

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Monday 9 September (Pre-conference programme)

3pm, meeting point TBA: The Cardiff Arcades Tour (Martin Willis, Cardiff)

Cardiff has six historic shopping arcades, five of which are Victorian. The earliest predate the arcades in London, Leeds and Milan. They were built when Cardiff was one of the richest cities in Europe, and the Marquess of Bute, landowner, coal mogul and shipping magnate, was believed to be the richest man in the world. The arcades are fabulous monuments in glass and iron to the period of Cardiff's pre-eminence and confirm Walter Benjamin's view of the Victorian shopping arcade as a cathedral of consumption. The tour will describe the building of the arcades and share stories from their Victorian and neo-Victorian history.

The tour will last approximately an hour. There is some (optional) climbing of stairs (no lifts available) included in the route taken.

Biographical note: Martin Willis is Professor of English and former Head of the School of English, Communication and Philosophy at Cardiff University. His research considers the inter-relationships between literature and the sciences across the Victorian period.

Tuesday 10 September

KEYNOTE 1

Kirsti Bohata (Swansea): “For the good of everyone who lives there”: Poaching, Protest and “the Common Good”

Abstract: Patterns of land ownership and rights are currently seen as one of the biggest barriers to addressing the twin crises of climate change and nature collapse. An extractive model of private profit is being challenged by various models of commons and public goods. This is an old battle. The major phase of Enclosures had already passed by the Victorian period, but the loss of the commons continued to put pressure on social relations and to impact daily lives. The Game Laws of 1831, Salmon Fisheries Acts of 1865 and 1873, and others exacerbated tensions further and mass poaching protests broke out in some areas, drawing on longer traditions of rural folk protest. In industrial fiction, poaching could also be linked with trade unionism and strikes. Kirsti Bohata will talk about the figure of the poacher as trespasser and protester, drawing some connections between Victorian debates about property and common rights and contemporary debates about land use. (The title quotation derives from *The Rebecca Rioter* (1880) by the Welsh novelist Amy Dillwyn (1845-1935) and this lecture will focus on Wales).

Biographical note: Professor Kirsti Bohata works in the field of Welsh writing in English from the nineteenth century to the present, and has published on postcolonial theory, queer literature, disability studies, literary geography. Her most recent books are an anthology of queer short stories from Wales (from 1840 to the present), co-edited with Mihangel Morgan and Huw Osborne, *Queer Square Mile: Queer Short Stories from Wales* (2022) and a co-authored book on *Disability in Industrial Britain: a cultural and literary history of impairment in the coal industry 1880-1948* (Manchester University Press, 2020) which is fully open access. She is Co-Director of CREW (the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales) and Director of CARN, the Climate Action Research Network at Swansea University and leads the pan-Wales Narrating Rural Change network. External roles include co-Chair of the Association for Welsh Writing in English, co-Chair of the Wales Arts and Humanities Alliance and advisory roles for the Arts and Humanities Research Council and UKRI. She has just completed a scholarly edition of Amy Dillwyn's (abridged) diaries and (nearly completed) a monograph on Dillwyn's fiction and is running a project on hedgerows.

1A. CRISES: PERSONAL AND POLITICAL, THEN AND NOW

- Martin Danahay (Brock, Canada): 'Shooting Soldiers: Crimea 1855 / Iraq 2003'
- Sophie Franklin (University of Reading & University College Dublin): 'Inheritance or Contagion? Violent Events in Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*'
- Ruth Derham (Independent): 'The Victorian in Relation to the Contemporary: Decadent Divorce versus Digital Divorce'
- Isaac Linton Clewes (Málaga University): '(Neo-) Decadent Style and Dystopian Aesthetics in Will Self's *Dorian: An Imitation*'

Martin Danahay (Brock, Canada): 'Shooting Soldiers: Crimea 1855 / Iraq 2003'

Abstract: Roger Fenton in 1855 took the first photographs of the British army's daily activities during the Crimean War (1853-6); the newspaper *The Scottish Daily Record* in 2003 published *Shot and Captured*, a book of photographs documenting the participation of the Scots Dragoon Guards battlegroup in the invasion of Iraq as part of combined forces from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Poland. The way in which the British military is represented in both cases has not changed even though 149 years and many developments in technology separate Fenton's photographs of the British Army in 1855 from those taken in 2003. Absent from both sets of photographs were any dead or wounded British soldiers as the photographers focused instead on scenes of everyday military life. The exclusion of such images was not the result of a direct edict but rather a voluntary alignment with the foreign policy of the government. The use of 'shooting' in the title *Shot and Captured* as both photographing and firing a gun inadvertently recalls the work of Paul Virilio on the way in which the camera has been used as an extension of military strategy and became a 'weapon'. The implicit prohibition against showing dead bodies disappeared in British coverage of the Indian rebellion in 1858 and media coverage of the war in Ukraine in 2022 when the foreign policy objectives of the government changed.

Biographical note: Martin Danahay is Professor of English at Brock University, Canada. He is the author most recently of *War Without Bodies: Framing Death from the Crimean to the Iraq War* (Rutgers University Press, 2022). With Ann Howey he has co-edited the forthcoming *Neo-Victorianism and Medievalism* collection of essays (Brill, 2024). He has published numerous articles on a variety of topics in Victorian culture including the working-class body in *Jekyll and Hyde*, H. G. Wells and eugenics and the Russian view of the 'Charge of the Light Brigade'. He has also published articles on neo-Victorian subjects such as gender in steampunk, steampunk as a post-industrial aesthetic and Donald J. Trump's neo-Gothic toxic masculinity.

Sophie Franklin (University of Reading & University College Dublin): 'Inheritance or Contagion? Violent Events in Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*'

Abstract: Physical violence is now viewed globally as a public health crisis that can be treated like a contagious disease, with the World Health Organisation declaring violence a major 'health burden' in 2002. Yet connections between violence and contagion are not new. Within English-language contexts, what I call the 'violence as contagious' narrative crystallised in the nineteenth century, partly due to a simultaneous shift in cultural understandings of both violence and disease in the period. This paper considers the 'violence as contagious' narrative through an exploration of Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896), particularly its representation of events such as gathering crowds and street fights. The novel follows the titular child, Dicky Perrott, as he attempts to navigate the world of the Jago, an East End London slum mirrored on the Old Nichol which was a community notorious for its violence, ill-health, and non-conformity to wider Victorian ideals. Although Morrison humanises Dicky and contextualises his struggles, he ultimately depicts the Jago population as 'rats' bred only for Jago life. In the novel, as well as in contemporary interviews given in the aftermath of its publication, Morrison invokes the spectre of eugenics to argue that the 'cure' for places like the Jago is penal settlements, sterilisation, and, ultimately, death. Yet, in a review titled 'A Slum Novel', published in November 1896, H. G. Wells – who also held racist and eugenicist views – rejects Morrison's suggestion that the Jago is a 'black inheritance'; rather, for Wells, 'it is a black contagion'. Through close readings of violent events in *A Child of the Jago*, this paper teases out the implications of viewing violence as contagious rather than as inherited, reflecting on ongoing efforts to position violence as a communicable disease in the process.

Biographical note: Previously a lecturer at LMU Munich, Dr Sophie Franklin recently started a new position as an IRC and MSCA postdoctoral researcher at University College Dublin and the University of Reading, as part of the new DOROTHY programme. Her research explores representations of violence in long

nineteenth-century literature and culture, with a current focus on the ‘violence as contagious’ narrative from the late eighteenth century to the present. Her work has appeared in journals including *Brontë Studies*, *Neo-Victorian Studies*, and the *Journal of Victorian Culture*; and her monograph, *Violence and the Brontës: Language, Reception, Afterlives*, is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press in 2025. She is also the author of *Charlotte Brontë Revisited: A View from the Twenty-First Century* and is an Associate Editor for *Brontë Studies*.

Ruth Derham (Independent): ‘The Victorian in Relation to the Contemporary: Decadent Divorce versus Digital Divorce’

Abstract: In April 2024, the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act (2020), that removed all fault from divorce in England and Wales and introduced significant procedural changes, will have been operational for two years. Critics have argued that it was enacted without principle or forethought, reducing marriage to the status of ‘a tenancy contract’ and making it ‘less binding than a car lease’. Available data suggests that its early impact in terms of quantity of applications is minimal compared with previous divorce law reforms but, more significantly, that 95% of all applications are now processed digitally with a quarter made jointly, online, under the guidance of a single solicitor (if any). Though procedurally such practice was beyond the imagination of Victorian legislators, the concept of no-fault divorce was not. It horrified them and led to the passing in 1857 of the least permissive divorce law possible.

This paper will reflect on a time when divorce was considered a decadence and examine the effects of the ‘draconian’ Victorian law on those who sought the court’s relief; a law that pitched spouse against spouse, often in very public and bitter courtroom battles. It will follow the 1886 petition of a Cardiff labourer’s wife from its filing to its outcome and compare it with the experiences of petitioners from other classes to draw into focus some of the law’s inherent inequities and hardships. It will demonstrate how press reporting, encouraged as a deterrent, translated abstract legal terms such as ‘cruelty’ or ‘desertion’ into relatable living examples to an increasingly literate and scandalised readership, and consider the consequences of this, alongside the influence of church and state in a series of reforms that culminated in the system of divorce we have today.

Biographical note: A former a healthcare professional and lecturer at the University of West London, Ruth Derham has spent the last eight years immersed in the Victorian divorce court, focusing in particular on individuals’ experiences of the court system and more generally on changing attitudes to marriage and divorce. Her interest in the divorce court was sparked by the intriguing story of Bertrand Russell’s older brother Frank, whose 10-year battle to free himself from an unfortunate 3-month marriage is the subject of her first book, *Bertrand’s Brother: The Marriages, Morals and Misdemeanours of Frank, 2nd Earl Russell* (Amberley, 2021). Ruth has also edited a volume of Russell’s writings and speeches and co-edited *The Complete Winchester Letters of Lionel Johnson* (Snuggly, 2024) with Dr Sarah Green of Cambridge - an expansion of Russell’s 1918 heavily edited version. Her most recent book, *Decadent Divorce: Scandal and Sensation in Victorian Britain*, was published in May 2024. Ruth has published articles in *Women in History* and the journals of the Bertrand Russell and George Santayana Societies, and has delivered talks to these and other organisations, including the H.G. Wells Society. She is currently working on an alternative interpretation of the famous Crawford/Dilke Divorce Scandal of 1886 and gathering data on bigamy proceedings, 1670-1914.

Isaac Linton Clewes (Málaga University): ‘(Neo-) Decadent Style and Dystopian Aesthetics in Will Self’s *Dorian: An Imitation*’

Abstract: Neo-Victorianism, as a literary genre, has become prevalent in the twenty-first century due to its praxis of ‘writing back’ to the nineteenth century as a means of both addressing present-day concerns, and re-assessing our relationship with the past and how it is portrayed in fiction and text. Nowadays, it has seemingly moved away from postmodern textual games that foreground artifice and textuality in the vein of Linda Hutcheon’s historiographic metafiction, in order to uncover the historical referent as a means of resisting both the commodification and fetishisation of the historical object under capitalism.

However, such a practice becomes problematic when (re-)assessing late nineteenth century *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, which is defined by its transgressive queerness, self-conscious artistry and artifice, and a paradoxical rejection and acceptance of consumerism through the archetype of the dandy. This mirrors late twentieth-century postmodernism, which is typically considered by its critics to also be ‘decadent’ due to its inwardness and its assimilation into capitalism. Will Self’s *Dorian* – a contemporary Neo-Victorian novel

that retells Oscar Wilde's original text – emphasises the dyadic relationship between the 1890s and the 1980s, both periods representing 'decadence' as both a literary-historical moment and the broader notion of societal decline.

Therefore, through my paper, I argue that Will Self intentionally uses postmodern aesthetics to ironically criticise the superficiality of postmodern culture, thus invoking dystopian aesthetics using heightened style, ambiguity, and textual artifice. Furthermore, I argue that the novel marks the burgeoning of a twenty-first century literary practice called 'Neo-Decadence', which embodies the intentional foregrounding of self-conscious style as a means of critiquing contemporary consumerism. In other words, I argue that both postmodern techniques and dystopian aesthetics have revolutionary potential through their critiques of the dominant cultural hegemony, and that the construction of an ontology for 'decadent style' further contributes to the understanding of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics.

Biographical note:

Isaac Linton Clewes is a graduate student born in Britain and based in Spain, who specialises in (Neo-)Victorianism, Decadence, modernism, and critical theory. He has recently graduated with honours and a distinction from the University of Málaga with an MA in English Studies, having written and successfully defended his thesis. His MA dissertation – entitled 'Neo-Decadence, Effeminacy, and the Question of Futurity in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* and Will Self's *Dorian*' – passed with honours. Furthermore, prior to his MA, he completed his BA in English Studies at the University of Málaga with honours, and has received the Bachelor's Degree Extraordinary Award for outstanding academic achievement. During these four years, he has collaborated as a member of the university's writing centre, and he has contributed to the LGBT+ COST Action movement as an assistant organiser. He is now embarking on his doctoral thesis, which he will apply for in September.

