



Welcome to the spring issue of the *BAVS Newsletter*, packed with news, book reviews, recent publications, reports, and CFPs. Do get in touch with any items for inclusion in future issues!

We are excited to share the latest news of the BAVS 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference on p.2. Alongside what are certain to be excellent papers and Victorianist discussions, we can look forward to the presentation of Victorian resources at the Ashmolean Museum, a walking tour of Victorian Oxford, and a *Punch and Judy* routine.

Speaking of *Punch*, be sure to look over the Calls for Submissions. The British Library are soliciting papers for a study day examining *Punch* magazine and the British Library archives and *The Gaskell Journal* has announced its biennial Graduate Student Essay prize. There are also opportunities to participate with conferences considering how the writings of Charles Dickens are shaped by—and contribute to—Victorian discourses of race, nation, and empire in the middle of the nineteenth century, *Alice in Wonderland*, and a colloquium interrogating Nineteenth-Century Legacies.

We're delighted to announce that the 2025 BAVS/BARS Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellowship will be hosted by the University of Edinburgh. This role seeks to provide institutional support for an unaffiliated early-career researcher. Full details on pages 2-3 (apply by Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May).

This issue also marks the introduction of The GLAM Report, which showcases work being done by colleagues working in galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. Alexandra Foulds takes us on a walk, through Gladstone's Library and its vast holdings. If you work with nineteenth-century collections and want to share them with the BAVS membership, please do let us know!

Amy Waterson & Ruth-Anne Walbank  
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## BAVS News

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### **BAVS 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference** University of Oxford, 23-25 July

*Keynotes include: Lauren Goodlad, Catherine Maxwell, Sarah Meer, Pablo Mukherjee, Matthew Rubery*

Founded in 2000, the British Association for Victorian Studies supports and promotes research in Britain and beyond. The Oxford Faculties of English and History are delighted to host this anniversary conference.

The programming will set aside some time at the start and end of each day when participants are warmly invited to take part in a dedicated presentation of Victorian resources at the Ashmolean Museum, and a walking tour of Victorian Oxford (including chances to view some of the less well-known college archives). We are also delighted to announce a wine reception and a special performance, both free to conference attendees, of a *Punch and Judy* suffrage routine. *Spike Bones' Punch and Judy* show is a new perspective on an old tradition – commissioned by *The Judy Project*: <https://thejudyproject.exeter.ac.uk/>.

New this year for early career researchers and postgraduates is the opportunity to exchange writing for peer review, including proposals for first monographs and postdoctoral fellowships. If you are interested in participating in these workshops and can commit to peer review and discussion, please contact Dr Christy Wensley, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, via [bavs@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:bavs@ell.ox.ac.uk).

Registration for the conference will open in April, once the programme has been finalised. In order to keep costs low, we will be asking attendees to book their own accommodation (a list of suggested options will be provided). All aspects of the ECR/PGR event will be free, excepting accommodation.

For full details of the panels and round tables addressing any aspect of Victorian Studies, its past, its future, and pedagogical best practises, as well as workshop opportunities concerning writing and peer review follow @Bavs\_PGs and visit <https://english.web.ox.ac.uk/bavs2025>.

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### **Nineteenth-Century Matters 2025** University of Edinburgh

Nineteenth-Century Matters is an initiative jointly run by the British Association for Romantic Studies and the British Association for Victorian Studies. Now in its ninth year, it is aimed at postdoctoral researchers who have completed their PhD, but who are not currently employed in a full-time academic post. Nineteenth-Century Matters offers unaffiliated early career researchers a platform from which to pursue their research, while also organising an academic event on a theme related to nineteenth-century studies or a workshop focused on an aspect of professionalisation. The focus of their proposed research should be on the nineteenth century, rather than on Romanticism or Victorianism. There is no requirement for this research to relate directly to Edinburgh's institutional specialisms, but areas of interest, in addition to the long nineteenth century, might include: Scottish literature; the history of the book; the Gothic; the history of reading; textual editing; environmental humanities; periodical studies; and travel and tourism.

For the coming year, the Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellowship will provide the successful applicant with affiliation at the University of Edinburgh, located primarily in the Department of English and Scottish Literature. The fellowship will run from October 2025 to September 2026. In addition to intellectual exchange and collaboration, the successful fellow will benefit from:

- Access to Edinburgh's library resources, both physical and digital, for the duration of the fellowship. These include the university's internationally significant Heritage Collections, which present many possible avenues for research in nineteenth-century studies. This includes an extensive collected of printed books and

manuscripts, the former partly reflecting Edinburgh's status as a copyright deposit library until 1837. Particular collections that might be of relevance include the Corson Collection of Walter Scott; the collection of the antiquarian David Laing (1793-1878); and the collection of the geographer, environmentalist and sociologist Patrick Geddes (1854-1932). Recent acquisitions include first editions of canonical Gothic novels including Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and work by female nineteenth-century novelists including Mary Shelley and Jane Austen.

- Access to collaborative research groups, as relevant, including: Scottish Writing in the Nineteenth Century (SWINC), which brings together staff and students with interests ranging across the long nineteenth century in Scotland and beyond; EDITION (formerly the Centre for the History of the Book), which supports new research in all aspects of the history of the book and textual editing; and the Edinburgh Environmental Humanities Network, which focuses on humanities-led responses to current crises. These and other groups at Edinburgh run a programme of research events that would offer the fellow opportunities for research dissemination, networking and professional development.
- Mentorship from Dr Gerard McKeever, Lecturer in Modern Scottish Literature, who will offer advice on research, professional development and careers.
- Free registration for the 2026 BARS Biennial Conference.
- Access to Edinburgh's webinar functions to host online events, if desired.
- Access to room bookings to host in-person events, if desired.

There is no requirement for the Fellow to live in or near Edinburgh during the fellowship and permanent accommodation will not be provided as part of the fellowship. The primary purpose of the fellowship is to enable the successful applicant to continue with an affiliation and remain part of the academic community. It is a non-stipendiary post, and the fellow will need to support themselves financially. The value of the fellowship is £1,500. These funds are intended to support the fellow's research project as they deem appropriate (paying for travel to archives, accommodation, and other research-related costs) and to cover the organisation of a research or professionalisation event related to their own research and/or development interests. It is also expected that the fellow will acknowledge BARS, BAVS, and the University of Edinburgh in any publications that arise from their position.

### **Application Process**

Applicants should submit a CV with a proposal of their research topic and event (maximum of two pages), explaining how and why they would benefit from the fellowship. Applicants can propose research on any aspect of the nineteenth century, and we are keen to encourage interdisciplinary proposals which might include, but are not limited to: literature, history, geography, and library and information studies. Applications should be sent to Sarah Parker ([s.l.parker@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.parker@lboro.ac.uk)), Cleo O'Callaghan Yeoman ([cleo.o.callaghan.yeoman@stir.ac.uk](mailto:cleo.o.callaghan.yeoman@stir.ac.uk)) and Gerard McKeever ([gerard.mckeever@ed.ac.uk](mailto:gerard.mckeever@ed.ac.uk)). The deadline for applications is **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025**.

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## **The BAVS-Rosemary Mitchell Prize for a Second Monograph 2025**

Annually, BAVS awards the Rosemary Mitchell Book Prize to the best second monograph published that year in Victorian studies. The prize is judged by a panel of BAVS scholars. Unlike other book prizes, this is specifically intended to honour the work of mid-career Victorianists in all disciplines who publish a monograph over the past year. The Prize will draw the attention of the Victorian Studies community to important new work in the field. The Prize also represents a celebration of the monograph as a form. Full rules are below.

**Judges:** Dr. Melissa Gustin, Dr. Vicky Mills (Chair), Dr Rieko Suzuki.

### **Rules**

This is a prize awarded by the British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS) which is intended for mid-career scholars. The winning book will be the second book by a scholar.

Eligible contenders must have published a scholarly work in Victorian Studies **between 17 February 2024 and 17 February 2025**. In order to submit, an author has to be a paid-up member of BAVS on 30 April 2025. This will be

checked. Members of BAVS outside the UK can enter books for the prize. Applicants for the prize do not need to have a university post.

The work needs to be a scholarly monograph in Victorian Studies (multi-authored books of articles will not be acceptable but joint-authored monographs will be, and the prize can be shared). We will not accept scholarly editions of Victorian texts, neo-Victorian novels or websites.

We will accept monograph studies devoted to the long nineteenth century (broadly defined) but will also accept texts that deal with neo-Victorian Studies as well. The work in question does need to have some post-1830 content (up to 1914). The prize is open to scholars in any discipline that deals with nineteenth-century Britain (including Britain's relationship with the wider world).

Publishers or authors may nominate a book. A covering letter (either by the author or the publisher) *must indicate the name and publication details of the author's first book*. We accept that the author's first book may not have been in Victorian Studies: they simply have to have published an earlier book. If publishers or authors wish to check if a work is eligible or not, they should email [v.mills@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:v.mills@bbk.ac.uk) **before 15 April 2025**. The covering letter can be sent separately by email (to the Chair Victoria Mills at the above address) if desired.

The judges will need to be provided with THREE hard copies of the nominated work (paperback copies are acceptable).

**IMPORTANT:** The author/publisher needs to email [v.mills@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:v.mills@bbk.ac.uk) with details of the book. Victoria Mills will then provide the addresses to which the author/publisher needs to send the books.

**The final deadline for receipt of books is 1st May 2025.** Volumes received after that date will not be eligible and will not be returned. It is the responsibility of authors to make sure that publishers send over copies of the book. We do not expect authors to pay for copies and take no responsibility for this. Books sent for consideration will not be returned. Dispatch of the books by authors or publishers grants BAVS ownership of them.

The cash prize is £500. If a monograph is joint authored, the prize money will be divided between the authors. The prize winner is normally announced in mid-June and will be expected to attend the following BAVS conference later in the summer. (conference fee, travel expenses and a contribution to accommodation will be paid by BAVS). A panel will be devoted to the prize-winning book. There will also be a cash prize of £500.

All judges are required to declare any conflict of interest.  
The Judges' decision is final.

The Prize is named after the late Professor/Reverend Rosemary Mitchell (1967-2001). Rosemary was a brilliant scholar who served on the board of BAVS. Her superb work which covered history, literature and art history, embodied the interdisciplinary project for which BAVS stands. Naming the Prize after her serves as an inspiration to Victorianists well into the future.

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## BAVS Postdoctoral Network

The BAVS Postdoctoral Network invites you to BAVS Tea Time, an informal, online space for the community to get together and discuss everything and anything. From the job market, publications, collaborations, to fun rabbit holes we've found ourselves down and exciting ways to avoid finishing that manuscript. This is an open space for nurturing an honest BAVS postdoc community.

These sessions are open to anyone who identifies as early-career or postdoctoral, regardless of affiliation. We especially encourage those on precarious contracts, in alt-academic or GLAM roles, or who identify as independent researchers. We hope you can join an upcoming session. Links for BAVS Tea Time events will be circulated via the BAVS Postdoc Mailing List, which you can join [here](#).

### BAVS Tea Times

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 12:00 – 13:00  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 14:30 – 15:30  
Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 14:00 – 17:00  
Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 12:30 – 13:30  
Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August 17:00 – 18:00

## BAVS Newsletter Reviews

Would you like to contribute to the *BAVS Newsletter*? We are always looking for new reviewers, particularly among postgraduate, early-career, and independent researchers. The *Newsletter* reviews two types of writing:

- Recently published work on any aspect of Victorian history, literature and culture. We have included a list below, but we are always open to suggestions!
- Foundational contributions to Victorian studies, published between 1950 and the present. We ask that reviewers revisit a foundational contribution to Victorian studies. How has it been built on, nuanced, and challenged by subsequent scholarship? Is it still a ‘game-changer’?

You can find examples of past and current reviewers’ work in the **Newsletter archive (2009 – 24)**. We are also keen to publish reviews of recent exhibitions, theatre productions, and other cultural events of Victorianist interest. Please get in touch if you would like to pitch an idea!

### Recently published works:

- Sarah Parker, *Form and Modernity in Women’s Poetry, 1895–1922: A Line of Her Own* (Routledge, 2024)
- Riya Das, *Women at Odds: Indifference, Antagonism, and Progress in Late Victorian Literature* (Ohio University Press, 2024)
- Debra Gettelman, *Imagining Otherwise: How Readers Help to Write Nineteenth-Century Novels* (Princeton University Press, 2024)
- Anne Jacob Priyanka, *The Victorian Novel On File: Secrets, Hoards, and Information Storage* (Oxford University Press, 2024)
- Lindsey N. Chappell, *Temporal Forms and the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean Writing British Heritage in Ancient Lands* (Cambridge University Press, 2024)
- Melissa Dickson, *Acoustics in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Science Listening at the Threshold* (Cambridge University Press, 2024)
- Julia Ditter, *Scottish Literature, Borders and the Environmental Imagination* (Bloomsbury, 2025)
- Elizabeth Ludlow, *Prayer and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing* (Bloomsbury, 2025)
- Julia Thomas, *The Victorian Mind’s Eye: Reading Literature in an Age of Illustration* (Oxford University Press, 2025)

### Foundational Texts:

- Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale UP, 1979, 1984)
- Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983; CUP, 2000, 2009)
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985)
- Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)

Please note that in most instances, it will not be possible for us to provide a copy of these books. Any and all ideas are very welcome. Do get in contact at [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com).

### Recent Exhibitions/Events:

- ‘Imaginary Worlds’: An exhibition by Franklin, Bronte Parsonage Museum (2025)
- *Jane Eyre*, The Northern Ballet Tour (2025)
- **Rise Up: Resistance, Revolution, Abolition**, The Fitzwilliam Museum (2025)
- **The Story of Elizabeth Gaskell’s House from Dereliction to Delight**, Elizabeth Gaskell House (2025)

- **Dickens in Doughty Street: 100 Years of the Charles Dickens Museum**, Charles Dickens Museum (2025)

To express an interest in reviewing, please include your name, affiliation (if applicable), current status, and five research keywords in an email to the Editor, Amy Waterson ([BAVSnews@gmail.com](mailto:BAVSnews@gmail.com)). Reviewers will be required to **join BAVS** if they have not done so already.

