

Invitation from the School of English and Drama

# English Annual Lecture: “‘Are you animal – or vegetable – or mineral?’ Alice and Others.’

Dame Gillian Beer

**Thursday 16 October, 2014, 6pm**  
**ArtsTwo Lecture Theatre**

One of the un-easiest realisations produced by evolutionary theory was that species and genera are unstable. Taxonomies cannot be permanent or universal descriptions. Questions arose concerning what is organic, what inorganic, what normative, what monstrous. Such questions are addressed by T.H. Huxley, Max Müller, John Tyndall, John Ruskin, and Lewis Carroll among others. The guessing game 'animal, vegetable, or mineral', like twenty questions, starts from these primary categories: but unicorns, girls, pigeons, and talking flowers, each have different classificatory systems.

Dame Gillian Beer is Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge, having held the King Edward VII Chair of English Literature. She is a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Royal Society of Literature and a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Philosophical Society. She holds Honorary Degrees from a number of universities, including London, Oxford, the Sorbonne, and Harvard. Among her books are *Arguing with the Past* (1988), *Darwin's Plots* (3rd edition, 2009), *Virginia Woolf: the Common Ground* (1996), *Jabberwocky and Other Nonsense: the collected and annotated poems of Lewis Carroll* (2012). She was twice a judge for the Booker Prize in the 1990s and has also judged the Orange Prize and the Cohen Prize. Recently she has been writing about Sylvia Townsend Warner and music and is finishing a book on Lewis Carroll this winter.

**A drinks reception will follow the lecture.**



## Ticket Information

This event is free to attend, but you must book tickets online in advance. Please visit: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/english-annual-lecture-dame-gillian-beer-tickets-13000588109](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/english-annual-lecture-dame-gillian-beer-tickets-13000588109)

## Map and directions

This event takes place at our Mile End Campus. Please visit: [www.qmul.ac.uk/about/howtofindus/mileend/index.html](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/about/howtofindus/mileend/index.html)



Mile End Campus



The nearest tube stations are Stepney Green and Mile End

ArtsTwo Lecture Theatre  
ArtsTwo Building  
Queen Mary University of London  
Mile End Road  
London E1 4NS

## Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this event please contact Beverley Stewart, email: [b.stewart@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:b.stewart@qmul.ac.uk) or tel: 020 7882 8559.