1B. CELEBRITY LIFE-WRITING

- Lucia Cowen (Cardiff): 'The Spectacular Event of the Bankrupt Dandy: Henry Cyril Paget and his Decadent Things'
- Aaron Eames (Leicester): 'The Death of a Poet: Remembering Wilde'
- Sylvia Mieszkowski (Vienna): 'Illicit Desire Made Visible: Empress Elisabeth and Bay Middleton in Neo-Victorian Biofiction'
- Liam Billingsley (Cardiff): '"In Pain, In Perplexity, Under Duress": Diane Setterfield's *The Thirteenth Tale* and the Trauma of Neo-Victorian Fictional Life-Writing'

Lucia Cowen (Cardiff): 'The Spectacular Event of the Bankrupt Dandy: Henry Cyril Paget and his Decadent Things'

Abstract: Objects played a pivotal role in communicating the relationship between people and things at the fin de siècle. Events such as the Great Exhibition signalled an object's worth in Victorian society and flirted with concepts of value and ownership. Deborah Wynne argues that ownership is 'one of the most socially and politically important ways of relating to objects.' Yet, for the Fifth Marquis of Anglesey, ownership was not enough – ordinary objects were refashioned by him to become 'bewildering decadent things' that he lived around, through and embodied. His love of extravagance and excess led to his spectacular ruin. Within only a few years of his succession to the title of Marquis of Anglesey, he sensationally squandered an entire inheritance and accumulated debts of £500,000 - the equivalent in today's money of a staggering £44,000,000.

In this paper, I take the event of one of the largest bankruptcy sales in Wales, The Anglesey Sales, to explore how decadent things brought forward the transgressive identity of the Marquis. An event of public sensation, news of his lustrous objects rang from the grounds that housed the druidical cromlechs to the far corners of the world. An illuminous display of ornate clothing, dazzling jewellery, and other decadent objects, including a vast collection of dogs collars, 'set with the brilliance of amethysts, turquoise and pearls' were auctioned. The public was transfixed. Reports rang with fervour from the Sales of the Marquis' excessive tastes that 'drew near insanity.' Such an event offers fresh insight into the ways Victorians, and specifically a facet of Welsh society, used 'decadent things' to challenge social conventions and transgress identities through fetishized crossings.

Biographical note: Lucia Cowen is AHRC funded PhD student in the Department of English Communication and Philosophy at Cardiff and Exeter Universities. She is a member of both BADS and BAVS. Her thesis examines the spectrum of Welsh fin de-siècle Decadence through her case study the Fifth

Marquis of Anglesey and her research interests include literary and visual decadence and decadent neo interpretations of gender and class

Aaron Eames (Leicester): ‘The Death of a Poet: Remembering Wilde’

Abstract: Taking the ‘event’ of the writer Oscar Wilde’s premature death in exile in Paris on 30 November 1900, this paper will explore twentieth-century poetic responses to this unexpected and tragic occurrence. I will examine several different poetic interpretations of Wilde’s death, asking why poetry is the preferred medium, how they interact with Wilde’s own work and the work of preceding poets, and how the poems mediate and manipulate our understanding of Wilde’s personality and significance to posterity. Specifically, I will compare and contrast Lord Alfred Douglas’s ‘The Dead Poet’ (1901), J. M. Stuart-Young’s ‘To the Dead Poet’ (1905)/‘A Dead Poet’ (1909), ‘The Death of Oscar Wilde’ (1948) by William R. Johnson, and Leonard R. N. Ashley’s ‘The Death of Oscar Wilde’ (1965). Aside from Douglas’s these poems have received little critical attention, John Betjeman’s poem on Wilde’s arrest tending to dominate this field. The poems display a range of tones, styles and forms including sonnet, quatrain, and free verse. I will also explore the context in which these works operate. For instance, Douglas’s work reveals his heartfelt anguish, something he would vehemently deny just a few years later, even in court, and Johnson’s publication in the aftermath of World War II interacts with the renegotiation of the cultural significance of Wilde’s life and legacy in the wake of the adaptation of his writings into film, the popular staging of his plays with royal patronage, and the publication of Hesketh Pearson’s landmark biography. This paper represents work in progress in my current research on Wilde’s depiction in poetry.

Biographical note: Dr Aaron Eames is Programme Leader for the Foundation Year in Society & Culture at University of Leicester Global Study Centre. Eames is a committee member of the Oscar Wilde Society UK and edits their regular e-newsletter, *Oscariana*. He has published work in *The Wildean: A Journal of Oscar Wilde Studies*, *Victoriographies*, *Romance, Revolution and Reform* and, with Dr Tom Ue, *The Routledge Handbook of Victorian Scandals in Literature and Culture*.

Sylvia Mieszkowski (Vienna): ‘Illicit Desire Made Visible: Empress Elisabeth and Bay Middleton in Neo-Victorian Biofiction’

Abstract: Two biographical novels about the Empress auf Austria-Hungary – Daisy Goodwin’s *The Fortune Hunter* (2014) and Allison Pataki’s *Sisi: Empress on her Own* (2016) – feature the Elisabeth’s hunting holidays in the UK. My talk analyses one moment from each text in which the doubly illicit desire between Sisi and Bay Middleton, the man who acted as her pilot, when she was riding in Britain, becomes visible or is made invisible. Goodwin’s novel is focalised by Bay’s bride, Charlotte Baird, a hobby-photographer. She takes a picture that captures her infatuated fiancé looking at the Empress, which finds its way into a photographic exhibition, where it causes a sensation. In Pataki’s novel, focalised by the Empress, Sisi’s maids of honour keep warning her that she does not hide her sexual attraction to Bay enough. On a visit to Hungary, where Emperor Franz Joseph has invited his wife’s English friends, Bay goes missing for days in Budapest, until a telegram announces that he has been arrested, having been robbed by a prostitute. What interests me in connection with both events is their visual economy. In Goodwin’s novel, Queen Victoria and Sisi’s grown-up son see the photograph in Bay’s presence, framed by Charlotte’s second order observation. In Pataki’s text, Sisi’s former lover, Count Andrassy, lowers his eyes, as she reacts to the telegramme, while her husband is blinded by tears of laughter. Combining Alain Badiou’s definition of the event as ‘social disruption’ with Lauren Berlant’s concept of ‘intimate publics’, my talk investigates these moments of in_visibilising desire intersectionally, focussing on class, age, gender and sexuality. I argue that both novels strategically de- and re-exceptionalise Sisi by presenting middle class normality as a privilege out of reach due to the dominating event of her life that lies beyond the narrative horizon of either novel: becoming Empress.

Biographical Information: Sylvia Mieszkowski is Professor of British Literature at the University of Vienna with interests in Gender Studies, neo-Victorian biofiction, and refugee literature. These are testified to by publications on: “Transparent and the optics of gender(ed) identity.” *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 32, no. 8, 2023, pp.1–12, “Polymath Revisited: Cross-Lighting R.F. Burton between Cultural Passing and Steampunk Action” in: *Neo-Victorian Biofiction: Re-Imagining 19th Century Historical Subjects* eds. M.L. Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, Leiden: Brill/Rodopi. (2020), 265–293 and “In_Visibilizing stress: *Refugee Tales* as a counter-apparatus.” *European Journal of Life Writing*, vol. XII (2023), 77–99. Her current research project expands on neo-Victorian biofiction (on Mary Anning, Julia Margaret Cameron, Empress Elisabeth

of Austria-Hungary, E.M. Forster, Henry James and Oscar Wilde) and focuses on issues of visibility and invisibility in connection with gender and desire. The proposed paper grows out of in this research context.

Liam Billingsley (Cardiff): “In Pain, In Perplexity, Under Duress”: Diane Setterfield’s *The Thirteenth Tale* and the Trauma of Neo-Victorian Fictional Life-Writing’

Abstract: This paper seeks to recognise and explore the different levels of struggle in Setterfield's *The Thirteenth Tale* (2006) that are presented through the theme of fictional life writing. In some cases, as illuminated by biographer Margaret Lea and author Vida Winter's developing relationship, the trauma is personal, suppressed and exclusively textual. In other instances, the trauma extends into an external, broader crisis with the novel's celebrity status as a neo-Victorian text.

In this paper, I unite these levels of trauma to consider how the text balances, addresses, and resolves both its internal and external struggles. In the first section, I examine how Setterfield persistently unites Margaret and Vida in order to allow both characters to confront their personal trauma. Margaret has built a career writing about others, instead of herself. By encountering Vida, she finally embraces the loss of her conjoined twin. Meanwhile, Vida lives her life as a celebrity to hide from the personal trauma she is masking. Gradually, she destroys the veil of performativity in an effort to confront her past. Then, in the second section, I turn to the text's overarching struggle with its status as a neo-Victorian novel. Similar to a life writer, this book plays the role of something that it can never fully embrace or understand. By adopting some of the themes from Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and by forging an intertextual connection with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Setterfield validates the text's neo-Victorian identity. Elsewhere, in an effort to feel further reminiscent of the Victorian period, Margaret's fascination with Victorian writing constantly bombards Setterfield's readership with references to iconic texts. Through both levels of trauma, I aim to show how neo-Victorian literature uses fictional life writing to present its own, internalised problems, before querying its life and identity within the literary genre.

Biographical note: Liam (he / him) is a first-year PhD student at Cardiff University. His current research interests include the history of religion, illustration studies, and book history. Utilising these interests, his thesis examines the pictorial afterlives of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* that have been produced between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries. Prior to undertaking PhD study, Liam previously completed both his BA in English Language and Literature, and MA in English Literature, at Cardiff University. Alongside his studies, he is also dedicated to the wide variety of programmes offered by the University's Widening Participation and Outreach team, which support underrepresented and underprivileged young people who have an interest in higher education.

2A. COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS AND IDENTITY: PERSONAL AND PRIVATE WRITING

- Ayaka Komiya (Meiji University, Tokyo): ‘Letters to the *Times* from Crimea’
- Rosie Blacher (Kingston): ‘Sensory Experience at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition 1886’
- Himan Heidari (Roehampton): “‘I Almost Began to Think I Were a Person’: Gertrude Bell’s Ambivalent Identity Performance’

Ayaka Komiya (Meiji University, Tokyo): ‘Letters to the *Times* from Crimea’

Abstract: The Victorians were avid letter writers. Since the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840, the number of letters being sent increased dramatically from about 76 million in 1839 to 169 million in 1840, then 2.3 billion in 1901. Therefore, it was natural that many letters were sent to/from the battlefield of Crimea when the war broke out in 1853.

My paper will focus on the letters from Crimea sent to *The Times* newspaper. They include letters from soldiers to the editor of *The Times*, as well as the dispatches from William Howard Russell, the first war correspondent. These letters played a significant role in forming public opinion at home, which resulted in sending Florence Nightingale and her nurses. Letters from a soldier asking for a recipe of a nice soup that can be cooked with his ration food urged the celebrity chef Alexis Soyer to travel all the way to help soldiers with their cooking. The letters to *The Times* became the impetus for *The Times* fund, which in fact turned out to be more useful than the government money.

Biographical note: Born in Saitama, Japan, in 1971. BA & MA in English, Keio University, Tokyo; MA in Victorian Studies, Leicester University; completed Doctoral course, Keio University. Research interests mainly in Victorian literature. I have been interested in the role of letters during the Crimean war. My most recent work is on Florence Nightingale and *The Times* fund.

Rosie Blacher (Kingston): ‘Sensory Experience at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition 1886’

Abstract: This paper will consider the publication of T. N. Mukharji’s account of his experiences at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition which took place in London between May and October 1886. First published in Indian newspapers and later compiled to form a collection entitled *A Visit to Europe* in 1902, Mukharji’s writings subvert dominant colonial narratives of Western perspectives of travel and instead offer an underrepresented viewpoint of Britain through the eyes of a visitor. Particular consideration will be given to the depiction of sensory engagement with place and Mukharji’s work will be analysed alongside other accounts of the simulated travel experience available at the exhibition.

This paper forms part of a larger piece of work which considers how writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century illustrate travel as an affective encounter that anticipates contemporary affective ecocriticism and contributes to emerging ecocritical discourses which emphasise the importance of anthropocentric power structures. While these texts often uphold dominant imperial attitudes, they simultaneously expose sensory engagement as a route to empathetic relations between the environment and humans, complicating colonial, economic and gendered ideologies. Understanding such encounters offers new material to consider the relationship between human and environment as an essential feature of environmental justice.

Biographical note: I am currently a second year PhD student at Kingston University, London, studying English Literature. My project has the working title of ‘Sensory Experience in the Contact Zone 1870-1936’ and examines the depiction of sensory experience in both fictional and non-fictional accounts of travel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have been awarded the AHRC Techne studentship for my doctoral studies and have most recently presented at a Victorian Popular Fiction Association study day which explored nineteenth century travel in Egypt. Prior to beginning my current programme of studies, I was awarded a first class Bachelor of Arts degree with honours in English Literature from Kingston University and an MA in English Literary Studies from the University of Exeter.

