Recording of the week: Ancient Evenings

This week's selection comes from Stephen Cleary, Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings.

It is now 10 years since the death of Norman Mailer, one of the best-known and most widely read US authors of the post-war period. This week's recording features Mailer in discussion with Melvyn Bragg at the ICA. London, in 1983. Mailer's epic novel of ancient Egypt, *Ancient Evenings,* had been published just a few days previously. Mailer discourses on the 'class system' of Ancient Egypt, among related subjects. It didn't pay to be poor in those days either, apparently.

Norman Mailer and Melvyn Bragg in conversation (C95/55)

This recording comes from a substantial collection of talks and discussions held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London between 1982-1993.

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Recording of the week: watching Britain's nuclear bomb tests

This week's selection comes from Tom Lean, Project Interviewer for An Oral History of British Science.

On 8th November 1957, hundreds of British military and scientific personnel gathered at Christmas Island, a remote speck of land in the Pacific Ocean. They were there for Operation Grapple X, the first successful test of a British hydrogen bomb. At 1.8 megatons, the blast was about a hundred and forty times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, and signified Britain's mastery of the secrets of thermonuclear power. Amongst the witnesses to the mushroom cloud rising above Christmas Island was a 35 year old technician named Frank Raynor. As he recalls, in perhaps something of an understatement, it was "quite impressive" to watch:

Frank Raynor_C1379/76

The tests were also witnessed by Laurance Reed, a naval officer on HMS

Warrior. He describes a shipboard atmosphere of excitement, anxiety and awe when the first bomb was dropped.

[Laurence Reed_C1503/37](#)

The full interview with Frank Raynor can be found in the [Oral History of British Science](#) collection on [British Library Sounds](#).

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[Made-up about this boss new Liverpool Dickie](#)

Jonnie Robinson, Lead Curator of Spoken English, writes:

We can all probably remember the first time we met a *Scouser* [= 'person from Liverpool'] face to face. Leafing through Tony Crowley's excellent *[Liverpool English Dictionary](#)* immediately transported me back to 1983 and a fellow first year student in halls of residence who regularly described himself as *dead made-up* [= 'really pleased/excited'] or disdainfully proclaimed *that's last* [= expression used dismissively of e.g. unpleasant drink or food/embarrassing choice of clothing/dismal taste in music]. *Made-up* and *last* are both in Crowley's wonderful new dictionary, which is the culmination of years of research into Liverpool English. There have been countless entertaining and informative treatments of *Scouse* [= 'the dialect of Liverpool'] – both in print and online – but Crowley provides a long overdue authoritative inventory of Liverpool vernacular based on evidence from published works, thus enabling a reader to trace the provenance of over 2,000 fascinating expressions.

 It's intriguing, for instance, to be able to consult his entries for items in the Library's own *[Evolving English WordBank](#)* – examples of contemporary dialect and slang words and phrases submitted to the British Library by members of the public in 2010/11. The following items that feature in both resources include established Liverpool favourites such as *[made-up](#)* [= 'pleased']; forms that reflect local pronunciation, like *[antwack(y)](#)* [= 'antique']); references to local specialities, customs and folklore, such as *[Wet Nellie](#)* [= type of bread pudding] and *[Hickey the Firebobby](#)* [= bogeyman evoked to frighten children/deflect them from asking awkward questions]; and recent coinages, like *[jarg](#)* [= 'fake, useless, rubbish']. Returning to 1983, it turns out my new friend was actually from Formby, so might potentially be dismissed by sticklers as a *Plastic Scouser* [= 'person from the Liverpool hinterland rather than the city itself']. Intriguingly, there's no entry for *Plastic Scouse*(*r*) in Crowley's dictionary, although there are several (conflicting) definitions in *Urban Dictionary* and elsewhere online including

[this](#) *BBC Voices Recording*. Opinions as to the exact geographic boundary of *Scouseland* [= 'Liverpool'] inevitably vary, but towards the end of our first term my mate from Formby certainly staked a genuine claim to membership of the wider *Scouse* community by asking me if I was intending to put up any *chrizzie dezzies* [= 'Christmas decorations'] in my room. This brilliantly playful construction is an example of a highly productive process of word formation in Liverpool English – abbreviating the stem of an existing word and adding the suffix <-y> or <-ie> (e.g. *plastic → plazzy*) and/or changing the final consonant of the stem before adding the suffix (e.g. *plastic → placcy*).

