



The Fitzwilliam Schism

Attentional Practice and Practical Criticism in the Interwar

*An evening with ESTAR(SER) at Mildred's Lane
Social Saturday, 23 July 2016*

On a cold night in the winter of 1929, an Egyptian vase, less than six centimeters tall and as many as five thousand years old, was stolen from the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge University. The theft is of no consequence to art history, since the object was returned undamaged, or barely damaged, to the collection, and Museum records make no reference to its peregrinations. During its interlude of liberty, however, it seems to have played a part in a skirmish of genuine interest to historians of the arts of attention: a skirmish between a putatively ancient practice, and a putatively novel method; and a part somewhere between that of a pawn, and of a god.

At Mildred's Lane on Saturday, July 23, members of the research consortium *ESTAR(SER)* will report on the present state of investigations into the Fitzwilliam Schism. At stake are the intersecting careers of the so-called "practical criticism," the intellectual movement birthed at Cambridge by I. A. Richards and William Empson, so consequential for midcentury Anglo-American intellectual life; and "the Sevens," a variant of the practices of the Order of the Third Bird, less visible but perhaps no less vital among certain Cantabrigians at the same time. Attendees will have the opportunity to experiment with the techniques of attention that provoked the events of that controversial evening.

About *ESTAR(SER)*: *The Esthetical Society for Transcendental and Applied Realization* (now incorporating the *Society of Esthetic Realizers*) is an established body of private, independent scholars who work collectively to recover, scrutinize, and (where relevant) draw attention to the historicity of the Order of the Third Bird. (www.estarser.net)