00:07:26][55.7]

Ian: [00:07:27] Is that part of the impact...is that part of the impact side of it, just for people who might not be familiar with what...what...what is meant by impact. [00:07:34][7.2]

Helen: [00:07:35] Ehm, well, this is, this is a burning issue, what is meant by impact, because things that are actually in our normal terms 'impactful' are very difficult to describe in terms that count as impactful within the system of impactfullness [laughing] [00:07:50][14.9]

Ian: [00:07:51] Yes. Measurable outcomes, that sort of thing? [00:07:53][2.3]

Helen: [00:07:53] Well, this is too, I mean, I think the thing about certainly the WORD Centre, but also, you know, the Elphinstone Institute and other places in this university that do lots of public engagement, is that it's just inseparable from what we do. We do it all the time and we do a lot of it. And then when you try and describe it in the terms that can be measured by the measurers, they're like, "oh, no, but this is far too, you know, there's far too much in here. How is this all..." You know, and of course, it all ties up. It makes sense. But it's...it's managing to make it look like it makes sense to

other people who just, well, have no idea about creative work.
[00:08:29][36.1]

Ian: [00:08:30] Mm hmm. [00:08:30][0.1]

Helen: [00:08:31] Or...possibly about public engagement at all, so yes, that's, you know, measuring. So, yeah, these are all just...So actually the WORD Centre and the WayWORD festival or the WORD have never been an impact case study because they're too complicated. And the people running those things would just be run into the ground trying to write an impact case study that would tick all the boxes for all that you needed to be ticked. So yes...Sorry! [00:08:57][26.5]

Ian: [00:08:58]. No, that's fine. So what ways do you connect, then, and..and what sort of public..we know about the fact - we're going to talk about the festival in a minute, which is great. It's an annual literary festival - but what other ways does the WORD tend to connect with the wider community or get involved in public engagement? [00:09:17][18.6]

Helen: [00:09:18] Well, I mean, basically, we, I mean, we were created..we were set up in the first place, partly to kind of coordinate many of the things that we already did. So there was a lot of activity going on with writers groups in the shire and in the city - publication projects - but we also work with partners, so we did a project with Scottish Culture and Traditions Association and produced a book of contemporary tunes in traditional style, or collected some northeast songs. There's lots of..we did a project around Charles Hamilton Sorley and Powis Community Centre, which was his childhood home. We did a project about Bennachie and the Colony on Bennachie, yeah, the Commonty on Bennachie, and with the Police Association, and we did creative writing in ancient Polish. We helped, we help local writers sometimes to produce work, sometimes through collaborations and sometimes locally - a collection of poetry, for example - but we also do legacy projects which are related to the festival, so we've done a street art project with Hazel Head Academy called Art and Activism that grew out of the Love Wall event that we had at the WayWORD Festival. What else have we done? Yeah, we've done ..we've done a project with Magic Torch in Aberdeen Central Library and Aberdeen Young Carers, which is a graphic novel project. So yeah we'd..we had.. [00:10:47][89.3]

Ian: [00:10:47] A long..it's a long list! [00:10:48][0.7]

Helen: [00:10:48] It's a long list..is what I mean about it being difficult to describe. Yes. So yes, I mean any..and on any given day, we're doing something. [00:10:55][6.7]

Ian: [00:10:56] So it sounds like the is very, very active. And I also know that you work with...you've got numerous Research Fellows that work with the centre as well, that also... Can you tell us a little bit about the Research Fellows and how that works? [00:11:08][12.6]

Helen: [00:11:09] Sure. Well, we...we, I mean, we have obviously associations with lots of writers and some of whom have been, you know, alumni of our creative writing programme. And yes, I guess we really wanted to be able to sort of draw them in so that, you know, we could know about what they were doing already. So Leila Aboulela for example, is an Honorary Professor of the WORD centre. We have honorary fellows Shane Strachan, Sheena Blackhall, Emily Utter and more. And it's really so that, you know, obviously the things that they're doing that play off things we might be doing, we can get involved in. We might be able to provide some funding for something if we have any. And we also...it means that we can call upon them, so if we have a project or a workshop or something or an idea about something, we can ask, you know, would they be willing to come and run it? And obviously we can pay them for doing that. And we also have internships. So we have two interns, but we can talk about that. [00:12:05][56.0]

