



BAVS 2025 ABSTRACTS

WEDNESDAY 23 JULY

9:45-11:00: Panel session 1

1. VICTORIAN TEXTUALITIES (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

Marcus Waithe

Modelling Character: Stone Inscriptions in the Page World of the Victorian Novel

There are moments in the typographical world of the Victorian novel when other versions of the letter secure an entrance. A famous example occurs at the opening of *Great Expectations*, when Pip considers the characters inscribed on his parents' headstone, and imagines their shape disclosing the personality of the deceased. At an explicit level, the episode probes the developmental questions involved in infant reading practices. But it also models fresh generic and interpretative possibility. While conventional histories of memorial letter cutting associate the rise of expressive letters with the Arts and Crafts movement and Edward Johnston's calligraphic revival, this paper argues that it is the mid-Victorian novel's concern with 'character' that initiates and models this idea. In the process, it sketches one path by which we might begin to see the shapes of letters as entwined with literature's generative capacities.

Lucy Whitehead

'This Valuable Autograph': Victorian Studies and the Rise of the Manuscript

This paper examines how the shifting status of the modern literary manuscript across the long nineteenth century, from discardable draft to high-prestige commodity, has shaped and continues to influence Victorian studies. The emergence of a transatlantic commercial market for writers' holographs impacted on long-nineteenth-century literature and authorship: what novelists wrote, what they kept, and how they thought about their writings. The transatlantic dispersal of British literary collections in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has fundamentally shaped who has access to Victorian writers and authority to speak about them, and the forms which that access takes. Underexplored sources including collectors' papers, annotated booksellers' catalogues, historic acquisition records and institutional collection policies cast light on the agents and choices that have shaped our Victorian manuscript inheritance and offer new directions for Victorian studies. They

provide new historical perspectives on current debates about the value of the humanities and of English literary studies in particular, by illuminating the various forms of value attached by a range of transatlantic agents to the primary materials of humanities study.

Michael Sullivan

'Among a World of Ghosts': Spectral Imaging and Textual Apparitions in the Tennyson and Shelley Circles

This paper reveals findings and practices from Recovery of Literary Manuscripts, an Arts-STEM collaboration to restore lost lines of anglophone literature that had been erased and environmentally damaged. It recovers previously unreadable variants in the manuscripts of Tennyson and the Shelley Circle and offers a theorization of how these digital methods can contribute to the formal and intellectual-historical study of modern manuscripts. Digitally stripping away deletions in manuscripts has transformative consequences for our relations with nineteenth-century archives, turning previously examined collections into untapped repositories of lost literary lines now newly visible. Offering readings of newly available text of Tennyson and Percy Bysshe Shelley, the paper restores cultural heritage that was previously illegible, opening up for consideration stages of composition that have long been irretrievable—beyond the limits of critical interpretation. The paper ends by theorizing the implications of this research for criticism, digital humanities, and scholarly editing of Victorian literature.

2. VICTORIAN ASIA Lecture Theatre 2)

Lynn Qingyang Lin

The Formations of Transcultural Knowledge in the Victorian Periodical Press: Translating and Reviewing Classical Chinese Poetry, 1870s–1900s

Looking into archives of historical periodicals and publisher's records, this study examines translations and reviews of classical Chinese poetry in Victorian periodicals, including *The Athenaeum*, *The Academy*, and *The Nineteenth Century*. These transcultural practices reveal the transfer of sinological knowledge from the dual institutional networks of Oriental studies in the metropole and 'China-coast sinology' to an intellectually inclined general readership in the late Victorian literary world. This study considers how translation and reception construct and disseminate multiple forms of transcultural knowledge through the medium of the periodical press. Analysis of the discursive-sociological networks of the "periodical field" will be correlated with close reading of periodical pieces from various perspectives: practices of cross-cultural comparison and Victorian comparative discourses, (para)textual aspects of poetry translation, like versification and the representation of aesthetic features, and how translation and reception reconstitute 'sinographies' – the discursive archive of recurrent images, themes, and common conceptions about China.

Colin Cavendish-Jones

The Chinese Canon in English: James Legge and the Chinese Classics

James Legge set out for China as a Christian missionary in 1839. He is remembered, however, not for bringing Christianity to China but for spreading Chinese culture in Victorian Britain, eventually becoming the first Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at Oxford University in 1876. Legge's most important works were his translations of Chinese canonical literature into English and he spent decades of his life on a vast and compendious annotated English edition of the Chinese classics. At a time when the literary canon in Europe still primarily meant Latin and Greek, Legge introduced another ancient tradition to his English readers and laid the foundations for a canonical approach to the emerging discipline of world literature.

Jin Chenxiao

Picturing Meiji Japan in Late-Victorian Visual Culture, c.1880-1901

The end of Japan's self-imposed isolation in 1858 gave rise to a craze for Japanese culture in Victorian society. This paper reframes pictorial representations of Meiji Japan by British artist-travellers between 1880 and 1901 in the Victorian art market. It demonstrates that the intense interest in Japan not only stimulated artistic exchanges but also shaped the cross-cultural understanding of Japan on a social level. Commissioned to visit and paint Japan, the artist Mortimer Menpes played a key role in disseminating images of Japanese people and landscapes across Victorian society. His paintings were first exhibited in public and then reproduced as illustrations, thereby reaching a vast audience in different material forms. This study highlights the connection between Victorian artistic practices and Anglo-Japanese relations. Analysing the agency of images as transcultural products in varied contexts reveals the fluidity of the Victorian discourse of Japan.

3. BRONTES (Seminar Room K)

Krista Lysack

Brontë Weather

How did the Brontës watch the weather? In their outdoor pursuits, their correspondence, and their novelistic and poetic practice, the sisters were something other than weather observers in the empirically meteorological sense. For they imagined stranger relationships with vital atmospheric forces: systems and forms that are felt but never quite seen. This paper considers the Brontës' peculiar affective ontology when it comes to their writing about weather: their 'wutherwhach' (a term adapted from Anne Carson's 'The Glass Essay'), that is, an attention to and feeling for weather which anticipates contemporary theories of the weird (Fisher), the spectral and hauntological (Coverley), and of vibrant matter and form (Bennett). In order to do so, the paper tracks four storms in the Brontës' writing: the rainstorm in *Villette* (or weird weather); the early windstorm in *Wuthering Heights* (or wuthering weather); the lightning storm in *Jane Eyre* (or wild weather); and the cold weather that haunts Charlotte's letters in the weeks before and after Emily's and Anne's deaths (the weathering of grief). This living with and in weather, this whorling of literary form and genre, reveals strange affiliations between the human and more-than-human. Brontë weather produces the wonder of 'wutherwaching,' of longing for storms to come and subsume.

Alexander Lynch

'God watch that sail!': Brontë's *Villette* and Victorian Vagueness

Readers have long accused Victorian authors of vagueness of thought and expression. Pound lamented their 'convoluted tushery', Chesterton their 'muddle-headedness'. Recent critics have justly resisted their occlusion of exploitation and oppression. By reading Brontë's marvellously indeterminate novel *Villette* (1853) alongside works of nineteenth-century and contemporary theology (e.g., Newman, Marcel), this paper presents Victorian vagueness not as a critical problem but as the adequate expression of a specifically religious mystery, a matter in which the being of the reader is peculiarly at issue. For Brontë, it proposes, on one's decision to believe that Paul Emanuel does return to Lucy Snowe at the novel's hazy end depends nothing less than one's capacity for faith in the return of another called 'Emmanuel'. Unfolding such mysteries promises to clarify the postures of faith that Victorian religion commended in matters of morality and politics (here, Brontë's 'hagiological' vision of personhood) and enrich our interpretive practices.

Gem Kirwan

'That nursery of folly and impertinence': The influences of *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* on *Jane Eyre*

In the postscript to *Waverley*, Walter Scott recommends the Scottish writer Elizabeth Hamilton's third novel, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, for its 'striking and impressive' narrative. Despite Scott's long-recognised influence on Charlotte Brontë's writing, *Jane Eyre's* potential indebtedness to Hamilton has never been explored. Through analysing Betty Mason and Jane's parallel understandings of justice and education, and Brontë's emulation of Hamilton's narrative style, this paper argues that *Cottagers* influences *Jane Eyre's* presentation of discipline. Both protagonists learn the destructive powers of confinement and fairytales in childhood before their mentors teach them to control their

passions. Echoing the educational philosophies delineated in Hamilton's non-fiction works, Betty and Jane become governesses who model exemplary forms of caregiving. By examining the novels' parallel constructions of disciplinary models founded on fairness and compassion, I argue that Hamilton's writing is not just a precursor to, but direct inspiration for, one of the most renowned Victorian novels.

4. PRE-RAPHAELITISM (History of the Book Room)

Susie Beckham

Pre-Raphaelitism as a *Nightmare*: artistic, linguistic and temporal adaptation

In this paper I explore how Frederick Sandys adapted John Everett Millais's *A Dream of the Past – Sir Isumbras at the Ford* (1857) for the purpose of parody in his printed illustration, titled *A Nightmare* (1857). I then investigate how he adapted the 'Pre-Raphaelite' name for an illustrative form, examining how he utilised the pictorial space and compositional direction of the central vignette to communicate ideas related to artistic periodisation and linear constructions of time. For example, I explore how Sandys's alteration of Millais's background allows the direction of movement in the foreground vignette to take on a greater relevance, playing upon a traditional conception of time-space and left-right codings of the past and future. The paper positions *A Nightmare* as a vital source in the study of Pre-Raphaelite receptions and as notable case study in visual adaptations of time and language.

Molly Watson

Edith Coleridge and the Rossettis

In this paper I examine the work of a relatively unknown member of the Coleridge family, Edith Coleridge (1832-1911), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's granddaughter. Edith's manuscripts, now held at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin, include numerous poems that reveal the depth of her Christian faith. Through an analysis of her unpublished 1910 commonplace book, this paper traces the textual and personal connections between Edith, Dante Gabriel, and Christina Rossetti. Focusing on the poem 'A Christmas Carol: Lines on a Picture by D.G. Rossetti', inspired by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 1857 painting of the same name, I argue that Edith uses the painting to tell a story about feminine piety and the possibility of engaging in a mystical marriage with Christ. In so doing this paper contributes to new knowledge about the Rossetti family's influence on women's religious poetry.

Victoria M. Young

Creating Space for Holman Hunt's 'The Light of the World': J.T. Micklethwaite Renovates Keble College Chapel

In 1872, Keble College received Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt's 1853 painting, 'The Light of the World' from Martha Combe, a recent widower of Oxford University Press publisher Thomas Combe, both longtime supporters of the artist. Work on the new chapel at the college was underway by William Butterfield in a fully decorated building program of the polychromatic High Victorian Gothic style. Butterfield refused to put the painting in the chapel where Combe preferred it and eventually the work found its way into the library, much to the artist's dissatisfaction. Finally in 1891, Keble College's Council hired the significant but understudied architect John Thomas Micklethwaite to renovate the building's south transept and sacristy into a side chapel featuring 'Light'. This paper uses archival research to illuminate the making of this space in a late Gothic Revival style and considers the issues at hand for Micklethwaite working alongside Butterfield's design.

5. ILLUSTRATION (Seminar Room A)

Robert Steele

Queering the Sister Arts: Aubrey Beardsley's Queer Narrative and Image-Text Dynamics in *Under the Hill*

In *Under the Hill* (1896), Aubrey Beardsley's self-illustrated erotic retelling of the legend of Venus and Tannhauser published in *The Savoy* (Beardsley's own little magazine), Beardsley provides less of a novel and more of a queer decadent artifact. Beardsley's illustration-text dynamics employ representational excess and digression to dilate or contract the narrative progression, resisting the heteronormative teleology of the Tannhauser legend to the point where the novel devolves into narrative fragmentation. This aesthetic of queer fragmentation typified *The Savoy*, which provided a refuge for queer expression and collaboration in the wake of the Wilde Trials. Bridging recent scholarship in illustration studies (Cook, Dowling, Leighton and Surridge, Thomas), queer narratology (Bradway, Seidler), and queer bibliography (Frankel, King, Kooistra, Noble and Pyke), my paper will show how Beardsley develops novel queer narrative and representational strategies in both illustration and letterpress, positioning the little magazine as a multimodal site for queer expression at the fin-de-siècle.

Michelle Reynolds

Althea Gyles: Feminist Symbolist Illustrator

Althea Gyles (1867-1949) is known primarily through her relationships with well-known men. She designed book covers for several volumes of W B Yeats's (1865-1939) poetry. She was also in romantic relationships with Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) and Leonard Smithers (1861-1907). However, this paper will move behind these male-focused histories to examine Gyles's female subjectivity as a professional woman designer and illustrator. I will investigate the feminist symbolism in Gyles's illustrations through her use of the female nude. I will visually analyse Gyles's contributions to the periodical *The Dome* (1897-98) and her illustrated edition of Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) *Harlot's House* (1904). Gyles's illustrations were connected to her membership in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a group transcending traditional gender roles and sexual norms. I argue that Gyles's use of the female body in her illustrations symbolised her life and career as an ambitious New Woman.

Dominique Iannone

Two Copies, Two Visions: the Interplay of Word and Image in the Illuminated *Idylls of the King*

The aim of this study is to offer a comparative analysis of the relationship between word and image in a critically neglected illustrated edition (c. 1862) of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* supposedly produced by R. R. Holmes, librarian at Windsor Castle between 1870 and 1906. Resembling the style of medieval illuminated manuscripts, this richly decorated edition of the *Idylls* prioritises the visual over the textual as Tennyson's words, rendered in medieval-inspired calligraphy, are veritably engulfed by embellishments the likes of pictorial capital letters, hand-coloured miniature illustrations and decorated borders. Although four copies have been identified, only two are available for examination as the remaining specimens, held by auction houses, remain virtually inaccessible. Close

scrutiny of the copies at my disposal — retrieved respectively at the BNF and at Cardiff University — has revealed substantial differences in the eight plates making up each book. These variations in the choice of materials (wood vs. paper), and most importantly, in the use of colour (soft vs. vibrant) not only make each image unique but also significantly impact our reading and interpretation of Tennyson's text.

6. POETRY (White and Case Room)

Timothy Anderson

Alliteration as 'Early Style' in the Poetry of William Barnes, Eliza Keary and Mathilde Blind

Alliteration is a deceptively simple poetic feature: one of the first which students learn to identify but persistently difficult to assign meaning or motive. In Victorian culture, interest in the sounds of Old English verse prompted what some scholars have called a 'Second Alliterative Revival' as poets discovered new historical depths and expressive potentials in alliterating rhythms. My paper will investigate three less-studied poets – William Barnes, Eliza Keary and Mathilde Blind – as I argue that alliteration prompted revision of assumptions about the dialect, class and gender of poetic voice. In Barnes's dialect poems, Keary's fairytales for grownups, and Blind's pessimistic vision of evolution, alliteration was used to remake poetic forms and retell the histories from which they emerged. Besides its association with the late styles of late Victorian poets, I argue, alliteration could body forth 'early styles': new kinds of archaism, outlining new conceptions of the Victorian past and future.

Amy Wilcockson

Octopods and Pofflikopps: Edward Lear and the Mundellas

At the Hotel Monte Generoso in Italy in 1882, the nonsense poet and artist Edward Lear (1812-1888) met Mary Mundella (1847-1922). Mundella was the daughter of the Liberal politician, Anthony John Mundella (1825-1897), both of whom were also guests at the Hotel. Over the course of their stay, Lear and the Mundellas struck up a keen and lively friendship, culminating in the exchange of comical letters and original Lear poems, three of which were not published until 2021 after being discovered in the British Library's Charnwood Collection. They include the long poem 'Lays of the Octopods (The Last of the Octopods)', sister poem to 'The Octopods and Reptiles'. This paper will trace the manuscripts' discovery, analyse them in detail, and explore in greater depth the understudied relationship between Lear and the Mundellas. I will do so through utilising correspondence, Lear's artworks of Monte Generoso, and entries in Lear's unpublished diaries.

