

Dear Woolf Friends,

When the news of the British conquest of Mount Everest came through on the same day as Queen Elizabeth's coronation, it seemed too good to be true. But the story of how that piece of news was managed and gathered is less well known. While the coronation was being planned a British led group of mountaineers was on the way to climb the world's highest peak. *The Times* had sent a young reporter called James Morris to cover the expedition. He operated from Base Camp but made several solo trips up to the camp established by Sherpas at 22,000 feet from where the team assigned to tackle the summit would set off on the last leg of their climb when the time came. Morris later described these fleet footed trips up and down the mountain as an almost sacred experience. And some would say the sacred *was* involved because Morris got lucky. The final attempt at the summit (two had already failed) seemed to be coinciding with coronation day back in London. One final sprint up the mountain and Morris was able to make short wave radio contact with Hillary and Tenzing on the summit. He rushed back to Base Camp and despatched a runner to the nearest radio transmitter at Namche Bazar where a pre-planned secret code was transmitted to *The Times* newsroom which indicated that Everest had been conquered. As scoops go, it was fairly spectacular.

And so it was that the reporter James Morris, who later transitioned to become the world renowned writer Jan Morris, brought the news of the British conquest of Everest to the world on coronation day in 1953: a very contemporary sounding trans- sexual

story at the heart of what became the foundation myth of the new Elizabethan age.

The gowns were by Norman Hartnell; the gold shoes were by Roger Vivier; the music was by Handel, Parry and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Over 27 million people watched on black and white TV. Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 was above all a civic, public-facing event which in some ways almost anticipated the celebrity culture that emerged later in the century. But hidden away, literally, was the fragment of an ancient and sacred ritual. By tradition the Archbishop of Canterbury anoints the hands, breast and head of the new sovereign, but at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the protocols forbade the filming of the actual anointing itself, so sacred was the event still felt to be.



Upcoming Events

3 May

Kessler Celebration



9 May

14th Century Authors
as Readers north and
south of the
Mediterranean



5 June

Reading Group:
Qur'an and Bible



6 June

Woolf Institute
Garden Party



10 - 21 July

Woolf Institute
Summer School



What is striking about the coronation ritual as it has evolved is how it seems to have combined the deeply mystical with the civic and the ecclesiastical, and to have done so with such assurance. The statement the Archbishop of Canterbury made when the anointing oil for King Charles's coronation was blessed in Bethlehem moved effortlessly from ancient mysticism to Anglican solidarity, to the King's family heritage. This is the fruit of a long standing relationship between the established church, the monarchy and the state in these islands, although we did find it in ourselves to execute a King along the way. But we quickly reverted to tradition and the blessing of the oil and subsequent monarchical anointing seems to have helped in this process.

This tradition of anointing dates way back to before the birth of Christ. In Jewish custom it was used exclusively for priests and the Tabernacle articles, but it was later extended to include kings. It was forbidden to be used on an outsider or to be used on the body of any common person. A number of religious groups claim the holy anointing oil they use to this day derives from the original batch prepared by Moses. Just Stop Oil activists, please note! Such groups include rabbinical Judaism, the Armenian Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Coptic Church and the Saint Thomas Nazrani churches.

In Europe monarchs started to adopt the practice of coronation anointing from the early Middle Ages. King Athelstan was probably the first to do so in Britain in 925. It then became associated with powerful notions of the Divine Right of Kings but the solemn ritual has persisted well into the era of constitutional monarchy long after thoughts of Divine Right had faded. How we deal with the sacred can be a difficult and potentially incendiary matter which is perhaps why Charles's mother opted for her anointing not to be filmed. At the time of writing it looks as if King will make the same decision. Apparently a means has been found to ensure the anointing remains private but it will not be performed under a canopy as it was for his late mother's coronation. Whatever your view of the monarchy, May 6th will be a momentous event. The Woolf Institute sends warmest wishes on the occasion of the coronation of King Charles III.

With best wishes,

David Perry
Writer in residence, Woolf Institute

LOOK BACK ON INTERFAITH IFTAR AT THE UAE EMBASSY

On Tuesday 18 April the Woolf Institutesupported the UAE embassy in organising an interfaith iftar at Leighton House. Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner attended the event. Have a look at the pictures below for an impression of the evening.








**WOOLF INSTITUTE
KESSLER
CELEBRATION**

*Join us to celebrate the 25 year
legacy of our Founder President Dr
Edward Kessler MBE on the
occasion of his birthday*


MAY

3

14:00-17:00

JOIN US FOR:

- Celebratory birthday cake and bubbles
- 'Leading Women': a panel discussion of shifts in women's leadership in the Abrahamic faiths
- Formal unveiling of our renamed building





KESSLER CELEBRATION

Join us at the Woolf Institute for our Kessler Celebration on 3 May 2023. We will be celebrating the legacy of our Founder President, Dr Edward Kessler MBE, on the occasions of his birthday and the Institute's 25th anniversary.

The celebration begins at 14:00 and will include:

- Birthday cake and presentations
- 'Leading Women': a panel discussion on the shifts in women's leadership in the Abrahamic faiths over the past 25 years
- Formal unveiling of our newly renamed building

Events will conclude at 17:00. We look forward to celebrating together with Woolf Institute alumni and friends.

WEBINAR 9 MAY@17:00

Woolf Institute and the Society for the Medieval
Mediterranean present:

14th Century Authors as Readers north and south of the Mediterranean

**WEBINAR 9 MAY @17:00**

This session focuses on evidences on late medieval authors' act of reading and studying. The two speakers analyze two cases dating back to the 14th century, relating to two different geographical and cultural contexts: the French monarchy and the Mamluk sultanate. Michèle Goyens examines the multiple traces left by the translation work on the pseudo-Aristotelian text *Problemata*, carried out by Évrart de Conty, active at the court of Charles V of France. Élise Franssen deals with al-Şafadī's *Tadhkira*, reconstructing the author's reading and his library from his notes.

Speakers: Professor Michèle Goyens (KU Leuven) and Élise Franssen, Post-doctoral researcher, (Université de Liège).

Chair: Benoit Grevin

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK

Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

TELL THE UKRAINIANS TO TURN THE OTHER
CHEEK AND YOU'D PROBABLY GET SHORT
SHRIFT. SO WHAT DOES THIS ADVICE
REALLY MEAN?

**PODCAST: TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK**

In the blue corner: National Anthems and military marches; in the red corner: protest songs. Politics and music often coincide.

How practical is Jesus's advice to turn the other cheek? Some see it as an example of the excessive passivity of Christianity. Others think it's the only way to get out of an endless spiral of violence. Meryem Kalayci and Tim Stevens discuss the matter without coming to blows.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

COMING SOON

Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

LOVE THE OTHER

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