Ian: [00:12:05] Bea being one being one of them, which... [00:12:06][1.1]

Helen: [00:12:06] Bea is one of them, yes! Hi Bea. [00:12:07][0.3]

Ian: [00:12:07] So that's great. So that's...that's the way that the work at the university, through creative writing, reaches out into the wider community. It just sounds like a really joined up...a joined up thing, and joined up thinking. I really like the way it sounds. It sounds like it works. [00:12:22][15.1]

Helen: [00:12:23] Can we just...I should...I should stress we do pay people. We don't...we don't exploit that in terms of who they are, in terms of being paid. And we look for every opportunity to pay our honorary fellows and for things that they do and to...and to, you know, obviously create opportunities for them to do things for which they are paid. That's...that's a core principle. [00:12:44][21.4]

Ian: [00:12:45] So a lot...a lot of the core - not core focus - but I suppose the most visible output from the centre is the annual wayWORD festival, which you've mentioned. Can you tell us about how that started and what it grew out of, because we know that there's a relationship with MayFest and there was a

WORD festival before that. Can you tell us a little bit about that? [00:13:07][21.7]

Helen: [00:13:07] The WORD festival, which my former colleague, Emeritus Professor of creative writing Alan Spence, started in 1999, 2000, and which ran for ten years, was a literary festival and a very, very big event in the Northeast. And then the May Festival was, you know..the university basically took it over and made it into a research festival, which I think alienated quite a few of the sort of literary audience, and never...I mean, I, you know, I'm an academic and I like research and I like lots of the events that were in the May Festival, but as a kind of coherent offering that made sense to its audience, I think that was an issue. And some people wrote 'Bring back the word festival!' every year on their feedback forms. [Laughing]

So, yes, we did want to do that, but we wanted to do it with a kind of youth twist on it, because one of the issues was the May Festival was held at a time of year when students couldn't come because it was after the exams. So we wanted students to come and students to be involved, but we also wanted this sort of core literary Northeast audience, so in 2019, we - as part of the main festival - we ran a programme called WORDS ANDA, because we also wanted to broaden it a little and make it more cross arts - and that was the first year that we had funding from the previous principal - So he gave us funding with which we could apply to Creative Scotland for more funding, because we had explained that Creative Scotland were not keen on the university just providing in-kind funding and not real money. So, he did finally provide real money for five years. And with that we have gone out and got match funding from Creative Scotland.

So, the idea was to revitalise it, but it partly grew - and Bea will tell you about this - we had a...we had the internship and we advertised for the WORD Centre to have an intern and we had a fantastic 65 responses or something applications, and they were all really good and we put together a shortlist and the administrator was saying, "Oh for goodness sake, you know, whittle it down a bit more, you don't need ten." And then he read them and said, "Oh my goodness, these are better than some of the applications we get for academic posts!" So yeah, so they were fantastic. So the ten we, we interviewed the ten and we had to give it to one person. But I said, 'look, why don't we - these people could run a festival - why don't we ask the other nine to form a committee?' And we did. So that's how it started in the first year.

So, we had an intern and then we had nine other people who formed a committee, and that's how the whole name of the festival came about, the whole ethos of it as having, you know, unconventional form, or forms of expression, and that we would try and create events where there were interest..things of interest to young people, but there was also sort of, enough that the kind of WORD, the old WORD festival audience would recognise, but perhaps we could get the different constituencies coming to each other's inspired events, cross-pollinate them. [00:16:11][138.4]

Ian: [00:16:11] Yeah. [00:16:11][0.0]

Helen: [00:16:11] Yeah. And that does seem to...so far...our stats indicate that it is basically 50/50 and that has worked, and that, yes, older people do find themselves coming to the queer horror event despite not expecting to. And you know, all the other students get to find out about writers that they haven't heard of just because they were, you know, famous five years ago. Yeah. [00:16:31][19.6]

Ian: [00:16:32] No, it's a fantastic...it's a real mix. Can you tell us about some of the things that are going to happen in this year's festival? [00:16:37][5.5]