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## *The Victorianist* Call for Researcher Blogs

*The Victorianist* blog publishes reviews, discussions, and opinion pieces by BAVS members on all matters of Victorian interest. Whether you have strong feelings about a recent neo-Victorian film or would like to share an intriguing snippet of research, if you'd like to write for us, please contact **Lilyemma Whalley** and **Marijke Valk**.

*The Victorianist* is run by postgraduate representatives of the Executive Committee and particularly encourages postgraduate members of the community to submit their writing for publication.

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## BAVS Online Writing Retreats

The BAVS Online Writing Retreats provide a supportive and friendly co-working environment to work through your to-do list. All members of BAVS are welcome to join. If you're not already on the email list, sign up using the form below so that you receive details of upcoming Zoom sessions (you don't need to register for individual days).

We tend to run one or two per week (09.30-12.45 GMT/BST) and send details of upcoming sessions at the start of each month.

Sign up form:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd83QhlmT4FB0vOgPgpJqwxWgrtQPCjIwH9\\_Pjjxzip8rv0lQ/viwwform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd83QhlmT4FB0vOgPgpJqwxWgrtQPCjIwH9_Pjjxzip8rv0lQ/viwwform?usp=sharing)

Sessions are run by Charlotte Boyce and Madeline Potter. You can opt out of emails at any time by contacting [charlotte.boyce@port.ac.uk](mailto:charlotte.boyce@port.ac.uk)

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## BAVS Funding Grants: Forthcoming deadline

The British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS) is committed to the support of its members' activities, such as conferences, events and research activities. There are three funding streams currently available to BAVS members:

- 1) **Events funding:** up to £1000 is available to support the costs of an academic conference or event relating to Victorian studies. The Association and its Executive remain committed to the development of postgraduate students, and it is anticipated that two postgraduate-organised/led events will be funded each academic year.
- 2) **Research funding:** up to £625 is available to support the costs of individual research for Postgraduates and Early Career Researchers.
- 3) **Public Engagement funding:** this stream offers up to £300 to support the costs of public engagement activities by members at all levels.

The guidelines and the link to the application form are available on the BAVS website: <https://bavs.ac.uk/funding/>  
The next deadline for applications is **31 May 2025 at 5 pm (UK time)**.

Please direct any queries to the BAVS Funding Officer, Dr. Francesca Arnavas, [francesca.arnavas@gmail.com](mailto:francesca.arnavas@gmail.com)

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## Reviews

The BAVS Newsletter is always looking for writers, particularly among postgraduate, early-career, and independent researchers, to review recent works on any aspect of Victorian history, literature, and culture. To express an interest in reviewing, please email your name, affiliation (if applicable), five research keywords, and any titles or digital resources that you are interested in reviewing to [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com). You will also find a list of books currently available to be sent out to reviewers on the [Newsletter webpage](#). Reviewers must **join BAVS** if they have not done so already. We also encourage authors, editors, and publishers of recent works to suggest titles or digital resources for review by emailing the same address.

***The Feeling of Letting Die: Necroeconomics and Victorian Fiction*, by Jennifer MacLure (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2023), 200 pp., £65.99 (Hardback), ISBN 978-0-8142-1485-5**

Jennifer MacLure's *The Feeling of Letting Die: Necroeconomics and Victorian Fiction* (2023) presents a wide-sweeping analysis of Victorian literary engagements with capitalism. MacLure's study expands upon the concept of necroeconomics, coined by Mike Hill and Warren Montag, and uses the biopolitical approaches of scholars such as Emily Steinlight and Catherine Gallagher to interrogate how beliefs about the inevitability of preventable deaths were manufactured, encouraged, and complicated in the nineteenth century. MacLure's work is not only an incisive and precise examination of how the fictional characters of Harriet Martineau, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, William Morris, and George Eliot embodied responses to the New Poor Law of 1834, but it also problematises our modern conception of capitalism as unfeeling in the face of poverty and death. MacLure's insistent and revelatory claim is that emotion has been key to the formation of capitalism and the perpetuation of laissez-faire, non-interventionist behaviours and policies, and that the literary manifestations of necroeconomic concerns demonstrate the astonishing power and privilege of sympathy.

In her first two chapters, MacLure studies characters 'aligned with the work of the biopolitical liberal state [...] they are complicit in the strategic action of letting die' (p. 12). Chapter One uses Martineau's deeply didactic *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-34) alongside the anonymous and satirical 'Marcus Pamphlet' (1838) to demonstrate how literary treatments of economic policies embody theoretical economic approaches in the affective presentations of their characters. *Illustrations* supports MacLure's claim quite clearly, as Martineau urges that no matter how saddening the plight of others appears to be, we must resist 'instinctive cross-class sympathy' as, fundamentally, the working class must 'exist less' (p. 37, 41). MacLure's particularly persuasive close reading of Martineau's *Deerbrook* (1838) provides a fascinating example of how the radical press' pillorying of the New

Poor Law and of *Illustrations* prompted Martineau to reconsider the harms of laissez-faire capitalism. The importance of an open dialogue between literary and journalistic engagements with economic policies is a motivating undercurrent throughout this text.

Broadening out the scope of this argument from the parables of Martineau, MacLure turns to Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1854). Here, she weaves her necroeconomic argument away from death and more firmly toward debility, deftly crafting a theory of 'pathoeconomics' which crystallises into a powerful and progressive hermeneutics of sympathy. Gaskell's writing reveals how revolutionary sympathy can be by emphasising how stringently capitalism attempts to control human feeling, that there is a 'systemic manipulation of feeling that has to take place to make necroeconomics work' (p. 54). Yet, MacLure also demonstrates Gaskell's refusal to consider paths forward that do not maintain her privilege, relying upon class-based systems to determine whose feelings are *too* radical. Where Gaskell's novels demonstrate a fundamental truth, that necroeconomics both stifles and redirects middle-class sympathetic feeling to benefit itself, they also reveal the limitations of sympathy in a social body already infected by capitalism.

Chapter Three centres on *Bleak House* (1852-53), focusing on the characters of Harold Skimpole and Mrs. Pardiggle to elucidate how pleasure and pride can reinforce deadly social and political stratifications. Necroeconomics' ability to produce pleasure for the middle and higher classes at the expense of the oppressed is explored alongside Achille Mbembe's necropolitics theories, which appear insistent and pivotal for understanding how pleasure can reign where sympathy seems essential. MacLure's attention to 'Boundary-Pleasure and Biopolitical Racism' peels back the facades of literary necroeconomic apparatuses to reveal, especially through the representations of Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby, how racism is used to further capitalistic agendas (p. 92). These racialising moments in the text are considered more from the perspective of general marginalisation, rather than as a specific instantiation of racial difference as a tool for economic oppression. Further work would do well to

take up these claims with more direct attention to the relationship between these racialising acts and Mbembe's necropolitical theories. Despite this limitation, the chapter is still the most pressing of the book, as the gap between 'letting die' and 'enforcing death' closes.

The final chapter considers how sympathy can be repositioned as a radical and destabilising influence on capitalism. Eliot's *Felix Holt* (1866) is used to demonstrate how capitalism and sympathetic action, taken together, promote the cannibalisation of the working class; political power and economic freedom form an inescapable ouroboros that at first appears hopeful but is too reliant on the social hierarchy to be truly revolutionary. *News From Nowhere* (1890), on the other hand, envisions a world of extreme sympathy in which capitalism and its laissez-faire impulses have been eradicated. The study of Morris' didactic project here is far more scintillating than the source material, but it finalises MacLure's analysis of affective power by imagining a world that is not contingent on letting die and is, instead, radically focused on living.

MacLure's persuasive and deeply felt account of the necroeconomic underpinnings in Victorian literature is an important contribution with wide-reaching interventions. MacLure's theory of pathoeconomics and diagnosis of sympathy's violent edges in Victorian literature are innovative methods for the field to consider, but MacLure's exceedingly readable prose also lends itself to undergraduate syllabi. Even beyond the classroom, MacLure's attentive readings are vital as we attempt to understand our current moment. Reading this book in the 2020s, at a time when community and care feel unstable, the literary examinations in *The Feeling of Letting Die* adopt a pivotal commentary on understanding how emotion and economic ideology are intertwined under capitalism. After the feeling of letting die, MacLure boldly argues that there may be courage enough to prioritise care.

Alexia Mandla Ainsworth (Stanford University)

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***Wayward Girls in Victorian and Edwardian England: Pathways In and Out of Institutions, 1854-1920*, by Tahaney Alghrani (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), 222pp., £76.50, (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-350-40711-4**

Opening *Wayward Girls in Victorian and Edwardian England: Pathways In and Out of Institutions, 1854-1920* (2024) with nineteen-year-old Beatrice's attempts to 'dress beyond her station in life' (p. 1) immediately presents gender and class as central

issues explored by Tahaney Alghrani in her examinations of working-class girls within reformatory education. She considers ideas of working-class girlhood, the real lived experiences of girls in reformatory institutions and gender ideologies in her study, using sources from the Red Lodge Reformatory and Carlton Industrial School in Bristol and Manchester Sale Industrial School for Girls archives. The book encompasses the period from the 1854 Youth Offenders Act to 1920, and is organised into two parts: a sample of 465 girls, resident in institutions between 1854 and 1900 followed by analyses of the girls' lives after discharge. Alghrani's archival research examines how girls came to be in reformatory and industrial schools, and the means used to regulate gender behaviour so that it aligned with feminine gender and social norms, both within the institutions and immediately after release. This is an important book as it acknowledges the histories of girls who were placed in reformatory education during the nineteenth century, a hitherto underexplored area.

This is fresh research into nineteenth-century girls' education and redresses a gender imbalance. The archival resources Alghrani consults include minute books, reports, registers, regulations and punishment books, in conjunction with relevant parliamentary papers, Reformatory and Industrial Inspector Reports, contemporary newspaper articles and photographs. The material is neatly presented in a compact book with easily navigated chapters, useful tables, and images. The importance of the 'untapped' sources (p. 18) is reestablished throughout. Chapter 6, 'Life After the Institution' opens with a reminder that working-class girls' lives, such as those explored here, have not been extensively represented in the critical literature before, whereas boys' lives have (p. 129). It is important to recognise that reformatory education was not the preserve of boys and Alghrani's contribution helps address this.

Using these sources, the routes by which girls came to be in these institutions are described as contributing towards 'scholarship on juvenile delinquency and crime history literature' (p. 3). The book also presents numerous diverse examples of girlhood, reminding readers of the breadth of experiences of girlhood. The range of sources and the details provided regarding these Reformatory and Industrial Institutions prompts the reader to reflect on how education has been delivered and for what purposes. While the work focuses on girls, the working-class families from which they came are an aspect too. This book is useful for those interested in education, family lives, class, and gender.



Through these chapters, we consider the process of leaving behind girls' former lives as they were incarcerated and how time was organised throughout their days (pp. 110, 111). The description of silent mealtimes, accompanied by a sample of the weekly menu from Manchester Sale (p. 113), reveals a grim existence. Beyond their school lives, it is demanded of us that we consider women's 'economic autonomy' and its relationship with 'respectable femininity' (p.171). Existing within the boundaries of 'respectable femininity' was restrictive and significantly impacted women's economic realities.

The ethical implications of presenting vulnerable girls' lives are answered with the explanation that these records are easily obtainable due to the digitisation of archives (p. 21). The book never loses sight of the fact that these were girls leading real lives, and Alghrani takes care to remind the reader of this throughout. Explanatory text and interpretation through considerate scholarship is needed to do justice to those whose lives are exposed through digitisation and Alghrani's book helps address this issue.

This is a useful book for people interested in how nineteenth-century girlhood intersected with class. It helps take girls' education beyond the classrooms of free girls. Education in these shadows is a chilling showcase of society and culture. The reformatory schools were, 'shaped by the contemporary attitudes and discourses around gender, sexuality, delinquency and the ideals of femininity' (p. 25). Alghrani's work sits alongside work of historians working on similar institutions, such as Claire Phillips and Emma Watkins. For those interested in reformatory and industrial education, it presents a precursor to the work of twentieth-century colleagues, including Charlotte Wildman and Jessamy Carlson.

*Catherine Freeman (Independent Researcher)*

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***Perception, Class, and Environment in the Works of Thomas Hardy*, by Roger Ebbatson (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2024), 154pp., £34.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-031-40109-1**

In *Perception, Class, and Environment in the Works of Thomas Hardy* (2024), Roger Ebbatson examines Thomas Hardy's poems, novels, and short fiction in an effort to 'lay bare' the 'indeterminacy' present in his work. It is those elements of Hardy's texts which are elusory, 'veiled' (p. vii), or otherwise obscured that, Ebbatson believes, yield the most revealing insights into his work. Ebbatson's study identifies and addresses motifs which reoccur across Hardy's oeuvre, while offering fresh readings of key

textual moments in eleven short chapters which follow the chronology of Hardy's literary productions.

The book opens with an examination of Hardy's handling of folk elements and dialect in his early poem 'The Bride-Night Fire' (1866). Here, Ebbatson argues that this ballad poem exposes the conflict between the 'collective truth' of the folk 'people' and the 'dispersed knowledge' of the modern 'public', which allowed the nineteenth-century reader to delve into a past effaced by modernity, thereby preserving a culture under threat of obliteration (p. 10). In the second chapter, Ebbatson considers the cliff scene in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) as an expression of the Kantian sublime. Critics have tended to read this narrative moment through a geological lens, and Ebbatson's fresh approach repositions Henry Knight as a precursor to his later conflicted heroes: Clym Yeobright, Michael Henchard, and Jude Fawley; all representatives of an age in which the 'ground fails' and those afflicted 'hang[s] in the abyss' till a 'turning point' arrives and swerves them away.

Ebbatson's analyses of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1871) are predominant within the text. In 'Selfhood and Labour in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*', Ebbatson's approach, echoing Ferdinand Tönnies' definition of *Gemeinschaft*, shows how Hardy's novel begins with a 'community of place' and 'community of spirit' and concludes with an 'uprooting of Durbeyfield clan from their native village' (p. 54). Chapters seven and eight focus on exposing the textual ambiguities in *Tess*. In the former, Ebbatson argues convincingly that Tess's history is influenced through her attempts to escape her d'Urberville face, a physical manifestation of her ancestral history. When Tess stumbles upon paintings of her female ancestors at Wellbridge Manor, she is disturbed by their faces which she perceives as being swathed in cruelty and ferocity. The novel charts her self-effacement as she tries to escape this legacy, compelling her to distort her features and 'veil' her face (p. 87). In chapter eight he presents *Tess* as a novel of The Decadence, arguing that it is imbued with 'a pervasive sense of imminent decay' (p. 92). He identifies traces of antisemitism, 'Decadent satanic lines' (p. 94), and vampirism, opening interesting new avenues for research.

