Foreword

Trash

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Issue 12 of *Oxford Research in English* has been unusual in many ways. Firstly, it is the first issue for the new committee and the new editors, of which, for the first time in the journal's history, there are two. Splitting the workload down the middle, I took care of the current issue and Zachary Garber leads the way on the next. Secondly, being the third issue to be produced during the Covid-19 pandemic, the difficulties of such an undertaking continued, and the entire committee are to be thanked for their gallant and patient work overcoming the various associated challenges, which included a disrupted ORE calendar. The Spring issue — this year's Summer Issue — is usually a publication of selected proceedings from Oxford's English Graduate Conference held in Trinity term of the previous year. However, given that Trinity 2020 was in the eye of corona's storm, the conference could not take place and was cancelled. Much of the behind-the-scenes work had already been done, and so instead of letting it all go to waste, we decided to run with the conference's previously selected and advertised theme of 'trash' as planned. Therefore, we are also indebted and grateful to the 2020 Conference committee for their hard work. The third unusual occurrence of this particular issue was an exceptionally high number of submissions: 20 in total. It seems that the peculiar set of circumstances of a global pandemic, unfulfilled conference papers, and an increasingly virtual and thus international workspace was the perfect concoction for a popular theme that produced high-standard articles.

As mentioned, then, for Issue 12, ORE sought papers on the myriad literary resonances of 'trash'. As both ORE and the English Faculty cast their nets far and wide in defining 'English literature', the definitions of 'trash' were potentially infinite: from genres considered 'trash(y)' at some point in time (romance, the Newgate novel, pamphlets, erotica, 'chick lit') to the material text as literal waste (palimpsested manuscripts, pulp fiction, paper production, recycling). As it happens, the articles that made it into the issue show some commonalities: in terms of time and place, several submissions dealt with literature from England, with a concentration of nineteenth-century topics. However, true to the nature of 'trash', the

issue in its entirety is multifarious and anything but mainstream, taking readers from poetry and novels to book history and graphic design, from Northumberland and London to India and the internet.

We begin with four single-author or single-text articles, the first of which is Rebecca Bradburn's examination of the peri-textual in the works of twentieth-century modernist poet, Basil Bunting. Discussing aspects of literature that become disposable over time — flyleaves, typefaces, dustjackets, and page formats — Bradburn traces the critical afterlives of Bunting's poetry. A distinct shift in publishers' presentation of his works from the original sparse appearance of his magnum opus, *Briggflatts*, to the heavily-footnoted 2016 critical collection by Faber leads Bradburn to analyse the implications of ignoring the poet's innate distrust of paratexts. Next, Frazer Martin finds several iterations of 'trash' in the 2001 international bestseller, *Life of Pi*. His piece argues that the narratological apparatus depends on recycling the experiences of others, including the fictional author-self's faintly neo-colonial repackaging of Pi's refugee trauma as a tale of 'unity, willpower, and love'. Euphoria serves to dispel dysphoria in an endless cycle indicative, to Martin, of the 'post-postmodern'. Popular literature also threads through Emily Cline's exploration of the now somewhat forgotten nineteenth-century author, Catherine Crowe, and her proto-detective novels. Women's exclusion from science and gendered reception and authorship are explored as Cline challenges the unserious reputation of popular fiction. This is inspired by how Crowe herself challenged the evidence of women as unserious and dismissible accounts corrupted by emotional subjectivity and instead championed a feminised science stemming from experience, observation, intuition, and a humble spirit of enquiry. Staying in the same century, Ruth Hobley writes a similarly redemptive piece on the 'naïve poetess', Letitia Elizabeth Landon (L.E.L.). Hobley's astute observations on literary recycling as an innovative feature of Landon's compositional practice seek to redress her still prevalent reputation as a spontaneous, rudderless, and artless ingenue. Conversely, Hobley sees in L.E.L.'s prolific output an intricate and economical practice of assiduously recycling her own material to both pragmatic and creative effect.

The issue's second half tiptoes towards broader historical questions and towards book history, starting with Avani Tandon Vieira's exposition of the Little magazine, focusing on those of 1960s and 1970s Mumbai. Vieira examines the material and literary content of these zine-like productions, arguing that they support a narrative of space and self that troubled definitions of 'trash' as cleanliness/dirt and order/disorder in opposition to the institutional 'idea of India'. Located outside mainstream conceptions of literary value, this neglected and physically discarded aspect of Indian

literature is proven to be far more than amateur ephemera. Andy Zuliani's article also fuses art, book, and literary history, though this time applied to the black square motif in twentieth- and twenty-first-century productions. This international and multimedia square of saturated waste becomes obstructive and destructive in early examples, such as in the 'black-faxing' of the 1980s, but also in contemporary digital and online instances such as Holly Melgard's poetry or Kenny Goldsmith's *Printing out the Internet* project, constantly threatening to materialize. Zuliani traces the weaponization of this once aesthetic trope of the avant-garde and questions the ethics, efficacy, and artistic value of such productions.

'Trash' closes with Olivia Krauze's querying of the first pornographic novel to explore homosexuality as an identity rather than a practice: the anonymous though likely multi-authored *Teleny* (1893). Read in isolation, the novel's masochistic and sexually explicit vignettes can easily be regarded as obscene and meaningless instances of pornographic 'trash'. Krauze, however, argues that the network of sex, violence and queerness plays a key role in creating a homosexual subjectivity that enriches characters and brings meaning to plotlines, thereby overcoming the novel's fractured narrative. Lastly and relatedly, before two insightful reviews of recently published monographs on Irish literature's relationship with the sea and the pertinent topic of nineteenth-century ephemera, Natasha Arora and Nicholas Duddy present a chronological overview of the history of pornographic literature, evaluating how this often regarded 'vulgar' genre has shapeshifted over the years, becoming the increasingly legitimised, marketable, and acceptable form it is today. This feature article ties together a broad selection of writings that seek to probe readers' conceptions and definitions of trash in an issue that this editor believes to be inquisitive, informative, and enjoyable.