Helen: [00:16:38] Well, again, now we've got a lot, we've got a lovely mix this year. So, we've got a mixture of...we're trying to make most of it in person in the King's Pavilion that we have got an event in the central library and the Blue Lamp... [00:16:49][10.5]

Ian: [00:16:49] Since...since it started again.. it was... it was at 2020 that it relaunched..So that was...that was completely online. [00:16:56][7.2]

Helen: [00:16:57] Yes, and then last year we had like seven events that were in-person, but 40 events online last year was huge. This year we've kind of tried to keep it down to fewer events, but we've still got five days of festival. And yeah, we have...we have a wonderful array, we've got a Performing Identities panel; we've got a Fan Fiction panel; we've got workshops on writing about mental health and song writing. We've got the aforementioned Queer Horror Panel; we've got Monica Ali; we've got Douglas Stewart; we've got Alan Spence coming back; we've got Jenny Cogan and Bee Asha Singh; we've got Raymond Antrobus; we've got C.J. Cooke. Yeah, we've got a huge host...we've got, sort of horror writers and crime writers. Chris Meyer is coming. We've got a Nan Shepherd event - we always have a Nan Shepherd event - with Esther Woolfson and Sarah Thomas. So, yeah, we've got Irish poets, Birmingham poets. We've got... [00:17:51][53.9]

Ian: [00:17:52] A lot! A real mix: something for everybody.
[00:17:54][1.9]

Helen: [00:17:54] Also I should mention, we've also got arts and art. So we've got a really interesting Middle East / North African arts event, which hopefully people will come to as well with an artist called Sherko Abbas and another one called Afsoon. And yeah, we've got...we've got a whole...we've got mixtures: mixtures of flash fiction and photography and yeah, lots of stuff. Look at the...look at the website. And yes, get it, get your free ticket! [00:18:19][24.9]

Ian: [00:18:19] And the website will be included on the notes, I think, for the podcast, for anybody that wants to find that.

So, thanks Helen. That's a fantastic insight into a very active research centre in the school and such a joined - as I said before - it's such a joined up way of working and it brings us to talk to you Bea, who have been... you're a current intern with the WORD Centre, is that right? [00:18:43][24.1]

Bea Livesey-Stephens: [00:18:44] I am, yeah. [00:18:45][0.5]

Ian: [00:18:46] So how did you come to the WORD Centre? How did you find yourself there? I know you were ehm..Can you just tell us a bit more about your undergraduate studies and..and how you came to be involved? [00:18:54][8.1]

Bea: [00:18:55] So my undergrad studies, I, I'm not an English lit student. I was a linguistics student and I've just graduated. [00:19:08][13.3]

Ian: Congrats!

Bea: So...Thank you!

Ian: It's over! [laughing] [00:19:09][0.7]

Bea: [00:19:11] Yeah. Oh, wow. So, like Helen says, a bunch of people applied to the WORD Centre intern post, then that got whittled to ten, then one of the ten got the actual job and the nine got to run the festival and I think that worked out great. Like, I think that's amazing. Whenever I tell people about that, they're like, Oh, that worked out great. And I'm like, Yeah! [00:19:34][23.7]

Ian: [00:19:37] So, you started off on the committee helping to organise the festival too? [00:19:41][4.1]

Bea: [00:19:41] Yeah. So, I started off on that committee and we all sat down around one of those tiny tables in the MacRobert café being like, Great, okay, what are we doing? What's the name of the festival? We went through like five names we went through... with weird words, wacky words, some, some, some really strange stuff! But we really wanted to keep that...that word branding. So, the name of the festival, the WayWORD festival is meant to be a pun on way...way...waywards. So, like a wayward woman or something, but it's about being like... [00:20:21][39.9]

Ian: [00:20:22] Slightly off kilter... [00:20:23][1.1]

Bea: [00:20:24] I wouldn't call it wacky, but it's unconventional. [00:20:26][1.8]

Ian: [00:20:27] Okay, unconventional. It's great. It's a great focus. And it has...it seems to have really reinvigorated a festival, you know, and it needs that every few years, a festival, I think, because otherwise it can get a bit stuck in the mud ...[00:20:37][10.0]