Himan Heidari (Roehampton): “I Almost Began to Think I Were a Person”: Gertrude Bell’s Ambivalent Identity Performance’

Abstract: What does it mean to be a ‘Person?’ Gertrude Bell’s gender (re)construction journey from her early travels to Persia until her later foray into the political scenes of the Middle East in the long Victorian era shows a cyclical evolution from an uncertain ambivalent persona into a strong political figure, commentator, mapmaker, kingmaker, and adventurer, among other roles, only to return once again to a lost and ambivalent soul. This shows that Bell’s representation of her gender does not adhere to a static enactment of societal roles but rather it is expressed to the extent that it is performed. This paper is a close reading of the *Letters of Gertrude Bell* in order to comprehend the motivations and implications behind Bell’s adoption of the concept of ‘becoming a Person’ and its connection to her performance of gender identity. Employing Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, I argue that Bell’s concept of ‘becoming a Person’ is a performative act that is understood through a process of repetition. The gender performativity allows us to better understand Bell’s idea of ‘becoming a Person’ which can be both a means of challenging the prevailing gender norms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and/or gaining recognition through negotiating her gender in male-dominated spheres, thus fashioning a gender identity that is ultimately ambivalent. Studying the fragmented and ambivalent identities provides insight on the influence of gender on ambivalence, speaking to our interest in complex/ ambivalent identities today. This paper is part of a PhD project on British women’s travel writing and performativity, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and is currently underway at Roehampton University, London.

Biographical note: Himan Heidari is PhD candidate (Techne funded) in English Literature at the University of Roehampton, London. His project explores neglected texts by well-known (Gertrude Bell and Isabella Bird) and lesser-known (Freya Stark and M.E Hume-Griffith) female travel writers. It examines the opportunities British women embraced when travelling to the Kurdistan over a 50-year period (1890–1940), recording their observations of Kurdish people and other ethnic groups, while performing their ambivalent gender identities. As a student of literature, Himan also finds great pleasure in the art of literary translation and creative writing.

2B. WATER ENVIRONMENTS : POLLUTION VS LIBERATION

- Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi (Bath Spa): ‘The Eventfulness of Nature: Victorian Women and the Seashore’
- Joan Passey (Bristol): ‘Queer Ecologies of the Nineteenth-Century Coast’
- Kaya Purchase (Liverpool): ‘Walls of Snow and Crystal: How Richard Jefferies’ Post-Apocalyptic London Condemns the Industrial Pollution of English Rivers’

Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi (Bath Spa): ‘The Eventfulness of Nature: Victorian Women and the Seashore’

Abstract: Natural history was often promoted as a leisure pursuit for both men and women in the Victorian period. It combined outdoor pleasure, curiosity and natural theology. One branch of this fascination was marine biology and the littoral space of the seashore, full of exotic yet everyday creatures. Key to its appeal was its role as a living, ever changing space, departing from a natural history that, as Phillip Gosse put it, was ‘too much a science of dead things. . . mainly conversant with dry skins, furred or feathered, blackened, shrivelled, and hay-stuffed’. This paper will explore women’s engagement with the seashore in the 1850s and 1860s as part of the broader taste for the eventfulness of nature that drove the growth of Victorian popular science. Amateur female naturalists were able to recreate their enamoured experiences of the seashore through the latest fashionable accoutrement for the home, the marine aquarium. The coast would no longer be a peripheral or remote space, but became mobile, eventful and reproducible, part of the domestic interior as a living souvenir from their naturalist expeditions. The impetus to reproduce the beauty of the natural world within the Victorian home might have satisfied a familiar drive to observe, domesticate, and conserve nature. But it was precisely its eventfulness that led to the rewilding of the domestic interior. Many hours women spent studying and arranging the specimens. As Adamowsky notes, their ‘mimic oceans’ offered ‘a theatre of exotic forms that were perpetually changing, a continuum of the strangest metamorphoses and paradoxical symbioses’. It is precisely because they oscillated between the exotic and the everyday, domestication and rewilding that narratives of women’s engagement with natural history can help us to rethink their identities as part of a multispecies community.

Biographical note: Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Bath Spa University. She is currently working on a research project on Victorian women and the natural world, provisionally titled, *Nature on the Move: Patterns of Female Collecting in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Her current research explores the different ways that women brought nature into their homes and the role it has played in the reconfiguration of their identity as part of a multispecies community. It builds on her published research on Victorian women, work and art, which includes *Crafting the Woman Professional in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Routledge, 2013), *What is a Woman to Do? A Reader on Women, Work and Art, c.1830-1890* (Peter Lang, 2011) and *Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material* (Palgrave, 2007); as well as her funded public engagement project, *Science at the Seaside: Pleasure Hunts in North Devon* (2014) and related publications.

Joan Passey (Bristol): ‘Queer Ecologies of the Nineteenth-Century Coast’

Abstract: We can see queer ecological energies in the coasts of Romantic and Gothic authors like Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Smith, and Mary Shelley, and this is concretized by authors like Wilkie Collins and Thomas Hardy into the latter part of the nineteenth century. We cannot separate the coast as a space of queer liberation from the foundations of the Victorian seaside town as motivated by leisure, labour, economics, and class politics. The birth of the Great British seaside town is inextricable from changing ideas of public and private, queerness and sexuality, emerging tourist economies, moral panic and increased secularisation, industrial revolution, environmental consciousness, and new conceptions of health, contagion, purity. This paper establishes Wilkie Collins and Thomas Hardy’s Victorian coast as a site of transgression and anxiety that lends itself to a queer imaginary

Biographical note: Dr Joan Passey is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Bristol where she specialises in Victorian coasts and seascapes; Cornwall and regional literatures; and the Gothic from the eighteenth century to the present. Their monograph, *Cornish Gothic*, was released by University of Wales Press in 2023. They have released anthologies with the British Library and regularly contribute to and present BBC Radio 3 programmes.

Kaya Purchase (Independent / Liverpool): ‘Walls of Snow and Crystal: How Richard Jefferies’ Post-Apocalyptic London Condemns the Industrial Pollution of English Rivers’

Abstract: Richard Jefferies’ 1885 speculative novel, *After London*, portrays a future London as a partially submerged wasteland of noxious fumes and poisonous chemicals. With the intention of inciting fear in his Victorian readers, hoping that such fear would lead to environmental consciousness, Jefferies harnesses the Evangelical apocalyptic vision to present a particularly bleak dystopian landscape. He hoped such a terrifying portent would raise awareness about the pollution of the River Thames and what he considered to be the inadequacy of Sir Joseph Bazalgette’s 1856 improvement of London’s sewage system. His unique portrayal of a post-apocalyptic London speculates just how uninhabitable the city would be if its factories continued to deposit industrial waste into its waterways.

An 1875 report for *The Saturday Review*, ‘Mining and Metal Pollution of Rivers’ details the different types of deposits that contaminate the rivers of England. In reading this article, one can draw parallels between the imagery used by Jefferies and the effect certain deposits had on water quality. For example, Jefferies’ repeated emphasis that the water surrounding his submerged city is black and red mirrors *The Saturday Review* article’s description of the impact of the coal industry on rivers in Chesterfield. A comparative reading of the texts also suggests that the unusual edifices that populate *After London*’s otherwise desolate landscape, ‘brittle as glass, and merely a white powder having no consistency at all’ could represent arsenic contamination.’ [p.183] ‘Mining and Metal Pollution of Rivers’ states that during the 1870s it was common practise for arsenic to be discharged into rivers as part of the process of mining and producing iron, copper, and coal.

My paper will explore the imagery used by Jefferies and how it relates to industrial water contamination, paying particular attention to *After London*’s representation of arsenic as a corrosive and poisonous pollutant.

Biographical note: I am a freelance writer and English Literature MA student at the University of Liverpool. Although I chose a General Pathway MA, because I enjoy connecting and comparing an eclectic range of literary genres, many of my chosen modules have been Victorian. My particular areas of interest are the Victorian gothic and postcolonialism. I am fascinated by texts that concern themselves with environmental issues through a neo-colonial lens or that explore the intersection between literature and human rights. In my spare time I write creative pieces, primarily short stories. I intend to continue my studies at the University of Liverpool next year as a PhD student.

2C. CONAN DOYLE/SHERLOCK HOLMES

- Emily Vincent (Birmingham): “‘A Serious Epidemic’: Influenza and Alterity in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Fin-de-Siècle Fiction”
- Lucy Andrew (Chester): “‘Carefully Cultivated Obscurity’: Sherlock Holmes, Professor Moriarty and the Myth of Jack the Ripper in Michael Dibdin’s *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*”
- Akira Suwa (Doshisha University, Japan): ‘Holmes in “Victorian Kyoto”: Metafictionality and “Fauxstalgic” Longing in Tomihiko Morimi’s *The Triumphant Return of Sherlock Holmes* (2024)’

Emily Vincent (Birmingham): “‘A Serious Epidemic’: Influenza and Alterity in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Fin-de-Siècle Fiction”

Abstracts: In this paper, I review two of Arthur Conan Doyle’s fin-de-siècle tales to identify the criminalised and othering language of respiratory contagion, specifically of influenza, which permeates his fiction. While close reading influenza as a metaphor and motif, I consider its presence in light of the 1899 ‘Russian Flu’ epidemic and Doyle’s own lived experiences of the virus. I consider influenza as a lens through which to view the marginalising nature of literary disease motifs, particularly in relation to the colonial Other, while highlighting the hitherto neglected impact of influenza on Doyle’s fin-de-siècle oeuvre.

Virginia Woolf once lamented that fiction ‘devoted to influenza lacked plot’, yet this paper will stress that Doyle’s masterful combination of Gothic invasion fiction and medicalised disease narratives suggests otherwise. I centralise ‘The Story of the Brown Hand’ (1899) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901–02) as texts which suggest influenza as a Gothic and criminal threat. I place them in the context of contemporaneous periodicals which personified viruses to conflate disease, crime, and alterity. In ‘The Story of the Brown Hand’, a ‘nebulous’ racialised ghost stalks two medical men before the demise of the infected protagonist, while hints of a ‘serious epidemic’ haunt Doyle’s Gothic Sherlock Holmes tale.

I close by drawing parallels between the historic and continued foreign othering of contagious respiratory illnesses. While the Victorians characterised the so-called ‘Russian Flu’ as a foreign ‘invader’, this condemnatory naming is far from obsolete, as seen with COVID-19’s etymology as the ‘Wuhan Coronavirus’ and the renaming of variants to discourage stigmatising their perceived countries of origin. Reading Doyle’s narratives amongst modern epidemic events underscores a critical lens which looks to historic disease narratives to evaluate how epidemics were, are, and could be, imaginatively represented, while stressing caution against alienating language which conflates infection and geography.

Lucy Andrew (Chester): “Carefully Cultivated Obscurity”: Sherlock Holmes, Professor Moriarty and the Myth of Jack the Ripper in Michael Dibdin’s *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*

Abstract: This paper examines one of the earliest confrontations between famous fictional detective Sherlock Holmes and his infamous real-life criminal contemporary, Jack the Ripper, in Michael Dibdin’s *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* (1978). Dismissed by Gary Coville and Patrick Luciano as ‘a particularly radical if not heretical novel’ on account of its shocking conclusion, this paper suggests that it is this very conclusion – that Holmes, in his schizophrenic alter ego of Moriarty, is the Ripper – that makes this such a significant text in the Holmes/Ripper canon. The paper will consider the effects of blurring fact and fiction in the narrative, both as a way to lend authenticity to Holmes’s fictional world and to draw attention to the reality of Jack the Ripper’s status as a mythic construction, a bogeyman created by the London press. It will then examine how the Ripper’s representation as Moriarty in Dibdin’s novel ties in with the representation of Doyle’s original Moriarty as a Ripper-like figure, a Gothic monster created to dispose of the rational detective, and with the Ripper’s Gothic origins in the press and early Ripper fiction. The Holmes/Moriarty doubling in Dibdin’s novel draws upon Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), a text which clearly influenced early constructions of the Ripper. Yet, in a similar vein to Robert Bloch’s *Psycho* (1959), Dibdin’s novel focuses on rational psychological explanations for criminal activity and develops this model further by blurring the boundaries between the criminal and the detective, several years before this technique became popularised by serial-killer-thriller and psycho-horror narratives. Finally, the paper will consider how the sensational solution of Holmes/Moriarty as the Ripper connects with the rise of Ripperology in the 1970s and, in particular, the Royal conspiracy theory popularised by Stephen Knight’s *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (1976).

Biographical note: Lucy Andrew is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Chester. Her research specialisms are in crime fiction, children’s literature, young adult fiction, popular culture and creative writing. Her publications include *The Boy Detective in Early British Children’s Literature: Patrolling the Borders between Boyhood and Manhood*, *Crime Fiction in the City: Capital Crimes* (co-edited with Catherine Phelps) and *The Detective’s Companion in Crime Fiction: A Study in Sidekicks* (co-edited with Samuel Saunders). She has appeared on the Jack the Ripper episodes of Murder Maps (3DD Productions, Season 5, Episodes 1 and 2) and on Rippercast, the Jack the Ripper podcast. She has also spoken about Jack the Ripper at the Wolverhampton Literature Festival, on BBC Radio Shropshire, the Essex Ghost Hunters Radio Show on Pulse Talk Radio and has delivered a guest lecture on Jack the Ripper for the University of Liverpool.

Akira Suwa (Doshisha University, Japan): ‘Holmes in “Victorian Kyoto”: Metafictionality and “Fauxstalgic” Longing in Tomihiko Morimi’s *The Triumphant Return of Sherlock Holmes* (2024)’

Abstract: Tomihiko Morimi’s novel *The Triumphant Return of Sherlock Holmes* (2024) begins with John Watson’s introduction of the eponymous detective as the best in and around the city of ‘Victorian Kyoto’. Morimi not only replaces the streets in London with the ones in Kyoto and retains all the character names from Conan Doyle’s original stories, but also brings to the fore its complex narrative structure, which serves to disrupt the relationship between order and disorder, reality and fiction, the centre and the peripheral.