A chapter entitled 'Wayfaring' stands out as a particularly innovative contribution to Hardy scholarship. Ebbatson attends to Hardy's depictions of nomadism and itinerant lives in *The Return of the Native* (1878), *Tess*, and several of Hardy's poems. He traces the influence of nineteenth-century gypsy narratives in Hardy's 'wayfaring' texts (as Ebbatson categorises them), interestingly upholding and problematising the role of journeying in Hardy's writing, which he holds to be of singular importance.

Wayfaring, says Ebbatson, is neither liberating nor innocent, but fraught with deep anomalies on the lines of sexuality and class; while a Diggory Venn may transform from the wayfaring reddleman to the dairy-farmer, a Tess or Jude are bombarded with iniquities and exploitation.

The closing chapters turn their attention to the aesthetic qualities of Hardy's work. Ebbatson examines 'Beeny Cliff' (1912) and makes the case for it is as an impressionist text, rich with evocative and sensuous experiences. He asserts that Hardy's application of the lyric form turns the poem 'inwards', and into a 'private mythology' (p. 118), reiterating impressionism as a significant influence on, and component of, Hardy's texts, in the form of creative irresolution. Finally, Ebbatson explores window patterns in poems such as 'The Face at the Casement' (1871), 'Outside the Window' (1914), and 'Something Tapped' (1913). He suggests that the 'window' is often a 'threshold' which leads to 'problematising issues of space and time, identity and alterity' (p. 127). Ebbatson seeks to establish that 'settings, doorways, windows, stages, mirrors, pictures' in Hardy's writing focus unrelentingly on 'the framed nature of reality' (p. 128). This critical intervention contributes to recent scholarship aligning Hardy with proto-modernist sensibilities, where the glass acts as a barrier, inhibiting transparency and stable identity.

*Perception, Class, and Environment in the Works of Thomas Hardy* is a fresh intervention in Hardy studies which successfully establishes that Hardy attempts, in his fiction and poetry, to show individuals shoring up a stable identity in a 'fluid and changing environment' (p. 141). The book is densely packed with novel perspectives on Hardy's oeuvre, that have seldom been touched upon or mentioned only obliquely in existing scholarship, without the depth of examination that Ebbatson brings. This is a must-read for any serious Hardy scholar, for innovative and new readings of his work.

Oindrila Ghosh (*Diamond Harbour Women's University*)

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***Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, by Susie L. Steinbach (London: Routledge, 2023), 390pp., £38.99 (paperback), £145.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-3674-2103-8.**

In the thirteen years since Susie Steinbach's *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2012) was first published, the field of Victorian studies has experienced

much change and revision. There have been significant developments in our contemporary understandings of race, class, imperialism, emotions, nationalism, gender, and sexuality during the nineteenth century. The third edition of Steinbach's work builds on these recent developments, and so remains a useful and informative book about the key social, political, and cultural underpinnings of the Victorian era. As Steinbach notes in the preface to this new edition, the book 'introduces readers both to what happened in Victorian Britain (which does not change) and to how historians today approach and interpret Victorian Britain (which does)' (p. xxii).

Since 2012, reviews of Steinbach's study have emphasised its relevance as a teaching resource. *Understanding the Victorians* is certainly still a sound jumping-off point for educators and students of the Victorian era alike. In part, this is due to Steinbach's thematic structure; her sixteen chapters cover an array of topics from Victorian leisure and class, to the police and emotions. This approach paints a vivid picture of an era that saw drastic changes throughout Britain. One can easily envision this book in a reading list for an undergraduate module on modern British history. This is especially the case considering that Steinbach ends each of her chapters with a section listing relevant Victorian fiction 'that students might enjoy' (p. 37), a further reading section, and accompanying online resources. This approachable structure and signposting to additional learning sites means that *Understanding the Victorians* remains readable and accessible for those of us teaching wide-ranging survey courses encompassing the nineteenth century, particularly for educators working outside of the UK.

In attempting to cover nearly a century and a half of history, naturally, there are generalisations and omissions, such as Steinbach's discussions of national differences within the UK. For example, her assertion that 'by the early 1870s, Britain produced over 500,000 tons per year of steel [...] Scottish iron producers were particularly efficient at using new techniques to reduce costs' (p. 120), raises more questions. How much of that steel was produced in Scotland, what new techniques were in use, and *where* in Scotland was it produced? Likewise, there are shaky interpretations of Scottish geography: 'over the whole period from 1841 to 1911, there was a relative loss of population in the counties of [...] Grampian and Highland' (p. 107). These regional terms do not provide sufficient detail for the substantial changes that were happening at a local level in Scotland between 1841 and 1911; a 70-year period that included two massive overhauls of county, burgh, parish and electoral boundary divisions in the form of the Local Government (Scotland) Acts of 1889 and 1894. Overall,

Steinbach's interpretations of regional variations within the UK and Ireland are, at times, vague.

My primary criticism of *Understanding the Victorians* is that it often leaves the reader searching for its historiographical intervention. For instance, there are trending topics within Victorian studies that lack much penetration in the book, such as ecology, working-class literature, and popular periodical culture. However, Steinbach acknowledges her study's limitations from the outset, writing 'of course, this edition still does not cover everything' (p. xxiii). Indeed, these are topics which have been explored by other scholars in monographs, edited collections, and journal articles that provide much more detail, both historiographical and theoretical. What has been lacking from the field in recent years are 'big-picture' monographs that provide an up-to-date overview of the inescapable concepts that defined Victorians' lives. Enter, *Understanding the Victorians*. For this, Steinbach is to be praised. Her efforts to update her study with subsequent editions should also be recognised. In the meantime, only time will tell whether her contribution provides a lasting summary and interpretation of the Victorian era.

Charlotte Lauder (*Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities*)

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***Women's Writing and Mission in the Nineteenth Century: Jane Eyre's Missionary Sisters*, by Angharad Eyre (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 264 pp., £104.00 (Hardback) £39.99 (paperback), £35.99 (eBook) ISBN 978-1-032-36623-4**

Angharad Eyre opens this fascinating and scholarly text with an extract from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), in which Brontë records Jane's reflections on receiving an offer of marriage from St. John Rivers, so that she might accompany him overseas as a missionary wife. Eyre explains that this paragraph stimulated her interest in missionary narratives and suggests that few have recognised that *Jane Eyre* includes an extended engagement with mission culture. She uses this narrative moment to lead into her examination of nineteenth-century female missionaries and how they are rendered within discourse. The subtitle to Eyre's monograph is reminiscent of Jody G. Bower's *Jane Eyre's Sisters: How Women Live and Write the Heroine's Story* (2015). However, Eyre's text differs by focussing almost completely on the biographies, tracts, and novels of missionary writers, apart from three Victorian novelists and their work: Charlotte Brontë, particularly her novels *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* (1853); Anne Brontë, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848); and Elizabeth Gaskell, her novel *Ruth* (1853), and her biography of Charlotte Brontë.

The Introduction establishes a robust theoretical summary of the history of nineteenth-century missionary women and British Mission Societies, emphasising the role of missionary writing in maintaining the evangelical missionary movement, and noting the importance of letters, reports, newsletters, biographies and memoirs in constructing these narratives. Eyre demonstrates the complex nature of women's mission work. In relation to colonial missions, she states that her study explores 'strategies of power used by women missionaries over their converts', and how female missionaries' objectification 'in a narrative of ideal femininity based on self-sacrifice caused them to subjugate native others' (p. 5). Eyre continues by discussing female missionaries in relation to religion and gender ideology. After an explanation of her methodology for examining female missionary narratives, Eyre sets out her main theme, the representation of the female missionary figure in Victorian literature through heroines who portray 'idealised' missionary tropes, such as self-sacrifice and piety. Other notable issues explored include mission driven marriages, and the informal friendships and spiritual support between women, including the exchange of letters between missions, which gave rise to religious publications. Whilst many of these other themes are common in mission scholarship, Eyre's thoughtful discussion from a feminist perspective is pertinent.

In the Prologue, Eyre explores the afterlives of the published biographies of two American missionaries, Ann Judson (1789 -1826) and Harriet Newell (1793 – 1812), detailing the strategies used by their male biographers to establish them 'as appropriately feminine' (p. 26), blurring the distinction between private and public accounts of their missionary work. Eyre asserts that publishing these accounts represents an effort to support the missionary movement, rather than recording authentic accounts of two missionary women. Acknowledging Judson and Newell's biographies and highlighting how they were adapted, usefully illustrates how the experiences of female missionaries could be used to further particular ideas of femininity; a concern which preoccupies much of Eyre's study.

Eyre's argument is organised chronologically and thematically. In Part I, which covers the period 1830 to – 1870, Eyre focuses on three missionary writers and their fictional portrayals of self-sacrifice in the domestic sphere, including an examination of the 'Holy Child' character. The novels include Martha Sherwood's *The History of Little Henry and his Bearer* (1814) and Hesba Stretton's *Jessica's First Prayer* (1867), which were both widely distributed through Sunday schools and became international bestsellers.

Eyre notes that Diana Craik, in her novels *The Half Caste* (1851) and *Bread Upon the Waters* (1852), includes governess heroines whose work takes on ‘a missionary flavour’ (p. 96). Eyre closes Part I with a discussion of Charlotte Brontë’s novels *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* and the impact of missionary culture on Brontë. Importantly, Eyre asserts that with her ‘uncompromising psychological realism’ Brontë ‘exposes the limits of missionary femininity for Victorian women’ (p. 111). Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Ruth* are then discussed, together with Gaskell’s biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), all in relation to missionary narratives.

In Part II, Eyre discusses the feminist writing of three ‘New Women’ writers: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner and Margaret Harkness, arguing ‘that all three writers portray the ‘New Woman’ in their fiction as a missionary, and her feminist cause as a deeply religious ‘redemptive mission’ (p. 146).

The final chapter is concerned with the establishment of women’s higher education colleges in London, Cambridge and Oxford, between 1840 and 1886. Eyre continues with a detailed study of Westfield College, London, founded in 1882, and the impact of their newsletter, *Hermes*, on the mission movement of this period. Eyre concludes with the assertion that many women, to the present day, were aided by the ‘moral framework inspired by missionary femininity’ to understand themselves as ‘women, writers and feminists’ (p. 229).

This monograph is a valuable contribution to missionary scholarship, with a densely argued analytical approach. It is distinct from the majority of missionary texts, which tend to focus on geographically defined missionary communities or missionary societies, rather than narrative analysis. Eyre’s reading of the impact these missionary narratives had on Victorian novels, culture, and the development of feminism is clear-sighted, with relevance to both Feminist and Literary Studies.

*Trudie Messent (Independent Researcher)*

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***Secular Foundations of the Liberal State in Victorian Britain* by William C. Lubenow, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2024), x+304pp., £95 (hardback), ISBN: 9781783277971**

In this scholarly and eloquently written book, W.C. Lubenow fully delivers on his promise to explain the complex interactions between the ideas and institutions which forged the modern British state in the

aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, arguing that they engendered a distinctive liberal-secular constitutional and administrative ethos. Drawing from an impressive range of archival and published material, Lubenow illuminates these processes of state formation in six interrelated thematic chapters. He spotlights a period which witnessed the gradual replacement of the eighteenth-century fiscal-military-confessional state, with a political culture guided by ‘secularity and liberality’, as well as by merit (p. 13). This book presents a compelling story about modernity and the means whereby a new political coterie, educated in the reformed universities and moulded by competitive examinations, first claimed the political, intellectual, and cultural spaces once held by confessional ‘clerisies’, before channelling their energies into the reorganisation of British political life.

The origins of the secular-liberal state in Britain can be found in the aftermath of the repeal of the Test Acts, Catholic emancipation, and the removal of Jewish political disabilities. These secular ‘constitutional reformulations’ were fundamentally ‘liberal’ as they ‘opened civic opportunities for people who had been excluded previously’ (p. 57). Lubenow emphasises that this British species of secularism was not irreligious, nor was it the highway to disbelief. What the repeal of the Test Acts, Catholic emancipation, and the removal of Jewish political disabilities instead achieved, was to transfer religion ‘into a different constitutional and legal place’. The secularising thrust of these three acts did not damage religion itself, but was rather ‘directed against clerical dogmatism and doctrinal literality’ (p. 57). Lubenow’s argument here is cogent and written in beautiful prose. The reader, however, is left wondering about those critical, anti-liberal voices - both clerical and lay - which were less keen on the idea of constitutional reformulation which admitted people into the civic state who had been previously excluded from it.

The repeal of the Test Acts, Catholic emancipation, and the removal of Jewish political disabilities left a constitutional vacuum which, as Lubenow abundantly shows, was later filled by (to borrow his term) the ‘secular clerisy’. This group of ‘fit and proper persons’ was created by the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 and the Order in Council of 1870. Informed by a moral and reformist Gladstonian spirit, the Report aimed at the purification of public life from political corruption and patronage through the establishment of competitive examinations open to all persons of talent, prior to their appointment to public office. The ethos of the Report resonated in Robert Lowe’s Order in Council of 1870 which provided the blueprint for the modern Civil Service. Health, ‘character’, merit, knowledge, and ability were some of

the key criteria that the Civil Service Commissioners had to be satisfied that the candidates met prior to their appointment. Lubenow does an excellent job of sketching the history of this constitutional development between 1854 and 1870, and he is at his best when delving into parliamentary debates to capture some of the finer points of contention amongst contemporaries. Carrying the same theme into the next chapter, he examines how the Haldane Committee and the formation of the Cabinet Office gave expression to the spirit of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report predicated on the idea that merit ought to be ‘measured by competitive examinations instead of patronage’ (p. 106). Here, Lubenow’s detailed prosopographical analysis of key members of the Haldane Committee does a very good job in bringing to life their aspirations and efforts to reorganise executive government.