Bea: [00:20:39] Yeah, I absolutely love thinking of WayWORD as it is. So, like, as a cross-arts festival. It is primarily a literature festival, and that's what its heart is, but, but thinking about the...the cross arts bit, what it means for a festival to be cross-arts, what, like, how that can make a festival innovative, different, if you really tap into that, we can do anything with it, really. [00:21:15][36.1]

Ian: [00:21:16] Wow. That's a great, positive message. And you're obviously passionate about it. I can see that because I can see you've obviously enjoyed the process. Can tell us about - obviously you started in the committee and then became an intern. Can you tell us about that process: how you found that and what roles you've taken on in the centre? [00:21:33][17.4]

Bea: [00:21:34] Yeah, so Helen jokes that...that being on the WayWORD committee is like a year-long interview for the intern position, and since I was quite involved on the committee the first year, and I was not graduating that year - that's actually not when I became an intern - but I, but I stayed on the committee the following year - so 2021 - and then, after that year I got made the WORD Centre intern and there was also a WayWORD Festival intern. And we sort of work together and..Hmm. How I. How I found it? So I, I just, I just really like working in arts admin. This entire experience has taught me that I like to work in arts admin, that I'm not bad at it and just how to run a festival, really.

So, yeah, I kind of got with...withdrawal symptoms from WayWORD so I was...organising my own conferences and stuff and that was really fun. [00:22:51][76.5]

Ian: [00:22:52] So, I believe you took on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion role. Is that right? [00:22:58][5.4]

Bea: [00:22:58] Yeah. So in terms of all of that, I mainly focussed on disability access and accessibility. So uhm...so one of the events that we did in the first year of...of...of WayWORD was talking to a BSL interpreter about interpreting theatre and interpreting performance, and she uhm...pointed out to us that if that wasn't interpreted that would block deaf people from learning or...about interpretation and about, like something that they are specifically involved in, and that simply wouldn't be fair. And then we sort of uhm.. and then then we expanded that, so now we have BSL across virtually every event, uhm and, and I'm, I'm really quite...quite proud that we have that really. [00:23:58][59.8]

Bea: [00:23:59] Yeah, Yeah, you should be. It sounds amazing. So, uhm, what it ... obviously you found it rewarding because you just basically told us, but I just wondered what... what aspects were the most rewarding for you? And were there any frustrations? Has there been any frustrations?
[00:24:14][14.7]

Bea: [00:24:15] Yes. [00:24:15][0.0]

[laughter]

Ian: [00:24:17] But we can't, we can't mention Helen. We can't mention Helen in that. [00:24:20][2.6]

Bea: [00:24:22] I mean...I mean, yeah, I definitely have found it really rewarding in the sense of I am, I am listened to, I'm able to mentor people; I'm able to give people advice about...'hey, you have to follow up with academic staff because they will never remember.' I really like working in a team where, like, people are also passionate about what we're doing. So. So two of the people who were in the original the WayWORD have stayed on with me, so Kirsty Laurie and Naomi Christie uhm, we've been there from the start really and we've all become friends and we've all realised we all really sort of, like doing arts admin. So whenever we're in a meeting together we're kind of unstoppable really.

But yeah, there definitely have been frustrations, like that fateful day where we all sat in, in Grubb at the beginning of March being like, 'we didn't have a global pandemic on the cards!' - really having to sort all that out within a few

months; the endless Zoom meetings which have become slightly less endless, uhm, but it's..but it's all really worth it because it all turns out really well. And we were able to collect feedback and we've got stats on the ticket sales and we have an amazing website thanks to Kirsty. She's a legend. Yeah. Yeah. I'm not sure what else to say about that, but I just think the...the...the rewards outweigh the frustrations so much. [00:26:03][101.0]

Ian: [00:26:04] You're just such a good advocate for it. So, if...if any students are listening to this are interested in taking part, I don't think you need a better..a better advocate than Bea.