Dana Moss

'I am in love, meantime': Nonmutual Time in Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage*

Amours de Voyage is notable for what Ralph Waldo Emerson complained is its 'baulking end or no end'. The last two cantos document the efforts of Clough's protagonist Claude to reach the woman he has decided he loves, Mary, following second-hand information throughout Italy—only to resign himself seemingly to disappointment when the trail appears to run dry. For Emerson, this is an unforgivable poetic sin: to refuse the reader any kind of resolution, to refuse, in other words, to end the poem at all. In my paper, I will argue that we should read *Amours de Voyage* as an experiment in writing about forms of intimacy that never become direct, reciprocated, or synchronous, that manifest instead in the gaps produced by miscommunication and missed opportunities. In other words, an intimacy that only becomes meaningful and viable through the lens of nonmutual time and the embrace of asynchronicity.

14:00-15:15: Panel session 2

7. FILM SCREENING AND PANEL (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

‘The Man Who Painted His House’: Uncovering a Victorian Art-Workman

Panel Participants

Vicky Mills, Senior Lecturer in Victorian Literature and Culture, Birkbeck, University of London

Claire Jones, Senior Lecturer in History of Art, University of Birmingham

Zoe Thomas, Associate Professor in Modern History, University of Birmingham

Who was the Victorian ‘art-workman’? This panel addresses this question through critical responses to a new short film by Victoria Mills and Lily Ford about the life and work of David Parr, a working-class decorative artist. Parr worked for the Cambridge firm F. R. Leach and Sons between 1871-1908 on the decoration of churches, private houses and municipal buildings and was commissioned by leading designers, including William Morris. In 1886 Parr moved to a modest terraced house in Cambridge, which he decorated over forty years with an extraordinary array of hand-painted designs. Parr’s house recently opened as an independent museum.

The panel will be structured around a screening of ‘The Man Who Painted His House’ (17 minutes) and three response papers. Victoria Mills will discuss how she uses the medium of film to explore the hidden history of a Victorian ‘art-workman’ and to open up questions about the relationship between art and labour, the concept of art-workmanship, and the autonomy of the ‘art-workman’ within the aesthetic, structural and classed hierarchies of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Mills will also reflect on using audio-visual practice in the context of academic research and on working in partnership with a museum.

Claire Jones and Zoe Thomas will respond, drawing on their own research into histories of work, women art workers and the relationship between art and industry. Jones will explore the ways in which the film’s focus on fragments and layers echoes the traces of skilled workers such as Parr, and his particular agency and legacy as a homeowner. She will also consider how the film offers prompts for reconnecting distinct spaces of art-workmanship. Thomas will focus on how the film offers a reflective space to think more widely about ‘art-workmen’ and ‘art workers’ in the Arts and Crafts. She will consider the central role played by these lesser-known ‘workers’ and how gender and class shaped their experiences. She will discuss how the film encourages viewers to think about the little-recognised labour of family members (usually women), who have so carefully ensured that the creative expression of figures beyond William Morris’s inner circle have been preserved across the twentieth century, often in the face of considerable apathy from academics and cultural institutions.

8. THEATRE AND VISUAL CULTURE IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY (Lecture Theatre 2)

This panel seeks to create cross-disciplinary dialogue between scholars of nineteenth-century art history, visual culture, and theatre history. The nineteenth century is known as a period of blurred boundaries between previously distinct media, as evidenced by the growing importance of spectacle in stage productions, the circulation of images and motifs between media, and also by the frequent application of the term 'theatrical' to a certain type of narrative painting. In looking laterally across media (and disciplinary) boundaries, we hope to offer new insights into contemporary debates about spectatorship, cultural legitimacy, popular taste and the relationship between high art and the mid-nineteenth century theatre. Drawing on theories of remediation and intermediality, each paper considers the relationships between artists and the theatre arts, drawing into question the practices and meanings of spectacle, melodrama and sensation drama.

Patricia Smyth & Emma Sutcliffe

Painting, Theatre, and Remediation: Delaroche and Gérôme

This paper considers the relationship between painting and theatre in the work of the French artist Paul Delaroche and his pupil Jean-Léon Gérôme. Delaroche's paintings were realized on stage, while recently discovered drawings reveal Dumas' drama *Henri III* as a source for his *Duc de Guise*. Gérôme's *Duel after the Masquerade* was inspired by Grangé and Montépin's *Corsican Brothers* and was itself subsequently realized in several stage productions. For both artists, theatre was a conduit through which their works were disseminated to a transnational public. Paintings by Delaroche appeared on the stage of the Britannia theatre, while Gérôme's *Duel* featured as a tableau at Drury Lane, the success of which prompted changes to the staging of the duel scene in Boucicault's adaptation of *The Corsican Brothers*. In considering these artists side by side, we reveal ways in which their practices aligned and/or diverged, and illuminate the scope of nineteenth-century transmediality.

Caroline Radcliffe

Louisa Ruth Herbert, Lady Audley and the Pre-Raphaelite Image on the Nineteenth Century Stage

This paper examines the relationships between C19th literary, theatrical and visual culture in a production of Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, featuring Louisa Ruth Herbert. Herbert's fundamentally 'natural' acting aesthetic appealed to the realist imperative of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Also admired for her physical beauty, she was painted by many Pre-Raphaelite artists. Herbert's appearance as Lady Audley reflected her identity as a Pre-Raphaelite muse, indirectly reinforcing the Pre-Raphaelite themes in Braddon's novel.

Kate Newey

Immersion and Innovation in Melodrama

This paper starts from the question - what might it mean to consider C19th theatre as existing not just in parallel to the visual arts, but as a cultural product which is part of visual culture? I explore the ways in which we can use the language and concepts of late twentieth-century experimental and immersive theatre to think about one of the most important generic innovations of the nineteenth

century: melodrama. I conceptualise the mid-century melodrama stage as an experimental three-dimensional space, where managers, playwrights, scenic artists and technicians, and actors collaborated to create a new theatrical language. I am interested in the way we can see melodrama at the forefront of British aesthetic modernity in the nineteenth century, and in the way that melodrama and the melodramatic becomes an epistemology – a kind of knowledge and way of knowing.

9. TRAVEL IN THE EAST (History of the Book Room)

Claudia Capancioni

Lucie Duff Gordon's Gendered Travel Narratives of Encounter in the Easts

This paper studies Lucie Duff Gordon's representation of eastern gendered spaces and women's lives in *Letters from Egypt* (1865) to demonstrate the palimpsestic quality of her seven-year correspondence from Luxor and embrace the complexity and ambiguities of her dynamic cartographies of multilingual, multicultural domestic spaces determined by her gendered difference. Inspired by her use of the concept of the palimpsest as an interpretative tool, I conceive *Letters from Egypt* as a multi-layered composite and complicate the apparent linear progression of Duff Gordon's letters to unfold her insightful gendered travel narratives of encounter that map both a woman's journey of self-discovery and a more nuanced understanding of her interactions with the women of Egypt. Her letters, I argue, capture complex intersections of the local with the global, the domestic with the public that remain thought-provoking in re-examining the representation of eastern life in Victorian women's accounts of travel to the Easts.

Michelle Beth Chong

Conrad, Touch, and the Malay Archipelago

Joseph Conrad's sensitivity to physical movement is acute and ubiquitous. Focusing on Conrad's Lord Jim (1900), my paper traces the depiction of cross-cultural physical contact and gestures in Jim's character development as a 'romantic hero' within the context of the nineteenth-century Malay Archipelago. Jim initially deems himself 'untouchable' but eventually finds himself literally and metaphorically 'rubbing shoulders' with the people of his adopted culture in a way which destabilises his status not only as romantic hero, but representative of British liberal imperialism. The imaginative response arising from his romanticism is that Jim is held 'captive' by the region and initial expectations of cultural imposition are quickly complicated. This reading, derived from my doctoral research on Victorian embodiment, gestures towards the difficulty of acting with singular self-command in complex social situations arising out of unstable cultural and ethical categories, and where no simple imperial assumption of heroic superiority can hold for long.

Akira Suwa

Reimagining Isabella Bird: Cross-Cultural Representations in Japanese Neo-Victorian Fiction and Manga

This paper examines the transnational representation of Victorian traveller Isabella Bird in contemporary Japanese neo-Victorian texts inspired by her *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (1880): Kyoko Nakajima's novel *Ito's Romance* (2005), Taiga Sassa's manga *Isabella Bird in Wonderland* (2015-), and Midori Uematsu's novel *Isabella Bird and a Samurai Boy* (2024). These texts reveal how Japanese authors reimagine Bird and her encounters in Japan. These contemporary works appropriate, transform, and sometimes subvert Bird's identity. The paper argues that these neo-Victorian reimaginings reflect contemporary anxieties about gender, cultural exchange, and imperial history while celebrating Bird's pioneering spirit as a female traveller who defied Victorian conventions. The varied approaches across media demonstrate how Bird's liminal position – as simultaneously

embodying and contesting Victorian norms – allows exploration of the complex intersection of gender, empire, and cross-cultural encounters between Britain and Japan in the Victorian era and our own.

10. GOOD AND GIFTED DAUGHTERS (White and Case Room)

Fabia Buescher

'A useful, steady daughter': Charlotte Yonge's Tractarianism and the Ideology of Female Self-Sacrifice

This paper will examine how Charlotte Yonge's Tractarian ideology of female (self-)sacrifice came to pose a challenge to the nineteenth-century ethical imagination of individual rights. I am particularly interested in the balance between what Herbert Spencer called a 'proper altruism and a reasonable egoism': if Yonge's idealisation of self-sacrifice is synonymous with utter altruism, egoism needs to be fully expunged. As I will argue, Yonge's female characters' obsession with being 'useful' and 'dutiful' exposes an unethical ideology of a self-renouncing living that is diametrically opposed to a discourse of individual rights and self-determination. Yonge's Tractarian morality cannot be balanced with an ethics of justice: if Yonge's Ethel wants to become the pious, dutiful daughter her late mother idealizes, she has to forfeit her own interests and rights. This paper will explore how the Tractarian ideal of self-sacrifice can be read as a countermovement to the self-interestedness of nineteenth-century capitalism, and the ethical problems this came to pose for a discourse of individual rights.

Jillian Southart

'The well-nigh magical influence exerted by this gifted woman (for only a woman could succeed in such a task)': Repositioning Women in the Narrative of Nineteenth-Century Ragged Schools and Refuges

The recorded history of the ragged school movement has been largely dominated by men (the Earl of Shaftesbury, committee members, philanthropists, school inspectors), apart from Mary Carpenter, the prominent Unitarian educational and social reformer whose life and works have been well-documented and acknowledged. But the quotation above refers not to Carpenter but to an unnamed teacher at Lambeth Ragged School. In fact, most teachers were women, as were domestic staff in the residential homes, while many middle-class women supported the institutions by philanthropic donation, fundraising and as lady visitors. Starting with an exploration of the biographies of three little known women whose lives touch only briefly on the historical record as matrons of some of these institutions, this paper will show that women were crucial to ragged school operations at every level and will reposition them at the heart of the ragged school narrative.

Emma Arthur

'List to the Convent Belles': Music & the Convent Schoolgirl in Victorian Ireland

During the Victorian period, the convent boarding school grew into a dominant force for female education in Ireland. While convents provided education to students of all demographics, these elite institutions catered specifically to the newly emerged 'Catholic Elite' whose daughters, through enrolment in these 'superior' convent schools, engaged in a rich musical culture which emphasised formal instrumental instruction. Through reference to school account books, recital programmes, awards lists and the personal music volumes of students, this paper will highlight the everyday musical lives of convent students during this period. The typical musical experience of the convent schoolgirl will develop into a discussion on the wider role of music within the mission of nineteenth-century convent education. In doing so, this paper aims to unveil how engagement with music

reflected changing class structures among Irish Catholics during this century and exemplified a kind of 'trickle-down' of ideals connected to the Ascendency class.

11. PHOTOGRAPHIC (Seminar Room K)

Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz

The Empire's Follies and Julia Margaret Cameron as Ethnographer in David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011): Contesting the Civilising Mission

David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011) is a neo-Victorian biofiction published about the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron during her time in the crown colony of Ceylon. In the novel we find a peculiar connection between the protagonist Catherine Colebrook and her Indian servant Eligius Shourie, subverting the relationship mistress-native servant. The so-called British civilising mission and the role of Empire are questioned in the text. At the same time, photography as an incipient form of art becomes the means to discuss gender roles and sexual mores, not only in the colonies but also in the metropolis. I will focus my discussion on the way in which the narrative deals with the follies of Empire and the role of Cameron as an ethnographer, making the representation of the 'colonised other' the object of the coloniser's gaze. Rocklin's aim is to question the colonial past and its reminiscences in our postcolonial present.

Helen Victoria Murray

'Speak of a Radiance': the photographic surface as transmissive membrane for affective horror in *The Terror*

The Neo-Victorian genre abounds with textured surfaces. Amidst a viewer's alienation from the unreality of a fictional nineteenth century, surface materiality exploits our sense of touch to anchor us in time. This is particularly true of Ridley Scott's 2018 television show, *The Terror* - an adaptation of Dan Simmons's 2007 novel. *The Terror* uses the broken history of the 1845 Franklin Expedition as a membrane through which horror touches us. This paper focuses on the repeated motif of photographic surfaces in *The Terror*. Nineteenth-century photography is a particularly apt referent for the uncanny. Its chemical surface connotes a fragile skin, while the very indexicality of the photograph foretells death (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1980). Drawing on scenes from Scott's adaptation, from Simmons's novel, and from historical accounts and material culture from the real expedition, I will discuss how *The Terror* uses photographic processes and daguerreotype surfaces to instil a sense of fear in audiences.

Meg Dolan

'And She Herself in White': Echoes of Victorian Death Ritual in Photographic Interpretations of Tennyson's *Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat*

Julia Margaret Cameron's 1874/75 two-volume publication *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems* features four images of Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat. Two of these distinctly echo Cameron's earlier postmortem studies of her grand-niece. Despite large amounts of scholarship on Cameron's Arthurian photographs, she was far from the only nineteenth-century photographer creating representations of Elaine's iconic death. Within the majority of interpretations are undeniable traces of actual Victorian death ritual, notably the 'good death' and the laying out period. This paper will first present other hitherto overlooked photographic representations of Tennyson's Elaine created in the mid-nineteenth century, widening the context of Cameron's popular

interpretations. Secondly, visual analysis of this corpus of images will explore the ways photographers drew on actual Victorian death ritual to lend a realistic feeling to portrayals of fictional death, allowing these images to exist in an overlap between realism and romance.

12. DEEP TIME (Seminar Room A)

Billie Gavurin**'Show them iron!': History and Deep History in Grant Allen's 'Pallinghurst Barrow'**

This paper explores the depiction of human history and development in Grant Allen's 1892 prehistoric ghost story 'Pallinghurst Barrow'. Allen's peculiar narrative recounts the story of a journalist who enters a prehistoric barrow and is menaced by the bloodthirsty ghosts of Palaeolithic proto-humans. He is ultimately saved by a Renaissance-era spirit who instructs him to 'Show them iron'. While regarded by its own author as 'low' fiction, 'Pallinghurst Barrow' offers an intriguing insight into the cultural reception of palaeoanthropology at the fin de siècle. This paper argues that the story reveals an anxious ambivalence around the question of human progress: despite superficially narrating the overthrow of primitive violence by superior human intellect and technology, the lingering presence of the 'savage' Palaeolithic ghosts speaks to fin-de-siècle anxieties regarding the inescapable animal nature of humanity as understood in the wake of Darwinism.

Janette Leaf**Acting, Re-acting and Reacting to Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* in Three Neo-Victorian, Gothic Dramas**

Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* was a top seller in 1897 and centres on a vengeance-seeking, shapeshifting Egyptian who transforms at will into an enormous insect. She is a Priestess of Isis who pursues her erstwhile captive lover and would-be murderer from Cairo to London. Three entirely separate neo-Victorian plays also called *The Beetle* acted and re-acted Marsh's sensational text, and each embodies shifting reactions to the tale. The stage versions are virtually unknown, and if Marsh scholars are aware of them at all, they invariably only mention James Bernard Fagan's *The Beetle* (1928) since it was the only one performed in London. This paper constitutes groundbreaking research in having unearthed two further Beetle dramas by Charles Freeman and George S. King, (1925) and Leslie Howard Gordon (1929) respectively. It approaches the three plays through a blended methodology of Neo-Victorian Studies, Egyptian Reception Studies, Adaptation Theory, and Affect Theory.