Morimi’s novel consists of five chapters, and the first four chapters are revealed to be the manuscript of a new Holmes story that the ‘original’ Watson in Victorian London is writing. While in reality Mary’s death sets Holmes and him apart, Watson attempts to imagine a different world in which to escape the present. In Watson’s story set in ‘Victorian Kyoto’, Holmes is in a slump because his deductions (in cases resembling ‘The Red-Headed League’, ‘The Man with the Twisted Lip’, and ‘The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle’) turned out to be nothing but his wild imagination. Setting the stories in London, a ‘fictional’ city for those in ‘Victorian Kyoto’, and reworking the endings of these stories in accordance with Holmes’s deductions, Watson actively intervenes in the process to re-establish Holmes’s status as the best detective and his own as

Holmes's biographer. 'Victorian Kyoto' thus represents Watson's longing for what they could have been. Also, by deploying multi-layered embedded narratives, Morimi situates 'Victorian Kyoto' in a complementary relationship with Victorian London.

This paper argues that metafictionality in Morimi's novel suggests a new way of examining how Japan is represented in neo-Victorian fiction, which can expand the scope of neo-Victorianism in Japan.

Biographical note: Akira Suwa is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Global Communications, Doshisha University, Japan. His research interests include neo-Victorianism, gender and sexuality studies, queer studies, and adaptation studies. In 2022, he co-edited a special issue of *Humanities* on neo-Victorian heterotopias with Marie-Luise Kohlke and Elizabeth Ho.

3A. NEW WOMEN AND NEW MEN

- Yanrui Cui (York): 'Marriage, Profession, and Happiness in Geraldine Jewsbury's *The Half Sisters*'
- Mei-Fang Chang (National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan): 'Events and Eventfulness: Revisiting Lona Hessel in Henrik Ibsen's *The Pillars of Society*'
- Sarah Alanazi (Cardiff): 'A (New) Man in Process: Victorian Masculinity and Feminism in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895)'
- Bridget Morgan (Aberystwyth): 'Female Ageing as an Event in Charlotte O'Connor Eccles' *The Rejuvenation of Miss Semaphore* (1897)'

Yanrui Cui (York): 'Marriage, Profession, and Happiness in Geraldine Jewsbury's *The Half Sisters*'

Abstract: This paper examines the representation of professional women in Geraldine Jewsbury's *The Half Sisters* (1848). It focuses on the tension between professional ambition and an orientation towards marital happiness in the characterisation of Bianca Pazzi, a respectable young woman of genius who works her way up from a circus performer to a successful actress. Her retirement from the stage to marry Lord Melton at the end of the novel was regarded as Jewsbury's unfortunate compromise of feminist principles by readers in the late twentieth century (Hatley, 1979; Wilkies, 1994; Surridge, 1995). However, recent developments in feminist theory and new definitions of gender invite a re-evaluation of Jewsbury as an unconventional feminist and the new direction that she provided for female characters in her novels (Bloom, 2020).

Drawing on Sara Ahmed's theory of happiness and feminism, this paper explores how Jewsbury affirms that professional women are worthy of domestic happiness and that their capabilities are subdued by conventions. By adapting the narrative of the *bildungsroman*, Jewsbury represents Bianca's marriage as not only a happy ending rewarding her virtue and effort but also an anticlimactic event highlighting the significance of her professional genius and achievements. This paper argues that, in *The Half Sisters*, Jewsbury pushes the narrative of happiness to the extreme, where it appears to lose the power of coherence. The inconsistency in Bianca's development affirms her role as an intermediary between the happy-in-the-end female protagonists in the early nineteenth century and the more pessimistic heroines in later novels. By reading Bianca as a synthesis of professional success and domestic happiness, this paper will contribute to the discussion about marriage in different forms of feminism in both the Victorian period and contemporary culture.

Biographical note: Yanrui Cui is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. She began her research in 2022, focusing on Victorian women's fiction, with a particular interest in the theme of self-sacrifice, marriage plots and feminist theory. She presented at the BAVS 2023 Conference on *Jane Eyre*. She holds a BA and an MA in English Language and Literature and a second BA in Philosophy, all from Peking University. As an undergraduate, she was selected for a one-term funded exchange programme to study at the University of Exeter.

Mei-Fang Chang (National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan): 'Events and Eventfulness: Revisiting Lona Hessel in Henrik Ibsen's *The Pillars of Society*'

Abstract: The Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen was both a notable and notorious influencer in raising feminist consciousness in the late Victorian period. Most of his heroines were coloured with feminist tints that called into question contemporary gender norms, despite Ibsen's denial of such an attempt. Leading the twelve major realistic prose dramas Ibsen wrote to form what he called 'an entity', *The Pillars of Society* (1877) has been given the least notice hitherto in critical scholarship. Its stage performance in London was even jeered as 'the pillows of society' (*Sunday Times* 1889). That said, the play has been seen as 'one of the most radically feminist works of the nineteenth century' (Templeton 1997). Its heroine Lona Hessel has

almost unanimously been accredited for her moral and feminist agencies, winning such appraisals as ‘the proto-New Woman’ (Shepherd-Barr 2018) and the play’s ‘raisonneur’ (Templeton 1997). Drawing on the genealogical development of Ibsen’s writing of the play in tandem with historical references to his connection with the contemporary women’s movement, this paper proposes a revisioning and reinterpreting of Lona. It argues that Ibsen’s representations of the events concerning Lona actually mirrored the liminal stance he held in the process of his conceptual transformation in the 1870s towards the Woman Question. These textual events, centralizing Lona’s reactions to trusteeship and railway project revelation as well as her self-imposed mothering and fantasized heroism, effectuate eventful junctures that throw into relief Ibsen’s subtle rendering of the moral basis of Lona, which in turn unearths the degree to which her feminist potency is performed. That is to say, Ibsen uses the eventfulness of these events to unfold the hidden truth of the real Lona, which literally contradicts the existing positive critical approvals of her. The paper suggests that Lona is nothing but Ibsen’s contra- and ad hoc mouthpiece, for she is a satirical specimen who can voice reason but who cannot act in accordance with reason. However, in view of the plot development and dramatic action, she is a Hobson’s choice Ibsen has to give the curtain line, ‘The spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom—they are the pillars of society’ (119), whereby he wants his readers and audiences to parse discreetly what truth and freedom actually are behind his surface representations of Lona. A delve into the textual events emplotted in the narrative within the contextual 1870s shall facilitate our understanding of ‘the Ibsen “boom”’ prevalent imminently at the *fin de siècle* (Stutfield 1897).

Biographical note: Mei-Fang Chang (folmfc@ccu.edu.tw) is Associate Professor at National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan. She received her PhD in English from the University of Wales Swansea (now Swansea University). Her research interests include Victorian literature and culture, the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman, gender and genre, women’s writing, and Henrik Ibsen.

Sarah Alanazi (Cardiff): ‘A (New) Man in Process: Victorian Masculinity and Feminism in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895)’

Abstract: The deconstruction of masculine identity in Victorian literature has received insufficient attention in critical studies until relatively recently. Thomas Hardy’s work offers a case study of a fictional experiment in portraying new forms of masculinity that is of its time but also out of time in terms of the fulfilment of its potential, specifically in his novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895). I introduce a characterological reading of the male identity depicted in Jude Fawley’s character as an early presence of the proto-New Man in the Victorian period. This discussion is concerned with how a New Masculinity is contextualised through a deeper understanding of the male character’s progressive mindset in relation to female unconventionality, which opens a space for rethinking masculine subjectivity.

Jude is not necessarily the absolute achievement of the New Man, but rather his character is a step towards an alternative understanding of Victorian manhood for future generations. This reading also untangles female influence as a main factor in shaping and destabilising Jude’s masculinity, especially through the female character Sue Bridehead. Rather than approaching Sue, Jude’s love interest, as a representative of New Womanhood, I suggest that her unconventionality is an embodiment of another form of (conventional) masculinity. Due to the problematic layers of their blurred gender identities, I argue that Jude’s and Sue’s attempts to contradict or undermine gender conventions often result in appropriating and representing conventional behavioural patterns of the other sex. Thus, Hardy’s characters do prove their worth as representations of some traits of New Manhood and New Womanhood, they also mirror repetitive attitudes of both conventional masculinity and femininity in a reversed or, to use an 1890s term, inverted, way.

Biographical note: I am a PhD Candidate in English Literature at Cardiff University. Having commenced my PhD in January 2023, I am currently embarking on the second year of this program. My research follows a new trend in the field of critical studies that is concerned with rethinking the ways in which masculinity has been depicted in English literature, particularly within Victorian novels. I aim to draw attention to the overlooked presence of unconventional male characters in mid to late Victorian texts, a debate that has been examined only recently. My thesis delves into the relationship between the creation of masculine identity in fiction and the presence of unconventional females. Specifically, I analyse the impact of unconventional femininity on reshaping Victorian masculinity to produce new forms, and vice versa, a phenomenon I refer to as the Victorian New Man.

Bridget Morgan (Aberystwyth): ‘Female Ageing as an Event in Charlotte O’Connor Eccles’ *The Rejuvenation of Miss Semaphore* (1897)’

Abstract: This paper considers how the event ‘middle age’ was defined for women during the fin de siècle. In her farcical novel, *The Rejuvenation of Miss Semaphore* (1897), the Irish journalist Charlotte O’Connor Eccles plays with the social pressures surrounding middle age in beauty culture. Through Augusta Semaphore’s failed rejuvenation into a newborn baby, the novel simultaneously captures how beauty products silence middle age and offers an alternative rejuvenation narrative.

Discussing the parameters of Eccles’s model of middle age, this paper situates it into the context of female consumerism and New Woman journalism. Ultimately, it argues that Eccles defines middle age as an event of renewed purpose, where the middle-aged woman parodies the role of the undercover female journalist by utilising the advantages that her experienced age adds to her class and gender.

Biographical note: Bridget Morgan is a PhD candidate at Aberystwyth University and the University of Bristol, funded by the South, West & Wales Doctoral Training Partnership. She is researching late-nineteenth-century conceptions of female middle age in medicine, periodical culture and popular fiction, predominantly focusing on under-explored vampire fiction and science-fiction texts written by women from the 1890s.

3B. CONSUMER CULTURE, THEATRE AND ENTERTAINMENT

- John Plunkett (Exeter): ‘Events for Hire: Magic Lanterns, Stereoscopes and Media Consumption’
- David Coates (Warwick): ‘Tracing British Amateur Theatrical Events Beyond Blighty: Exchanges, Identities, Communities’
- Rachel Cowgill (York): ‘The Victorian Policeman as Gendered and Racialised Other: The Metropolitan Police Minstrels in Performance’
- Madoka Nagado (University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan): ‘The Layers of Legend and History: The Blind Beggar, the Kray Twins, and the Construction of London’s Cultural Landscape’

John Plunkett (Exeter): ‘Events for Hire: Magic Lanterns, Stereoscopes and Media Consumption’

Abstract: The popularity of optical exhibitions in the nineteenth century is often asserted. However, there remains a critical lacuna around the commercial practises that facilitated the appeal of devices like the magic lantern and stereoscope. This paper argues that, propelled by the growth of a nascent leisure industry, there were important innovations in the retailing and distribution of optical devices that encouraged their exhibition within the home and at a plethora of small-scale educational and civic events. It details the emergence of the practise of the hiring out of optical devices and pictorial content which made the creation of these events more accessible and affordable.

The success of circulating libraries such as Mudie’s Select Library is well known. Yet it has been completely overlooked that there was a similar hiring model for stereographs, lantern slides, which first emerged at a local level in the 1850s and 1860s. Just as circulating libraries expanded the literary and musical fare available to those in provincial towns and cities, the hiring out of lantern slides and stereographs significantly increased the provision of pictorial content. Particularly during the Christmas season, local opticians, photographers and fancy good retailers would invariably advertise lanterns, slide sets and other optical devices for hire. Herein emerged a distribution pattern that was subsequently utilized by early cinema, as well as prefiguring 20th c businesses that rented out videos, DVDs and PC games.

Biographical note: John Plunkett is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Exeter; his research focuses on the visual shows and media that so fascinated audiences during the nineteenth century. His books include *Queen Victoria – First Media Monarch* (2003), *Victorian Print Media – A Reader* (2005), co-edited with Andrew King, and *Popular Exhibitions, Science and Showmanship 1820-1914*, co-edited with Joe Kember and Jill Sullivan, as well as articles on panoramas, dioramas, stereoscopy and peepshows. His current project is a co-authored book with Joe Kember, *Picturegoing: Visual Shows 1800-1924*, based on the results of large AHRC grant, which will detail the exhibition networks of nineteenth-century visual shows across the south west of the UK.

David Coates (Warwick): ‘Tracing British Amateur Theatrical Events Beyond Blighty: Exchanges, Identities, Communities’

Abstract: Numerous scholars have considered amateur theatrical events in different contexts beyond Britain’s shores in the long nineteenth century. Tobias Becker and Derek Forbes, for example, took amateur theatrical events in colonial India as their focus, while Sarah Penny and Mary Isbell have analysed theatricals in the Royal Navy.

This paper uses these existing case studies alongside a significant amount of new archival traces from collections across Britain and the USA to ask what is revealed when they are viewed together.

This macro approach will ask a number of questions, including: what it meant to British citizens to produce amateur theatrical events overseas? How was British national identity being performed in different contexts? How did amateur theatrical events function as sites of cultural exchange/imperialism? What role did amateur theatrical events have in creating and maintaining communities? What other roles did they have for both communities and individuals living within them beyond Britain? This paper will draw on examples from across the globe, including India, Malta, South Africa, Australia, the USA, Italy, the Caribbean and Gibraltar.