Crowley includes several of these highly distinctive hypocoristic forms. Many are arguably universal in colloquial speech, like *bevvy* [= 'drink' (from 'beverage')], *bezzie* [= 'best mate'], *butty* [= 'sandwich' (from 'bread-and-butter')], *chippy* [= 'chip shop'], *footy* [= 'football'], *offy* [= 'off-licence'], *pressie* [= 'present'], *sarnie* [= 'sandwich'], *trackie* [= 'tracksuit'], *tranny* [= 'transistor radio'] and *wellies* [= 'Wellington boots']; others are probably more geographically and/or socially restricted, such as *bezzies* [= 'best clothes'], *cozzie* [= 'swimming costume'], *lazzy* [= 'elastic'], *lecky* [= 'electricity supply'], *lippy* [= 'lipstick'], *photie* [= 'photograph'] and *trainies* [= 'trainers']. Even more noteworthy, though, is the set of entries that are, if not absolutely unique to Merseyside, then much more common there than elsewhere. Several refer to significant local landmarks, such as *Dellie* [= 'Adelphi cinema'], *Mizzy* [= 'Wavertree Playground' (known locally as 'The Mystery')], *Parly* [= 'Parliament Street'], *Scotty Road* [= 'Scotland Road'], *Sevvy Park* [= 'Sefton Park'], *Tocky* [= 'Toxteth'] and *Vauxy* [= 'Vauxhall Road' (I've never heard *Vauxy* in reference to the Vauxhall Road in London, for instance)]; others refer to municipal institutions or authority figures that have special local significance, including *binnie* [= 'binman'], *bizzies* [= 'the police' (from 'busybody')], *corpy* [= 'Liverpool Corporation'], *cuzzies* [= 'customs officer'], *lanny* [= 'landing stage'], *ozzy* [= 'hospital'], *plainee* [= 'plain-clothes detective']; while several relate to domestic objects and/or cultural activities including food, daily routine and leisure pursuits, such as *avvy* [= 'afternoon'], *conny onny* [= 'condensed milk'], *cowie* [= 'cowboy film'], *finny addy* [= 'finnan-haddock'], *loosie* [= 'cigarette sold individually'], *mobie* [= 'mobile phone'], *muzzy* [= 'moustache'], *emmy oggie* [= 'empty house'], *rollie* [= 'roll-up cigarette'], *squashies* [= 'squashed/broken chocolate sold at reduced price'] and *sterry milk* [= 'sterilised milk']. As a productive form, Crowley's dictionary cannot possibly hope to be comprehensive, but forms like *conny onny* and *mobie* demonstrate how this process applies equally to traditional and to modern household items and my mate's use of *chrizzie dezzies* shows how it can be used to create highly original forms that may or may not be adopted more widely – the *BBC Voices Recordings* captured [*basies*](#) [= 'baseball boots'] and [*grungies*](#) [= 'fan of grunge rock music'], for instance.

Crowley's dictionary is a unique celebration of the extraordinary ingenuity and creativity of *Scouse* vocabulary. To explore the equally distinctive *Scouse* accent, try [this](#) recording in the Library's [*Evolving English VoiceBank*](#).

Recording of the week: Rabindranath Tagore's 'Songs of Patriotism'

This week's selection comes from Dr Janet Topp Fargion, Lead Curator of World and Traditional Music.

Born in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a writer, poet, artist and teacher. He was the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1913, for his poetry collection *Gitanjali.* Tagore wrote over 2,000 songs during his life, referred to as *Rabindra Sangeet*, in which he expressed his world view commenting on politics, progress and education. This song is taken from an album of patriotic songs, and is sung by Hemanta Mukherjee (1920-1989), popularly known as Hemant Kumar, a respected Indian singer, composer and film producer.

[Nai Nai Bhoy](#)

Tagore's work was hugely influential on European writers and thinkers. A part of his life narrative is highlighted in the *[Connecting Stories: Our British Asian Heritage](#)* exhibition at the Library of Birmingham in collaboration with the British Library running until 4 November, 2017.

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Nai Nai Bhoy is taken from *Songs of Patriotism* – Rabindranath Tagore. Label/catalogue: His Master's Voice ECLP 2280, 1962. BL shelfmark: 1LP0156677

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Recording of the week: not on period instruments

This week's selection comes from Jonathan Summers, Curator of Classical Music Recordings.

Those of us brought up in the 1980s and 1990s only hearing Haydn performed on period instruments missed a lot. While these were innovative and fascinating, older recordings of symphony orchestras – with large string sections performing Classical repertoire on contemporary instruments – became

outmoded. This recording from 1953 of the Oxford Symphony by Geroge Szell and his Cleveland Orchestra is a delight, full of elegance, wit, virility and humour – all the best traits of Haydn's genius.

Haydn Symphony no. 92 G major (Oxford)

A collection of Haydn's symphonies can be found on British Library Sounds.

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