Amy Waterson**Inheritance and Descent in *A Pair of Blue Eyes***

This paper examines Thomas Hardy's treatment of marriage and attraction in his novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. In this novel, Hardy brings the literary marriage plot into contact with Darwinian evolutionary discourses through his treatment of Elfride Swancourt and her love interests. The marriage plot is a way to discuss inheritance and descent, as well as express anxieties surrounding the legitimacy of relationships and births which dictate what is passed on and to whom. Following the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, issues of sexual selection were brought to bear upon the marriage plot. I will argue that there are nascent signs in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* which indicate that Hardy is interested in testing the implications of imposing artificial constraints upon natural human behaviours. These signs suggest that reading his depiction of characters and their relationships through the lens of Darwinian sexual selection is productive.

13. INTERTEXTUALITIES (Seminar Room B)

Laura Greene

Christina Rossetti's Plato: *Goblin Market* and the *Phaedrus*

This paper will illustrate how a study of the depth and complexity of women poets' knowledge of and engagement with philosophical idealism can yield new perspectives on Victorian poetry by examining the underexplored influence of Plato on Christina Rossetti. Despite her brother William Michael's assertion that 'of science and philosophy she knew nothing,' I hope to demonstrate that her poetry experiments with the forms and philosophical questions that dominate the *Dialogues*. Introducing how Rossetti's poetry participates in the revival and reinterpretation of Platonic idealism and aesthetics in the nineteenth century, this paper will reconsider one of her most well-known poems, *Goblin Market*, in the context of Plato's *Phaedrus*, which raises the question of love's significance to life, art, and the immortal soul. This close reading will ultimately underscore the ongoing relevance of historicism and a study of textual influence to re-imagining canonical texts within Victorian Studies.

Mari Seaword

Wordsworthian Duty and Spinozan Liberty: A Study of *Middlemarch* Chapter 80

This paper explores the triangular influence of Spinoza on Wordsworth, Spinoza on Eliot, and Wordsworth on Eliot, through a close analysis of Chapter 80 in *Middlemarch*. This pivotal chapter opens with the epigraph quoting Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty', where the Wordsworthian sense of duty and Spinozan concept of liberty are synthesised on the shared idea of God or the law of nature between Spinoza and Wordsworth. The paper argues that this influence underpins Eliot's intimate portrayal of Dorothea's inner transformation, concluding that the chapter reflects Eliot's intellectual indebtedness to Spinoza and Wordsworth, both of whom emphasise attaining liberty and peace by aligning oneself with the law of nature.

Charlotte Wilson

'The poetry of nursing': Domestic Caregiving in William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1769) and Florence Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing* (1860)

This paper examines William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1769) alongside Florence Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing* (1860) to explore how late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century home medical publications advocated for a stronger reach of medical knowledge into the domestic sphere. I argue that these publications are best understood as in dialogue with a surrounding print culture that recognised the philanthropic and financial opportunities of home medical texts and gave cultural visibility to the domestic caregiver. The developing hybridity between informative presentation of fact and the demonstration of literary flair in Buchan and Nightingale's publications offers a quasi-disciplinary exploration of the caregiver's function and preferred character and persuasively celebrates the domestic caregiver as an important agent in the medical system. Buchan and Nightingale held significant roles to play as key mediating figures between professional and lay carers, bringing into focus how these spheres are not in opposition but mutually informative

15:45-17:00: Panel session 3

14. REALISM (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

Doug Battersby

Free Indirect Style and the Realist Novel: Or, How to Read Jane Austen and George Eliot Today

No technical innovation has been more central to critical discussions about the nineteenth century realist novel than free indirect style (FIS). Nevertheless, critical claims for its historical significance are invariably predicated on one of two theoretical understandings of FIS, known respectively as ‘single’ and ‘dual’ voice theory. This paper demonstrates that an experiential approach to close reading (informed by recent affective-formalist practices) can reconcile these apparently mutually-exclusive theories, through readings of Jane Austen and George Eliot that show how imaginatively realist writers have exploited FIS in both its single- and dual-voiced guises. Recognising the true diversity of effects FIS is capable of generating brings into question many influential accounts of its importance for the nineteenth-century novel—including those that claim that it was through FIS that narratorial impersonality (D. A. Miller), anti-didactic characterisation (Franco Moretti), and the convention of transparency (John Bender) became core tenets of realist aesthetics.

Athanassia Williamson

Fredric Jameson, Reader of the Nineteenth-Century Novel

In this paper, I revisit Jameson’s legacy for the study of nineteenth-century realism. Beginning with his landmark critical work, *The Political Unconscious* (1981), I consider how contemporary reception (from Best and Marcus to Kornbluh) emphasizes Jameson’s Lukácsian inheritance: the critic’s role in uncovering fiction’s repressed historical ‘real’. This interpretive model privileges realist fiction from Balzac to Dickens for historically capacious forms and a conception of literary character that rests on social typicality. I argue that the role of History as ‘ground and horizon’ (Jameson: 1981) is overdetermined in Jameson’s reception. What remains overlooked is fictionality itself, which emerges as a more crucial concept in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013). Fictionality, and the ‘consciousness of form as a reality in its own right’ (Jameson: 2024), constitutes a more valuable concept insofar as it remains a feature of the novel today.

Gregory Brennen

Trollope’s Serial World-Building

Anthony Trollope turned his famous productivity and diligent writing methods to publishing novels in just about every format and venue available to him, perhaps most especially to the many modes of serial publication that proliferated in the 1860s and 1870s. This paper explores the affordances of various publication formats for Trollope’s novelistic world-building, focusing in particular on his six-novel Palliser series (1864-1880). Drawing upon archival research I’ve conducted with the Trollope Papers at Oxford’s Bodleian Library, I analyse the extent to which Trollope’s processes of planning and composition varied—or didn’t—depending on each novel’s proposed publication format and venue.

My preliminary findings indicate that Trollope was surprisingly consistent in his writing methods regardless of publication format, but I argue that his methods lent themselves more effectively to some formats than others. In particular, I suggest, the monthly serialization venue offered by George Smith's new magazine *The Cornhill*, amongst other new periodicals, proved particularly fertile ground for Trollope's uniquely expansive form of novelistic world-building, which entailed numerous sub-plots, a vast cast of characters from different social strata who recede into and out of significance, and interlinked settings. While monthly publication effectively enabled Trollope to accommodate ever-expanding social networks and story-spaces, the novelist did not stop there. Building on the forms of monthly seriality, Trollope took the serial form of the novel to new levels by developing series of interlinked novels. Trollope expanded the units of serialization to enable the massive world of the novel series, the plots and characters of which could always generate another novel. The monthly format and the series form, I argue, enabled Trollope to create expansive, open, and hospitable novelistic worlds, pioneering the form of ever-expandable serial world-building now deployed across contemporary culture, from the Marvel Cinematic Universe to Tana French's *Dublin Murder Squad*.

15. TEA (White and Case Room)

Chandrica Barua

Plantation Commercials: Advertising Tea, Empire, and Racialized Labour

In this paper, I study the curious proliferation of the South Asian labouring body and plantation scenes across tea advertisements in periodicals such as *The Graphic*, *Illustrated London News*, *The Times*, etc. during the late nineteenth century, the historical juncture when Indian and Ceylon tea surpassed the imports of Chinese tea. The presence of racialized bodies in commodity advertisements in British newspapers—the genealogy of which points to its intimate, necessary entwinement with narratives of imperial progress, prosperity, and longevity—reconfigures the very essence of the advertising space, the terms of their existence and their generic constitution. Colonial plantations had always been constitutive of the metropole, but what had earlier extended influence from the margins became materially visible at the centre of 19th-century periodical culture of advertising, trade, and business. Through visual analyses of what I call ‘plantation commercials’ (i.e. tea advertisements) in relation to contemporary discourses of adulteration and racial toxicity, artisanship and labour, and inter-imperial rivalries, I animate the rhetorical, material, and affective functions of the racialized labouring body across imperial, metropolitan spheres in Britain and the cultural publics of British India. Furthermore, I show that the cultural proliferation of the South Asian labouring body through the wide dissemination of periodicals went on to inform late Victorian ideas about art, labour, capitalism, and race.

Lucie Touzot

A Transatlantic Tale of Two Tea Cities: Exporting the Glasgow Tearoom to New York

This study explores the cultural phenomenon of tearooms, comparing their origins, evolution, and societal significance in Glasgow and New York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Emerging in 1870s Glasgow, tearooms provided urban shoppers with social spaces beyond the home, later evolving in New York as hubs for female emancipation. By employing a comparative historical methodology, this presentation will argue that they contributed to influencing cultural structures and urbanisation processes in the metropolises of the late nineteenth century, both in Britain and America. Through the tearoom movement, cosmopolitan Glasgow and New York allowed for the coexistence of multiple cultural products and practices (C.S. Craig, 2013). The presentation will examine this process through different cultural media, using *The Glasgow Post Office Directory* and maps, guidebooks (*Dictionary of Glasgow* (1884), *Glasgow of To-day* (1888)), advertisements (*Scottish Field*), and newspapers (*New York Times*, *Glasgow Herald*) to trace the rise of tearooms.

Margaret Gray

Blue China, Red Blood: Japonisme and Masculinity in the Late-Victorian Domestic Interior

Recent studies have established that for Victorian Aesthetes, Japanese aesthetics were viewed as a subversive mode of artistic expression that lent itself to queer interpretation and identification (Reed, Lavery, Zaitlyn, Li). ‘Japanese’ tea rooms are a prime example: typically built within the home, they are most often associated with male decadents in contrast to public ‘Arab’ tea rooms which were marketed towards women. Drawing from commentary on art and interior design by Charles

Eastlake, Christopher Dresser, Walter Pater, and Oscar Wilde alongside visual art by Aubrey Beardsley and Max Beerbohm, this paper will probe the relationship between queer or domesticated masculinity and Japanese Buddhist spirituality between 1870 and 1900. Accepting the premise that Japanese art embodies the ritual aestheticism of Zen Buddhism (Yanagi, Suzuki, Okakura), I posit that Victorian men's fascination with Japanese decor facilitated a public apotheosis of the harmonising relationship between masculinity, beauty, and the domestic interior.

16. VICTORIAN FUTURES (Seminar Room K)

Isabella Viegas**Beyond the Sage: Sibyls and the Gender of Prophecy in Victorian Literature**

Although the 'prophetic strain' abounds in Victorian literature, scholars tend to focus on the ways in which individual male authors assumed prophetic personae and incorporated biblical topoi in their works. This body of scholarship often frames these writers as 'sages' who participated in a genre later classified as 'sage writing.' However, critics such as John Holloway and George Landow have overlooked how these 'sages' participated in female traditions of prophecy—and how the 'sage' excludes women writers who existed at the margins of public discourses. As such, my paper will reframe prophecy in Victorian literature as more classical and feminine, and less biblical and masculine, than previously hypothesised. Through representations of classical prophetesses in both poetry and prose, I will investigate how figures like the Sibyl challenge binary paradigms that have divorced the classical from the biblical, the feminine from the masculine, and the human from the divine.

Lauren Cullen**'We Shall Make That Idle Water Work': Energetic Fantasies in the Sensation Novel**

In Wilkie Collins's novel, *Heart and Science* (1883), Canada becomes a place of recuperation for protagonist Ovid Vere. In contrast, for Mrs. Galilee, Canada is less a place to venture *to* than one to extract *from*: 'Mrs. Galilee improvised an appropriate little lecture on Canada—on the botany of the Dominion; on the geology of the Dominion; on the number of gallons of water wasted every hour by the falls of Niagara.' This moment offers one revealing example of the natural environment's significance to histories of empire and industrialism. My paper will examine Collins's use of extraterritorial plots, as formal technique and narrative interruption, to parse Canada's identity as both discursive construction and physical environment. In doing so, I resituate this novel within a larger network – one that reveals a dialectic of resistance and acceleration to human activities – to underline the important role literary forms continue to play in our time of environmental crisis.

Lisa C. Robertson**Visions of a New Age: Feminist Prophetic Writing and Victorian Periodical Culture**

In 1877, writer and feminist campaigner Frances Power Cobbe published *The Age of Science: A Newspaper of the Twentieth Century* under the pseudonym 'Merlin Nostradamus'. This short work of speculative fiction details the invention of the 'new Prospective Telegraph' that has conquered the 'obstacle of Time' and allowed for the transmission of a newspaper from January 1, 1977. Cobbe had first offered the story to *Blackwood's Magazine* but elected instead to publish it as a single volume to "encourage impulse reading" by a wider audience. The narrative itself is a collection of articles that prophesise the degree to which twentieth-century culture has aligned itself with scientific priorities – including casual euthanasia and animal vivisection – and neglected humanistic pursuits such as art and literature. This paper focuses on *The Age of Science* to explore the significance of Cobbe's use of the prophetic or visionary mode and the periodical form in her narrative. It suggests that *The Age of Science* represents a significant stylistic innovation in feminist literature and debate that would echo

through the decades around the turn of the century and appear in the work of authors like Olive Schreiner and May Sinclair. It will use Cobbe's *The Age of Science* as a case study to argue that feminist writers engaged with Victorian sage discourse but used the prophetic vision as a method of re-imagining community. This paper explores Cobbe's use of satire, particularly the narrative form of the newspaper, which limits the narrator's prophetic voice but nevertheless articulates the author's concerns about social and moral dissolution. Ultimately, this paper argues that feminist visionary writing introduces alternative methods of imagining the relationship between the individual and society in both the present and the future.

17. NATIONAL CHARACTERS (History of the Book Room)

Lucy Warwick

Penny Periodicals and National Identity

With the French revolution in living memory, and the Peterloo Massacre fresh in the minds of many, the working classes of the 1830s required distracting from the 'poison' of radical writers. Made attractive by both their price point and detailed illustrations, penny periodicals were produced to remind the masses of what it was to be British and what was at stake should the status quo be altered. This paper aims to explore how two popular illustrated periodicals - the *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge's Penny Magazine* (1832-45) and its Anglican rival, the *Society for the Promoting Christian Knowledge's Saturday Magazine* (1832-44) - forged a national identity in their readership, placing them at the heart of the prosperous and advancing British Empire. Whether through articles on the produce of empire, the English countryside and its wildlife, or colonial scientific discoveries, illustrated periodicals had the empire woven through their core.

Rebekah Cohen

Sketching National Character in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1865

Expanding recent research by Laurel Brake, Fionnuala Dillane and others on genre-focused approaches to Victorian print media, this paper asks why contributors of miscellaneous articles (known as newspaper 'middles') for the *Pall Mall Gazette* turned in 1865 to the character sketch. Developing recent work by Clare Pettitt on how serial forms mediated nationalist and internationalist perspectives, this paper will examine George Eliot's 'A Word for the Germans', a disavowal of stereotypes used to construct national 'caricature'. I argue that although Eliot was attracted to the character sketch's descriptive potential, her sketch works ironically as a medium for (and a satire on) attempts at 'close observation'. My argument situates Eliot alongside Anthony Trollope and Leslie Stephen's satires on British character types to make the wider point that material format organised newspaper genres. These sketches of contemporary types, placed after columns of reportage, positioned foreign news in conversation with British, daily life.

Agnieszka Serdyńska

National literature in the service of social change: Teaching *The Faerie Queene* at the Working Men's College

The Working Men's College was established in 1854 to provide working-class men with a comprehensive scheme of humane studies which, by elevating them as individuals, would benefit society at large. All subjects in the curriculum, which included English literature, were seen as contributing to this goal. By analysing a lecture on 'Spenser's "Faery Queene"' delivered at the College by F. D. Maurice, I will demonstrate how his interpretation of the text is informed by the institution's socially reformist philosophy. Maurice construes national identity as the ground on which his working-class students can access Spenser's text, thus advancing the concept of national literature as cultural heritage belonging to all born on English soil regardless of class distinction. This case study will illustrate the role extramural education played in the development of English Studies.