Biographical note: David Coates is an Assistant Professor in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Warwick in the UK. He is a cultural historian with a particular interest in theatre and performance in the long nineteenth century. Between January 2022 and January 2027 David is co-investigator on the European Research Council (ERC) funded project 'Performing Citizenship: Social and Political Agency in Non-Professional Theatre Practice in Germany, France, Britain, Sweden and Switzerland (1780-1850)'.

David has been a longstanding member of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR)'s Historiography Working Group, the Society for Theatre Research (STR) and an occasional member of the British Association of Victorian Studies (BAVS). He has also been a member of the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) since 2011, has served on its Executive Committee and is now Co-Convenor of the 'Theatre and Performance Histories' working group (2022-2025).

Rachel Cowgill (York): ‘The Victorian Policeman as Gendered and Racialised Other: The Metropolitan Police Minstrels in Performance’

Abstract: The Metropolitan Police Minstrels—an amateur blackface minstrel troupe made up of serving police officers—performed across London for six decades from the 1870s to the 1930s. Despite now extensive literature on traditions of blackface performance worldwide, the activities of this particular troupe remain largely unexplored, due at least partly to the changing cultural and political landscape of Britain. This paper demonstrates how uncovering the history of the Metropolitan Police Minstrels offers a unique perspective on musical and social constructions of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' in mid-late Victorian urban culture, and ways in which this performance tradition articulated tensions within/between masculinity, class, uniformity and discipline, authority, and alterity. It also offers new insights into the day-to-day activities of a British blackface troupe; for although archival materials relating to minstrelsy are almost completely lacking, the bureaucratic structures of the Metropolitan Police and the longevity of and widespread affection for its minstrel troupe ensured the survival of a substantial cache of records. Among these are 25 annual season programmes, providing an item-by-item record of musical repertoire featured in the troupe's concerts each year, including details and lyrics of songs, as well as names and photographs of individual performers shown without make-up or police uniform. Such rich data afford analysis of how the nature and presentation of the MPMs' material changed over time, as well as how their performances (as events) adapted to new influences. The paper reflects on the impact of new media, audiences, and technologies on what was essentially a Victorian form of popular entertainment: showing themselves to be ambitious and adaptable, the Minstrels experimented with variety, cinema, gramophone, and early radio—indeed, in the late '20s they were poised to become the public face of the British Police—before being disbanded by modernising and reforming impulses within the British Establishment.

Biographical note: Rachel Cowgill is a Professor of Music, Associate Dean for Research (Faculty of Arts & Humanities) and Director of the Humanities Research Centre at the University of York UK. She has published widely on a range of topics relating mainly to opera; Mozart reception; British music and musical cultures; musical internationalism, diplomacy and commemoration; music, gender and sexuality; and digital musicology, archives and performance histories. This paper arises from her long-term project on the rise and fall of the Metropolitan Police Minstrels in the context of US-UK musical-cultural exchange in the 19th and

early 20th centuries. Over the last three years Rachel has been PI of the AHRC-funded InterMusE project - The Internet of Musical Events: Digital Scholarship, Community and the Archiving of Performance - and the UKCRF/HEIF-funded project StreetLife, bringing research in culture, the arts and heritage to a UK high street (Coney Street, York) as part of a programme of partnership-working and economic regeneration

Madoka Nagado (University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan): ‘The Layers of Legend and History: The Blind Beggar, the Kray Twins, and the Construction of London’s Cultural Landscape’

Abstract: This paper explores the intricate relationship between history and legend, with a focus on the roles played by particular events in the formation of cultural heritage sites. In the current era of participatory cultural tourism, the commodification of history assumes a crucial part, leading to a preference for more appealing and easily comprehensible sources. For example, The Blind Beggar, the renowned pub in the East End, traces its origin back to a thirteenth-century legend of a blind beggar, with notable Victorian associations such as the Whitechapel district, infamous for its connection to Jack the Ripper. Moreover, the pub stands on the site where William Booth gave a sermon, followed by the creation of the East London Christian Mission, known today as the Salvation Army.

However, the primary attraction of The Blind Beggar has been overshadowed by a more recent event involving the East End gangsters, the Kray twins, depicted in the confusingly titled screen adaptation, *Legend* (2015). While the pub’s proprietor capitalises on this event by offering it as part of a two-hour, £25 Gangster Tour of London, the legend of the blind beggar is relegated to the status of an obscure side story.

Is history a palimpsest that is continuously overwritten by subsequent, more theatric events occurring at the same location? Who holds the pen and agency to shape these narratives? Drawing on Ilkka Lähteenmäki’s assertion that ‘history is by its nature a large-scale transmedia project’ (2021), I will analyse the narratives associated with these events to investigate how media influences the historicisation of collective memory. I argue that the decisive factor in shaping these narratives lies in the expectations and imagination of consumers (including tourists and readers), while the layers of history contribute to shaping the identity of a place, particularly within the context of Victorian London.

Biographical note: Madoka Nagado is a lecturer at the University of the Ryukyus in Japan, specialising in British literature and culture. Her research focuses on British literature in the long nineteenth century, life writing, and disability studies. Currently, she is exploring the intersection of literature, history, and adaptation studies, with a particular interest in how comics serve as a medium to connect these fields.

PRE-DINNER SESSIONS:

**PGR training session: PGR career development from PhD to postdoc (Aberdare Hall)
Workshop run by Liam Billingsley and Ann Heilmann (both Cardiff)**

In this session we will discuss development activities during PhD study (such as teaching, Outreach, events organisation, internal and external committee membership, peer reviewing) and consider postdoctoral opportunities.

Liam Billingsley is a first-year PhD student working on the pictorial afterlives of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Ann Heilmann is Professor of English Literature and specialises in Victorian and neo-Victorian studies.

**Victorian Illustrated Books: A Visual Tour of Special Collections and Archives
Session run by Julia Thomas, Cardiff, and Ken Gibb, Rare Books Librarian, in Special Collections and Archives, Arts and Social Sciences Library**

Come and see the Victorian treasures in our collection of illustrated books. Each book has its own story to tell about the extraordinary rise of illustration in the period, from the heyday of wood engraving to the emergence of photomechanical techniques for printing images. These illustrations encapsulate the Victorian world: its fashions, literature, industries, and ideologies. The session will consist of a guided exploration of some of the most well-known Victorian illustrated books, magazines, and newspapers, with a few surprises along the way.

Julia Thomas is a Professor of English Literature at Cardiff University and specialises in Victorian illustration. Ken Gibb is the rare books librarian at Cardiff University's Special Collections and Archives.

Wednesday 11 September

KEYNOTE 2:

Steph Roberts (Freelance curator and researcher; and Commissioning Editor Wales for Art UK): ‘The Picton Problem: The Challenge and Contemporary Urgency of Re-presenting Victorian Colonial Narratives in Museums’

Abstract: The need to interrogate colonial narratives in our museums and galleries has never felt more urgent. It is an essential step towards redressing historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations that has left us with a skewed, white-washed version of the past. 2020 brought renewed attention on museums and other cultural and heritage sites, and their complicity in either upholding or challenging the systemic racism that is rooted in our shared colonial legacy. This legacy is complex, thorny, and - to some more than others - endangering.

In Wales, this emerged as a renewed interest in the Picton problem. The highest-ranking British officer to be killed at the Battle of Waterloo, historically Thomas Picton has been hailed as a public hero for Wales but today he is equally notorious for the brutality of his colonial regime as Governor of Trinidad (1797-1803). In his own lifetime was put on trial for sanctioning torture on a teenage girl, Louisa Calderon. His name is commemorated all around Wales: through civic portraits and monuments; and by name in streets, pubs and schools. But since his death, rarely has the more violent aspects of his history been brought to public attention.

In the last few years, museums and civic institutions across Wales have taken up the gauntlet in attempting to bring these conversations into the cultural arena, one example being the current *Reframing Picton* exhibition at Amgueddfa Cymru. In this keynote, Steph Roberts will describe some of these attempts at addressing the Picton problem, reflecting broadly on the historical context, contemporary relevance and challenges it presents.

Biographical note: Steph Roberts is a bilingual curator, researcher, and visual arts producer, and Commissioning Editor Wales for Art UK. She graduated with a first class honours degree in Fine Art from the University of Wales Aberystwyth, and has an MA with distinction in the History of Art from the Courtauld Institute, where she specialised in images of the body in late Victorian art. She also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Practice from Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences. Steph's professional career spans 16 years in the museum and cultural sector in Wales. With extensive knowledge of historic and contemporary Welsh art, she has a specialist interest in making historic art relevant for contemporary audiences today. She was Senior Curator of Historic Art for National Museum Wales from 2019-2022, where she worked on high-profile international exhibitions including *Kizuna: Japan Wales Design*, and *Re-framing Picton*, before going freelance in 2022. She lives with a chronic condition, and her current work focuses on disability equity, and platforming marginalised narratives in the visual arts, www.stephcelf.co.uk

Reframing Picton exhibition (National Museum)

Reframing Picton is a community-led project between the [Amgueddfa Cymru Producers](#) and the [Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel's \(SSAP\) Youth Leadership Network](#). [The Reframing Picton](#) exhibition opened at National Museum Cardiff in August 2022 and is due to close 12 January 2025.

The journey started in 2020, during the Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd, and the subsequent removal by protestors in Bristol of the statue of slave trader, Edward Colston.

Through numerous lockdowns, the young people worked closely with our curators to add more information and context about Haverfordwest-born Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton (1758-1815) legacy as Governor of Trinidad at the turn of the 19th century. This includes his brutal treatment of the people of Trinidad, including the torture of 14-year-old Luisa Calderon – information which was not part of the museum's previous interpretation of the portrait.

‘One of our goals for this exhibition was to create a site of conscience rather than indoctrination. To create a dialogue between museums, the governments that fund them and the communities they serve. To create healthy ways of addressing trauma. We hope that this exhibition will encourage visitors of all backgrounds to listen and learn from the past, and to put these learnings into practice today.’ – The Reframing Picton project team.

<https://museum.wales/about-us/Black-lives-matter/reframing-picton/>

Editing the Victorians - Workshop run by Anthony Mandal (Cardiff)

This workshop offers an introduction to the key issues and methods involved in preparing scholarly editions, with a particular focus on nineteenth-century fiction. Working from historical examples, we will consider the decisions editors make when putting together scholarly or critical editions, including comparing different versions/editions, annotating a text and preparing the paratexts. The workshop will encourage participants to understand a scholarly edition as a critical intervention in its own right, as something which can never be neutral or objective, but rather as an artefact shaped by the intellectual, political and material contexts out of which it emerges.

Biographical note: Anthony Mandal is Professor of Print and Digital Cultures at Cardiff University and Past President (2019–24) of the British Association for Romantic Studies. He has published articles and books on nineteenth-century fiction, the gothic, book history and the digital humanities. He is a General Editor of the Edinburgh Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, of UWP's Gothic Originals series of scholarly editions and of Bloomsbury Studies in Digital Cultures. He is also the Founding Editor of the online journal, *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840*.

4A. ARCTIC VOYAGES

- Claudia Capancioni (Bishop Grosseteste): 'Polar Explorations and the Victorian Arctic Imaginary'
- Charlotte Boyce (Portsmouth): 'Haunting Narratives: Remembering the Lost Franklin Expedition in post-1854 Arctic Fiction'
- Mariaconcetta Costantini (G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy): 'Meeting the Other in Arctic Narratives and Travelogues: Stereotypes and Novelties'

This panel focuses on nineteenth-century travelogues and fictional representations of the Arctic as a remote destination of Royal Navy and commercial expeditions. Drawing upon the idea of Arctic voyages as "eventful" occasions for confronting otherness, the three papers explore the spatial, epistemological, existential and ethical challenges faced by real and fictional travellers, who hunted polar creatures and invaded Arctic icescapes but were, in turn, haunted by a hostile, uncanny environment that triggered their innermost fears and anxieties. While exploring these complex sensations, the panel will reflect on the generic experimentation carried out by writers of polar travelogues and narratives who, in addition to crossing the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, combined a variety of forms and subgenres together.

Claudia Capancioni (Bishop Grosseteste): 'Polar Explorations and the Victorian Arctic Imaginary'

Abstract: In the nineteenth century, the appointment of Sir John Barrow (1764-1848) to the position of Second Secretary to the British Admiralty marked the beginning of a new era of naval Arctic expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage. The official accounts of these epic journeys were bestsellers whose deep cultural resonances shaped Victorian imaginative constructions of the Arctic establishing a polar heritage that remains relevant to our understanding of how travel and fictional writing question the limits of human nature, and our relationship with the natural world. This paper investigates travel narratives by the British explorers Edward Parry (1821, 1824) and John Franklin (1823, 1828), and those of the Arctic voyagers who searched for Franklin and his lost men, such as Elisha Kent Kane (1856) and Leopold McClintock (1859), to examine how these narratives of discoveries construct an image of a desert, wide and lonely icescape in which to chart haunting experiences of sacrifice, loss and disaster as well as heroism, success and survival, framed through scientific and nationalistic registers of progress, and redeeming religious providence, produced by the British Naval Admiralty.

