Richard Berengarten

(aka Burns, b. London 1943) is a British poet who acknowledges elective affinities with Octavio Paz, George Seferis, and C. G. Jung. Berengarten has lived in Italy, Greece, Serbia, Croatia, and the USA. His Selected Writings number nine volumes; his writing has been translated into over 100 languages; the Critical Companion to his works contains 34 essays from contributors in 11 countries; and his many awards include prizes in the UK, Serbia, and Macedonia. Formerly Visiting Professor at Notre Dame University (1982), British Council Lector in Belgrade (1987-1990), Royal Literary Fund Fellow, Newnham College, Cambridge (2003-2005), Berengarten is a Fellow of the English Association, Bye-Fellow at Downing College, Cambridge, and poetry editor of Jewish Quarterly.

In October 2016, Richard Berengarten published a 450-page poem entitled Changing. This work is, among other things, an extensive homage to the ancient Chinese classic, the Book of Changes (Yijing; I Ching). Richard’s contribution to this conference will be to give an evening talk, illustrated with poems, based on the composition and architectonics of his new book. Besides offering insights into a poet’s mind and working practice in composing a ‘long poem’, his presentation will explore the relationship of Changing with the Yijing, in terms of both form and content. By framing some of the conference’s main themes in a poetic context, Richard will also broach questions about several further issues, including: (1) the relationship between poetic thought itself and holistic thinking; (2) hierarchical, fractal, rhizomatic and aleatory models of organisation; and (3) the practice of divining and the theory of synchronicity. The theme of temporal directionality in the literary work, and the twin motifs of particularism and universalism – all inherently present as undercurrents throughout this exploration – may also emerge into explicit focus.