18. RURAL AND PROVINCIAL (Seminar Room A)

Christopher PittardCornwall in Manuscript: The Multimediality of Wilkie Collins' *Rambles Beyond Railways*

This paper explores Wilkie Collins' touristic construction of Cornwall in his 1851 travelogue *Rambles Beyond Railways*. Examining the manuscript of *Rambles* held by the University of Texas at Austin, I discuss how Collins' amendments to the text demonstrate his aim to present the published version of *Rambles* as an unmediated engagement with under-explored space, rather than (as the manuscript demonstrates) an account shaped intertextually by previous Cornish travelogues. Likewise, Henry Brandling's illustrations for the first edition of *Rambles* depict Cornwall as empty space awaiting touristic colonisation, or in some cases (drawing on John O. Jordan's analysis of illustration in *Bleak House*), where spectral figures merge with the landscape. Engaging with previous readings of *Rambles* in the context of Sue Zlosnik and Avril Horner's 'Cornish Gothic', I suggest that a more suggestive frame for reading *Rambles* is through the concept of the 'weird' rather than the Gothic, a space which is off-centre rather than definitively other.

Claire Cock-Starkey

Death Omens and Pluralities of Belief in Nineteenth-century Rural England

One of the over-riding narratives of Victorian culture identified the second half of the nineteenth century as a time of inexorable secularisation, as the combined effects of scientific positivism and Darwinian evolutionary theory overcame both religion and superstition to usher in a new age of reason. Yet, the credence given to the death omens that circulated in rural working-class communities in these decades tell a different story, indicating a plurality of belief in which religion, folklore and rational explanations could coexist and interplay. While recognising death omens were often shared by someone with an unshakeable belief in their veracity, I propose that exploring the function of sharing death omens within a rural working-class community is a more productive reflection on folk culture than extrapolating wider adherence to belief. This approach allows death omens to be viewed as cultural and social mechanisms that can offer comfort in times of anxiety.

Laurence Roussillon-Constanty

Travelling through Text and Image in the Pyrenees—an Intermedial Approach to Victorian Travel Writing

As is well documented, The Pyrenees and the Pau area attracted a large number of tourists in the course of the nineteenth century, generating an idyllic picture of the place of well-being and outdoor activities. How was the image constructed and on what visual and textual documents was it based? In this talk, I present an overview of the travel narratives I have explored in the course of my investigation and the main features of the material I later used in my teaching through the translation and annotation project that I started with my graduate students using the digital platform COVE studio. I will show how the research I am leading offers an alternative view of 'Pyreneism', a term that was coined in the nineteenth century and that tends to restrict the fuller understanding one might have of the notion when it comes to recording one's impressions of the mountain.

19. GENDERED ENTERTAINMENTS (Lecture Theatre 2)

Kathryn Waters

‘[O]ne of the most peculiarly bright episodes of my life’: Mary Cowden Clarke (1809-1898) and Charles Dickens’ production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1848)

Mary Cowden Clarke (1809-1898) was most famous in her lifetime as being an eminent Shakespearean scholar. In 1847, she met Charles Dickens (1812-1870) for the first time. Much to Dickens’ surprise, she asked to play the part of Mistress Quickly in an amateur production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* he was directing at the time. Cowden Clarke was the only non-professional female actor involved in the production, although all the male actors were amateurs. This paper will consider Cowden Clarke’s performance in the context of women’s involvement in amateur theatricals and her ‘celebrity’ status as Shakespearean scholar at the time. In this context, it will consider contemporary reviews of the performances, as well as how this production influenced Cowden Clarke’s subsequent tale ‘Meg and Alice; The Merry Wives of Windsor’ (1851) (part of her series *The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines* (1850-1852)). This tale was dedicated to Charles Dickens.

Serena Trowbridge

A Remarkable Woman: Pragmatic Feminism in May Morris’s plays

May Morris (1862-1938) is emerging from the long shadow of William Morris, with recent research on her life, her professional design and embroidery work, and her feminist and socialist activities. This paper will address Morris’s creative works, which deserve a wider audience: two drawing-room plays (*Lady Griselda’s Dream*, 1895 and *White Lies*, 1901), probably influenced by George Bernard Shaw, which parody female stereotypes and draw on the aesthetic influences of Pre-Raphaelitism. These works, along with her scholarly work on her father’s collected poems and her writings on embroidery and design, indicate her to be a skilled writer. My paper will assess her plays in the context of her feminism, socialism and her aesthetic preoccupations, arguing that she uses an apparently conventional form to navigate and test the acceptable boundaries of women’s public and private roles, and considering how she transforms her artistic influences to construct a pragmatic dialectics of feminism.

Alissa Mello & Tony Lidington

Punch & Judy and the Long 19th Century

This is a love story (of sorts) and an intervention in the historiography of one iconic puppet form, Punch & Judy. As a puppeteer, I love the form and have seen and been delighted by some of the greatest; as a scholar I question the oft-cited historiography’s singular narrative. In the long 19th, for example, the form transitioned from string puppet to glove; from a couple of characters to an entire show; from fixed theatre venues to mobile urban street to middle-class salon to seaside performances; and from adult to young or family audiences. And even this is not full story. This paper will examine some of lesser-known aspects of Punch & Judy to weave and trace (and speculate) on women’s engagement with the form and the changing role of Judy. Dr Tony Lidington will then provide the context in which Spike Bones’ work was developed and how the direct transfer of contemporary interpretations of historical popular forms were manifested in this project.



BAVS 2025 ABSTRACTS

THURSDAY 24 JULY

11:15-12:45: Panel session 4

1. AFFECTIVE CONTAINMENT AND THE BOUNDARIES OF FEELING IN VICTORIAN PROSE (Seminar Room B)

In *The Golden Bowl* (1904), Henry James's narrator finds in Adam Verver 'the very action of the cerebral temperature, brought to the highest point, yet extraordinarily contained'. Affect theory has taught Victorianists how to trace the flow of such feeling—alternately sticky, contagious, flat, atmospheric, moody—through our objects of study. Nineteenth-century aesthetic forms demarcate the boundaries that shape this movement. This panel explores the work of such affective containment as it is enacted both at the level of the psyche and within the material structures of national borders in the period.

Sophie Franklin

"Marvellously Self-Contained: Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*

This paper examines Samuel Butler's satirical novel, *Erewhon* (1872). Here, we find a peripheral character described as 'pale and ill but [...] marvellously self-contained'. In Butler's utopia, emotional responses typically ascribed to violent acts and disease in nineteenth-century Britain are upended. By doing so, the text troubles Victorian notions of the instinctiveness and social containment of certain emotions, including disgust, guilt, and shame.

Olivia Krauze

Affect and Translation at the End of the Nineteenth Century

This paper theorises the relationship between affect and translation at the end of the nineteenth century – a moment of national re-consolidation of emotional boundaries. Her paper focuses on Constance Garnett's early translations of the works of Goncharov, Turgenev, and Tolstoy in the 1890s.

Fraser Riddell

Containing First Impressions

This paper similarly addresses the challenge of articulating affective responses across national and linguistic borders. His paper considers Lafcadio Hearn's cosmopolitan travel writing about Japan, in which Western materialist science of emotion is combined with Buddhist spirituality in an effort to contain fugitive 'first impressions'.

2. ARTIST ACTIVISTS (Seminar Room A)

Chiaki Yokoyama

Fast Fashion in the Victorian Era: The Fight Against Exploitation

Victorian England saw the rise of department stores, many evolving from drapery shops. This growth was fuelled by the mass production of ready-made clothing, which relied on the sweated labour of women and children. Such exploitation inspired Thomas Hood's 'Song of the Shirt', influencing paintings and narratives of 'fallen women' deceived by the 'social evil'. Journalism also condemned slop-shops as breeding grounds of vice. In 1856, the Committee of the Reformatory and Refuge Union was founded to address women's and children's poverty. As part of its efforts, member John La Touche launched the Anti-Slop-Shop League in 1858, trying to operate a slop-shop that ensured fair wages and equitable producer-consumer relations. Though the movement failed to dismantle the system, La Touche's initiative may have influenced John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. This essay traces La Touche's endeavour, which ultimately foreshadowed the fair-trade movement in the clothing industry of our time.

Ingrid Hanson

'These dear old friends': mosses, lichens and Victorian socialism

The 2 March 1901 issue of the socialist newspaper *The Clarion* carries a story of the Manchester author's recovery after a bout of influenza thanks to a visit from a friend bearing a little tin box of mosses and lichens, daisies and fungus from the countryside. On seeing 'these dear old friends' pain and sleepless nights are forgotten as the sick man is transported in imagination to 'the old wall on the edge of the moor' where he sees the mosses and lichens growing (6). They generate a kind of pleasure for him that 'falls outside the utilitarian calculus,' in Michael Marder's terms (2013, 142). This paper traces out the ways mosses and lichens figure in Victorian socialist writings as the antithesis of capitalist accumulation or exchange; they enable those who encounter them to participate in a liberatory economy of pleasure and an unregulated experience of time.

Hayley Bradley and Maggie Gale

So much more than just 'the new Charles Dickens': George R. Sims and the artist/activist in the commercial arts

George R. Sims (1847-1922) was born into a life of middle-class privilege, and raised by a merchant and the Suffragist daughter of a Chartist. He was a prolific author, activist and philanthropist: a commercially successful storyteller with a robust moral perspective on poverty, temperance, and inequality. Whilst familiar to those working on cultural histories of nineteenth century, Sims' theatre work and its impact on his professional practice more widely, has been largely sidelined in studies of his social critiques, his ballads and his engagement with legal cases. From the early 1880s his writing was significantly subsidized through his popular success across theatre and film: he wrote more than 70 plays, and many of these, along with his novels and short stories, were adapted for the early screen industry up until his death in 1922. This paper discusses how we might reframe Sims as an artist/activist whose performance works – in dialogue with a social reformer agenda - highlighted the inequalities of modernity. Our consideration of Sims also raises larger questions around historical

erasure and explores the methodological challenges of recovering such figures: what presents as another story of a 'dead white man', might well and even so, challenge our readings of cultures of performance production and consumption in the long nineteenth century.

3. FORGOTTEN ARCHIVES, FRAGMENTED LIVES: EXPLORATIONS IN FEMALE IDENTITY, VOICE, AND FEELING (History of the Book Room)

This panel analyses the archival traces of women and girls in the long nineteenth century, and how their legacies are constructed and interpreted as a result.

Anouska Lester

The Material Legacy of Marie Corelli and Bertha Vyver

This paper explores the material legacy of popular Victorian novelist Marie Corelli and her relationship with Bertha Vyver. She analyses the interplay between public and private in Corelli's self-fashioning, finding evidence for "queer possibility" in surviving letters, objects, and buildings.

Catherine Archer-Richards

The Role of Affect in the Archive

This paper considers the role of affect in the archive, questioning how far it is necessary, possible, even desirable to approach the archive with objectivity. Catherine shares her personal PhD journey through the archives of a Victorian girls' school. Affective connectivity led her to surprising discoveries; social history and feminist genealogies are revealed alongside the story of the tragic deaths of two sisters.

Emma Mitchell

Pocket-Making and Privacy: Archival Traces of Georgian and Victorian Sex-Workers

Emma Mitchell's practice-based paper explores the process of making and decorating a tie-on pocket as the stimulus for creative writing that considers the value of personal private space for Georgian and Victorian sex-workers, women whose business was intimacy and bodily access. Drawing on pockets in museum collections, archival documents, and the nursery rhyme 'Lucy Locket', this paper uses needlework and narrative to expound the emotional truth of working-class women's experiences in patriarchal societies.

Mollie Clarke

The Scandals of Lola Montez

This paper considers the stories that defined the career of Lola Montez, dancer and actor, and highlight the significance of her scandals. Talking through newspaper reports and visual depictions, she explores the cultural construction of 'Lola Montez' and what she reveals about Victorian – and our own – relationships with sex and gender, and the challenges of researching a woman who has been deemed 'inferior' and 'unworthy' of further study.

Through analysis of manuscript, print, images, and objects, this panel interprets the stories of women who have been historically overlooked or misinterpreted, from anonymous sex-workers to

infamous performers. 'Archival fragments' combines theoretical and creative approaches to recovering forgotten histories.

4. INDIA (Seminar Room K)

Sucheta Bhattacharya

Miss Harkness Writes Mrs. Besant: Encounter in India

This paper examines the iconoclastic representation of Annie Besant by Margaret Harkness in her travelogue *Glimpses of Hidden India* (c.1909), as an entry point to explore how the text often problematizes the established approaches to the reading of colonial travel-writings by British women. Besant and Harkness were connected in England in the late Victorian years by their partially shared political and social-reform concerns and agenda. Their careers followed widely different trajectories with Besant becoming a major figure in the international religious and political arena as she settled down in India, whereas Harkness left England temporarily in early 1890s to work as a journalist for *The West Australian* and visited India as its correspondent. One of the most interesting experiences narrated in Harkness' text was her re-encounter with Besant when the latter was the driving force of The Theosophical Society at Adyar.

Paolo D'Indinosante

Reactionary Lines: Victorian Poetry and the Indian Rebellion

Widely regarded as marking a major watershed in the history of the British Empire (MacKenzie 1999, 280), the Indian Rebellion of 1857–58 also proved to be 'a compelling literary subject' (Herbert 2008, 20). Whereas previous investigations of the influence of the Indian Uprising on Victorian literature have largely concentrated on fiction, my paper will join the recent efforts of scholars like Mary Ellis Gibson (2024) to shift the focus of attention towards poetry. In my proposed contribution, I aim to highlight and interpret some recurring tropes deployed in the various poetic responses that the Indian Rebellion elicited from a host of neglected imperial voices, including Sir Vincent Eyre, Gerald Massey, James Innes Minchin, and others. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate the relevance of these now forgotten texts to our collective understanding of the development of British imperial ideology and (literary) discourse in the decades immediately preceding the period of so-called 'high' or 'new' imperialism (c. 1870– 1914).

Tarini Bhamburkar

Crosscurrents in the Late Victorian Feminist Press: Interviews with Indian Women Reformers

Two Victorian feminist periodicals namely *Women's Penny Paper* and *The Woman's Signal* featured groundbreaking front-page interviews with two Indian women, the social reformer Pandita Ramabai Saraswati in 1889 and the women's rights advocate Shevantibai Nikambe in 1896, respectively. They were the only two Indian women, and the only racial minority, given full-length features on the front pages of these periodicals. My paper will discuss these interviews in the context of the New Woman in both colony and metropole, and will consider how Ramabai and Shevantibai used this journalistic opportunity to fashion modern, cosmopolitan identities for themselves while also subtly interrogating Anglocentric perceptions and stereotypes. The paper will also discuss how the two women wielded this emerging feature of Victorian 'New Journalism' – the interview – to push forth their efforts for Indian girls' and women's education and reform in the Victorian feminist press in their own voices.

5. VICTORIAN DIVERSITIES RESEARCH NETWORK (Lecture Theatre 2)

The AHRC-funded Victorian Diversities Research Network challenges public and academic perceptions of historical British culture by recuperating and promoting nineteenth-century writers of colour, and it plays an important role in shaping and developing an inclusive approach to Victorian literary studies by exploring new methodologies for reading the literature of race and empire in commonwealth countries.

Éadaoin Agnew (PI)

Encounters with Victorian London

This paper focuses on points of cross-cultural solidarity in Victorian literature. By engaging with conversations about gender, oppression, racism, social justice and the environment, nineteenth-century modules can address multicultural contributions to social and political discourses while avoiding the sameness of struggles, needs, and desires across differences.