I just wanted to touch on..you just sound like you've really blossomed through the whole process, the whole experience, and uhm, I hope you don't mind me mentioning that you have cerebral palsy, and I wondered how that experience of your disability and being involved in the Word Centre - how that's influenced your own, you know, your own development, your own view of things, and your confidence? [00:26:41][37.3]

Bea: [00:26:43] Yeah. So, I feel like disabled people, especially young disabled people, can often have problems with agency and knowing what we can do or are allowed to do, or can think about doing. But there was..there was this one moment - like I can remember where I was - a moment where it clicked for me that if I wanted to do something or suggest something or say something, I could just do it. Especially if, say, you have something on your mind that you don't know if, if, if someone else remembers: if you want them to remember something specific that you want the committee to be doing or an event that you want to do, just say it. Just do it! Just..and just like, do..do a..bring a PowerPoint in and do a presentation about how much you want a specific event. There is..there is literally nothing stopping you. [00:27:39][56.3]

Ian: [00:27:39] Don't wait for permission. [00:27:40][0.4]

Bea: [00:27:41] Yeah. Yeah, I don't - Don't ask for permission. Ask for forgiveness! [00:27:44][3.2]

Ian: [00:27:48] [laughing] That's a good...a good mantra I suppose... [00:27:48][0.6]

Bea: [00:27:49] But I think..but I think the main area in terms of disability, where I really flourished, wasn't the cerebral palsy, but I also have a speech impediment and I feel like that's..that's the one that held me back the most, really, because I've spent so long thinking that since I'm not fluent,

the stuff I say isn't worth waiting for or isn't worth listening to. [00:28:17][28.7]

Ian: [00:28:18] Far from it I *think*. [00:28:18][0.0]

Bea: [00:28:19] And since being a part of WayWORD and just getting involved with a lot of uni related stuff, the fact that I am involved in something so specific where people are always talking and everyone's input is really important. I'm...I've...I've really sort of, gotten rid of the idea that since I'm not fluent, I'm less worth listening to, and it's actually made my stutter less bad, which is great. [00:28:44][25.3]

Ian: [00:28:45] Yeah, it can. Well, you didn't notice it when you've been talking today, so it's obviously had a big impact.

Moving on, then, could you tell us about the panel that you'll be chairing in the festival this year? I know you're taking one of the panels, aren't you?. [00:28:58][13.7]

Bea: [00:28:59] Yeah. So, for a long time, I've sort of been pushing for a game centric event, because I felt like there was a lot of overlap between narrative and literature and play, and we had a Dungeons and Dragons event in the first year of the WayWORD Festival, and I thought that was great. And this year we are... I have talked to three members of the Academic Game Studies Network 'Multiplayer' and which I'm sort of involved in too. and I invited them to all be on a panel about narrative and gaming.

So, so that's sort of about how narrative intersects with... with play, and how narrative and play shape each other. Where does the game start? And...and end, uhm, what can the medium, or medium of games, mean for narrative and meaning for literature?

And then I realised there was this massive debate in the game community about narrative versus play - because it's not actually because it's not a great idea to study a game as a text, because it always intersects with play. But I'm really excited for the event. [00:30:29][89.5]

Ian: [00:30:29] And always evolves, I guess [game as text] [00:30:30][1.1]

Bea: [00:30:31] Yeah, of course. [00:30:31][0.4]

Ian: [00:30:32] So when's that event happening? What day of the festival is it on? [00:30:35][3.2]

Bea: [00:30:36] Saturday the 24th, I believe, at 10:30 a.m until 12 p.m. [00:30:40][4.3]

Ian: [00:30:40] I think you'll be sold out, I reckon. So, what happens next, then? I know you graduated recently...so, and apart from the Word Centre, what are you planning to move on to do now, or want to do, perhaps, now? [00:30:56][15.7]

Bea: [00:30:57] Well, I am..I'm very glad we decided to do the podcast today, because just yesterday I had a meeting with two potential supervisors at Abertay. Because I'm hoping to study a research masters in game studies. [00:31:15][18.2]

Ian: [00:31:15] Ah, it's all coming together. [00:31:16][0.6]

Bea: [00:31:18] And I'm just putting together my proposal and I'm talking about funding. And I'm actually going to be at a game studies conference and in the next few hours, which is great. [00:31:30][11.7]

