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Introduction for *Brief Encounters* Issue 8

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Jemma Walton and Lola Dickinson

It would be impossible to introduce Issue Eight of *Brief Encounters*, the student-run open-access journal which platforms emerging work within the arts and humanities, without referencing the ongoing crisis the disciplines encompassed within this rubric are currently facing. While this crisis is by no means new, across this academic year all those who have contributed to the building of this issue will have been aware if not directly impacted by the turmoil witnessed across humanities departments in the UK. This has included redundancies and course closures amidst a broader debate on the perceived value of humanities education that increasingly depicts higher education as predominantly valuable in how it feeds the capitalist workforce. We are, moreover, acutely aware that the tumult humanities departments face are not unilateral, but frequently target work whose focus is multidisciplinary and both builds on and challenges traditional humanities focus and methods.

In a moment when humanities departments across the UK are facing such precarity, *Brief Encounters* offers a platform for engaging with work that is a testimony to the diverse critiques that the arts and humanities can offer. The articles in this issue exemplify this commitment: they explore themes ranging from Gothic violence and gender in contemporary theatre to the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in social movements and cultural productions. They delve into post-Weinstein feminist discourse, queer identity in digital music, and the ethical implications of artistic representations of autism. Ranging from poetry to analysis of film, music, literature, theatre, art exhibitions, social movements and urban planning, as with every issue of *Brief Encounters* we are provided with thoughtful work that provides not only insight into discrete topics but broader reflection on our current social order.

Producing the journal has been, above all, joyful. To paraphrase Elizabeth Barrett Browning, let us count the ways. First, the fact that the platform exists at all – and the many resources the unfailingly kind and generous-spirited CHASE team put into making sure everything runs smoothly – is refreshing: CHASE is committed to bringing together postgraduate researchers and helping them to publish high-quality work within a supportive context.

Second, helping postgraduate scholars to publish a piece of work (often their first scholarly publication) is an inherently positive experience – and one that would be impossible without the third joy: witnessing the careful and empathetic work carried out by our peer reviewers. While working on this iteration of *Brief Encounters* we have been struck by the overwhelming knowledge, professionalism and time put in by scholars – many of whom are precariously employed within the university system – in order to help articles be as strong as they can be. The fourth joy has been working with each other on this piece of work over the course of the year: from drafting a call for papers to signing off our last copyedit, putting together a *Brief Encounters* is basically a bootcamp in how talented and inspirational your fellow PhD students are.

If you are a postgraduate looking for an opportunity to publish a revisited MA chapter/ conference piece or a fresh new article, are curious about the editorial side of academic publishing (including becoming a peer reviewer), consider this a sales pitch – or rather, a recommendation to embrace the opportunity to take part in something uplifting and, well, *humane*.

In particular, we would like to thank the following: Sephora Imomoh, Joe Upton, Rob Witts, and Simon Everett at CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership for providing guidance and support. All our peer reviewers who provided valuable guidance to our authors as well as Silicon Chips, our typesetters both of whom without which this issue could not have been made. We are grateful to Lydia Hiraide who produced the cover art for this issue. Lastly, we would like to thank Becky Hunt, an initial member of our editorial team who provided invaluable support.

We hope you enjoy reading the issue as much as we have enjoyed editing it,
Jemma Walton and Lola Dickinson