Lars Atkin

Indigenising the Nineteenth Century

This paper engages with the question: 'how do we embed Indigenous-centred research methods to the study of nineteenth-century Indigenous literature?' Using case studies from my research, I will make some tentative suggestions in answer to this question. I will then show how I have worked to embed Indigenous writers into my teaching at both BA and MA level.

Ross Forman

Formerly/formally: Expanding the Literary Horizons of Empire"

This paper discusses the difficulties that students and scholars face confronting and analysing Anglophone texts by non-British writers from the fin de siècle: difficulties that include obtaining the materials for study; grappling with their differently conceived sense of genre and cross-linguistic 'interference'; and with their engagement with unfamiliar systems of gender and sexuality. These texts, some of which hail from beyond formal colonial spaces, also expand the boundaries of informal imperialism.

Tara Puri

Uncertain Alliances: The Work of Race and Empire in Victorian Fictions

This paper thinks about what it means to teach Victorian literature and culture at a moment where we have been reminded yet again that racial and imperial hierarchies continue to structure everyday life. These contemporary concerns, I suggest, bring new insight and proximity to the ubiquitous racism and imperial connotations we see in Victorian fiction, allowing students a sharper critical approach towards canonical texts.

6. WILDE (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

Emily Vincent

‘[M]oral pestilence’: Oscar Wilde, the Aesthetic Condition, and Epidemic Disease at the Fin de Siècle

This paper examines how Oscar Wilde and fellow aesthetes narratively represented the so-called ‘Russian Flu’ which began ‘sweeping over Europe’ in 1889. Published at the height of the epidemic, Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reflected mediatised fears of both physical and moral infection. Reviews were rich in contagion imagery, suggesting airborne infection and a plaguelike influence, while the novel’s homoeroticism was perceived as ‘contaminating’ and ‘poisonous’: a ‘moral pestilence’. Alongside this, influenza appears as a motif and recurrent affliction of the novel’s protagonists. Arthur Symonds’s *Spiritual Adventures* and Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* similarly represent characters weakened by sexual desires and moral choices which leave them vulnerable to disease and death. Influenza-like pathogens are read alongside representations of Italy and its Sirocco winds which conjured erroneous theories of miasma and contagion. Ultimately, I explore how the ‘Russian Flu’ shaped Aesthetic literary responses to disease at the fin de siècle.

Dylan Kelly

Oscar Wilde’s Rhyme Crimes

Reflecting on his youthful poems, Oscar Wilde remarked: ‘I am glad to say here was far more rhyme than reason’. This inverts the negative reception of his first collection, *Poems* (1881), which critics disparaged for rhymes that prioritised ‘emotion to reason’. Even today, critics don’t consider Wilde’s ‘slovenly’ rhymes as a stylistic choice. Reading Wilde’s idiosyncratic rhymes alongside their conventionally Victorian forms, this paper explores how Wilde inverts the *In Memoriam* stanza. As perhaps the most affective stanza form in the Victorian period, Tennyson’s ABBA scheme was freighted with historiographic implications. Though Wilde’s earliest *In Memoriam* stanzas (1876–78) adhere to this expectation, his later stanzas develop an artificial rhyming method. These ‘weak rhymes’ deliberately disappoint readers and trouble Victorian expectations about rhyme, reason, and rhyme’s own forms of reasoning. I conclude that *Poems* demands to be read as an aftermath of, rather than a hostage to, Victorian rhyming taxonomies.

Damian Walsh

‘the courts of the city of God are not open to us now’: Oscar Wilde’s Criticism in a Secular Age

John Guillory has described the present ‘legitimation crisis’ within literary criticism as a ‘loss of faith’ in disciplinary modes of reading. Guillory’s phrase alludes to criticism’s origins in biblical exegesis, arguably preserved in what Franco Moretti archly called the ‘theological exercise’ of close reading. Over a century before our current critical agnosticism, Oscar Wilde’s *Intentions* (1891) registers a similar mode of doubt. For fin-de-siècle critics, ‘the courts of the city of God are not open’: late Victorians are ‘too cultured and too critical’ for ‘religious ecstasy’. This paper troubles scholarly readings of Wilde as a fully ‘secular aesthete’, arguing that *Intentions* diagnoses an identity crisis within secular criticism that comes strikingly close to our present-day concerns. Wilde’s iconoclastic vision of creative criticism appropriates mystical modes of reading, presenting a charismatic repurposing of texts that subverts distinctions between sacred and secular.

7. MEDICAL/INSTITUTIONAL (White and Case Room)

Niyati Sharma

Curing the Gout: Water Cure and Wilkie Collins

According to Robin Price, water cure in Victorian Britain represented as an alternative therapeutic mode that countered the overt reliance on medication (Price 270). Vincenz Priesnitz, one of the earliest European endorsers of the method formulated the principle of water therapy as catalysing the body's restorative return to nature and later, Captain R.T. Claridge echoed this emphasis. So far, critical discussions on hydropathy have focused on women patients and the culture of spas popular in the period. This paper shifts the focus onto the male sensationalist author, Wilkie Collins, and his encounters with hydropathy. Between 1863 and 1868, Collins underwent water cure sessions to seek treatment for rheumatic gout. The paper attempts to understand Collins's experience of illness and the ways in which his encounters with hydrotherapy are represented in his fiction. Collins' novels briefly mention water-cure and, as the paper will demonstrate, such episodes shed crucial light on the therapeutic and medical terrain of the period.

Claudia Sterbini

Nonsexuality and 'The Real Demi-Vierge': George Moore's 'John Norton' (1895) as a Sexological Case Study

In this paper I demonstrate that fin de siècle literature and sexology co-constructed a figure of the 'pathological nonsexual'. Specifically, I will argue that George Moore's short story 'John Norton' (Celibates, 1895) uses the eponymous John as a fictive sexological case study. This allows Moore to translate his fascination with the medical, moral and interpersonal implications of celibacy into a tragic narrative, in which continuous male celibacy is understood as having detrimental effects on the individual and his betrothal. I showcase Moore's interest in and indebtedness to sexological praxis, and how the text mirrors the sexological presentation of continuous celibacy as pathological and a taxonomical problem, having been influenced by the writing of British sexologist Havelock Ellis. I will also read Moore's writing as a project that creates parallel sexological formulations of the nonsexual patient, constructing a new conceptualisation of nonsexuality that simultaneously mirrors and contrasts constructions of pathological nonsexuality.

Angharad Eyre

The College Girl in Fiction and in Fact

Most fiction about college women of the fin de siècle focused on the "Girton-girl". This figure, born in cartoons, was mannish, strong-minded and intellectually arrogant. Although her cultural representation became more complex as she entered periodical short fiction, she was seen as a strange cultural phenomenon that required an explanation and a solution. In fact though, as this paper will argue, college women at the turn of the century were not all that unusual. Moreover, in London, college women were not only studying, but they were studying alongside male students and were gaining university degrees. Using the University of London's archive alongside contemporary periodicals, this paper will explore how London's college women spoke and wrote of themselves:

how they negotiated Victorian gender ideology; created their own authorising narratives; and how far they were themselves affected by the negative coverage of the 'Girton-girl'.

13:45-15:15: Panel Session 6

8. ENVIRONMENTS (Seminar Room B)

Madoka Nagado

Transnational Ecology and Democracy: Kumagusu Minakata's British Experience and Environmental Legacy

This paper explores Japanese scholar Kumagusu Minakata's engagement with British culture, demonstrating how democratic thought influenced his intellectual development and arguably led to the first 'ecological' activism in Japan to protect the forests of his hometown. Scholarship on Britain's relationship with non-Anglophone nations in the nineteenth century typically emphasises the context of empire. However, Minakata's case offers an alternative perspective, focusing on transnational interactions shaped not by governmental or bureaucratic exchanges but by social and personal relationships. An amateur biologist and folklorist, Minakata spent his mid-twenties to early thirties in London, from 1892 to 1900. I argue that his grassroots democratic principles were formed by his associations with writer Arthur Morrison and by his exposure to Hyde Park's Speakers' Corner, a diversion he enjoyed from study. Additionally, my argument highlights the need to recognise lesser-known figures—especially non-Anglophone individuals—within Victorian studies to illuminate the period's global intellectual exchanges.

Julia Kuehn

'Travels in South America: Imperial Eyes, Enmeshed Life Forms and a Planetary Consciousness in von Humboldt, Darwin and North'

The go-to text for (nineteenth-century) South American travel writing remains Mary Louise Pratt's seminal study *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008). Concepts like the 'contact zone', the travelling 'monarch-of-all-I survey' and 'anti-conquest' have become established paradigms in travel writing studies. Yet it is always good to return to scholarly classics and enquire whether other, or more recent, scholarship has provided additional insights. I thus propose to read select South American travelogues through the lens of Tim Ingold's notion of the meshwork: a paradigm that seeks the enmeshing and becoming of life forms and/ in their world as it focuses on the tangled web of interconnecting lines and traces in the environment. I argue that Alexander von Humboldt's, Charles Darwin's and Marianne North's travel descriptions of Venezuela, the Argentinian coast and Brazil, respectively, show not only a sovereign eye/ I but also glimpses – however occasional or fleeting – of a twenty-first-century planetary consciousness.

Anne-Florence Quaireau

Giving birth on the road: Shifting bodies of mother and child in Lucy Atkinson's *Recollections of the Tartar Steppes and their Inhabitants* (1863)

Lucy Atkinson's travel narrative *Recollections of the Tartar Steppes and their Inhabitants* (1863) offers a striking counterpart to her husband's two narratives about the five years they spent travelling

Siberia, in which he did not mention either her or the child she gave birth to in the middle of the steppes. I will show that although her pregnant body is obfuscated in hers as well, her narrative superimposes the portrait of a weaker vessel with that of an extraordinary force of nature, of vulnerability with resilience, as they travelled by sledge, carriage and horseback—eventually leading to her premature delivery of a baby boy named Alathau. I will demonstrate that, far from being presented as an inconvenience, the infant traveller enriches the journey, working as “a barometer on the road” (143), and that he becomes the nexus of intercultural encounter, as British and local practices of child-rearing compete or are combined.

9. RACE (Lecture Theatre 2)

Ella Mershon

Anthropocene Fictions: Race, Decay, and the Limits of Omniscience in Dickens and Lyell

With its smoke-enshrouded and soot-encrusted London, Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* has been read as Anthropocene fiction that reveals humanity's geophysical power to transform the Earth on a planetary scale (MacDuffie 2014; Taylor 2016). But, as critics have noted, the Anthropocene conceals an ugly truth (Moore 2015). By making all humanity equally responsible for anthropogenic ecocide, the Anthropocene conceals how systemic inequality creates unequal environmental impacts. This paper seeks to address the legacies of environmental racism and climate colonialism by taking up *Bleak House* as Anthropocene fiction and reading it alongside Lyell's *Principles of Geology* to show how race subtends Lyell's theory of climate change and Dickens' manufactured London climate. Haunted by the prospect of climate reversion (Lyell) and urban degeneration (Dickens), both texts reveal the racial logic of decay, a socioeconomic-geobiological process that hierarchizes the taxonomies of life and nonlife. I show how decay's racial regime manifests in both texts' split narrative structure as a quasi-omniscience that arrogates to itself the ability to speak as and for the inhuman, revealing the racial violence underwriting the universalized Anthropos and the epistemological limits of white geology.

Eilidh Innes

'The filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature': T.D. Rice and blackface entertainment at the Gaiety Theatre, London 1868-1886

Frederick Douglass, the African American abolitionist, described blackface, the practice of white actors blackening their faces to provide a racist portrayal of Black people, as 'the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money'. Blackface entertainment was popularized by white American actors such as T.D. Rice, who first came to London in 1836. His performance, which involved 'mocking and caricaturing Black people', was witnessed by the young John Hollingshead at the old Adelphi Theatre in London. The effect upon Hollingshead was long-lasting: he described in his autobiography that he not only learnt the dances of the blackface performers, but also performed an imitation of Rice 'when called upon in convivial circles'. When he became manager of the Gaiety Theatre in 1868, this showed in his choice of entertainment: blackface was often to be found on the bill, including minstrel songs and dances and white performers in blackface in 'comic' plays. Paul Gilroy describes the 'special position of Britain within the Black Atlantic world, standing at the apex of the semi-triangular structure which saw commodities and people shipped to and fro across the ocean'. This paper will trace the influence of Rice's blackface performance, brought from America, on the Gaiety Theatre in the West End, which, as Rohan McWilliam notes, had 'a role in both explaining the empire as well as constructing the exotic for a domestic audience'.

Timothy Gao

On Not Seeing Colour: Albinism, Race, and *The Invisible Man* (1897)

This paper reassesses Matthew Beaumont's argument, representative of a general critical consensus, that H. G. Wells's 1897 novel *The Invisible Man* is 'not notably interested in the racial politics of identity.' I reconsider this disinterest by examining the novel's representation of albinism, a condition which occupied a liminal and contested position in Early Modern formulations of race, but was broadly understood in the nineteenth century as a hereditary pathology. For Griffin, the eponymous Invisible Man, albinism is indeed only a matter of genetic accident and pigmentation, but also a key precondition of invisibility: his chemical process only makes white objects and creatures disappear. Contextualising albinism as a deracialised idea in the history of medicine, one whose 'whiteness' has been demetaphorised and decoupled from (but remains haunted by) its former anthropological significance, offers a way of rereading the absence of race in Wells's novel as a potentially conspicuous disappearance.

10. HEALTH AND DOMESTIC MANAGEMENT (White and Case Room)

Anna Gasperini

Testing Boundaries: 19th-century Child Health Manuals in Transnational Perspective

In 1878, Carolina Ruata Pronati translated to Italian one of the most influential English childcare books: Pye Henry Chavasse's *Advice to a Mother on the Management of her Offspring*. Counting multiple editions, Chavasse's text was extremely popular and was widely translated. Pronati read the book the original English and, having used it to raise her own children, decided to make it available in translation for Italian mothers. This paper takes its starting point in the Pronati-Chavasse case to illustrate the crucial role of nineteenth-century childcare books in the development of Western conceptions of child health. This is the aim of the IRC Laureate project 'MILC - Medical Literature and Communication about Child Health (1850-1914)', which studies the English case in transnational perspective. Through comparative close and distant reading of English texts alongside Italian and French ones, MILC highlights how key ideas about childhood and child health moved across national boundaries.

Clarice Säävälä

The Medical Maladies of Jane Welsh Carlyle: A Case Study

In this presentation, I will demonstrate how the changing medical landscape of nineteenth century Britain, especially regarding pain management and appropriate conduct of a woman patient, can be evidenced through reading the letters and diaries of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801-1866). Jane Welsh Carlyle suffered from a variety of ailments and pains in her lifetime, most notably neuralgia (nerve pain) and rheumatism. Through a close reading of her autobiographical sources, especially regarding her (often) tense interactions with doctors, this research presents a contribution to the history of doctor-patient relationships from the often-silenced voice of the patient. Additionally, by examining her dependent relationship with morphia and other pain analgesics, which were presented as a cure for her ailments, the presentation offers a more nuanced perspective of pain management resources for a middle-class woman in nineteenth-century Britain.

Angel Perazzetta

Defeating Muddle, Fast and Slow: The Temporalities of Mid-Century Domestic Management Advice

Household management guides – it goes without saying – ostensibly seek to induce readers to change the way they run their home. Mid-century women interested in the pursuit of more comfortable circumstances, tastier (and more tasteful) food, better health, lower expenses and higher rates of familial harmony had access to a wealth of texts purporting to offer all kinds of domestic advice. This paper investigates how these texts imagined and depicted process of domestic improvement, focusing in particular on the temporal aspect of these plans. Are homes reformed quickly or slowly? And is there coherence in whether time is conceived of as cyclical or linear? By comparing the makeover model provided by a sanitary tract aimed at working-class women with the more gradual transformations featured in books for the mistress of a middle-class establishments, this paper seeks to trace the complex temporal webs structuring normative discourses of domestic time.