Yet the same methodological approach does not work as well in the following chapters. Despite offering some brilliant and highly original insights about the formation and functions of the ‘secular clerisy’, these chapters are overburdened with too much biographical detail. Regrettably, the rather formulaic *longueurs* make for a less compelling reading. What is more, one cannot help but notice a paradox which Lubenow seems to overlook in regard to his much-lauded protagonists: for all their purported commitment to the anti-patronage and anti-nepotism of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report, many of the individuals comprising the ‘secular clerisy’ launched and successfully built their careers precisely because of their family connections and extant nepotistic structures. When Lubenow steps away from the thickets of biographical analysis and considers the wider implications of his story, he makes several interesting observations about the mental world and habits, connections, characters, and intellectual manners of these ‘Victorian mandarins’ (p. 176).

This is an important and thought-provoking book by a leading expert in the field. Notwithstanding its occasional *longueurs*, Lubenow’s book is beautifully written and amounts to a work of serious historical scholarship which makes a significant contribution to our understanding of this period of constitutional and administrative change. It should be essential reading for students and scholars studying Victorian political and intellectual history.

*Petros Spanou (University of Oxford)*

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***Sex, Celibacy, and Deviance: The Victorians and the Song of Songs*, by Duc Dau (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2024), 178pp., \$69.95 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-8142-1503-6**

***Biblical Wisdom and the Victorian Literary Imagination*, by Denae Dyck (Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 2024), 216pp., £85 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-3503-3537-0**

It is a testament to the essential value of specialist archives that Duc Dau and Denae Dyck have recently produced such insightful and compelling works on religion and literature in the Victorian era. Both (among many other important and extensive acknowledgements) thank their respective experiences at the Armstrong Browning Library (ABL) at Baylor University, Texas. The ABL holds an extensive collection of Victorian documents, texts, and artefacts and provides a number of fellowships and funding opportunities for researchers to view and access them. The ABL’s influence can be seen not only in the references to the Brownings, but also in the writing of Michael Field (the pen name of aunt and niece writing duo Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper), George MacDonald, and the ABL’s growing collection of writing by nineteenth-century women poets, and nineteenth-century theological pamphlets.

The scholarly conversation surrounding faith and religion in Victorian culture remains a vibrant and fruitful field of research. As Dyck highlights, ‘the critical consensus has been to regard the Victorian era as an age of doubt, a time when scientific and philosophical developments led to a widespread ‘crisis of faith’’ (pp. 1-2). The reality, as it becomes evident, is that Victorian faith and religion is a complex and wide-ranging topic, complicated by changing critical attitudes and taste for such works of literature. The need for corrective and critical re-appraisals, such as those offered by Dau and Dyck, illustrates the manner in which this area continues to provide so many more interpretations and insights.

Duc Dau’s *Sex, Celibacy, and Deviance: The Victorians and the Song of Songs* opens with a quote from Yvonne Sherwood which acknowledges that ‘our modern sense of the Bible is so limited, so closed’ (p. 1) when compared with those who lived during the nineteenth century, and such a sentiment is shared in the exploration of the richness of biblical influences in Victorian literature. As Dau highlights, many Victorian writers ‘were reading the Bible through newer methods of exegesis, notably, higher criticism’ (p. 3), and this higher criticism ‘exerted an undeniable influence on the reception of the Song of Songs’ (p. 4). Dau clearly and insightfully sets out the significance and cultural impact of the Song of Songs, and how this can be seen to dominate many aspects of Victorian theology. Dau draws attention to the fact that ‘The Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible written predominantly from the first-person perspective of a female speaker. Indeed,

it is the only biblical book in which a woman uses her own words to speak about herself as well as her relationship with her beloved' (p. 21). Its significance, therefore, is evident.

Dau's queer and feminist reading of the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon), the only erotic poem in the Bible, provides not only an insight into Victorian Judeo-Christian beliefs but also a fascinating insight into the works of a number of key writers. Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Christina Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon and numerous others are considered, particularly in how the Song of Songs addresses ideas of gender, sexuality, love, and relationships with God and others. In chapter three, Dau explores the poet Augusta Theodosia Drane alongside Christina Rossetti on the theme of sisterhood and celibacy and, in doing so, places the still well-known Rossetti side by side with the now lesser-known Drane. 'Scholars have paid little attention to Drane,' Dau emphasises, 'despite her being a model of an accomplished Victorian whose many published works include poetry, histories, essays, and biographies' (p. 64).

For Dau, 'Higher criticism exerted an undeniable influence on the reception of the Song of Songs' and, as a result, many religious Victorians now saw that 'the Song of Songs was no longer chained to centuries-old exegesis (p. 4). This 'unchained' approach allows Dau to explore how a queer theology includes an exploration of 'queer and decadent Catholicism' in chapter four, which provides an insightful account of 'the aesthetics and erotics of the faith' (p. 107).

Denae Dyck gives a similarly theological insight in *Biblical Wisdom and the Victorian Literary Imagination*, which also 'reassess[es] the interpretive challenges and imaginative possibilities sparked by the advent of biblical higher criticism' (p. 3). Dyck's focus is placed on the period between the 1840s and 1880s, 'the decades that witnessed the most debate about the higher criticism in the Victorian press' (p. 4). The Biblical wisdom found in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, along with the gospel parables and the subsequent Victorian literature that interprets these writings form Dyck's research. 'Wisdom literature's poetic prospects have enduring appeal,' as Dyck notes, 'yet this genre reached newfound heights of expression during the Victorian era, with its crisis of interpretation' (p. 3). Dyck quotes Paul Ricoeur's identification of the characteristics of biblical wisdom literature, such as 'solitude, the fault, suffering, and death—where the misery and the grandeur of human beings confront each other' (p. 31) which provides a firm foundation from which the chapters delve into more detail.

Critical insight is given to works by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George MacDonald, George Eliot, John Ruskin, and Olive Schreiner, the latter of which being a fascinating insight into 'religious revisionism' (p. 144). The daughter of Methodist missionaries in South Africa, Schreiner's chapter is filled with the 'energy of [biblical] rebellion and recovery' (p. 141) which influenced her own semi-autobiographical novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) which 'poses searching questions about the experience of revelation' (p. 144).

Overall, Dyck's book 'reassesses the interpretive challenges and imaginative possibilities sparked by the advent of biblical higher criticism, demonstrating that a range of Victorian writers wrestled with these hermeneutic issues by creatively refashioning wisdom texts and traditions' (p. 3) Oscar Wilde, as Dyck notes, wrote extensively on the gospel of beauty, which 'at once subverts and preserves the traditions it inherits' (p. 3). Similar subversions are found in George Eliot who brought 'controversial works of German scholarship into wider circulation in Victorian Britain' but also is clear to note 'Eliot's complex and evolving position with respect to Christianity' (p. 87).

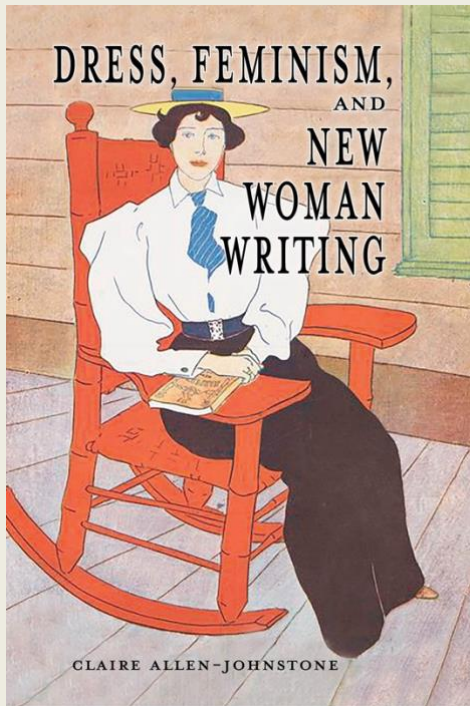
In these texts, both Dau and Dyck provide a refreshing delve into Victorian religion and its influence on literary and artistic forms. In doing so, both present a rethink and a challenge to traditional readings and understandings of major canonical figures, as well as many lesser-known people of note. Similarly, Dau and Dyck produce extremely readable and insightful research into the impact of Victorian higher criticisms that are, at once, traditional and subversive. They challenge the assumptions of Victorian religion, highlighting how new interpretations can provide alternative insight during an era that is often framed as a period of 'doubt' and 'crisis'.

*Jordan Welsh, Independent Researcher*

## Recent Publications

Are you an author, editor, or publisher of a recent or forthcoming book on an aspect of Victorian history, literature, and culture? Please email a JPG image of the cover to [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com) for inclusion in a future issue. If you are interested in reviewing one of the titles featured below, please get in touch at [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com).

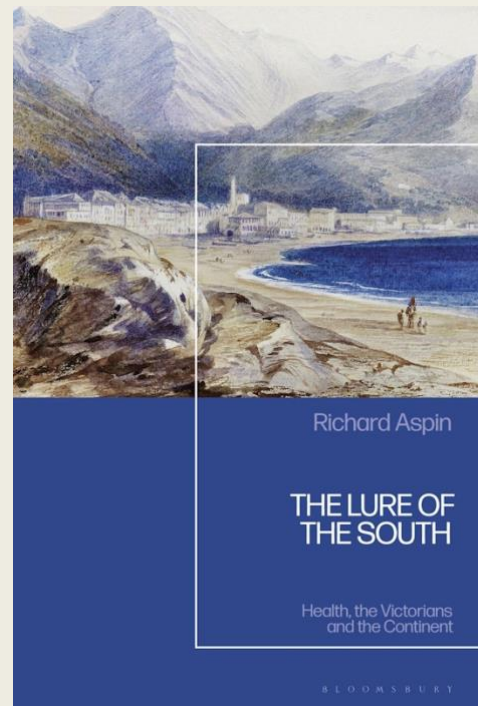
*Dress, Feminism, and New Woman Writing*, by Claire Allen-Johnstone (New York: Cambria, 2025), 336 pp., £93.99 (hardback) ISBN 9781638571964



*Dress, Feminism, and New Woman Writing* explores the connections between dress, feminism, and New Woman writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a focus on Britain. It reveals how dress, tied to Victorian gender norms and stereotypes, became key in feminist literary culture. Authors and publishers used dress strategically, from cross-dressing storylines and dress-based critiques to fashionable attire. Concentrating on Olive Schreiner, Sarah Grand, George Egerton, and Grant Allen while bringing in other writers including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the book offers interdisciplinary sartorial biographies, literary interpretation, and analysis of book covers. Through dress it reexamines topics including gender views and the New Woman character, proposing a new approach to feminist writing. This book is essential for those interested in feminist literature, dress history, and gender studies.

*The Lure of the South: Health, the Victorians and the Continent*, by Richard Aspin (London: Bloomsbury,

2025), 296 pp., £85.00 (hardback) £76.50 (ebook), ISBN 9781350444720



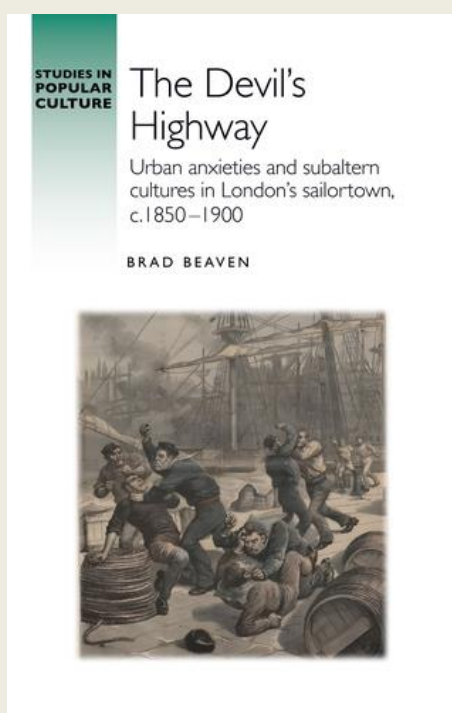
*The Lure of the South* looks at the experience of British health seekers in the explosion of continental touring that occurred after the opening of the Post-Napoleonic European continent to relatively easy access. These people ranged from the genuinely ill – some even on the verge of death – to the merely overworked or ill at ease. It examines why they went, where and how; who advised and guided them; how they lived (and sometimes died) when abroad; and finally the influence they had on the wider development of European tourism and tourist resorts.

Considering health tourism as an integral part of the wider phenomenon of foreign touring and travel, it surveys a wide range of concerns that exercised expatriate patients and their companions on the Continent beyond merely their health – concerns that were informed by the social and cultural baggage they brought with them. The overarching theme of the book therefore is to use health as a lens through which to examine Victorian society in all its complexity, and how it interacted with the continental cultures that it came to reside within.

Drawing from unpublished archival sources, especially correspondence and diaries from family papers, Aspin reveals the sacrifices and culture shocks of patients and their families, the feuds and interests they brought with them, and above all the reality of the delusion of climatotherapy, a promise of a cure that somehow remained forever out of reach.

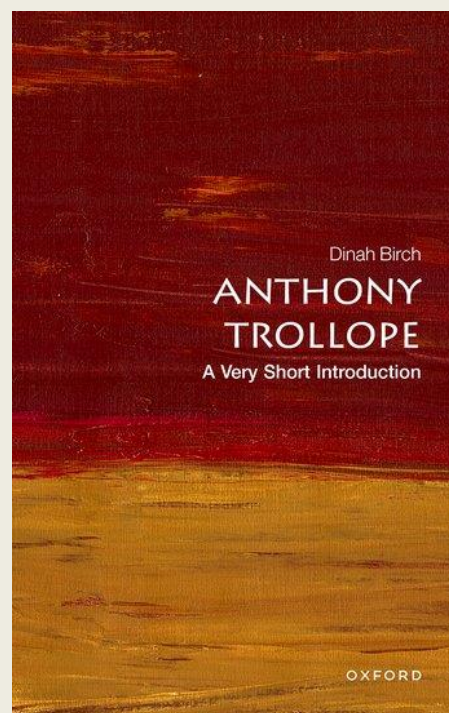
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***The Devil's Highway: Urban Anxieties and Subaltern Cultures in London's Sailortown, c.1850-1900*, by Brad Beaven (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2025), 214 pp., £85.00 (hardback), £85.00 (ebook), ISBN 9781526177926**



Between 1850 and 1900, Ratcliffe Highway was the pulse of maritime London. Sailors from every corner of the globe found solace, and sometimes trouble, in this bustling district. However, for social investigators, it was a place of fascination and fear as it harboured chaotic and dangerous 'exotic' communities. Sailortowns were transient, cosmopolitan and working class in character and provide us with an insight into class, race and gendered relations. They were contact zones of heightened interaction where multi-ethnic subaltern cultures met, sometimes negotiated and at other times clashed with one another. The book argues that despite these challenges sailortown was a distinctive and functional working-class community that was self-regulating and self-moderating. The book uncovers a robust sailortown community in which an urban-maritime culture shaped a sense of themselves and the traditions and conventions that governed subaltern behaviour in the district.