Ian: [00:31:31] Okay, superb. [00:31:31][0.0]

Bea: [00:31:32] And yeah, I've...there's a lot that's coming together. I've had..I've..I've just had a proposal accepted for a book that the multiplayer network is putting together about queer...uhm, queer studies within games. I'm.. What else am I doing? [00:31:52][19.4]

Ian: [00:31:53] Just let me have a look at my long list, here... [00:31:55][1.8]

Bea: [00:31:56] Yeah, there's...there's a lot that's going on. [00:31:57][1.9]

Ian: [00:31:58] Are you going to stay with the centre or is it something you have to move on from now you're going on to further study. [00:32:03][5.1]

Bea: [00:32:04] So I've been...so I think every time I talk to Helen now, I'm always like 'gaming project - gaming legacy project please,' and I would really, really love to do something like that, but it only feels right for the Word Centre intern, of course, to be at Aberdeen, because I really want people to have the same experience and opportunity that I have. I bet whoever next goes into that role will also realise they love arts-admin or love festival running, or something like that. [00:32:40][14.4]

Ian: [00:32:41] So, what advice would you give to somebody who's maybe listening to this and maybe perhaps also not from a purely literature, or literary, background, but were interested in wanting to get involved? [00:32:52][11.7]

Bea: [00:32:54] Yeah. Right. Okay, I've got the best metaphor for that. So, you know a D&D party? [Dungeons and Dragons]. When you're in a D&D party, you don't want a party just wizards, or just clerics or just warriors; you want a party that's like, it's got some warriors; it's got a bard; it's got a wizard; it's got a sorcerer. Um, and maybe like a Ranger; that's a WayWORD committee. You don't want a Wayword committee that's just full of English lit students - Just, only that, because the fact that WayWORD is cross-arts, yeah.

I mean it's really, really great to have the perspectives of people who aren't English Lit students, so we had a medical student on the committee one year and he ended up running one of the events called Verbal Remedies, which was about medical students reading some of their creative writing from one of their courses. And it was epic.

So yeah, if you are not from an English lit background and you want to be involved in the WayWORD first of all, because you like cross-arts and literature and books, uhm, you should definitely think about applying because you're, because the field that you come from, is a strength. [00:34:10][75.6]

Ian: [00:34:11] Brilliant, and you've heard it first here from Bea Livesey-Stephens, just the best advocate ever for the..for the Word Centre. Thanks so much. That was great. It's great chatting with you.

We're going to close now, but before we close, Helen, the director of this fantastic centre that you've created and developed.. [00:34:29][18.2]

Helen: [00:34:29] Well, it's not just me, clearly, as you can hear...it's not just me. [00:34:31][1.3]

Ian: [00:34:32] No, but well, you're the, kind of driving force... [00:34:36][3.5]

Helen: [00:34:36] Well, you know, we have..we have obviously...I have colleagues in creative writing and also, I mean, the Word Centre is interdisciplinary. So, it has affiliated staff from other departments, not just in SLLMVC, but right across the University. So, from medical humanities and education and music and you know, everything else, I guess. [00:34:55][6.9]

Ian: [00:34:56] We'll take that modesty. [00:34:56][0.3]

Helen: [00:34:56] So they've all...they've all, you know, I mean, it has all made a difference, and also fantastic partnerships because we've partnered with the Sound Festival and, you know, the Aberdeen City Council and, you know, a million...I mean we...I think we've got 48 listed partnerships on our website and we certainly, uhm, yeah, this year we're just...even for the festival. This year we're working with at least ten different partners.

But they're all, they're not kind of, you know, they're financial partnerships only in the sense that if we create a legacy project, we can give them some money. That's fine. If they can give us a room to do something or personnel to do something. So, we just - it's just a network of helpful, helpful people, helpful folk. I mean, there are lots of helpful folks, which makes a huge difference. [00:35:39][42.9]

Ian: [00:35:40] So on that, just - is there anything you've got in the pipeline or would like to see develop in the future? Or do you just want to consolidate the WayWORD Festival and continue building on that strength?
[00:35:48][8.1]