11. CHANGING MARITAL CONVENTIONS (Seminar Room A)

Jacqueline Smith

Forever a Bride, Never a Wife: Fairy Women and Failed Weddings in the Romantic Ballet

While nineteenth-century ballet often gave new life to old tales—as Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty* (1890) did for Charles Perrault’s ‘La Belle au bois dormant’—ballets like *La Sylphide* (1832), *Giselle* (1841), and *Swan Lake* (1895) used an array of folkloric source material to create relatively original stories. How did creating unique narratives with ballet impact fairy tale history differently than adapting existing tales? These ballets reimagined fairy brides from Scottish and Germanic legend to produce a consistent character type: where fairy brides of legend marry mortal men, becoming wives and mothers, balletic fairy brides always die before their weddings—fixing them as eternal brides. This paper explores how Romantic ballet conventions, including costuming as well as the performance and public reputations of the ballerinas who danced these characters, created enduring icons of both the ballet and the nineteenth-century fairy tale.

Maggie Kalenak

‘Into the frilled mysteries beneath’: Trousseaus in Victorian England

Trousseaus were collections of home-goods, clothing, and sentimental items compiled by nineteenth-century English women throughout their lives, representing the entirety of what a woman would bring to her married home. However, trousseaus were not only practicalities—they were symbolic of that quintessential homemaking magic associated with English wifehood. Their contents were comfort-bringing and decorative—literally home-making. Trousseaus can be approached as material archives of women’s lives in the nineteenth century, showing skill-building, tastes, personalities, and values. They can also be considered as the work of communities of women. They were the site of contemporary debates about homemade versus commercially produced goods and the tools used by women navigating the transition to new identities as married women. Wrapped up in the trousseau are ideas about money, sex, selfhood, family, friendship, gender, and love. For the historian, trousseaus offer a case-study for exploring the overlappings of material culture, sensory history, and history of intimacy methodologies. Despite this, the trousseau has been the subject of very little focused study, representing a significant lacuna in our understanding of the nineteenth century.

Andrea Selleri

Three ‘Victorian’ Novels and their Reception: *I promessi sposi*, *Salammbô*, *Doña Perfecta*

I will consider the earliest translations into English of some contemporary novels from Italy, France and Spain, and treat them ‘as Victorian novels’: that is, as English-language textual artefacts that entered their intended readership’s consciousnesses as such. I will examine *The Betrothed* (1844), an anonymous translation of Alessandro Manzoni’s *I promessi sposi* (1827/’42); *Salammbô* (1862), Eleanor Marx’s translation of Gustave Flaubert’s *Salammbô* (1862); and *Doña Perfecta: A Tale of Modern Spain* (1886), ‘D.P.W.’’s translation of Benito Pérez Galdós’s *Doña Perfecta* (1876). In each case I will examine how the translators went about either ‘domesticating’ or ‘foreignising’ their source texts; how they mediated these novels’ topics for their target readership; to what extent they

relied on stylistic models from Victorian novels proper; and how their efforts were received by contemporary British readers in both aesthetic and topical terms. Overall, I hope to extend our notion of what a 'Victorian novel' could be.

12. POLITICAL FORMS (History of the Book Room)

Phyllis Weliver

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Gladstone, Music: Bedrocks of Victorian Liberalism

Coleridge's influence on the spirit of radical Victorian political traditions would have surprised second-generation literary Romantics who never forgave his politically conservative turn. Yet, William Gladstone clearly admired Coleridge's combination of morality with the individual's imagination as an active force that bridged aesthetics and public good. This paper traces how Coleridge's ideas underpinned Gladstone's thinking as he formed his Oxford Essay Society and delivered his first paper on philosophy and poetry (1830). Not unrelated, manuscript correspondence and Gladstone's annotated sheet music collection (a significant new find, c.1000 pieces) reveal that he sang glees specifically to unite his divided family (the women remained abolitionists despite his father's slave-holding), not unlike abolitionists' music-making as a calibration for right thinking. Gladstone expressed this singing in similar terms to his developing ideas about the state. Through such foundations, I argue that music became a constitutive component in shaping Victorian liberal culture.

Christopher Blandford

The Paris Commune and Liberalism in Robert Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology* (1875)

Robert Browning responds to the 1871 Paris Commune in his poem *Aristophanes' Apology* (1875), which uses a hybrid form of dramatic monologue and closet drama. The paper will outline the liberal questions raised by the Paris Commune and consider the ways in which he provides an answer to these in his poem. The paper will include a close reading of sections of *Aristophanes Apology*, with reference to the events of the Paris Commune, which demonstrate how Browning changed his views on the way society should be structured. Although critics recognise the overall poem's engagement with contemporary cultural concerns, Browning's use of the closet drama form to respond to the Paris Commune has not been examined before. The paper will also discuss where Browning's political beliefs place him within the liberal movement of the early-1870s.

Michelle D. Ravenscroft

Improving the Industrialist: Isabella Banks's *The Manchester Man* (1876) and the Portico Library

In 1806, the Portico Library, a nineteenth-century subscription library located on Mosley Street, Manchester, opened to 'promote social intercourse between the respectable habitants'.¹ In the first half of the century, the Library counted a high proportion of local cotton manufacturers, known as Manchester men, amongst its members. These successful industrialists were often represented in nineteenth-century literature as an intellectually and morally inferior class, particularly in relation to their aristocratic counterparts. Significantly, the Portico Library features in Isabella Banks's popular novel, *The Manchester Man* (1876), which reflects on the characteristics of the Manchester Man figure, supporting the idea that membership of such institutions challenged the stereotypical view of the manufacturers. This paper will explore literary representations of the industrialists, and consider how the Portico Library was a valuable place of networking, knowledge exchange and cultural enlightenment that symbolised the increased improvement and social status of the Manchester Man.

13. ART CRITICS AND CURATION (Seminar Room K)

Deborah Lam

Soapsuds and Paint Flinging: Art Criticism and Turner at the Whistler v Ruskin Trial

Turning his humourist's hand to a parodic art criticism of J.M.W. Turner's technique in his satirical review of the 1846 Royal Academy Exhibition, Gilbert Abbot à Beckett remarked that the painter 'pelts [a piece of canvas] with eggs and other missiles, when, appending to the mess some outrageous title, he has it hung in a good position in the Academy'. The image of projectile painting would find its counterpart some thirty years later, when James McNeill Whistler sued John Ruskin for libel over the critic's more serious suggestion that Whistler had asked 'two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'. Through the re-litigation of the terms of critique in the Whistler v Ruskin trial, this interdisciplinary paper will explore the provocative analogies between Turner's and Whistler's treatments in art criticism to reconsider the critical afterlife of Turner's work. To examine the reemergence of the figure of Turner in later debates around indexicality and representation, it frames understandings about how critical antagonism instructively shapes and reflects the changing paradigms of art criticism.

Naomi Lightman

'Shelley's Influence on Ruskin'

This paper investigates the history of Shelley's influence on John Ruskin, which has not received as much attention as Shelley's influence on Browning and Tennyson. Ruskin's dismissal of this relationship in his autobiography *Praeterita* is partly responsible for this neglect. Evidence from unpublished passages by Ruskin tells a different story: 'with Shelley's descriptions of seas and mountains I had complete sympathy'. Two volumes in the Ruskin Library at Lancaster University, hitherto unconsidered, further open up Ruskin's connection to Shelley's writings—firstly through the appreciative annotations in his copy of the 1839 edition of Shelley's poems and secondly through his ownership of Shelley's *Essays* (1845) inscribed to Ruskin by Joseph Severn, companion to the dying Keats but also the father of Arthur Severn who looked after Ruskin in his last years. As Ruskin developed as a critic of society he came increasingly to express an affinity with Shelley's 'volcanic instinct of justice.'

14. VICTORIAN AFTERLIVES (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

Daný van Dam

Possessive Passion in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Rewritings of *Wuthering Heights*

For the uninitiated, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is one of the great canonical romances. Amongst Victorianists, however, it is known as a novel of violent passions rather than romantic love. Like other canonical nineteenth-century texts, *Wuthering Heights* has invited numerous neo-Victorian rewritings. For this paper, I analyse several novels that draw on the violent and passionate elements of Emily Brontë's work and that follow the original in making it a key element of the story. In Alice Hoffman's *Here on Earth* (1997), domestic violence becomes an explicit topic. *I Am Heathcliff* (2019), a story collection containing different rewrites of *Wuthering Heights*, also contains multiple stories focusing on the obsessive relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff. Maryse Condé's *Windward Heights* (1995, trans. 1998) adds race and discrimination into the mix explicitly. Using neo-Victorian rewritings, I aim to find out how Heathcliff and Cathy's violent nineteenth-century passion translates to different places and eras.

Danielle van den Brink

(Re-)Imagining Legal Others and Feminist Jurisprudence in Neo-Victorian Trial Narratives

The interdisciplinary study of law and literature has contributed much to the understanding of legal critique in Victorian literature. The legacy of Victorian legal critique, as in Wilkie Collins's sensationalist commentaries on the inherently subjective and flawed narrative of the law, is revived as a narratological tool of subversion in neo-Victorian literature. I argue that the genre's self-reflexive distrust of its own construction of historical narratives lends itself to questions of (feminist) jurisprudence, coming together in suspicion of narrative and witness (un)reliability, authenticity and representation. In this paper, my analysis touches on Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, Sara Collins's *The Confessions of Frannie Langton* and Peter Ackroyd's *The Trial of Elizabeth Cree*, as I consider their representations of (neo-)Victorian trials that centre historically marginalized legal subjects through the lens of feminist jurisprudence.

Adrian Wisnicki

Around the Victorian Globe in One Year

This presentation will develop a comparative analysis of teaching two sections of 'Nineteenth-Century Global Anglophone Voices'. This course examines a selection of writers spanning such locations as India, the Sudan, Jamaica, and Canada. I taught the first version as an undergraduate course (spr. 2024) and the second as a graduate course (spr. 2025). Between the two versions, the primary texts stayed mainly the same, while the pedagogical methodology alternated by student audience. In the undergraduate version, for example, the emphasis fell on source text complexities; in the graduate version, I gave extended focus to undisciplining the course as a whole. However, the context for teaching the course changed drastically over that one year. This presentation, therefore, will offer a reflection on the change, with particular emphasis on the differences in 'atmosphere' and the challenges of carrying on with 'business as usual'.

15:45-17:00: Panel Session 7

15. POETRY (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

Fergus McGhee

'Fused and Blent': Body and Soul in D. G. Rossetti

For Dante Gabriel Rossetti, argued Walter Pater, 'the material and the spiritual are fused and blent': like his namesake Dante Alighieri, 'he knows no region of spirit which shall not be sensuous also'. Pater's 1883 essay on Rossetti reopened one of the most notorious controversies in Victorian literary history, taking its stand on perhaps the central issue in the painter-poet's reception: Rossetti's insistence on the inextricable fusion of body and soul, a claim variously interpreted as fraudulent, incoherent, or blasphemous. This paper seeks to shed new light on the controversy by taking Rossetti's famous avowal – 'Thy soul I know not from thy body' – philosophically seriously and by pursuing the analogy he himself suggested with form and expression. I argue that the vision of human relations, including human engagements with art, sustained by this fusion is both stronger and stranger than its admirers and detractors alike have been inclined to imagine.

Erik Gray

The Two Loves: Victorian Poetry and the Problem of Embodiment

In his 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth renounced the use of 'personifications of abstract ideas,' and in the century that followed, such personifications progressively disappeared from English poetry. With one major exception: the figure of Love continued to feature prominently throughout the nineteenth century. Any personification is attended by ontological instability, as it wavers between a purely abstract existence and a fully embodied one, cumbered with all the unwieldy, potentially embarrassing properties of the flesh. But this problem has dogged Love in particular, since at least the time of Plato's *Symposium*, in which Love (eros) is praised, in alternating speeches, as an ideal concept and as an actual, embodied agent. The same confusion complicates the appearance of a personified love in many Victorian poems, including works by Tennyson, Barrett Browning, Swinburne, and the Rossettis. This paper, though, will focus on a single, crucial instance: Lord Alfred Douglas's 'The Two Loves', which played a notoriously pivotal role at Oscar Wilde's criminal trial in 1895.

Nicholas Dunn-McAfee

Picture-Word Entanglements: D. G. Rossetti's *Proserpine*

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Proserpine* (1874) is one of the most well-known compositions in Victorian art. Biographical interpretation, however, runs like a fault line through most scholarship on it. The deliberate complexities of the work, and the broader implications of its dual status as both a picture and a poem, have been consistently neglected. Challenging traditional interpretations and toying with disciplinary boundaries, this paper seeks to view and read *Proserpine* as a work structured by an intermedial impulse that is predicated on a stylised entanglement of picture-word relations. I argue that taking seriously the febrile entanglements of space-time, continuity-interruption, and speaking-

listening in Rossetti's treatment of the myth enables an expansive, if difficult, viewer-reader experience. In turn, I set out a visual-verbal close reading approach that aims to capture the exacting concern with a visibly moulded form and self-conscious presentation at the heart of the art object. This paper demonstrates how Rossetti ensnares picture and word to summon kinetic moments of action and fragmentary agency in the most unlikely narrative circumstances and darkest emotional milieu. In what is arguably the bleakest and least visionary of Rossetti's double works of art, the image-text relationship not only reflects the prevailing sense of imprisonment but also reorients the focus toward the single female subject's capacity for resistance to an ostensibly immutable fate.

16. CELEBRITY AND FANDOM (History of the Book Room)

Frederick Hyde

Palmerston and Tiverton: Celebrity and Memory in Victorian Britain 1835-1885

Henry John Temple, third Viscount Palmerston (1784-1865), Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, is no stranger to historians. Few stones in his life have been left unturned. One exception is Palmerston's relationship with the Devonshire borough of Tiverton, which he represented in Parliament for thirty years. Historians have tended to reduce the Tivertonians to a homogenous mass of cheering crowds, or to disinterested yokels with little time for their MP.

This paper – the product of new archival research – offers a more sophisticated approach. During Palmerston's lifetime, his celebrity status became a source of civic pride in Tiverton. After his death in 1865, his memory provided a stock of common allusions that were used to reinforce competing visions of local and national identity. Debates over foreign policy, reform, religion and education mutated into bitter arguments, involving voters and non-voters, over whether Tiverton's Liberals and Conservatives had the better claim to Palmerston's legacy.

Jane Harrison

Not just an 'arch and ferocious lion-huntress'? Reappraising the Victorian society hostess in her quest for celebrities

In 'Death of the Lion' (1894), Henry James's narrator railed against the 'bustling ladies for whom he [the narrator's celebrity friend] drew the water that irrigated their social flower-beds'. James himself, in his notes for this new novella, explicitly singled out the 'arch and ferocious lion-huntress' from amongst the 'destructive hordes' that he saw as encircling Victorian celebrities. This negative presentation of the nineteenth-century society hostess can be seen throughout the literature and media of the time and has largely persisted unchallenged since. However, the actions of these women were not necessarily ridiculous, nor were they pointlessly self-seeking or even unwelcome to the celebrities themselves. This paper seeks to disrupt the existing narrative. Using the archive of Emma Dent, Sudeley Castle's chatelaine from 1856 to 1900, it will consider the social currency and networking potential that building a relationship with a celebrity could provide to Dent and her contemporaries.

Claire Wood

'life seems to me a dark, dreadful enigma:' Writing to Dickens

'Life seems to me a dark, dreadful enigma...' Emmely Gotschalk in a letter to Dickens (c. 1849/1850) In October 1849, Emmely Gotschalk, a young Danish woman living in Copenhagen, penned a letter to Dickens, beginning a correspondence that would continue intermittently until 1856. The exchange appears uneven, with Gotschalk writing sixteen letters to Dickens's nine. Nonetheless, the surviving letters indicate a remarkable depth to this epistolary relationship. While Gotschalk often expresses her admiration for the author and his work, her missives range beyond the remit of a traditional 'fan' letter, articulating a sense of existential anguish and profound reflections upon faith, family, and the position of women in society. Dickens's replies are no less revealing, waxing and waning in intimacy,

while encouraging Gotschalk to pursue 'action, usefulness—and the determination to be of service' as a 'remedy' for her depressed state of mind. The Gotschalk/Dickens correspondence provides a fascinating example of what reading Dickens in dialogue can bring to our understanding of the author and his world. Building on approaches that decentre Dickens by recognising the input of his collaborators (Klimaszewski 2019) and shift attention to authors as part of correspondence networks (O'Neill 2015), this paper will explore how Gotschalk's letters specifically, and uncollected incoming correspondence to Dickens more generally, can enrich our sense of Dickens in context.