***Anthony Trollope: A Very Short Introduction*, by Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 176 pp., £8.99 (paperback), £6.35 (ebook), ISBN 9780192845627**



Anthony Trollope is among the best-loved novelists in the English language. His strongly drawn characters and skilful plots are compelling, while his moral judgements are often subtly challenging. He is an entertainer, but his power to make his readers think, and to feel, is unrivalled.

This Very Short Introduction will place Trollope's work in the context of his life and times, drawing on recent scholarship to illuminate his central interests and literary strategies. Readers will find a focussed critical guide to his writing, that will direct and inform their reading. The major series of novels (the six novels located in the fictional Barchinshire, and the six Palliser novels) are explored alongside the novels set in Ireland, his travel writing, and examples of his less well-known fiction.

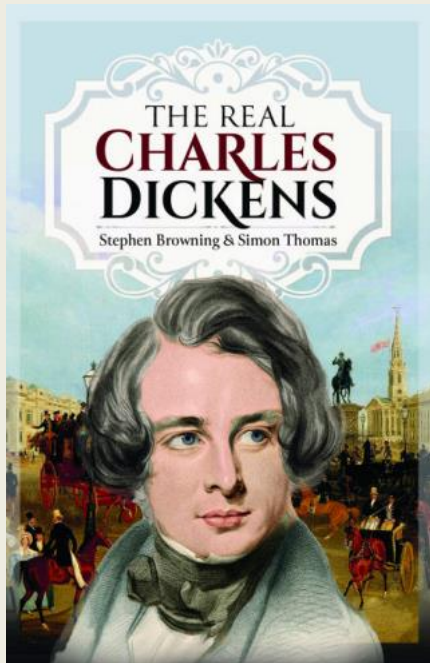
Trollope's work is energised by the complexities of the Victorian Britain, with its political tensions, its troubled views of the relation between men and women, its expanding place in the wider world, and its growing discomfort with the contradictions created by a corrosive preoccupation with wealth and display. But Trollope's writing is of more than historical interest. His insight into the motives of human behaviour (emotion, money, sex, and power), and of the conflict between the need for reform and the wish to defend what might be destroyed by the relentless pressure for



change, feels surprisingly modern. Birch shows how his writing has retained its vivid appeal to new generations of readers.

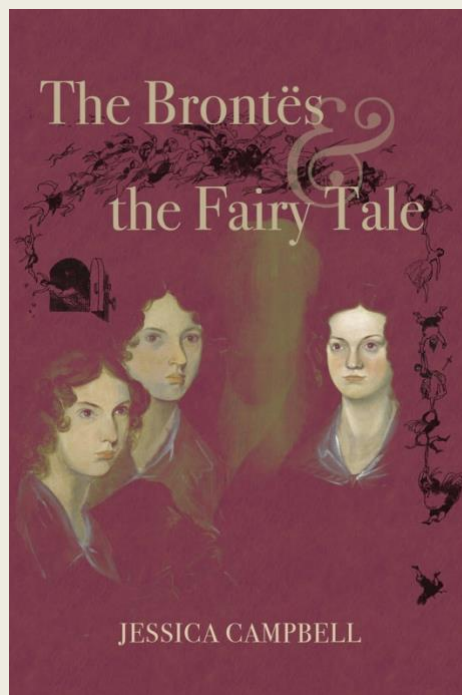
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***The Real Charles Dickens*, by Stephen Browning (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2025) 208 pp., £22 (hardback), ISBN 9781399080798**



*The Real Charles Dickens* is an insightful look into the world of the life and work of the great 19th-century writer. Dickens led one of the most colourful and interesting lives of any author and this book delves into his difficult early life, his emergence as a major novelist, his troubled marriage and suspected relationship with another woman, his trips abroad to Italy and the United States, his late blossoming as a theatrical performer and his work as a social reformer. The book takes a detailed look at each of his major works, tracing the development of his fiction through one of the most productive periods of world literature. To complement this are original photographs of locations associated with Dickens and the opportunity to follow in his footsteps with some expertly crafted walks around the parts of London most associated with him. There are sections on Dickens' enduring relationship with the theatre and one detailing the ten children that he and his wife Catherine had together. From his first foray into serialised novels, *The Pickwick Papers*, to his last, great, unfinished work, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, each of his books is given special attention. Full of biographical detail and analytical insight, *The Real Charles Dickens* takes the reader on a journey into the heart of the world that nurtured some of the greatest stories ever written.

***The Brontës and the Fairy Tale*, by Jessica Campbell (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2024), 272 pp., £69.00 (hardback), £57.66 (ebook), ISBN 9780821425640**

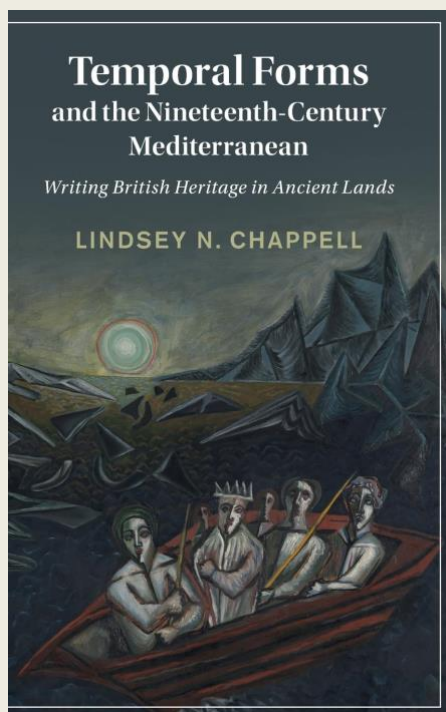


*The Brontës and the Fairy Tale* is the first comprehensive study devoted to the role of fairy tales and folklore in the work of Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Branwell Brontë. It intervenes in debates on genre, literary realism, the history of the fairy tale, and the position of women in the Victorian period. Building on recent scholarship emphasizing the dynamic relationship between the fairy tale and other genres in the nineteenth century, the book resituates the Brontës' engagement with fairy tales in the context of twenty-first-century assumptions that the stories primarily evoke childhood and happy endings. Jessica Campbell argues instead that fairy tales and folklore function across the Brontës' works as plot and character models, commentaries on gender, and signifiers of national identity.

Scholars have long characterized the fairy tale as a form with tremendous power to influence cultures and individuals. The late twentieth century saw important critical work revealing the sinister aspects of that power, particularly its negative effects on female readers. But such an approach can inadvertently reduce the history of the fairy tale to a linear development from the "traditional" tale (pure, straight, patriarchal, and didactic) to the "postmodern" tale (playful, sophisticated, feminist, and radical). Campbell joins other contemporary scholars in arguing that the fairy tale has always been a remarkably elastic form, allowing writers and storytellers of all types to reshape it according to their purposes.

The Brontës are most famous today for *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, haunting novels that clearly repurpose fairy tales and folklore. Campbell's book, however, reveals similar repurposing throughout the entire Brontë oeuvre. *The Brontës and the Fairy Tale* is recursive: in demonstrating the ubiquity and multiplicity of uses of fairy tales in the works of the Brontës, Campbell enhances not only our understanding of the Brontës' works but also the status of fairy tales in the Victorian period.

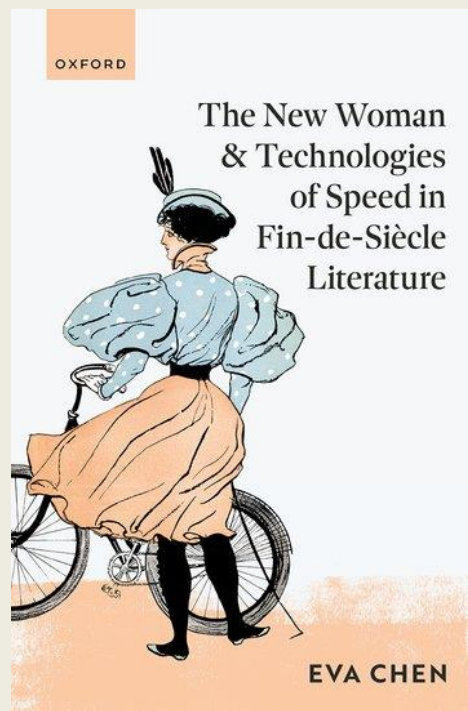
*Temporal Forms and the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean: Writing British Heritage in Ancient Lands*, by Lindsey N. Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 322 pp., £90.00 (hardback), £120.00 (ebook), ISBN 9781009469807



The Mediterranean is ubiquitous in nineteenth-century British literature, but this study is the first to fully recover and explore the region's centrality to Romantic and Victorian constructions of the past, the present, and the shape of time itself. Placing regions central to the making of Western cultural heritage, such as Italy and Greece, into context with one another and with European imperialism, Lindsey N. Chappell traces the contours of what she terms 'heritage discourse' – narrative that constructs or challenges imperial identities by reshaping antiquity – across nineteenth-century British texts. Heritage discourse functions via time, and often in counterintuitive and paradoxical ways. If assertions of political, cultural, and eventually racial supremacy were the end of this discourse, then time was the means through which it could be deployed

and resisted. Chappell shows how historical narratives intervened in geopolitics, how antiquarianism sparked scientific innovation, and how classical and biblical heritage shaped British imperialism.

*The New Woman and Technologies of Speed in Fin-de-Siècle Literature*, by Eva Chen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 208 pp., £77.00 (hardback), £53.99 (ebook), ISBN 9780198922254

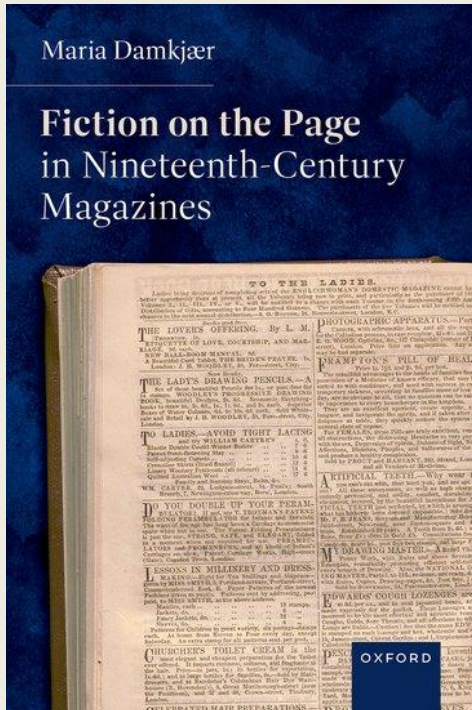


This is the first literary study on the New Woman's interaction with modern speed culture through use of the typewriter and the bicycle. These technologies of speed are among the earliest to be associated with middle-class women, exposing them to the discipline of mechanized speed while allowing for the construction of a new machine-savvy, sped-up, and energized female subjectivity. Used for women's office work and daily movement, they demand from their women operators a response and adaptation to speed right from the beginning. The ability to catch up with, imitate, adjust to, and finally master this mechanized speed, is the key to the New Woman's enlarged freedom in the modern city.

By examining New Woman literature penned by George Gissing, H. G. Wells, Grant Allen, Geraldine Edith Mitton, and Mrs. Edward Kennard, and stories and comments published in popular magazines, this book examines how mechanized speed works on the New Woman typist and cyclist, first as discipline and control (in typewriting), then as commodity and conspicuous display (in cycling), and finally as rejuvenation, stimulation, and active thrill. Being fast,

having speed, and adjusting to the shocks, as well as excitement of techno-aided speed, is a crucial part of what makes the New Woman new, as she stakes a claim to modern speed culture.

***Fiction on the Page in Nineteenth-Century Magazines*, by Maria Damkjær (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 224 pp., £77.00 (hardback), £53.99 (ebook), ISBN 9780198936053**

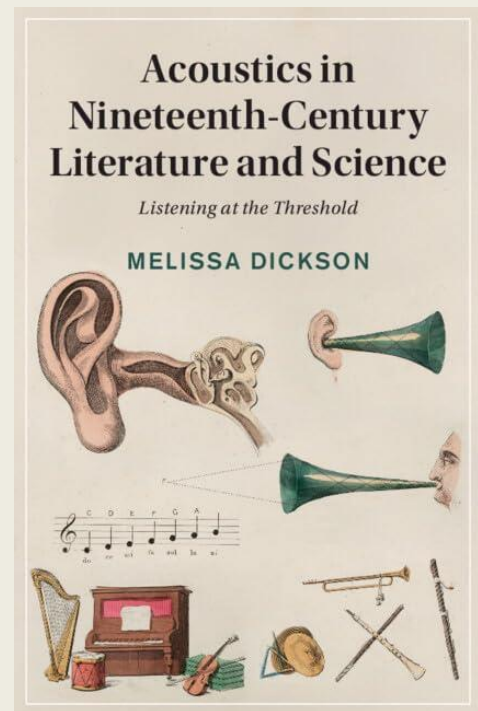


What makes fiction recognizable as fiction? Texts are shaped by their material print, but this book argues that they can also be made in response to it: that the needs of the magazine in the nineteenth century spurred writers to create hybrid, entangled texts. Using book history, genre theory, and literary close-reading, this book argues that narrative fiction in the nineteenth-century popular periodical was a malleable substance. By looking at typography, and the attempts to squeeze in too much text, or stretch out too little text, the book asks what the relationship was between the page that needed filling and the short story that tried to fill it. In the messy hybrids and outliers, we explore what fiction might have become.

