

This week Professor Robert Tombs reflects on his own experiences of Lent when he was younger.

Dear Woolf Friends,

Lent, which begins on Shrove Tuesday, 21 February, is a time for the recollection of important matters of life and death in preparation for the death and resurrection of Eastertide. But I admit that, despite being brought up in a pious Catholic home and educated in a no less pious Catholic school, when I think of Lent I instinctively think of chocolate. Giving it up for Lent was childhood penance for my sins, which were—or so I thought—many and scarlet. This view was encouraged by a woman, now long dead, whom I remember with respect and affection. The name I knew her by was Sister Cormac; I never knew the name on her birth certificate. She was Irish, perhaps about 40 (though to me she seemed ageless), charismatic, stern—even occasionally cruel—yet full of the joy of life. For her, we tiny tots were sinful creatures, personally responsible for the sufferings of Jesus; yet she took our imperfections in her stride. She winked at goings on that would now be reported to social services. She reproached me once for making another boy's nose bleed not because fighting was shocking, but because despite his being older than me (as I pleaded) he was (she judged) smaller. Fights should be between equals. Partly through her, I grew up from a tender age feeling that regularly falling into sin and returning to grace was a normal part of being human—or at least of being Catholic, as forgiveness was the automatic consequence of repentance. So I never acquired either a Puritanical sense of guilt, or a Californian sense that anything goes. Giving up

chocolate for Lent, and gorging on Easter eggs afterwards, was a child's way of learning that there was sin and also redemption. Was that a good or bad lesson? If I ever face some Last Judgment, I shall find out.

Best wishes,

Professor Robert Tombs



Upcoming Events

1 March

Spiritual and Religious Identity(ies) and Dramatherapy: To Hide or Reveal?



7 March

The Topology of Antisemitism: from Definition to Identification



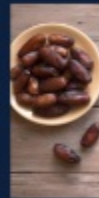
27 March

Barbarians and Romans: dynamics of integration in Late Antique Hispania



30 March

Iftar



27 April

Woolf Institute in New York



6 June

Woolf Institute Garden Party



Shalom Auslander at the Woolf Institute



Last week we were honoured to welcome Shalom Auslander, winner of the first Peter Gilbert Prize, a joint literary award from the Woolf Institute and Jewish Renaissance.



Woolf Institute In New York

27 April 2023



THE WOOLF INSTITUTE IS GOING TO NEW YORK

At the end of April, The Woolf Institute will be visiting New York. We will be meeting alumni and friends, and Dr Katherine O'Lone will be giving a talk entitled '*Belfast; Have the Ghosts Left?*' based on her research. This will take place at the Cambridge in America premises at 1120 Avenue of the Americas.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. In this talk, Dr Katherine O'Lone will explore the psychological and moral landscape of post-conflict Northern Ireland. Dr O'Lone argues that we can better understand peace by exploring the patterns surrounding how people think about reconciliation, forgiveness and justice in the aftermath of violent conflict. In Northern Ireland, despite the passage of twenty-five years since the GFA, the scars of 'The Troubles' continue to influence how people reason and think about moral issues, such as fairness, harm and justice. The conflict has ended but this talk suggests the ghosts are still there.

The talk will be followed by questions and discussion, and a reception to which all are welcome.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT FLORA MOFFIE

GOOD LUCK

Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

A LIGHT- HEARTED DISCUSSION ABOUT
POSITIVE THINKING IN BAD TIMES...



PODCAST: GOOD LUCK

A light- hearted discussion about positive thinking in bad times.

Can positive thinking create its own momentum, or to put it another way, does negativity reap its own bad harvest? Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner and Robert Tombs read the runes.

CLICK HERE TO LISTEN

COMING SOON

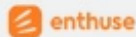
Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

THE POLITICS OF MUSIC

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