17. RENEWING OLD FORMS (Lecture Theatre 2)

Laura Monrós-Gaspar

Performing Victorian *tableaux vivants* for Contemporary Audiences: *Madame* (2023) by CienfuegosDanza.

Classical *tableaux vivants* are one of the most intriguing ephemeral entertainments that the nineteenth-century has bestowed on present times due to their palimpsestuous hybridity. Among the wide variety of troupes performing tableaux in mid-Victorian London, Madam Warton's are the best-documented shows of the period. For this reason, they were selected for the creative research commissioned by the research group Literature, Arts and Performance at the Universitat de València in Spain to CienfuegosDanza on how to perform Victorian classical tableaux vivants for contemporary audiences. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the outcomes of such creative process, which involved collaborative research in feminist theatre historiography, choreographic notation and the fine arts, and which resulted in the ballet spectacle *Madame* (2023). As shall be demonstrated, revisiting Warton's tableaux from the perspective of contemporary dance theory and practice through the archives allowed us to reinvent and republish a communal aesthetic experience amplified with unexpected artistic languages.

Saverio Tomaiuolo

'Myself It Speaks and Spells': Neo-Victorian Versions of Hopkins

Although Neo-Victorian biofictions have focused mainly on nineteenth-century novelists (from Dickens and Collins to George Eliot and the Brontës), and on marginalized or partially forgotten historical figures, the interest in Victorian poets has been extremely limited, with the sole exception, among the few, of Alfred Tennyson and of the Brownings. In this respect, my paper will focus on the various re-readings of Gerard Manley Hopkins's life and works first in two biofictions (Ron Hansen's *Exiles*, and Simon Edge's *The Hopkins Conundrum*), and then in a movie directed by Kenneth Lonergan and entitled *Margaret*, which centres on the poem 'Spring and Fall: To a Young Child'. In these cases, Hopkins has been approached not just as a single and uniform biographical and textual subject but as a multifaceted artist whom contemporary neo-Victorian culture has interpreted in various forms, offering different versions of him, and of his literary heritage.

Melissa L. Gustin

Turner: Always Contemporary? Curating J.M.W. Turner 250 in Liverpool

As part of the Turner250 celebrations commemorating the artist's 250th birthday, the Walker Art Gallery is featuring a major exhibition of J.M.W. Turner's (1775-1851) work and that of artists following in his footsteps from his lifetime to the present. This paper will address one of the major questions asked during the curating process: what is the relevance of contemporary art by the likes of Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, Bridget Riley, and Emma Stibbon to the work of J.M.W. Turner, and how do we communicate this to a non-specialist audience? Focusing primarily on Hirst's work that has been requested for the exhibition in dialogue with National Museums Liverpool's major Turner oil *The Wreck Buoy*, this paper (and exhibition) explore how transhistoric exhibition practice can introduce often-contrasting audiences to new ways of engaging with art history.

18. BODY AND AGE CONSTRUCTION IN THE PERIODICALS (Seminar Room K)

Helen Kingstone & Martin Hewitt

Generational Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Periodical Culture

The concept of generation is significant because it has two key dimensions: familial and social. It can therefore shed light on fundamental questions of structure and agency. The concept has often been overstretched and justifiably maligned, but its importance to lived experience of temporality makes it worth salvaging. This paper will showcase work-in-progress on a Digital Humanities project (with co-investigators Martin Hewitt and Pieter Francois) that asks how generational analysis can help us understand the cultural sociology of Victorian periodical authorship. Our project explores how best to link records between a database of contributors to nineteenth-century periodicals (the Curran Index) and a database of population (Integrated Census Micro-Data). The paper will showcase trends identified among the 600+ known contributors to the *Athenaeum* (1828–1921), regarding: (i) patterns of migration; (ii) how contributors self-describe their occupations in the census, and (iii) how new editors impacted the generational proportions of contributions – and not in the way one might expect.

Charlotte Boyce'Crazed on the subject of being too fat!' Body Image in *The Girl's Own Paper*

Although the *OED* locates the emergence of the phrase 'body image' in the twentieth century, the concerns encompassed by the term can be identified in a variety of late nineteenth-century girls' magazines. This paper focuses in particular on the anxieties that emerged in the 'Answers to Correspondents' section of *The Girl's Own Paper* in the 1880s and 90s. Although filtered through an organizing editorial voice, the 'Answers' bear traces of the GOP's readers' original voices, giving shape to their varied self-perceptions and providing insights into Victorian girls' complex relationships with their bodies. This paper also explores the tensions that existed between different sections of the GOP: while the 'Answers' page mainly promoted body acceptance and blamed fashion plates for distorting readers' self-image, the magazine's own fashion pages regularly represented women with exaggeratedly thin waists, while the 'Medicus' column often encouraged girls to monitor their diets and scrutinize their appearance.

Bridget Morgan

Constructing the Middle-Aged Woman in Late Victorian Periodicals

This 20-minute paper considers how middle-aged femininity was defined in women's magazines. Using individual titles as case studies, it examines how middle-class fashion periodicals and cheap domestic magazines constructed middle-aged femininity within advertisements, fiction and articles. That the figure of the middle-aged woman is not featured prominently in articles, fiction or illustrations shows that domestic magazines targeted the young woman as the ideal reader. As a result, female ageing is referred to in euphemistic terms and female middle age is defined as a process of decline. By situating euphemisms of age alongside articles and fiction that directly address the ageing woman as reader, however, this paper highlights how the definition of female middle age as decline is subverted. In doing so, it illuminates how women's magazines constructed and

deconstructed an idea of female middle-age in the late nineteenth century using discourses of class, medicine, and domesticity

19. MUSIC AND MORALITY (White and Case Room)

Chloe Green

Song Cycles, Cycle Songs: Gender, Sexuality, and the Bicycle in and around 'Daisy Bell'

The bicycle craze of the 1890s inspired myriad creative responses in art, literature, and music. Lyricists and composers on both sides of the Atlantic took particular interest in the bicycle's influence on expressions of gender and sexuality, as women cyclists adopted traditionally masculine fashions. Drawing on critical theory, I analyse the music-hall classic 'Daisy Bell'—written and composed in 1892 by Harry Dacre, a British composer working in America, and performed by artiste Katie Lawrence. Lawrence, like many fin-de-siècle female music-hall singers, was associated with prostitution; rumours of her sexual availability were compounded by her *en travesti* presentation in performances of 'Daisy Bell', figuring her as both the subject and object of desire. I examine the complex intertextual network—involving plagiarism, parody, medley, and other musical responses—that formed around this song, revealing the intertwined processes of musicalisation and technologization at the inception of an underexamined transatlantic bicycle song tradition.

Suzanne Robinson

'A dirty and disgusting diatribe': Moral panic in British responses to Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*

Scandal followed the release of Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) in Russia and as far afield as the United States and Australia, where a music professor's offhanded suggestion that his students read it provoked such a tempest that it contributed to the loss of his university post. As Simon Goldhill discusses in *The Buried Life of Things*, the meaning of objects is contingent on prevailing 'regimes of knowledge and perception'—whereas the Beethoven sonata referred to by Tolstoy was a staple of the violin repertoire, his story revealed how the act of performing it could inflame female sensuality and destroy the sanctity of marriage. This paper examines the reception of *The Kreutzer Sonata* in Victorian Britain and the colonies, identifying the religious, medical and socio-cultural regimes it threatened in order to discover how a book could be treated as a disease capable of infecting the moral body of a nation.

Victoria Roskams

Frédéric Chopin in Decadent Fiction

This paper is about decadent fiction's revisionary engagement with the music and mythology of Frédéric Chopin. While contemporary non-fictional writing about the composer associated him with the female pianist, drawing rooms, and sentimentality, in decadent fiction Chopin connotes anything but harmonious domesticity. In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, stories by Arthur Symons and Count Eric Stenbock, Stanley Makower's little-known tale of a female composer's descent into illness, *The Mirror of Music*, and short stories by American music critic James Huneker, Chopin's music signifies illness, love, melancholy, and the uncanny. Writers heard in his music the embodiment of their subversive fascination with decay, death, and isolation. Biographical reception played a part, too: his untimely death from tuberculosis and perhaps proto-queer relationship with George Sand. Decadent writers in English understood and shaped the late-nineteenth-century

reception of Chopin's music as meaningfully and pervasively as they participated in the reception of Richard Wagner.

20. TEETOTALLING – OR NOT (Seminar Room A)

Graham Harding & Jennifer Wallis

Time for a tippie? Nipping, Tippling and Late-Victorian Drinking Behaviours

In the late nineteenth century Britain's moral commentators turned their attention to 'nipping and tippling': taking small quantities of drink between meals throughout the day. This paper explores how and why 'petty but perpetual drinking' came to dominate turn-of-the-century debates about health and temperance. By the 1870s, the 'drinking clock' that divided days into work and leisure time was ticking ever more loudly. No longer was absolute volume the sole marker of problem drinking; nor was total abstinence the only solution. The introduction of time of day as a component in drinking practices re-made the rules, with temperance communities adopting new solutions such as the 'Semi-Pledge'. Thus, we argue that by the early twentieth century – encouraged by wartime measures driven by concerns about alcohol's impact on the war effort – there was a general, if not universal, acceptance that moderate, time-bound consumption was rational and reasonable.

Pam Lock

'[H]ave what you're a mind to, Poll. I'm going' to stand treat': Women drinking for pleasure and company

This paper focuses on representations of women's drinking for pleasure and convivial company in the late nineteenth century. Bringing together newspapers, travelogues, and fiction, I explore snapshots of 'normal' female drinking that challenged the relentless rhetoric about women's sobriety and moderation. The 'women and alcohol' project, from which this research is taken, aims to seek the middle ground between the extremes of female drinking (sobriety and drunkenness) which have dominated historical and literary studies to date. Figures such as the housewife stopping for a quiet beer after a day at the market, or women gathering in the public house for a gossip over a glass have, until now, been largely ignored in contrast with much discussed scenes of male drinking beside the fire over a pipe and a shared bowl of punch in Dickens and Stevenson for example. I will explore the importance and comparative invisibility of pleasurable female drinking.

21. PICTORIAL (Seminar Room B)

Morgan Lee

Rest In Pictures: Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Deathbed and its Pictorial Afterlives

There was a public fascination with Alfred, Lord Tennyson's last moments when his death was announced to the nation. Dr George Roqué Dabbs' poetic medical bulletin, which described Tennyson's 'spectacular death', was distributed widely and captured the Victorian imagination. The scene of the poet on his deathbed, bathed in moonlight, his copy of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* in hand, and surrounded by his grieving family was one that appeared in several illustrations within national media publications. My paper focuses on two of these illustrations – Samuel Begg's *The Death of Lord Tennyson* (1892) and Amédée Forestier's *The Late Lord Tennyson, the Last Idyll* (1892) – and examines how the intermedial nature of these illustrations is haunting. Both illustrations are haunted by their re-interpretation of Dabbs' literary account, but Forestier's image also recalls other popular visual representations of Tennyson's Arthurian poetry across several media, including engraving, painting and photography.

Dorka Lippai

'No Use to Painter or Man': William Holman Hunt's Orientalist Female Figures

This paper explores the evolving depiction of female figures in the Orientalist paintings of William Holman Hunt, key figure of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Hunt's desire to paint truth to nature prompted the artist on his journeys to the Middle East in order to find local models for his works. The paper aims to study Hunt's depiction of women in the context of Orientalism and realism as well as seek answers to the following research questions: In what ways had his travels affect the painter's art style? Do Hunt's works go against the visual characteristics of Orientalist works? What cultural and religious influences inform the portrayal of the models in the chosen paintings? The following oils from William Holman Hunt will be discussed in more detail: *Christ and the Two Marys*, *A Street Scene in Cairo*, *The Afterglow in Egypt* (two versions), and *The Bride of Bethlehem*.

Eleanor Parkin-Coates

George Cruikshank's Engagement in Social Issues After 1847: Multiply or 'Monomaniacal'?

Artist and caricaturist George Cruikshank (1792-1878) pledged himself to teetotalism in 1847; his subsequent productions, both artistic and non-artistic, have been labelled by contemporaries, biographers, and scholars as dogmatic or fanatical. Yet, Cruikshank simultaneously engages in multiple other issues of public debate, including criminality, education, leisure, and public health. How can we reconcile the fact that Cruikshank was engaged in a multitude of causes, yet was considered so committed to the Temperance movement that Charles Dickens labelled him 'monomaniacal'? This research employs the cultural history of ideas to examine this contradiction and consider Cruikshank as an increasingly conservative moralist, conforming to Victorian principles such as self-help, earnestness, and paternalism. Cruikshank's commitment to public debate will be considered within the context of the emerging concept and vocabulary of the 'intellectual,' public figures who employ diverse channels of expression to communicate their views on numerous issues of public concern.



BAVS 2025 ABSTRACTS

FRIDAY 25 JULY

10:15-11:45: Panel Session 8

1. VAMPIRISM AND THE GOTHIC (White and Case Room)

Madeline Potter

'The blood is the life': Natural Vampirism and Positivism in Bram Stoker and Mary Elizabeth Braddon

To approach Bram Stoker and Mary Elizabeth Braddon as writing in a tradition of medical realism may seem an unorthodox method. Yet my paper traces their engagement with accounts of blood research published in the medical press to examine the concept of natural vampirism in *Dracula* and 'Good Lady Ducayne'. Exploring the case of Renfield and the practices of Dr Parravicini, my paper will investigate how the texts employ figure of the natural vampire to critique a purely positivist approach to medicine. Finally, by setting Stoker and Braddon's texts in dialogue with publications from the medical press, my paper will seek to establish that vampire fictions can act as historiographical and methodological tools in the study of medical history revealing not simply their engagement with medical realism, but in highlighting that Victorian medical discourse itself exists in the proximity of the Gothic.

Paul Young

Cowboys and Vampires: Imperial Meat, Industrialized Metabolism and Gothic Hunger

Appalled by a 'robbery system' that exhausted global supplies of guano and crushed bones to enrich British fields, in 1862 the great German chemist Justus Von Liebig attacked a process that deprived 'all countries of the conditions of their fertility': 'Like a vampire [Great Britain] hangs on the breast of Europe, and even the world, sucking its lifeblood.' But around the same time that the Victorians turned overseas to fertilize their own fields, the development of meat preservation technologies meant that they also looked increasingly to foreign fields to rear the domestic breeds of cattle and sheep demanded by Britain's rapidly growing numbers of 'urban carnivores'. This was another vampiric process of imperial extraction, by which the Victorians created a planetary system that fuelled their own nutrient and energy-intensive needs at the expense of life on earth elsewhere. It

prompts this paper to read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as a horror Western, wherein the insatiable appetites and expansionist violence of cowboys and the undead are terribly confused.

Jen Baker

Transgressive Transformations: Packaging and Re-Packaging Short Form Gothic

This paper considers the theory, practice, marketing, and scholarship of collecting and anthologising Gothic short fiction in the long nineteenth century, exploring how stories moved between and from mediums such as the periodical, to the single-author collection, to the multi-author anthology across different global spaces and the significance of such. I will firstly offer some context for such publishing practices in this period and consider the conceptual difficulties forged by the retrospective designation of "Gothic" by contemporary scholars. The paper will then turn to some specific examples, tracing individual stories on their journey, to emphasise why the generic label of Gothic and its sub-genres means that the movement of such works does something particularly extraordinary, transgressive and transformative. Finally, I touch upon the afterlife of this practice in the current market as new and repackaged editions continually emerge in new series' and consider how this has informed my own pedagogical approaches to such works.