The book works with magazines like the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* (first series, 1852-59), the *Family Herald* (1842-1945), the *Home Circle* (1849-54), and authors like Elizabeth Gaskell, George Augustus Sala, and Samuel Beeton. It also includes a chapter on Charles Dickens's arguably least successful venture, *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-1), where Dickens was noticeably straining to sell and fill a weekly magazine. While the book is not attempting to

destabilise the status of canonical fiction, it does ask how the page makes fiction happen; what kind of readers magazines imagined for themselves; and what readers thought they were reading when they picked up an issue. The book argues that magazines projected a print imaginary, a symbolic realm where the magazine fits perfectly into the lives of happy, active readers.

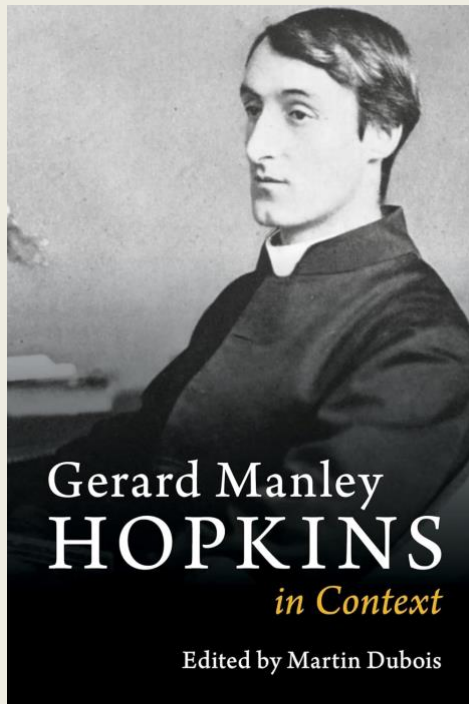
***Acoustics in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Science: Listening at the Threshold*, by Melissa Dickson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 314 pp., £90.00 (hardback), £120.00 (ebook) ISBN 9781009490450**



What did it mean to hear, for the first time, what George Eliot described as 'that roar which lies on the other side of silence'? Rapid developments in nineteenth-century acoustic science and communications technologies opened up new worlds beyond the limits of normal audibility for the Victorian public. Weaving together explorations of scientific developments with imaginative cultural, spiritual, and literary responses, this book sets out to explore the burgeoning field of acoustics in the nineteenth century and the new language, structure, and conceptual models it offered to broker the boundaries of the individual self. Ranging from Eliot's *Middlemarch* to Du Maurier's *Trilby*, and from Laënnec's work on the stethoscope to experiments on animal audition, inquiries into the unconscious, and spiritualist investigations of the hidden world of vibrations, it demonstrates the profound challenge to the boundaries of the human that was issued by new sound technologies in the Victorian period.

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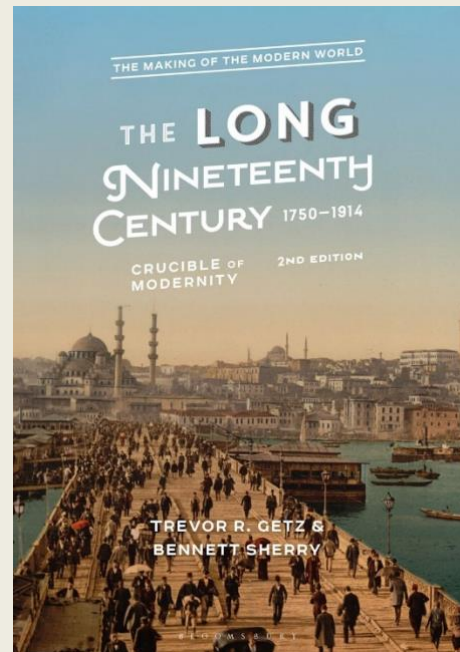
*Gerard Manley Hopkins in Context*, by Martin Dubois (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), 380 pp., £95.00 (hardback), £125.00 (ebook) ISBN 9781009183208



Gerard Manley Hopkins was one of the most innovative British poets of the nineteenth century. This book provides an authoritative guide to the ideas and influences shaping Hopkins's life and writing. Consisting of thirty-eight essays by leading scholars, the book covers topics that have long attracted scholarly attention while also responding to recent critical trends. It considers Hopkins's formal innovations alongside his theological and philosophical ideas. Chapters examine his Victorian aesthetic and cultural contexts as well as the significance of his ecological imagination and response to environmental degradation. Hopkins's poetry was not widely known until the 1930s, and the book closes by discussing the distinctive nature of its reception and influence. Informed by original research but accessibly written, the essays enable a fresh engagement with the originality of Hopkins's writing and thought.

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*The Long Nineteenth Century, 1750-1914: Crucible of Modernity*, by Trevor R. Getz and Bennett Sherry, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2025), 360 pp., £75.00 (hardback), £24.99 (paperback), £22.49 (ebook) ISBN 9781350355965

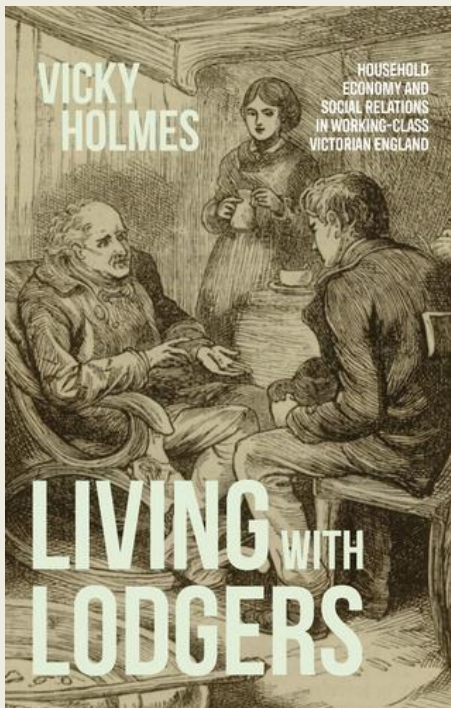


Part of *The Making of the Modern World* series, this innovative textbook offers an introduction to the 19th-century world with a focus on human perspectives through social and cultural histories. Taking a period of great transition and change, it shows how the actions and experiences of different communities and individuals across the world constructed, contested and were affected by major trends and events. With a thematic approach, and focusing on social and cultural histories, it connects these major trends and events to experiences of the people who lived through them.

Tackling politics, religion, economics, environment, empire and more, with this book students will critically encounter important global trends and key events from the Industrial Revolution, to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the dawn of the First World War.

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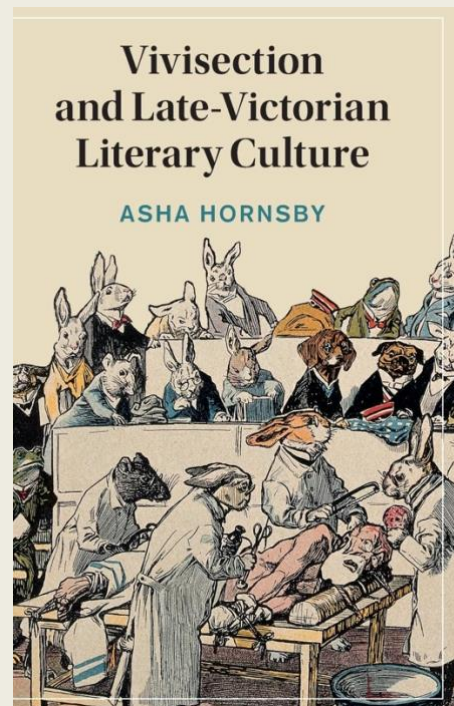
*Living with Lodgers: Household Economy and Social Relations in Working-Class Victorian England*, by Vicky Holmes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2025), 184 pp., £85.00 (hardback), £85.00 (ebook) ISBN 9781526170286



For the Victorian working class, lodging in someone else's home was commonplace. Yet, despite their prevalence, lodgers and their householders have received little scholarly attention. Drawing on hundreds of coroners' inquests reported in the Victorian press, *Living with Lodgers* traverses many domestic dwelling lodgings in England at this time, providing an extraordinary, intimate portrayal of the lives of the inhabitants therein.

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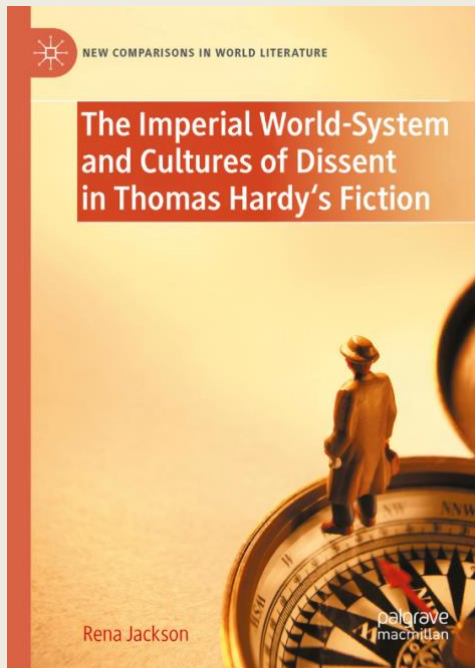
*Vivisection and Late-Victorian Literary Culture*, by Asha Hornsby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), 358 pp., £100.00 (hardback), £130.00 (ebook) ISBN 9781009503525



The nineteenth-century antivivisection movement was supported by a striking number of poets, authors, and playwrights who attended meetings, signed petitions, contributed funds, and lent their pens to the cause. Yet live animal experimentation also permeated the Victorian imagination and shaped British literary culture in ways that the movement against it did not anticipate and could not entirely control. This is the first sustained literary-critical study of the topic. It traces responses to the practice through an extensive corpus of canonical, popular, and ephemeral texts including newspapers, scientific books, and government documents. Asha Hornsby sheds light on the complex entanglement of art and science at the fin-de-siècle and explores how the representational and aesthetic preoccupations opened up by vivisection debates often sat uneasily alongside a socio-political commitment to animal protection. Despite efforts to present writing and vivisectioning as rivalrous activities, author and experimenter, pen and scalpel, often resembled each other.

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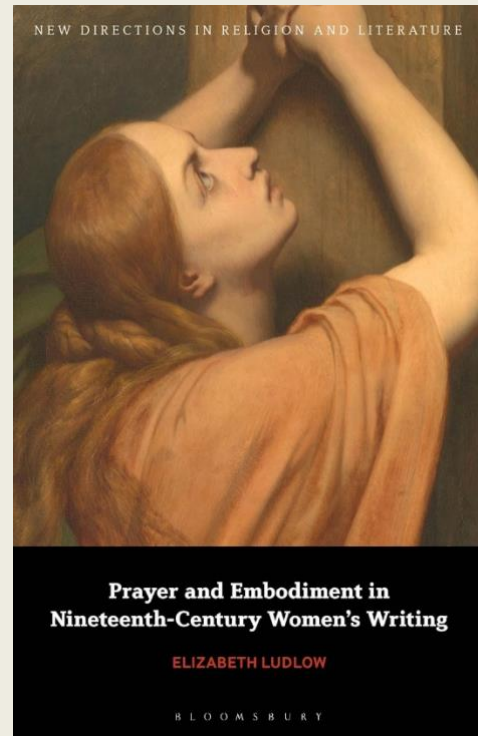
*The Imperial World-System and Cultures of Dissent in Thomas Hardy's Fiction*, by Rena Jackson (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 222 pp., £109.99 (hardback) £39.99 (paperback), ISBN 9783031694523



This is the first book-length study of imperial crossings in Thomas Hardy's novels and short stories. Combining the strengths of world-literary and world-systems analyses with a cultural materialist approach, the study offers unparalleled coverage of global links in Hardy's fiction, engaging, in addition, with a range of dissenting responses – at both formal and thematic registers – to the British world-system's exploitative structures. Hardy's prose outputs reveal that the empire, contrary to popular critical assumptions in postcolonial studies, did not harmonise the classes, genders or regions into a shared national imperial identity, culture or destiny. A major component of the study additionally includes comparative readings of the 'modern' world-system and imperial sociality in writings by Joseph Conrad, H. Rider Haggard, Elizabeth Gaskell, Rudyard Kipling, David Livingstone, and in Chartist poetry. The book will be an invaluable resource to teachers, students and enthusiasts working in the field of world literature, and in Victorian, postcolonial and settler colonial studies.

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*Prayer and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing*, by Elizabeth Ludlow (London: Bloomsbury, 2025), 216 pp., £85.00 (hardback) £76.50 (ebook), ISBN 9781350356191



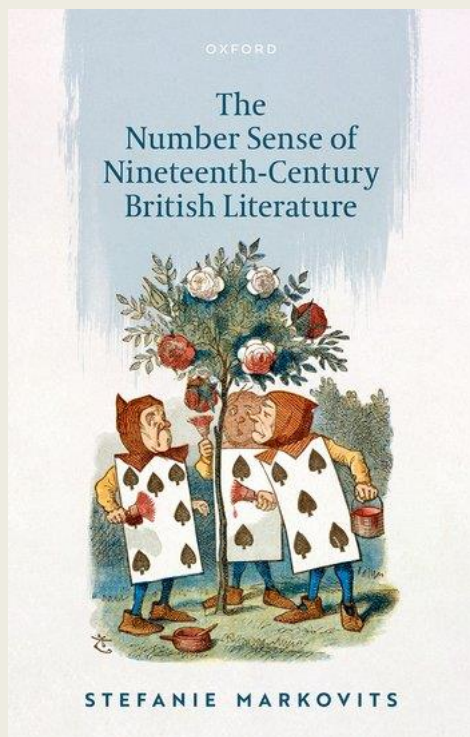
In the 19th century, an era that saw a reconfiguration of the relationship between the self, the world and the divine, women writers probed the theological depths of embodied faith in new ways through poetry, fiction, devotional prose and life writing.

Elizabeth Ludlow explores how, through this process, they articulated what it means to pray, and thereby understand one's place in a world of individual and communal bodies. The eight women writers discussed – Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Josephine Butler, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Dora Greenwell, Felicia Hemans, Adelaide Procter and Christina Rossetti – provide accounts of prayer that stress that the only way to experience and respond to something of the transcendent is through embracing lived experience and through a recognition of the connectedness of all bodies.

In detailing how these writers engage with new ways of thinking about faith, desire and the material world, Ludlow argues that they offer models for ethical modes of being in the world and pave the way for later theologies of embodiment.