Biographical note: Claudia Capancioni is Professor of English Literature and Programme Leader for English at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln (UK). She specialises in Victorian literature, life and travel writing, multigenerational intellectual legacy, British women writers, and border studies. She has also published on the Gothic, detective fiction, and Anglo-Italian literary and cultural connections.

Charlotte Boyce (Portsmouth): 'Haunting Narratives: Remembering the Lost Franklin Expedition in post-1854 Arctic Fiction'

Abstract: The fate of the 1845 Franklin expedition, which left England in search of the Northwest Passage, never to return, haunted the cultural imaginary in the second half of the nineteenth century. In particular, reports that some of the lost explorers had resorted to cannibalism before their deaths troubled the Victorians' self-image, blurring the boundary between 'civilised' Britons and 'savage' others. Focusing in particular on

the English translation of Jules Verne's *The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1874), this paper examines, first, the haunting presence of Franklin's mission in post-1854 Arctic fiction and, second, the narrative strategies by which anxieties about cannibalism are sublimated and displaced. It argues that textual efforts at tension reduction are only partially successful; although cannibalistic impulses are insistently projected onto the polar space and its inhabitants, as well as working-class mutineers, 'respectable' Englishmen nevertheless remain vulnerable to a metaphorical form of autophagy, in which they are 'eaten up' by the desire for Arctic adventure and discovery.

Biographical note: Charlotte Boyce is Associate Professor in Victorian Literature and Culture at the University of Portsmouth, UK. Her research centres on representations of food, hunger and practices of consumption in the nineteenth century and beyond. She is the co-author of *A History of Food in Literature from the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (Routledge, 2017), and has also published a number of articles on famine, fasting, taste and spaces of consumption. She is currently working on a new monograph on hunger and masculinity in Victorian culture.

Mariaconcetta Costantini (G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy): 'Meeting the Other in Arctic Narratives and Travelogues: Stereotypes and Novelties'

Abstract: This paper explores different attitudes to the Other (both animal and human) in Victorian travelogues and fictions centred on real and imagined Arctic expeditions. What most writings share is a tendency to racialise polar populations like the Inuit, as well as animal species hunted by explorers and seamen, including seals, walruses and whales. Often depicted in terms of monstrosity and savagery, these beings are confronted as 'abjects' by westerner polar travellers, whose aggressive behaviour will be interpreted through the lenses of twentieth-century postcolonial and psychological theories. The second part of the paper focuses on less conformist Arctic writings by W. H. G. Kingston and Arthur Conan Doyle. Though still couched in imperialistic discourse, these writings configure the travellers' encounters with polar animals and peoples as important events of Self and Other discovery, which offer glimpses into new potential forms of interethnic and interspecies solidarity.

Biographical note: Professor of English Literature at G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy, and Visiting Professor at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, UK, Mariaconcetta Costantini is the author of six books, numerous articles and book chapters. Her research mainly focuses on Victorian literature and culture, with a special interest in sensation fiction, the Gothic and travel literature. She is co-editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Victorian Popular Fictions*.

4B. APOCALYPSE: DYSTOPIA AND SPECULATIVE FICTION

- Brittani Allen (Cardiff): 'Apocalyptic Ecologies of Death and Dying in Shelley's *The Last Man*'
- David Barnes (Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford): 'W. H. Hudson's Avian London: Urban Ecology and the Late-Victorian Metropolitan Imagination'
- Daný van Dam (Leiden, The Netherlands): 'Changing Events: Alternate Histories of the Nineteenth Century'

Brittani Allen (Cardiff): 'Apocalyptic Ecologies of Death and Dying in Shelley's *The Last Man*'

Abstract: In Greg Garrard's chapter, 'Apocalypse', readers learn that apocalypticism 'responds to and produces crisis' (94). It influences the 'fate of human culture' (Garrard 97). An apocalypse also creates a sense of a 'moral dualism' (Garrard 94). One apocalyptic feature, as defined by Garrard, is how 'social psychology' impacts one's perception of his or her sense of place within the landscape and ecosystem (94, 98). Based on Garrard's chapter, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* can be read as an apocalyptic narrative. More specifically, the plague that occurs within Shelley's futuristic work leads readers to make this conclusion, since death and loss are at the forefront of the novel's themes with only one man left 'alive' by the end of the book – one man of a particular species. In addition to Garrard, I will draw on concepts developed by Charles Darwin to discuss the fragility of human nature. Because the text introduces concepts considered foundational and precursory to the Victorian era, though a Romantic era work, I will take a long view approach in my paper, demonstrating the progression of thought across time.

In my paper, I will disseminate how Shelley's expression of plague aligns with an apocalypse. Though the plague can be understood as metaphorical for the social infrastructure in England's hierarchical system, it is also associated with loss and redefining one's identity after loss. I will also bring attention to

how physical loss and death turns into a plaguing death of people's identities and the elitism that Shelley emphasises. As with any hierarchical system, there is the dichotomy of a dominant group within society and the 'others', as supported by Garrard when he suggests that this divide within nature contributes to an apocalyptic environment. I will emphasise that human agency and relationships with nature are explored as being formed and destroyed, despite the role of religion and moralism

Brittani Allen is a PhD student in English Literature at Cardiff University. Her areas of interest are Victorian studies and children's literature, particularly environmental literature for children. Her thesis offers critical commentary about how a selection of nineteenth century literature for children describes fantasy worlds in which unconventional features and behaviours occur providing lessons about humans, nonhumans, and other organisms cohabit to promote sustainability and futurity rather than exploitation.

David Barnes (Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford): 'W. H. Hudson's Avian London: Urban Ecology and the Late-Victorian Metropolitan Imagination'

Abstract: In the canon of late-Victorian and early twentieth-century literature, the writer W.H. Hudson has been credited as a key influence on the development of modernism, shaping the writings of such figures as Virginia Woolf and Ezra Pound. Hudson's status as an important figure in the development of nature writing has also been cited. Yet his distinctive contribution to an evolving vision of urban ecology has received less attention. This paper focuses on Hudson's *Birds in London* (1898), an important text in its own right (indeed, Woolf owned a copy of the 1924 reissued edition), exploring the city's varied habitats as potential breeding and feeding grounds for bird species. Yet Hudson, I argue, also created an 'avian vision' of London that responded to a number of dystopic fictions of the 1880s and 1890s that narrated the collapse of the city, often after a catastrophic event. Crucial to these dystopias was an idea of an 'animal' London where the boundaries of human and non-human civilisation were tested. In Richard Jefferies' *After London* (1885), the collapse of the city leads to a vast exodus of rats, which flood the surrounding forests so that the survivors 'fled in fear'. Similarly, H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) both present urban civilisation as under attack by animal others – the latter in a terrifying final scene where the novel's narrator appears to collapse in terror at an 'unbearable' vision of London as a city of bestial appetites. Hudson's book, by contrast, acts both as an elegy for a disappearing avian world (a 'lingering regret for the beautiful that has vanished') and as a manifesto for a transformed ecological space. For Hudson, 'bird life' would offer an escape from what he calls 'the prison and sick-room' of the over-crowded city.

Biographical note: David Barnes is Departmental Lecturer in English Literature (1800-present) at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford. His research and teaching ranges across Victorian and early twentieth-century literature and culture, with major interests in the city, environmental history, and transatlantic exchange. He is currently at work on two projects. 1898, White Imperialism and Transatlantic Modernism (in development) thinks about the impact of American imperialism on transatlantic writing in the early twentieth century, and its consequences for fluid notions of race, culture and nationalism. His other major project, Urban Animals, views the emergence of modern cities through the prism of animal studies, looking at the way domestic and wild animals, pets, 'pests' and zoo animals shaped the ways in which urban environments were conceived, c.1850-1945. His first book, *The Venice Myth: Culture, Literature, Politics 1800 to the Present* (2015) explored the ways in which the built environment of Venice was reimaged by different political ideologies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Daný van Dam (Leiden, The Netherlands): 'Changing Events: Alternate Histories of the Nineteenth Century'

Abstract: Over the past couple of decades, fictional returns to the Victorian period have received an increasing amount of attention. Much of this has been drawn together under the label of neo-Victorianism. The main aim of neo-Victorian texts and adaptations is often shedding a different light on existing perceptions of the Victorian era by including more diverse perspectives. In this paper, however, I focus on a different approach, namely that of alternate history, specifically alternate representations of the British Empire. My case study is S.M. Stirling's novel *The Peshawar Lancers*. In this novel – part speculative fiction and part steampunk – a natural disaster makes nineteenth-century Britain unlivable. As a result, the imperial British elite moves to India and Delhi becomes the capital of the British Empire.

As an alternate history, *The Peshawar Lancers* 'traces the path history might have taken', had events happened differently (Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 2016). Alternate histories often challenge mainstream grand narratives of the inevitability of history because 'to propose an alternate history is to

propose that history can be altered, to change directions, to inaugurate an alternate future' (Samatar, 'Toward a Planetary History of Afrofuturism', 2017). Consequently, alternate histories can have a reparative function, facilitating the construction of 'what if' worlds where different power dynamics can be imagined. In rewriting the British nineteenth century and its colonial power structures, *The Peshawar Lancers* offers a springboard for rethinking postcolonial relations today.

Biographical note: Daný van Dam works as a University Lecturer / Assistant Professor in English literature and cultural studies at Leiden University (the Netherlands). Her interests range from postcolonialism and historical fiction to speculative fiction and alternate histories. Daný has published several articles on race and colonialism in neo-Victorian fiction and is always looking for texts that can expand neo-Victorian fiction's racial diversity. As European Representative for BAVS, Daný supports knowledge exchange about the Victorian era between the U.K. and mainland Europe. Daný has recently been awarded a government grant for a project on art and AI in postcolonial speculative fiction.

4C. SENSATION AND MYSTERY: VICTORIAN TO NEO-VICTORIAN

- Beth Palmer (Surrey): 'Adapting Contemporary Events and Centring Female Experience in Sensation Drama'
- Saverio Tomaiuolo (Cassino University, Italy): 'Drawing the (Un)Finished Line in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*'
- Marie-Luise Kohlke (Swansea): 'Ghostly Events at Bosco: Carol Goodman's *The Ghost Orchid* (2006)'

Beth Palmer (Surrey): 'Adapting Contemporary Events and Centring Female Experience in Sensation Drama'

Abstract: This paper explores the work of Mrs H. (Melinda) Young as a sensation dramatist. Based in London and writing throughout the 1850s and 1860s, her dramatic output is extensive but has only ever been subject to piecemeal analysis. I argue that Young is typical of sensation dramatists in the flexibility of her transmedial working practices, particularly in attuning her adaptations to contemporary events and their media coverage. We see this in her adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1853 as *The Slave Hunt; or St Clare and the Happy Days of Uncle Tom* and her extension of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* in *Jonathan Wild; or The Storm on the Thames* (1868). She capitalises on contemporary events to localise and personalise her dramatic output. While on one hand, Young provides a typical example of sensational dramatic practice, her work is also distinct from her many male contemporaries writing popular drama at this time. This distinction lies in the centring of female experience throughout her plays of the 1860s. *The Dark Woman* (Effingham Theatre, 1861), *Jessy Ashton, Ida Lee* (1863), *Fair Liliat; or The Three Lives* (1865), *Adèle d'Escars; or The Picklock of Paris* (1866), *Eyes in the Dark; or The Grave on the Sands* (1866) all feature women who are wronged in some way but who take the lead in avenging or righting those wrongs. All of these plays were produced at the Effingham Theatre and this continuity throughout the 1860s meant that local audiences would have seen the Effingham as a space for the exercise of female agency through Young's heroines and her own impressive capacity to re-model contemporary events for dramatic purposes.

Biographical note: Beth Palmer has worked on several aspects of Victorian popular culture, women's writing and has an ongoing interest in Neo-Victorian drama and fiction. Her publications include *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies* (2011), *A Return to the Common Reader: Print Culture and the Novel, 1850-1900* (co-ed with Adelene Buckland, 2011), *Sensation Drama, 1860-1880: An Anthology* (co-ed with Johanna Hofer-Robinson, 2019) and *Picturing the Reader: Reading and Representation in the Long Nineteenth Century* (co-ed with Amelia Yeates, 2021). She currently co-edits the journal *Victoriographies* and is finishing a monograph on *Transmedia Sensations in Victorian Culture*.