Helen: [00:35:49] Well, I think...I mean, obviously I would like to consolidate the WayWORD festival and our funding..matched funding runs out after next year. So, obviously the question of how...how that's going to continue, I'd also like obviously to create, so it didn't depend on me, you might say, so we've got a little team together in English and creative writing who are...who've helped this year. And the idea is that, you know, I should be able to kind of...there should be some succession so it could go on into the future because, you know, as I said, with the interns - I mean, we've had people who've been there from the start, but they graduate into, you know, other things and, you know, one of them has gone on to be assistant curator at Peacock Arts, for example - so the idea is genuinely that it provides a kind of channel through which they learn about all aspects, you know: from chairing to sound, to AV to admin, you know, I mean, to paying people to liaising with writers, as a whole...a whole thing, so that, you know, that that leads hopefully to the kind of areas that they might like to develop in, and I would like that, you know, I really want that model to continue. I think that's key. [00:36:55][66.4]

Ian: [00:36:56] When did you when do you recruit, uh, generally for the committee, and what time of year should students look out for? [00:37:02][6.2]

Helen: [00:37:03] Well, they can message us at any point. Bea, you'd better correct me if I get this wrong. Is it WayWORD..the email address? [00:37:09][6.4]

Bea: [00:37:10] The email address? The email address is Wayword@abdn.ac.uk. [00:37:17][7.3]

Helen: [00:37:17] So you can message us at any point and go, actually, I'd be really interested next year - and we will keep your details and we will get in touch. Basically, we start recruiting for the next committee pretty much straight after the festival this year. So at the end of September, we start thinking about it. We put it - what we do is we put together a creative - what we call a creative caucus - because we do include people from NASCAR and other places out with the university and people who aren't students - and we've this year had a whole bunch of S3 and S4 pupils in Hazelhead Academy, for example, making a little satellite committee and running their own two little festivals in the school themselves. So, yeah, the idea is, uh, get... [00:38:00][42.5]

Ian: [00:38:00] Get involved. [00:38:00][0.0]

Helen: [00:38:00] Yeah, get involved. So yeah, we create a creative caucus and we have a massive brainstorm and people can put forward ideas. And at that point, people can say whether they'd be interested in being on the committee, and sometimes they might come into the committee because of a particular event they've suggested that they think they know how to run and we, you know - and sometimes they might just come on- and then we kind of allocate things to do and things emerge that may they turn out they will be able to do. But they get a mentor. They get mentored by previous committee members and by members of staff, so they get support in all of it. And yeah, basically, that's...from the creative caucus grows the committee. So you can be involved, you know... [00:38:36][35.8]

Ian: [00:38:36] At different level. [00:38:37][0.2]

Helen: [00:38:37] Yes, levels, different levels. [00:38:38][0.7]

Ian: [00:38:38] Of support...yeah, as time goes on. [00:38:40][1.7]

Helen: [00:38:40] And it gets, you know, it gets busier. Around the time of the festival it's pretty full on. But you know, hopefully it's, it's, it's an interesting and a rewarding experience. So yeah October..October. November is when we're recruiting, but you can email me at any point or you can email Wayword@abdn, and it's Way-WORD (W.O.R.D) just in case anyone missed that terrible pun... [00:39:05][24.7]

Ian: [00:39:05] Yeah, that's brilliant, thanks so much. It's such a...it's...it's a great insight, from both you and Bea, into a really exciting and dynamic centre doing lots of...lots of great stuff, and what's great about it, is this wider connection to the wider community, I think, and, and the good.. the cross arts pollination that Bea talked about. I think it's really great.

So, thanks both for your time and we hope to see you at the festival. [00:39:31][25.5]

Helen: [00:39:31] Well, I would hope you will see us at the festival. I hope lots of people will see us at the festival because yeah, the tickets are available from now and some of the...some of the workshops have limited numbers necessarily, but they're all free and are all free. [00:39:45][13.9]

Bea: [00:39:45] Free at WayWORDfestival.com [00:39:46][1.6]

Ian: [00:39:47] Yes. Okay. Thank you. Thanks Bea. [00:39:49][2.3]

Helen: [00:39:50] Thank you. [00:39:50][0.3]

Announcer: [00:40:15] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen. [00:40:15][0.0]

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