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***The Number Sense of Nineteenth-Century British Literature*, by Stefanie Markovits (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 240 pp., £77.00 (hardback) £53.99 (ebook), ISBN 9780198937791**

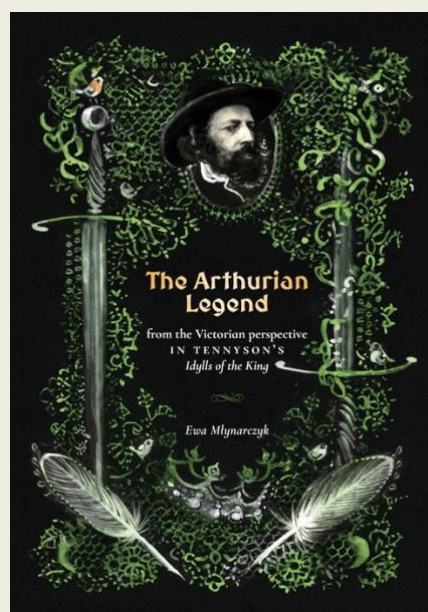


*The Number Sense of Nineteenth-Century British Literature* considers how the avalanche of printed numbers characterizing the period affected its literature. It looks at the influence of a variety of cultural and historical movements, such as the rise of statistics and of democratic Liberalism and concurrent developments in mathematics. This book takes as its starting point and focus the presence of actual numbers--ordinal and cardinal, Arabic, Roman, and spelled out in words--within the century's literary texts. It is through the deployment of such figures that texts display their number sense; similarly, readers develop the faculty of number sense by paying careful attention to their presence. And contemplation of a text's use of numbers, while frequently pointing to specific historical contexts, also enables more fundamental recognitions about how literature makes meaning.

*The Number Sense* asks what kinds of work, intellectual and ethical, literature's numerical figures perform. Why are some writers especially prone to include numbers? What affordances do they wield in various literary environments and against the backdrop of the numbery nineteenth century? When do textual numbers really count and when do they ask us to keep count? How do they stage contests between the one and the many, individuals and collectives? How do they relate to formal aspects of works, like plot and character, narrative, and lyric. Lingering over literary measures illuminates the way numbers help shape texts

into the recognizable forms we call genres. To that end, the book considers the works of poets, like Tennyson, Wordsworth, and Byron, and of novelists working in a broad range of genres, including Jane Austen, George Gissing, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, Lewis Carroll, Bram Stoker, Wilkie Collins, and Thomas Hardy. The numbers embedded in their fictions and verse can serve both as valves, releasing cultural pressures, and as fulcrums, places where pressures coincide to create new forms of literary agency.

***The Arthurian Legend from the Victorian Perspective in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King"*, by Ewa Młynarczyk (Institute of English Studies of the University of Warsaw 2024), Open Access, ISBN 9788360269350**



From the Middle Ages onwards, Arthurian literature has become part of the heritage of the culture of the Western Europe. It seems that, in a figurative sense, the prophecy about the once and future king, which originated in Wace's account, has been fulfilling itself ever since, as each epoch discovers its own Arthurian world and instils it with new meanings reflecting its current concerns.

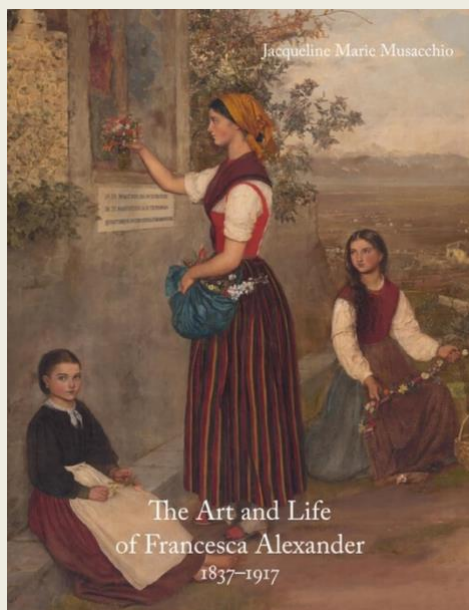
Lord Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* epitomises the renewal of interest in the Arthurian legend in the nineteenth century. However, this interest in the Middle Ages was not merely of an aesthetic kind. To the Victorians, challenged by the latest scientific discoveries and paralysed by the ensuing religious doubt, the idealized medieval world of the heroic past offered the comforting stability of the feudal system, restless energy, and simple Christian faith. While it seems that each Victorian artist developed his own personal vision of the Middle Ages, they all viewed that

world as much more comprehensible than their own age of transition.

Hence, to the future Poet Laureate, the past provided a peaceful and harmonious refuge, an alternative to the world dominated by the mists of uncertainty and confusion. *The Idylls* thus becomes the expression of the Victorian longing for spirituality, for the safety in unwavering faith in the modern world dominated by rationalism and science. The episodes chosen by the poet from the rich medieval sources reveal issues and values that proved particularly relevant to the Victorian middle class. The Victorian crisis of faith, and the hero-worship resulting from it, become particularly visible in the depiction of King Arthur himself, while his reflections lend the piece a parabolic and timeless dimension.

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***The Art and Life of Francesca Alexander*, by Jacqueline Marie Musacchio (London: Lund Humphries, 2025), 208 pp., £35.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781848226364**



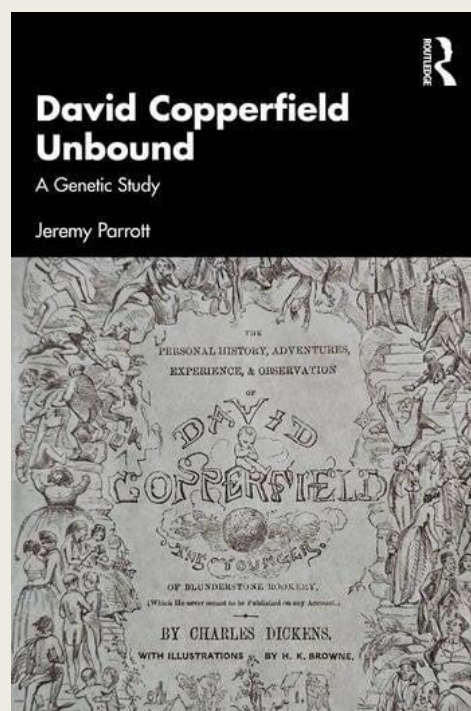
This is the first book to examine the art and life of Boston-born artist Francesca Alexander (1837–1917). Francesca and her parents moved to Florence in 1853 and became part of a thriving international community. She was a largely self-taught artist, and both her art and writing focused on Italians and Italian life. Her portraits and nature studies, and her translations of songs and stories, were much admired by her contemporaries, including John Ruskin, who published three of her manuscripts and promoted her work to his followers. She used her earnings from the sale of these publications, and her art, to fund her many charitable endeavours; both friends and admirers marvelled at her saintly character, which they linked to

a romantic view of Italy itself. Nonetheless, in spite of her celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic, she and her work have been largely forgotten.

Drawing on her work, as well as other sources including letters, diaries, guidebooks, newspapers and magazines, this book provides a vivid biography of Francesca Alexander, her art, and her place in history.

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***David Copperfield Unbound: A Genetic Study*, by Jeremy Parrott (London: Routledge, 2025), 392 pp., £145.00 (hardback), £39.99 (paperback), £39.99 (ebook), ISBN 9781032887333**

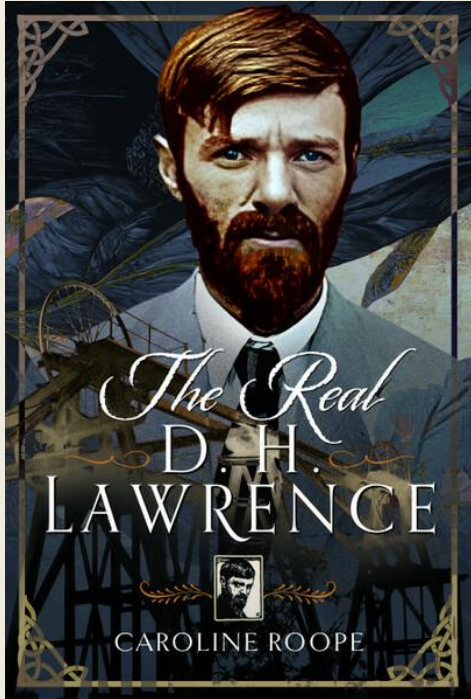


*David Copperfield* was Dickens's most personal novel, a first-person narrative that reworked details of both the author's lived experience and his complex psychological profile. The present study is a highly original exploration of the sources and motivations underpinning this canonical work, treated here as a melting pot of ideas and a proto-modernist masterpiece. Jeremy Parrott casts himself as a literary detective, tracking down clues hidden in the text, following in Dickens's footsteps, and laying bare a previously unsuspected symbolic scaffolding which ranges across Greek mythology, English history, Romantic poetry, and the latest advances in science. Following the example set by Betsey Trotwood, every proper name in this enormously rich text is subjected to rigorous analysis, laying bare the deepest currents of Dickens' mind and showing him to be an even greater artist than previously imagined. From the search for an elephant in Great Yarmouth to the discovery of the mysterious reader whom Dickens loved in 1850, this engaging and



readable study will radically alter what you thought you knew about the best-loved Victorian novelist and his own 'favourite child'.

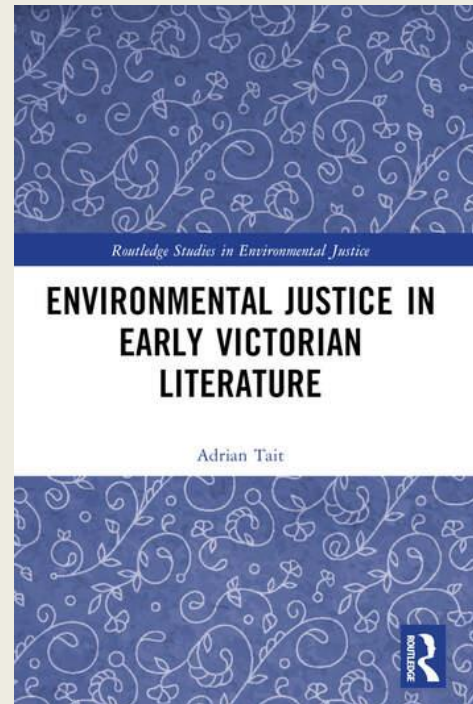
***The Real D.H. Lawrence*, by Caroline Roope (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2024), 224 pp., £22.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781399058162**



*The Real D H Lawrence* is something of a misnomer – for who can ever truly know the real Lawrence? Lawrence himself spent a lifetime roaming the depths of his imagination trying to communicate the essence of who he really was – a quest that ultimately gifted the world twelve full-length novels, eight plays, over eight-hundred poems, enough paintings to form an exhibition, travel essays, novellas and short story collections: and a vast catalogue of non-fiction ranging from topics as diverse as European history to psychoanalysis.

In this expertly researched exploration of Lawrence, Caroline Roope offers a captivating re-telling of the enigmatic author's life, from his humble beginnings in the coal mining districts of Nottinghamshire to his final struggle with censorship and his battle to stay alive. Drawing on Lawrence's published works, as well as his vast personal correspondence, *The Real D. H. Lawrence* offers a fresh insight into Lawrence's creative process; and his stubborn refusal to live anything less than a life that was right for him, in a world he believed had gone terribly wrong.

***Environmental Justice in Early Victorian Literature*, by Adrian Tait (London: Routledge, 2024), 216 pp., £135.00 (hardback), £39.99 (paperback), £39.99 (ebook), ISBN 9781032547664**



This innovative new book combines environmental justice scholarship with a material ecocriticism to explore the way in which early Victorian literature (1837–1860) responded to the growing problem of environmental injustice.

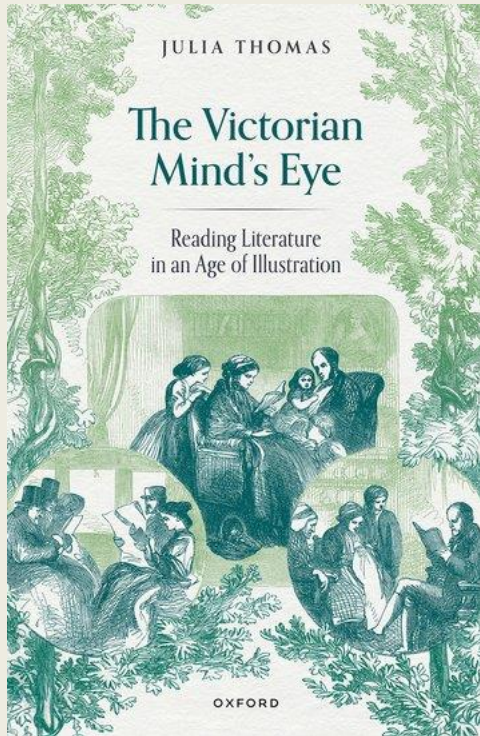
As this book emphasises, environmental injustice – simply, the convergence of poverty and pollution – was not an isolated phenomenon, but a structural form of inequality; a product of industrial modernity's radical reformation of British society, it particularly affected the working classes. As each chapter reveals in detail, this form of environmental inequality (or 'classism') drew sharply critical reactions from figures as diverse as Thomas Carlyle, Friedrich Engels, Charles Dickens, and John Ruskin, and from within the Chartist movement, as working-class writers themselves reacted to the hazardous realities of a divided society. But as this book also reveals, these writers recognised that a truly just society respects the needs of the nonhuman and takes account of the material world in all its own aliveness; even if only tentatively, they reached for a more inclusive, emergent form of justice that might address the social and ecological impacts of industrial modernity, an idea which is no less relevant today.

This book represents an indispensable resource for scholars and students working in the fields of

Victorian literature, environmental justice, and ecocriticism.