Saverio Tomaiuolo (Cassino University, Italy): 'Drawing the (Un)Finished Line in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*'

Abstract: Studies devoted to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* have tended, in some cases, to dismiss it as a great albeit incomplete novel. In contrast, others have pushed forward, rather than backward, the speculations raised by this text, with a series of hypotheses regarding the disclosure of the mystery, and its possible epilogue. Notwithstanding the status of Dickens's last novel as an unfinished text, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* features a closed narrative structure and may be studied as a finished text. Charles Allston Collins's sketched wrapper design and Luke Fildes's wrapper and illustrations reflect the novel's mixture of symbolic

and realistic elements, and feature a complete visualisation of its main themes, so as to offer the premises for an exhaustive textual investigation. In this respect, these visual texts may be also analysed and “read” as original and independent, rather than derivative, works that may shed light on the novel’s (eventual and foreseeable) conclusion and its multiple connotative implications. At the same time, the mystery the title alludes to suggests the actual impossibility of disclosing all of the novel’s (and illustrations’) enigmas, and encapsulates a paradigm of unsolvability that is central to an understanding of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Biographical note: Saverio Tomaiuolo is Associate Professor of English Language and Translation at Cassino University, Italy. His areas of research are translation and adaptation studies, Victorian Literature, and neo-Victorianism. He has published *Ricreare in Lingua. La traduzione dalla poesia al testo multimediale* (Carocci, 2008), *In Lady Audley’s Shadow: Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Victorian Literary Genres* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) and *Victorian Unfinished Novels: The Imperfect Page* (Palgrave, 2012), alongside a contribution on the sensation novel and the Indian Mutiny in the *Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (ed. Andrew Mangham, 2013). He has written a critical introduction to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (Come leggere ‘Heart of Darkness’, Solfanelli, 2014), an entry on ‘neo-Victorianism’ included in the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Victorian Literature* (eds. Dino Franco Felluga, Pamela K. Gilbert and Linda K. Hughes, 2015), and *Deviance in neo-Victorian Culture: Transgression, Canon, Innovation* (Palgrave, 2018). His most recent publication is a study on the Italian screen adaptations of Victorian novels, entitled *La Televisione dell’Ottocento. I vittoriani sullo schermo italiano* (Mimesis, 2021). He has translated and edited a selection of Alfred Tennyson’s poems (*In Memoriam e alter poesie*, Milano, Mondadori, 2022). At the moment, he is working on a new Italian edition and translation of Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Marie-Luise Kohlke (Swansea): ‘Ghostly Events at Bosco: Carol Goodman’s *The Ghost Orchid* (2006)’

Abstract: Encounters with ghosts pose some of the most disturbing and life-changing events in Victorian fictions, both in the popular form of ghost stories and within classic texts, such as *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847). While the notion of an ‘event’ is linked to a particular moment and place in time, the entry of spirits into the diegetic present breaches or dissolves temporal (and sometimes spatial) boundaries so that, in effect, the past event extends into the present and transforms into a temporal continuum or ongoing process. This diffuseness of historical time, characterised by after-effects, intrusion, and continuity of presence, is already inherent in neo-Victorianism’s self-reflexive engagement with the Long Nineteenth Century as uncanny mirror and harbinger of the postmodern present. Neo-Victorian ghosts, however, further undermine any comfortable notions of societal ‘progress’, especially of overcoming or transcending inimical aspects of the past, including racist violence. This paper focuses on Carol Goodman’s *The Ghost Orchid* (2006), in which an aspiring modern-day novelist, Ellis Brooks, attends a writing retreat in Bosco, a nineteenth-century rural estate in Upstate New York with onetime magnificent gardens and fountains, now in a state of decay, to work on a neo-Victorian sensation fiction. Ellis’s first novel takes its inspiration from scandalous mysterious events at the mansion at the fin-de-siècle, centred on the enigmatic owner and founder of the Bosco Foundation, Aurora Lantham, and a private séance conducted by the spiritualist medium Corinth Blackwell, engaged to contact the Lanthams’ dead children. The private performance, however, ends in tragedy with the disappearance of Blackwell, the Lantham’s only surviving child, and another guest. As Ellis delves deeper into Bosco’s traumatic history, she begins glimpsing spirits in the grounds, while other residents too are increasingly possessed by the past, as though collectively doomed to reenact the nineteenth-century crisis – indelibly interwoven with the silenced histories of First Nation peoples’ persecution, displacement, and the theft of their ancestral lands in cultural memory. Through a case study of *The Ghost Orchid*, this paper explores how effective neo-Victorian ghostly ‘events’ can serve a postcolonial critique and an agenda of restorative symbolic justice.

Biographical note: Dr Marie-Luise (Mel) Kohlke lectures in English Literature at Swansea University, Wales, UK, with research specialisms in neo-Victorianism, trauma narratives and theory, and gender and sexuality. She is the General and Founding Editor of the open-access e-journal *Neo-Victorian Studies* and Co-Series Editor (with Christian Gutleben) of Brill/Rodopi’s Neo-Victorian Series, most recently co-editing *Neo-Victorian Biofictions: Reimagining Nineteenth-Century Historical Subjects* (2022). She is currently working on a *Handbook on Neo-Victorianism* for Brill (forthcoming 2025), also co-edited with Christian Gutleben, as well as on neo-Victorian ghost stories and neo-Victorian children’s and Young Adult timeslip fiction.

5A. FOUND CHILDREN (WORKSHOP)

- Hannah Dennett (Warwick University / Foundling Museum)
- Holly Furneaux (Cardiff)

Abstract: This panel brings together research on children of the African and Asian diasporas taken in by the Foundling Hospital in London with work on African children brought to Britain and raised by soldiers, explorers and missionaries in the long nineteenth century. Collectively the two papers explore what these life-stories reveal about attitudes to race and empire, while attending closely to the experiences of these children and those who cared for them.

Biographical notes: Dr Holly Furneaux is Professor of English Literature at Cardiff University. She led the AHRC project, *Strange Meetings: Enemy Encounters 1800-2020* and is now working on a cultural history of international adoption in the nineteenth century. Her next book *Enemy Intimacies and Strange Encounters in Writings of Conflict 1780-1918* will be published by Oxford University Press this year. Her previous books include *Military Men of Feeling: Emotion, Touch and Masculinity in the Crimean War* and *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities*. She curated an exhibition - *Created in Conflict: Soldier Art from the Crimean War to the Present* - at Compton Verney in 2018 and was adviser to the BBC's *Dickensian* (originally screened in 2015-16).

Hannah Dennett's collaborative PhD project is in conjunction with the Foundling Museum, London and supervised by Professors Maxine Berg and Rebecca Earle at the University of Warwick and Kathleen Palmer, Curator of Exhibitions and Displays at the Foundling Museum. Titled 'Forgotten Foundlings: Black Lives and the Eighteenth-Century Foundling Hospital', her project is uncovering the lives of children of the African and Asian diasporas taken in by the institution during the long eighteenth century. In piecing together the fragments of these children's experiences, her research examines the Foundling Hospital's connections to the British Empire and plantation economy through the lives of children of colour received into the institution during the eighteenth century and the Hospital's founders and governors.

5B. AUTHORS: TENNYSON

- Morgan Lee (Cardiff): 'Dedicated to Arthur: The Return of Arthur Henry Hallam in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*'
- Jayne Thomas (Cardiff Metropolitan): 'Tennyson Among the Victorian "Feminists"'

Morgan Lee (Cardiff): 'Dedicated to Arthur: The Return of Arthur Henry Hallam in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*'

Abstract: The mythical King Arthur is a cultural ghost that has manifested itself within cultural memory across many generations and is interwoven in a complex fabric of British literature and culture. The myth itself is founded upon a promise of return, as King Arthur is prophesied to reappear when the nation's need is greatest. The myth's foundation in this promise speaks to spectrality theory and Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, in particular. Derrida states that 'After the end of history, the spirit comes by coming back [...], it figures both a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again'. King Arthur is the dead man who returns time and time again within literature and one of his greatest revivals was within the Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859-91). Cecil Y. Lang first observed that Tennyson's Arthur isn't just inherited from Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, but instead marks the return of a different dead man, one who is not so mythical, Arthur Henry Hallam. Hallam's death haunted Tennyson throughout his life and his loss was the subject of one of Tennyson's most famous poems, *In Memoriam A.H.H* (1850). This paper will build from Lang's discussion of Tennyson's Arthur to focus on the Derridean implications of Hallam's re-appearance. It will examine the connections between Tennyson's elegy and his Arthurian collection to discuss how Hallam haunts the *Idylls* as a spectre who possesses the body of King Arthur.

Biographical note: Morgan Lee (she/her) is a third-year doctoral student in English Literature at Cardiff University. Her research revolves around the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson examining the figure of the 'ghost' or 'revenant', its relationship to intertextuality and how Tennyson has gone on to haunt British literature and culture since the nineteenth century. Morgan is on the editorial board for the international academic journal, *Intersectional Perspectives: Identity, Culture and Society* as Associate Editor.

Jayne Thomas (Cardiff Metropolitan): ‘Tennyson Among the Victorian “Feminists”’

Abstract: This paper explores Victorian ‘feminist’ responses to the work of Alfred Tennyson, examining the response of early Victorian ‘feminist’ (a term that did not enter the language until the 1890s) writers to Tennyson’s work to that of contemporary feminists. Kate Millett, in her groundbreaking *Sexual Politics* (1970), itself an ‘event’ in contemporary feminist writing on Tennyson, set the standard for responses to Tennyson’s *The Princess* (1847), inaugurating a raft of contemporary feminist responses to the poem which examine Tennyson as a protector of the patriarchal ‘status quo’ (Millett, p. 79); these include Catherine Stevenson’s ‘Tennyson on Women’s Rights’ (1977) and Marion Shaw’s *Alfred Lord Tennyson* (1988). More recently, third-wave feminists have argued that Millett elided Victorian ‘feminist’ responses to the poem in her assessment of Tennyson’s work, giving rise to the question: how did Victorian ‘feminists’ themselves respond to *The Princess* and Tennyson’s work more generally? Did they, too, see Tennyson as a proponent of patriarchy or did they respond to Tennyson in a more positive, productive way? Did Tennyson help to further the development of ‘women’s rights’ in the Victorian period, particularly in relation to issues such as education and marriage, two of the main topics of *The Princess*? And how do these early ‘feminist’ responses reshape our reading of Tennyson’s poetry itself? Do their readings open up a view of Tennyson that has been ‘silenced’ as a result of contemporary feminist readings of the poem? Building on the work of Linda Hughes, who in ‘The Princess and the Generosity of Tennyson’s Imagination’ (2018), suggests that *The Princess* (and other Tennyson poems) were admired by women now regarded as forebears of modern feminism, this paper recovers readings of Tennyson from Victorian ‘feminists’ omitted in current feminist readings of his work, reconfiguring both Tennyson and ‘feminist’ responses to his poetry.

Biographical note: Dr Jayne Thomas obtained her PhD in English Literature from Cardiff University in 2015 and is currently an Associate Lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Her first monograph, *Tennyson Echoing Wordsworth*, which was supported by a British Association for Victorian Studies’ Research Grant, was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2019. The book recalibrates Tennyson’s poetic relationship with William Wordsworth, showing how Wordsworth is central to Tennyson’s democratisation of elegy and to his development of the dramatic monologue. Thomas has also published articles on Wordsworth’s influence in Tennyson and in George Eliot’s Higher Critical poetry, as well as book chapters on the novels of George Moore. She is an Editorial Board Member at *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, and a regular reviewer and referee for several peer-reviewed journals. She also reviews regularly for *The Times Literary Supplement*. Her latest project examines Victorian ‘feminist’ responses to Tennyson’s work

5C. WRITING NEO-VICTORIAN FICTION

- Emma Kirby (Cardiff): ‘Haunting Lives: Spectres in the Shadows’
- Imke Thormählen (Independent): ‘The Heroine of Her Own Life? Writing from the Point of View of the “Good Girl” Agnes Wickfield’

Emma Kirby (Cardiff): ‘Haunting Lives: Spectres in the Shadows’

My aim is to scrutinise the positions that we as twenty-first century readers and writers adopt in relation to the past, and illuminate the spectres that may lay dormant or come to light as a result. As an author writing neo-Victorian ghost fiction, I intend to draw on the genre’s engagement with contemporary concerns, specifically in relation to Britain’s colonial history. Neo-Victorian fiction and ghost fiction share key features, as the trope of the ghost and neo-Victorian fiction both frame the past from the position of the present, enacting a form of textual, spectral haunting. My novel will be set in Britain and India, and set across several time periods. It will draw on the tradition of the English country house narrative in which narratives of spectrality encode representations of British national identity and reappropriate this for the modern-day post-colonial reader. It is the unspeakability of these past experiences that necessitates the haunting and foregrounds the darker role that history and/or nostalgia can play in the conceptualisation of such places.

This paper will expose the instabilities inherent in seemingly authoritative imperialist discourses that have shaped history and investigate how telling stories forms the very site whereby we subjectivize our experiences and attempt to define the ‘I’ and the ‘Other’. This is a key tenet of ghost fiction concerned with exclusions and invisibilities and neo-Victorian fiction, where haunting has proved to be a powerful metaphor for the resurrection of the dead and repressed in literature. How do writers of neo-Victorian ghost fiction voice the unspeakable? How do we interpret pasts that we have inherited but not experienced? Is there a

danger that writers can inadvertently repeat the tropes of the past and become unwitting spectres of their own text?

Biographical note: I began my PhD in Critical and Creative Writing in January 2023. Before this, I completed two MAs (Nineteenth Century literature/Creative Writing). For my PhD, I am writing a neo-Victorian, post-colonial ghost novel. Among a multitude of others, three key texts are serving as my source material: Sarah Waters' *The Little Stranger*, John Harwood's *The Ghost Writer* and Emily Eden's *Up the Country* (a collection of Victorian letters). While neo-Victorianism and the ghost-story have a well-established relationship, the connection between British country estates and colonialism has not been explicitly explored from a neo-Victorian literary point of view before: how to do this is at the heart of my research.

Imke Thormählen (Independent): 'The Heroine of Her Own Life? Writing from the Point of View of the "Good Girl" Agnes Wickfield'

Abstract: 'I have loved you all my life' – this confession by Agnes Wickfield to David in *David Copperfield* may be the only memorable line she has in the whole novel. Otherwise she is saddled with clunky utterances like: 'Remember that I confide in simple love and truth at last'. So is the woman a sap, or is she a hypocrite? Or something else entirely?