2. NEW WOMEN (History of the Book Room)

Johanna Harrison-Oram

Speaking in an age of vocal anxiety: a comparative case study of Moffat's ammoniaphone and James' *The Bostonians*

Verena Tarrant, the protagonist of Henry James' *The Bostonians* (1886), has a 'low and agreeable - a cultivated' voice, fetishised for its political potential in the women's rights movement. However, Verena flees Boston's Music Hall moments before her fated speech 'in the biggest city'. Her voice, and political labour, remains formless: theorised, yet unrealised. This characterization, I argue, contradicts contemporary scientific developments which codified the human voice through treatises and new medical technology such as García's laryngoscope (1854) and Moffat's ammoniaphone (1884). In a period which affords the voice anatomical form, it seems contradictory that Verena's voice is indeterminate and formless. Through this, James participates in a repeating debate of the fin de siècle, one which seeks to arbitrate the nature and value of women's labour: through Verena's formless voice, the depiction of which rejects contemporary progress in the field of voice science, James positions women's political value as similarly contingent.

Tabitha Lambert-Bramwell

Professional Identity and Domestic Labour in the Life-Writing of Constance Maynard

'I have had to come forward and take the lead on household matters of which I know nothing,' wrote Constance Maynard (1849-1935) shortly following the opening of Westfield College in 1882, of which she was the principal. Maynard's anxiety regarding the domestic management of the college, which also served as her home, was a constant thread running throughout her diaries, representative of the difficulty she experienced in balancing professional work and domesticity. Drawing from Maynard's diaries and unpublished autobiography, this paper argues that domestic labour played a pivotal role in the formation of women's professional identities. Considering Maynard as a case-study, I will examine the practical and emotional conflicts that emerged from the need for working women to balance domestic and professional responsibilities, and the impact that these difficulties had on their subjectivities as professional women in the late-nineteenth-century.

Sara Lyons

Mona Caird, Anthropology, and Feminist Aesthetics at the *Fin de Siècle*

This paper will treat Mona Caird's 1897 collection of essays *The Morality of Marriage* as a case study in how the new discipline of anthropology informed feminist thought at the fin de siècle. As both a novelist and polemicist, Caird specialised in intellectual shock tactics: her fiction and essays draw upon anthropology to render feminist arguments in the most inflammatory terms available within the limits of cultured discourse. This paper will concentrate on how Caird drew upon anthropological debates about sacrifice both as a means of understanding the history of women's subordination and as a rhetorical weapon. I will also suggest that Caird's novel *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) exemplifies the aesthetic uses of anthropology for first wave feminism. Anthropology lent new intellectual prestige to Gothic and utopian tropes and enabled writers like Caird to construct feminism not simply as a rational discourse of rights but as a mode of literary enchantment.

3. PACKING A 'PUNCH': INTO THE ARCHIVES WITH MR PUNCH (Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre)

Clare Horrocks, Lucy Lawrence & Elliot Andrews

Packing a 'Punch': Into the Archives with Mr Punch

This panel of postgraduates, organised by **Clare Horrocks**, showcases the latest research on Punch. In her paper and introduction to the panel, Clare will the Archives she has used to identify the contributors who worked for the magazine and how this research is informing her latest work on the *Punch Pocket Book* and *Almanack*. Working on the *Pocket Books* from 1869 to 1881 was the artist Linley Sambourne, which led Clare to the comparatively unexplored and undigitised papers of the photographer and artist. Horrocks and **Elliot Andrew** were together able to discover important correspondence which will lead to an in-depth study of Francis Cowley Burnand, editor of *Punch* from 1880. The conclusion of Horrocks's paper will lead into Elliot's paper on periodical and professional networks, drawing on Archival work from their visit to the Sambourne Archive as well as the extensive work Elliot has undertaken at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Elliot will then discuss Sambourne's use of illustrated letters and correspondence in placating and negotiating with his employers and editors in matters relating to the format, quantity, and punctuality of his work, considering where and why these techniques were implemented by the illustrator. The final paper on the panel examines *Punch's* engagement with London's fog crisis of 1880. Through archival-based research methods, **Lucy Lawrence** will trace how Punch's ecological humour created a receptive cultural landscape for the successful execution of the Smoke Abatement Exhibition in 188. Her paper reveals how Victorian proto-environmentalism in Punch created a print ecology that catalysed ecological awareness, technological ingenuity, and sustainable development. Together the papers on this panel reveal that there is still so much more to examine and explore with the popular periodical Punch.

4. IMPERIAL AND ANTI-IMPERIAL (Seminar Room A)

Sercan Öztekin

Representations of the Ottoman Empire, Masculinity, and Imperialism in Victorian Boys' Magazines

Towards the late nineteenth-century, there was a revival of the interest in the Ottoman Empire, which could be linked to new imperialism and the decline in the empire's power. Several boys' magazines like *The Boy's Own Paper*, *The Boys of England*, or *Chums* published many serialised adventure stories set in the Middle East. Some examples of these could be 'Tom, the Flying Turk', 'Twixt Russian and Turk,' or 'The Naval Cadets in Turkey', all published in the late nineteenth-century. For instance, Jack Harkaway's *Boy Tinker Among The Turks* by Bracebridge Hemyng is a significant example serialised in *The Boys of England*. These stories generally start with teenage boys starting an adventure in the Ottoman Empire. While endorsing masculinity and new imperial ideologies through such adventure stories for boys, they also reflected imperial anxieties as well as the invasion of decadent sexualities into the British Empire. This paper aims to analyse how Victorian periodicals reflect Orientalism and changes in the recognition of sexuality and gender ideologies throughout this period. It shows in what way they present and subvert predisposed beliefs about the Orient, femininity, masculinity and sexuality. It focuses mostly on the Ottoman Empire and the regions belonged to it during and before the nineteenth century. Focusing on Orientalism and foreign political relations, it offers an examination of the perceptions of the Middle East in the Victorian age.

Helena Esser

A Victorian *Game of Thrones*? Ouida's *Helianthus* (1908) as Anti-Imperial Satire

Rival kingdoms, despots, intrigue, revolution, fatalism, and fathers plotting their son's death: This paper discusses the remarkable last novel of the bestselling and notorious, but crucially understudied Ouida (Marie Louise de la Ramée, 1839-1908): Though often remembered as a flamboyant sensation writer, Ouida's aesthetics always contain strong, cosmopolitan politics, and *Helianthus* (1908) imaginatively transforms and powerfully critiques a turn-of-the-century Europe terminally corrupted by industrialism, eco-catastrophe, capitalism, and colonialism. Its fictionalised, semi-Ruritarian—and surprisingly familiar—Europe teems with scathing caricatures of reactionary buffoons in positions of power, pomp and militarism, and identifies not only what Hannah Arendt would later call the banality of evil, but also the transnational tensions that would lead to the First World War. Ouida provides significant insights into late-Victorian Europe that echo powerfully with our present concerns, and makes a case for popular fiction as the prism through which the failures of modernity might be diagnosed.

5. WAR AND ITS AFTERLIVES (Seminar Room B)

Monika Mazurek

Browning's *Strafford*: Victorian Debates on the English Civil War Legacy

Robert Browning's *Strafford* (1837), like all his early dramas, is overshadowed in the critical discourse by his poetic achievements. Research on the play has tended to situate it in the context of nineteenth-century theatre history, or focus on its linguistic, psychological, or political aspects. My paper focuses on the theme of Browning's play – events leading up to the Civil War – and situates it in the context of Victorian debates on its legacy. The 17th century conflict was still far from resolved in the minds of many nineteenth-century British. While Parliamentarians had formidable supporters like Thomas Macaulay, the sympathies of many conservative British lay with the Royalist side. The latter's power grew with the conservative backlash in the first decade of Victoria's reign, with the combined influence of Disraeli's Young England movement and the growing importance of the Oxford Movement. Browning's play, premiering in the last months of King William IV's reign, responds to this dispute and foreshadows key points in its development in the following years.

Clare Tonks

Veteran Participation in Nineteenth-Century Battlefield Tourism at Waterloo

Soon after news reached Britain of the victory at Waterloo, Britons set out for Belgium, desirous to see the landscape where the famed battle unfolded. Visitors were eager to hear personal recollections from the battle and employed British soldiers who remained in the area to act as guides. Through an analysis of nineteenth-century visitor accounts, this paper will explore the development of tourism at Waterloo and consider how veterans participated in and shaped this new, local industry using one military family as an illustrative example. Sergeant-Major Edward Cotton and Sergeant Joseph Munday were brothers-in-law who led tours, published a military memoir, and managed a hotel as well as a museum of relics. The burgeoning tourism industry at the battle site offered an opportunity for veterans of the battle to capitalize on their wartime service and shaped how a collective memory of the battle was presented to visitors touring the field.

Christian K. Melby

The Many Afterlives of a Victorian Literary Genre: The First World War and the (Re-)Interpretation of Victorian and Edwardian Future-War Literature

Victorians and Edwardians indulged in reading numerous fictitious ideas of what a future-war would look like, from George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* in 1871, to Saki's *When William Came* in 1914. While the influence of such fiction on politics and military planning remains questionable, there is no denying the stories' popularity and endurance, and they were often trotted out in service of a variety of different causes in the decades prior to 1914, and indeed long after. This paper shows how Victorian and Edwardian future-war literature was read at the outbreak of the First World War: first by looking at the debate over whether Chesney had predicted the war, or whether instead his *The Battle of Dorking* was illustrative of the militarism that had caused it; and then by looking at two 1915 stories that were written in the pre-war mould: Laurence Cowen's 'Wake Up!' and Edgar Wallace's '1925'.

6. EXTRAORDINARY BODIES: SATIRE AND THE GROTESQUE IN VICTORIAN AND NEO-VICTORIAN POPULAR CULTURE (Seminar Room K)

This panel is dedicated to the memory of Professor Brian Maidment

This panel of 4 papers will explore the contribution of comically grotesque popular literary and visual culture to the heritage and contemporary significance of Victorian studies. It will examine ways in which representations of the 'deformed' body destabilized dominant ideologies of disability, childhood, gender, race and class.

Mary L. Shannon

Imagining the King of the Beggars: Disability, performance and visual culture

In periodicals of the 1820s and 1830s, the 'King of the Beggars' was a disabled man: first William 'Billy' Waters, a Black disabled sailor with a wooden prosthetic leg; then Andrew Whiston or 'Little Jemmy', a white man born with physical disabilities. This paper will take two recently-discovered images of Waters and Whiston - one a caricature of a London street performance, and other a magic lantern slide of a scene from a play set in London which featured them as characters – to consider how nineteenth-century visions of what Rosemary Garland-Thompson famously calls 'Extraordinary Bodies' were shaped by ideas about performance and theatricality both on and off the stage. In the process it will argue that visual images of performance have an important part to play both in the construction of disability representation in the nineteenth-century, and in our contemporary deconstruction of disability history.

Kirara Akashi

The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Edward Gorey: Unravelling the Dark Humours of Childhood Culture in Neo-Victorian Picturebooks

This paper will explore dark humour in children's literature and childhood culture through its focus on the twentieth-century American writer, illustrator, theatre designer and puppeteer, Edward Gorey (1925-2000), and his neo-Victorian nonsense picturebooks that repurpose Victorian literary and theatrical humour. His works are rarely recognised as children's books because of their taboo subjects for young readers such as violence, death, and unsettling narratives without a definite conclusion. However, this talk will argue that Gorey's picturebooks can be understood usefully as works of neo-Victorian children's literature, and his morbid humour is closely tied to social satire on ideals of Victorian child protectionism persisting in mid-twentieth-century America. As a crucial aspect of Gorey's neo-Victorian work, this will also spotlight the moral ambiguity of his work and its cross-over potential which has the capacity to extend the scope of children's literature.

Ian Haywood

Jest in time: mirth, mouths and Momus in Victorian joke books

This talk will delve into the once 'universal' but now largely forgotten world of Victorian joke or jest books. This hugely popular 'Museum of Mirth' - a wide range of comic genres including song books, drolleries, witticisms, puns, bon mots, epigrams and grotesque caricatures – provided a rich seedbed of textual and visual humour which nurtured better-known satirical publications such as Punch. To

illustrate the point, we might remember (or not) that when the reformed Scrooge of Dickens's *Christmas Carol* decides to send a huge turkey anonymously to Bob Cratchit's family, and while 'splitting with a laugh', he remarks that 'Joe Miller never made such a joke'. The identity and importance of 'Joe Miller' will become clear in this romp through Victorian one-liners, 'diverting pieces' and gawping maws.

Himan Heidari

From Text to Image: Exposing Imperial Grotesquerie in British Women's Travel Writing'

In *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* (1891), Isabella Bird distinguishes the 'unveiled' Kurdish women with their 'firm, elastic walk' from the 'shrouded' Persian women with their 'tottering gait.' Kurdish women's agency, symbolised by their uncovered appearance and 'masculine' stride, unsettles Bird's colonial gaze while resonating with her negotiation of Victorian gender norms. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of 'the anomaly of cultural difference,' I argue that Bird's simultaneous exoticisation of Kurdish women and identification with their resistance to patriarchal constraints does not merely undermine her authority but amplifies her gendered subjectivity as a western observer. By framing Kurdish women's cultural difference as both alluring and empowering, Bird strategically appropriates their agency to critique the gendered strictures of Victorian society and Persian patriarchy. Yet in doing so, she straddles the line between challenging patriarchy and perpetuating Orientalism—ultimately blurring the boundaries between liberation and domination in her portrayal of cultural others.

7. NEW METHODS (Lecture Theatre 2)

Emily Middleton

From Modern Tweets to Victorian Broadsheets: Refining Sentiment Analysis for Victorian Literature

This paper previews the results of an attempt to build a nineteenth-century-specific sentiment lexicon for digital textual analysis. Sentiment analysis enables visualisation at different levels of scale: for example, of shifts in tone under a new periodical editor; the tenor of reviews across several decades in a major publication like the *Athenaeum*; or Dickens's strategies in delivering fundraising speeches. Platforms like Gale Digital Scholar Lab include sentiment analysis tools, and the rise of Chat-GPT means scholars without technical training can produce visualisations with carefully-worded prompts, but the majority of available sentiment vocabularies are based on social media: in one case, specifically tweets relating to a UN conference.¹ The next step is to re-establish the role of the historian/literary scholar in ensuring there is a scholarly underpinning to this kind of analysis, and this paper aims to offer a first step in refining such tools to be meaningfully useful to Victorianists.

Dino Franco Felluga

Open Assembly and the Digital Condition

The first wave of nineteenth-century digital archives (e.g., the Rossetti and Whitman Archives) aimed largely to replicate the logic of print editions, just with more content and free access. The guiding structure of the editions followed the logic of print: one or more senior scholars editing the works of the canonical authors of the nineteenth century to create a definitive, authoritative version of source texts. This convention is a good example of the skeuomorph, imposing a structural or design feature from the previous medium (the author-function) to make palatable the radical transformations of the new. I propose a different model, 'open assembly'. This paper theorizes this new approach to textual editing. I propose that we resist the skeuomorphic drag of past ways of approaching the editorial act, instead fully embracing what my title names—in allusion to but also in contradistinction to Jerome McGann's *The Textual Condition*—the digital condition

Louise Creechan

'Lifting the Veil': Neurodivergence and Accessible Victorian Literary Futures

The aim of this paper is two-fold: firstly, to provide a reading of George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* using a critical neurodiversity studies framework, whereby clairvoyance functions a divergence from established neurotypical standard of the novella. Crucially, this approach rejects the urge to diagnose historical/fictional characters and looks beyond representation and/or mimesis to explore how neurodivergence operates at the level of narrative to critique the realist mode. Secondly, while lifting the veil on nineteenth-century realism, the paper will also lift the veil on my neurodivergent scholarly process. I will invite delegates to share in the perhaps disparate world of crippled literary scholarship where the text is, not only the object of analysis, but the point of disablement. This atypical engagement with the formal expectations of literary criticism asks how neurodivergent forms of knowledge making and dissemination might be facilitated and, ultimately, usher in a more accessible future for Victorian literary scholarship.