

Alum's fiction debut labelled one to watch

By **Ceci Browning**

It's third time lucky for long-form journalist Tom Lamont, whose debut novel *Going Home* will be published in June. The 41-year-old wrote the book within a year after failing to get two earlier drafts accepted. Set in the suburban north London Jewish community where he grew up, this successful attempt marks his first step into the world of fiction.

"I am delighted and super relieved because even though I gained a lot mentally and spiritually from writing it, you can't help but add up the time you spent," Mr Lamont said. "I wonder, if the third manuscript hadn't found a home, whether I would have been able to sit down and carry on."

Going Home tells the story of Téó Erskine, a road safety instructor who returns home to visit his ageing father, Vic. When a former classmate dies suddenly, he and his childhood pal Ben

find themselves responsible for taking care of her tricky two-year-old son.

Speaking on the transition from true stories of journalism to the imagined worlds of fiction, Mr Lamont said: "Embarrassingly, I've always done both. I just haven't ever been published before. Fiction has been this thing I've done in secret.

"For the last 15 years, more or less, I've started every day by doing a bit of fiction in the morning. Then I turn myself to journalism, my public-facing job. I see it as quite a nice, enlivening, almost caffeinating beginning to each day."

While celebrated by *The Observer* as one of the best emerging novelists of 2024, Mr Lamont already has a huge portfolio of pieces for national newspapers. Books scratch a different itch.

"The deeper satisfaction of writing is having a body of work and not just individual pieces," he said. "I love

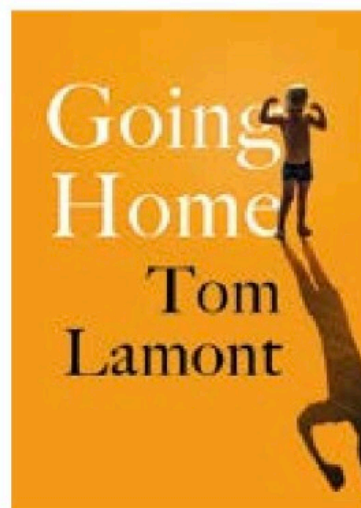


Courtesy of Tom Lamont

Above: Tom Lamont
Right: *Going Home* cover

having a good chunk of the road behind me, full of old, interesting jobs. And I want to try and replicate that with books. I want to fill a shelf if I can. If I have time. And if publishers keep wanting it."

What comes next? Mr Lamont has already set to work on a second book: "The day I finished the one that's coming out, I started the next one."



Creative fellowship launched for working-class journalists

A new fellowship for aspiring journalists from working-class backgrounds has been praised by City alumni as "a remarkable thing to do".

Independent publication *Polyester* opened applications in February for a programme to support creatives from less privileged backgrounds. It was founded to commemorate *Polyester*'s managing editor, Eden Young, who passed away last year aged 29.

The feminist arts and culture magazine explained

that the recipient will get a "fully paid, full-time, year-long position" at *Polyester*. The fellowship will pay the London Living Wage and provide mentorship directly from the editors. This was described as the same training that Young undertook at the start of her career, without industry connections or experience.

Lilith Hudson, graduate of City's MA Magazine Journalism course in 2022, said the fellowship is an opportunity she would have been grateful to have had

at the beginning of her career. "It's such a nepotistic world in journalism, unless you know somebody who knows somebody, unless you have a way in," said Ms Hudson, who attended a comprehensive school. "There needs to be more bursaries like this."

Ione Gamble, editor-in-chief at *Polyester*, said in a press release: "Eden had so many wonderful attributes, and chief among them was being a proud working-class woman - a rarity in an industry wherein over 80

per cent of journalists come from professional and upper class backgrounds."

Rhys Thomas, a 2019 MA Magazine graduate from a working-class background, said it is a touching and ambitious initiative to help improve class diversity.

"I would hope that it acts as a catalyst to help better the industry," he said. "The effort levels that are involved for a small publication like *Polyester* to do this kind of embarrassing many major media companies."

Urmi Pandit