The character of Agnes in *David Copperfield* is remarkably open to interpretation. David is usually a sharp observer, and even with characters he loathes, we are given some idea of what makes them tick. His portrait of Agnes, in contrast, is strangely colourless, and there are gaps which the readers themselves have to fill in. For instance, we can only gather how attractive Agnes is by Uriah Heep bringing it up, and by David's reaction to Uriah's designs on her. There are instances where David remains curiously uninterested in what Agnes actually thinks or feels. With regard to her, he is 'blind' in more than one sense.

In my latest novel *Dearest Agnes*, I have chosen to see Agnes as a good person, but one who struggles more with overcoming her weaknesses than David realises. In my paper, I'd like to explain why I went down this route rather than, say, making her a scheming minx, and to highlight Agnes's relationship with some key characters: Emily, whose confidence Agnes bolsters; Steerforth, whom Agnes has no scruples in calling a 'bad angel', though she never exchanges a word with him in *David Copperfield*; and last but not least Uriah Heep, Agnes's jailer and tormentor, but also a clever man who is attracted to her at a time when she's slighted by David.

Biographical note: Imke Thormählen makes her living as an administrator at Lund University, Sweden, and writes fiction in her spare time. In the neo-Victorian genre, she has published *The Ladislaw Case* (2011), a murder mystery featuring characters from *Middlemarch* (Will is the prime suspect, not the victim) where the case is finally cracked by Inspector Bucket from *Bleak House*. Her novels in Swedish include *Joséphine* (published 1994, when she was a teenager), a historical novel about Napoleon's first wife, and lately (2023) a whodunnit set in modern times – but with a certain fairy-tale tinge to it – published under a pseudonym. Her latest manuscript, *Dearest Agnes*, imagines a correspondence between Agnes Wickfield and Emily Peggotty from *David Copperfield*.

6A. TEMPORALITIES

- Phineas Humphris (Birmingham): 'Seeing and Being Seen: Aesthetic Trans-Temporal Witnessing and the Queer Desire to Be Seen'
- Kate Mitchell (ANU, Australia): 'Remembered Pasts, Imagined Futures: Neo-Victorian Fiction and/as Literary Utopia'

Phineas Humphris (Birmingham): 'Seeing and Being Seen: Aesthetic Trans-Temporal Witnessing and the Queer Desire to Be Seen'

Abstract: Swinburne opens his enraptured address to the ancient marble 'Sleeping Hermaphroditus' with an imploring cry to the sculpture's subject: 'Lift up thy lips, turn round, look back for love'. The viewer begs the sculpture to return their gaze, to turn and look back at them – to make the moment of seeing reciprocal. In so doing, Swinburne's speaker evokes a perhaps universal queer longing for the connection that might be found across Time, seeking resonance here in the Classical as a contemporary reader now might seek in turn from his work.

Trans-temporal encounters blur and cross the boundaries of temporality, even defying ‘chrononormativity’ – that imperative on every body to work in linear fashion towards maximum ‘productivity’ (Freeman). Using the works of Swinburne, Vernon Lee, Walter Pater and others of the Aesthetic circles, this paper explores these writers’ encounters with works of art both Classic and Medieval as sites of trans-temporal connection. Going beyond the simple ‘inspiration’ these works offer the writer, by focusing on the moment of looking and seeing, I hope to examine the Queer Temporalities (Edelman, Halberstam, Muñoz) of these Aesthetic texts. In characterising the queer Aesthetic encounter with Art as historical artefact, this study will consider the temporal slippage and seeping in the moment(s) of seeing and the importance of this to the queer writing and reading.

Biographical note: Phineas (Finn) Humphris is a PhD researcher in English Literature at the University of Birmingham with an interest in queer and trans gender, identity, and desire in art and literature, with a particular focus on the long nineteenth century and the emergence of ‘trans*’ culture and identity at the turn of the century. Their thesis centres trans* readings of British Decadent and Aesthetic neoclassical figures, using the (re)writing of Greco-Roman myth as sites of trans and queer imagination and potentiality. They are also interested in scholarship of illness and disability, medical humanities and care, and queer/trans autobiography writing.

Kate Mitchell (ANU, Australia): ‘Remembered Pasts, Imagined Futures: Neo-Victorian Fiction and/as Literary Utopia’

Abstract: There is a narrative of crisis about the humanities, which increasingly constructs disciplines like literary studies, history, art history and others as increasingly irrelevant in a world characterised by urgent and wicked problems like climate change and environmental disaster; food security; increasing disparity between rich and poor; human rights abuses; and the rise of fake news, cancel culture, and so on. For a genre and a field of study that is characterised by the reworking of the past, albeit often in service of the present, one might ask, can neo-Victorianism ever address itself to the future?

This paper explores the ways in which neo-Victorian fiction might engage in utopian imagining, not through a simple nostalgia that locates utopia in a lost golden age, nor through a self-congratulation that posits the present in terms of utopian progress away from the past, but by a strategic presentism that opens up an aperture for utopian imagining, situated neither past nor present, but in a future glimpsed, or projected, through this re-reading of the past. I’ll begin by identifying two principal ways in which utopian studies have been brought to bear on discussions of historical fiction, before moving to a discussion of the multiple utopian envisioning of neo-Victorian novels like Kate Forsyth’s *Beauty In Thorns*, as instantiating a particular kind of non-contemporaneity, which enmeshes together past, present and future within its frame. The paper asks whether the use of the past as an alternative reality through which to critique and re-envision the present – what is often read with suspicion as historical fiction’s presentist approach to the past – can become the site at which neo-Victorianism activates a utopian impulse in service of imagining not the past, nor the present, but an alternative future.

Biographical note: Kate Mitchell is Director of the ANU Research School of Humanities and the Arts and Professor of Literary Studies, in the ANU School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics. Her research is focused on neo-Victorian fiction and film and contemporary historical recollection in literature and film more generally, including fiction and creative non-fiction. Her work examines the role of fictional narratives in creating public memory of contested, marginalised or occluded pasts; the ways that ‘memory’ travels through time and space, especially via novels, film and television; and the ethics - and creative possibilities - involved in fictionalising past lives and events. How can fiction be used to speak the unspeakable, in the past and today? She is author of *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Victorian Afterimages*; co-editor of *Reading Historical Fiction: the revenant and remembered past*; and has published a range of journal articles and book chapters in *Neo-Victorian Studies* and elsewhere. Her current work examines the use of art and the figure of the artist in contemporary fiction about the Victorian period, including the representation of the Pre-Raphaelites, Impressionists and other artists and their work.

6B. SALVAGING THE VICTORIANS

A creative-critical workshop led by Megan de Bruin-Molé (Southampton)

Abstract: This creative-critical workshop explores the Victorians and their material legacies through the lens and practice of salvage. In the workshop participants will cut, tear, polish, paste, stitch, and mine the Victorian past to extract value and meaning.

Salvage as we understand it today is a process of ‘waste sorting and *value recuperation*’ (Williams, *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse*, 35). Our modern understanding of the term comes from the Victorians, who transformed the practice into a thriving series of industries (insurance, fire brigades, etc.). Salvage is also a concept tangentially considered by scholars looking for alternatives to (colonial, capitalist) practices of conservation, museums, and heritage. As an event, salvage attempts to ‘save’ an object or idea, but it is simultaneously a process of destruction and transformation. The act of salvage has also been related to extraction (a post/colonial concept), as discussed by Katrina Phillips in her work on the ‘salvage tourism’ of Native American sites, and by Chief Benjamin J. Barnes and Stephen Warren in their attempts to ‘salvage’ the colonising work of salvage anthropologists (which also has its roots in the late 19th century).

In the context of both commercialisation and anti-colonial movements in the UK university, what can salvage offer us as scholars of the long 19th century? Following a brief introduction to the history and practices of salvage, in this practice-based workshop we will think (and make) through these ideas together by ‘salvaging’ materials from Victorian texts and objects. This collaborative event will allow us to explore together how salvage attitudes and practices can be avoided or employed in our own research. The resulting outputs will be collected as an artists’ book.

Biographical note: Megen de Bruin-Molé (she/her, mdbm1v17@soton.ac.uk) is a Senior Lecturer in Digital Media Practice at the University of Southampton. She specialises in ‘monstrous’ adaptation and contemporary remix culture, in particular the digital afterlives and appropriations of historical archives, ephemera, and memory in popular culture. Read more about Megen's work on her blog: frankenfiction.com

NEO-VICTORIAN ROUNDTABLE

- Martin Danahay (Brock, Canada): Neo-Victorian politics and ‘knowledge mobilisation’/impact
- Sylvia Mieszkowski (Vienna): (In)Visibility: gender and sexuality
- Marie-Luise Kohlke (Swansea): Invisibility and critical neglect: What we choose (not) to teach and write about
- Saverio Tomaiuolo (Cassino, Italy): Visual art: Ways of seeing and re-visioning the past
- Kate Mitchell (ANU, Australia): Neo-Victorian temporality/temporalities: What neo-Victorianism might have to say to/for the future

Biographical notes:

Martin Danahay is Professor of English at Brock University, Canada. He is the author most recently of *War Without Bodies: Framing Death from the Crimean to the Iraq War* (Rutgers University Press, 2022). With Ann Howey he has co-edited the forthcoming *Neo-Victorianism and Medievalism* collection of essays (Brill, 2024). He has published numerous articles on a variety of topics in Victorian culture including the working-class body in *Jekyll and Hyde*, H. G. Wells and eugenics and the Russian view of the ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’. He has also published articles on neo-Victorian subjects such as gender in steampunk, steampunk as a post-industrial aesthetic and Donald J. Trump’s neo-Gothic toxic masculinity.

Sylvia Mieszkowski is Professor of British Literature at the University of Vienna with interests in Gender Studies, neo-Victorian biofiction, and refugee literature. These are testified to by publications on: “Transparent and the optics of gender(ed) identity.” *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 32, no. 8, 2023, pp.1–12, “Polymath Revisited: Cross-Lighting R.F. Burton between Cultural Passing and Steampunk Action” in: *Neo-Victorian Biofiction: Re-Imagining 19th Century Historical Subjects* eds. M.L. Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, Leiden: Brill/Rodopi. (2020), 265–293 and “In_Visibilizing stress: *Refugee Tales* as a counter-apparatus.” *European Journal of Life Writing*, vol. XII (2023), 77–99. Her current research project expands on neo-Victorian biofiction (on Mary Anning, Julia Margaret Cameron, Empress Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary, E.M. Forster, Henry James and Oscar Wilde) and focuses on issues of visibility and invisibility in connection with gender and desire. The proposed paper grows out of in this research context.

Dr Marie-Luise (Mel) Kohlke lectures in English Literature at Swansea University, Wales, UK, with research specialisms in neo-Victorianism, trauma narratives and theory, and gender and sexuality. She is the General and Founding Editor of the open-access e-journal *Neo-Victorian Studies* and Co-Series Editor (with Christian Gutleben) of Brill/Rodopi’s *Neo-Victorian Series*, most recently co-editing *Neo-Victorian Biofictions: Reimagining Nineteenth-Century Historical Subjects* (2022). She is currently working on a

Handbook on Neo-Victorianism for Brill (forthcoming 2024/25), also co-edited with Christian Gutleben, as well as on neo-Victorian ghost stories and neo-Victorian children's and Young Adult timeslip fiction

Saverio Tomaiuolo is Associate Professor of English Language and Translation at Cassino University, Italy. His areas of research are translation and adaptation studies, Victorian Literature, and neo-Victorianism. He has published *Ricareare in Lingua. La traduzione dalla poesia al testo multimediale* (Carocci, 2008), *In Lady Audley's Shadow: Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Victorian Literary Genres* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) and *Victorian Unfinished Novels: The Imperfect Page* (Palgrave, 2012), alongside a contribution on the sensation novel and the Indian Mutiny in the *Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (ed. Andrew Mangham, 2013). He has written a critical introduction to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Come leggere 'Heart of Darkness, Solfanelli, 2014), an entry on 'neo-Victorianism' included in the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Victorian Literature* (eds. Dino Franco Felluga, Pamela K. Gilbert and Linda K. Hughes, 2015), and *Deviance in neo-Victorian Culture: Transgression, Canon, Innovation* (Palgrave, 2018). His most recent publication is a study on the Italian screen adaptations of Victorian novels, entitled *La Televisione dell'Ottocento. I vittoriani sullo schermo italiano* (Mimesis, 2021). He has translated and edited a selection of Alfred Tennyson's poems (*In Memoriam e alter poesie*, Milano, Mondadori, 2022). At the moment, he is working on a new Italian edition and translation of Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Kate Mitchell is Director of the ANU Research School of Humanities and the Arts and Professor of Literary Studies, in the ANU School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics. Her research is focused on neo-Victorian fiction and film and contemporary historical recollection in literature and film more generally, including fiction and creative non-fiction. Her work examines the role of fictional narratives in creating public memory of contested, marginalised or occluded pasts; the ways that 'memory' travels through time and space, especially via novels, film and television; and the ethics - and creative possibilities - involved in fictionalising past lives and events. How can fiction be used to speak the unspeakable, in the past and today? She is author of *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Victorian Afterimages*; co-editor of *Reading Historical Fiction: the revenant and remembered past*; and has published a range of journal articles and book chapters in *Neo-Victorian Studies* and elsewhere. Her current work examines the use of art and the figure of the artist in contemporary fiction about the Victorian period, including the representation of the Pre-Raphaelites, Impressionists and other artists and their work.