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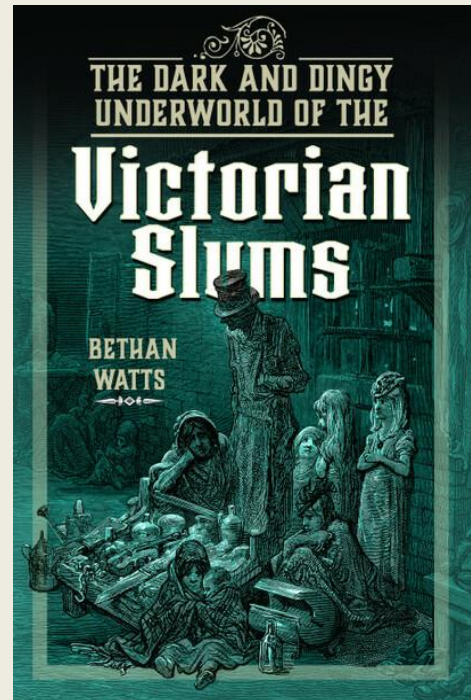
*The Victorian Mind's Eye: Reading Literature in an Age of Illustration*, by Julia Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 224 pp., £77.00 (hardback) £53.99 (ebook), ISBN 9780198914600



This book offers a major conceptualisation of the difference that pictures made to the reading of words. Analysing an extensive range of illustrated material and drawing on the accounts of Victorian readers, reviewers, authors, artists, and psychologists, the book describes how the Victorians characterised the effects of illustration, and how illustrations, in turn, elicited and anticipated responses from their readers. What emerges from these sources is the notion of a distinct mode of reading that determined readers' material and mental engagements with illustrated literature. The presence of images on the page was said to impact on whether readers created images in their mind as they read. Illustrations generated feelings of pleasure or displeasure; they determined what was read first, what was recalled, and what was etched in the memory.

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*The Dark and Dingy Underworld of the Victorian Slums*, by Bethan Watts (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2025), 232 pp., £25.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781399036986

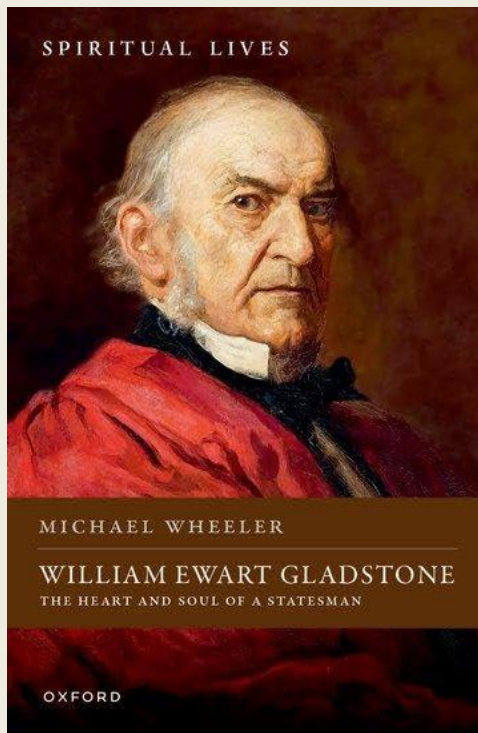


From the slurry-filled sewers to the most overcrowded of tenement blocks, Victorian Britain thrummed with the heartbeats of those who had lived there. Infants and children, adults and elders had called these twisting labyrinthian warrens home; here they had laboured, they had loved, they had lost. These people had celebrated progress and had fought for reform; they had raised families, fallen in love, worked laborious jobs, and lamented the deaths of their loved ones.

In her second book, Bethan Catherine Watts explores every crevice of the dark and dingy slums of Victorian Britain and illuminates the lives of those who lived there. From favourite pastimes, recipes and beauty practices to the treatment of children, animals and the dead, *The Dark and Dingy Underworld of the Victorian Slums* sheds light on those who were born, who had lived, and who had died in nineteenth-century British slums.

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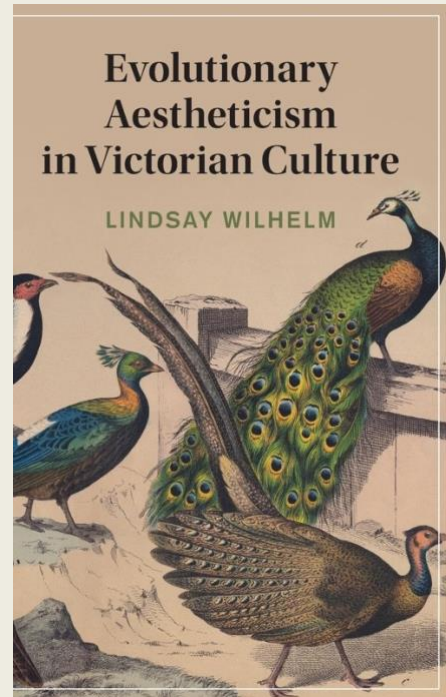
*William Ewart Gladstone: The Heart and Soul of a Statesman*, by Michael Wheeler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 224 pp., £30.00 (hardback), ISBN 9780198881513



The leading statesman of nineteenth-century Britain, a figure who bestrode the political world like a Colossus, is 'Gladstone' to modern biographers. In order to signal the difference between Wheeler's approach and those of earlier biographers, the subject of this book is known as William, his baptismal name. His autobiographical fragments of 1892 included a disclaimer: 'I do not indeed intend in these notes to give a history of the inner life, which I think has with me been extraordinarily dubious, vacillating, and (above all) complex'. *William Gladstone: The Heart and Soul of a Statesman* is about the spiritual dimension of his complex inner life. In tracing the movements of his heart and soul, the book works from the inner to the outer aspects of a rich and varied life, from William's daily disciplines of prayer and reflection to his earnest attempts to follow the precepts of Christianity through action in the public realm and in private philanthropy, and in the writing of numerous reviews, articles, and books. He remained an independent intellectual, eschewing party labels within the Church of England and working out his own stance in relation to specific Liberal party policies in politics. He was as much a man of letters as he was a politician. Later in his political career, 'the people's William' appealed to public opinion through a series of national moral campaigns. His fiercest battles, however, were spiritual, as he castigated

himself for falling short of the ideals set out in Jesus' sermon on the mount, particularly with regard to sexual desire as he sought to rescue women from a life of prostitution and became infatuated with a former courtesan. His longest crusade was against the enemy within.

*Evolutionary Aestheticism in Victorian Culture*, by Lindsay Wilhelm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 272 pp., £90.00 (hardback) £120.00 (ebook), ISBN 9781009469357



The Aesthetic Movement, a collection of artists, writers and thinkers who rejected traditional ideas of beauty as guided and judged by morals and utility and rallied under the banner of 'art for art's sake', are often associated with hedonism and purposelessness. However, as Lindsay Wilhelm shows, aestheticism may have been more closely related to nineteenth-century ideas of progress and scientific advancement than we think. This book illuminates an important intellectual alliance between aestheticism and evolutionism in late-nineteenth-century Britain, putting aesthetic writers such as Vernon Lee, Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater into dialogue with scientific thinkers such as Darwin and mathematician W. K. Clifford. Considering in particular how Aestheticism and scientific thinking converged on utopian ideas about beauty, Lindsay Wilhelm reveals how this evolutionary aestheticism crucially shaped Victorian debates about individual pleasure and social progress that continue to resonate today.

# BAVS Funding Reports

BAVS is committed to the support of its members' activities, such as conferences, events, and research activities. The application forms, including guidance notes and deadlines, are available from the BAVS Funding **webpage**. There are two rounds of funding each year, with deadlines at the end of May and November. For further information, please email the BAVS Funding Officer, Francesca Arnavas ([francesca.arnavas@gmail.com](mailto:francesca.arnavas@gmail.com)).

## Research Funding

### Margaret Harkness: Writing Women's Work

My thesis, 'Writing Women's Work: Working-Class Women's Labour in Margaret Harkness' Fiction and Journalism', addresses a gap by paying attention to the political significance of working-class women's labour at the fin-de-siècle through the lens of Harkness' fiction and journalism. Potentially central to this project are the ideas explored in her correspondence with Beatrice Potter (later Webb).

Letters that Harkness wrote to newspapers and periodicals, either in her own name or that of her pseudonym, John Law, have been available digitally for some time, but they often contain invented biographical details, hyperbole or evasions. It seemed, therefore, that my project could not be complete without the opportunity to consult her private correspondence kept in the Passfield Collection and held at the London School of Economics. Thanks to the generous funding of BAVS, I was able to visit this archive in November. Virtually all the letters are between Harkness and her cousin Beatrice, as the two maintained regular and confidential correspondence until a falling out in the 1880s. My hope was that the letters would give me an insight into the beliefs, attitudes and events that shaped Harkness' later ideology and, subsequently, her slum novels.

The letters did not disappoint. I spent the day deciphering Harkness' idiosyncratic handwriting and discovered discussions of marriage, religion, the restrictive expectations of family and class and evaluations of both her own writing and that of others. It is not just the topics discussed that were fascinating, but the insight into the kind of analyses that Harkness was applying even at this relatively early stage. Marriage is a recurring thread in the correspondence, and Harkness' frustration with "the matrimonial market

[...] I hate the idea of marriage, and I have no money" provided an early example of her propensity to contextualise cultural experience within economic frameworks. Having read her comments, it is now clear why marriage occupies such an ambiguous space in Harkness' later fiction.

From the correspondence, I have been able to trace the way in which the vague ideals that Harkness expresses in the 1870s later consolidated into a definite focus and decided action. In a letter written on Christmas Day 1887, she is demanding to know, from Beatrice, why Charles Booth did not employ her on "his enquiry into the work of women in the EastEnd. I know more than his Lady Sec." For once, this seems to be no idle boast, and I now think that her 'Tempted London: Young Women' series in the *British Weekly* may, in part, constitute some kind of sociological riposte to being overlooked by Booth.

Some scholars have questioned the literary value of Harkness' novels, but from these letters, I have been able to establish that she reflected on her own writing practice ("a novel should be like a sonata, full of different movements") and that of others such as Goethe and Eliot. This has helped me understand her characteristically robust comments about *Adam Bede* (she viewed Eliot's novel as "an exercise for five fingers") and realism in her final *British Weekly* article.

Harkness was a keen observational sociologist, and I was able to read her account of the quotidian detail of life as a nurse at the Westminster Hospital in 1877, accompanied by waspish descriptions of those who lived alongside her in the Nurses Home, "a High Church dolls house."

Thanks to the generosity of BAVS, these letters have provided me with a wealth of details for my thesis, and I am now looking forward to applying all that I have discovered.

*Rosemary Archer, Loughborough University*

# The GLAM Report

*The BAVS newsletter welcomes feature reports from the GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) who work with Victorian art, culture, literature and history. If you work in the GLAM sector, please contact the newsletter team at [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com) with your ideas for future feature articles.*

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## A Walk Through Gladstone's Library An introduction to the collection by Alexandra Foulds, Archivist



Gladstone's Library in Hawarden, North Wales, was founded by four-time Victorian Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone in the 1890s. It was founded 'for the purposes of learning, education, literature, and instruction', and to start the collections, William Ewart Gladstone donated 20,000 books from his personal library. These books cover a wide range of topics, from theology and classics to natural sciences, travel and topography. Many of them contain annotations and indexes written by Gladstone, and they reflect his research processes and diverse reading practices. Amongst the collection are many books that researchers tend to find surprising, such as popular literature, including Gothic novels, books on spiritualism and the occult, books on chickens and poultry keeping, and a large number of books on divorce.

Many books were sent to Gladstone by authors, publishers, and public members, as demonstrated by inscriptions or accompanying letters. These letters are now held in the Library's Glynne-Gladstone Archive, which contains William Gladstone's personal correspondence, notes, and drafts of publications. Amongst the correspondence are 200 boxes of letters from the general public, including letters from working-class people who wrote to express their opinions on Gladstone's writing alongside Victorian current affairs and political bills.

In addition to William Gladstone's records, the Library holds several generations of material from the Gladstone family. This includes the business papers of William Gladstone's father, Sir John Gladstone, which feature deeds and correspondence relating to his enslaved labour plantations and later indentured labour plantations in Jamaica and British Guiana. It also contains the records of several women in the Glynne and Gladstone families, holding their letters, diaries, sketchbooks, and papers related to their philanthropic work.

Outside the Glynne-Gladstone Archive, the Library holds standalone archives from several of William Gladstone's relatives. Amongst these are the papers of Sir Stephen Glynne, William Gladstone's brother-in-law, who travelled to the United Kingdom making detailed notes about church architecture. It also includes the papers of Anne Ramsden Bennett, William Gladstone's cousin and a literary editor and translator who worked with both William Gladstone and J. A. Froude. She was also a close friend of Mary Ellen Meredith and her father, Thomas Love Peacock, and took in Meredith's son Harold after her friend's death. At the time, she also seemed to have taken in some of Meredith's papers and correspondence, including a letter from Mary Shelley. In addition, the Library holds correspondence from Louisa Gladstone, William Gladstone's niece.

A final archive of note to Victorianists is the Library's institutional archive, the St Deiniol's Library Archive, which contains records from Gladstone's inception of the Library and the Gladstone Memorial Committee erected the Library's current neo-Gothic building up to the present day. This includes the Library's accession registers, which list all of the items added to the collections over the years and their origin. Through these, we have discovered the books that other prominent Victorian figures, such as Lord Acton, purchased for the Library and donated by authors such as Rudyard Kipling and Mary Augusta Ward.

These works are just a small fraction of the Victorian texts added to the printed collections in Gladstone's Library's early years. Nineteenth-century works make up a significant portion of the Library's classmarks, but they are especially prominent in theology, literature, social sciences, and history. The Library became known to many as a theology library in the later twentieth century due to its use by the Church in Wales as a training college. Although it continues to be used by practising clergy, one of its main user groups today is researchers looking at theology through a historical lens. A particular strength of the Library's theology collection is its extensive holdings of Victorian sermons and volumes relating to Victorian church history. The literature classmark contains a wide range of early Victorian fiction and poetry editions. The social sciences classmark includes a large number of works reflecting key social movements within the Victorian period, such as socialism, Chartism, trade unionism, women's suffrage, temperance, education reform, criminal justice reform, sanitation reform, and the rise of public libraries. Within history, biography is a particular strength, as well as Victorian histories of places.

In addition to the classmarks mentioned above, a periodicals classmark contains key Victorian journals such as *Punch*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Nineteenth Century*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, the *Strand*, *Bentley's Miscellany*, *Temple Bar*, the *Edinburgh Review*, *Graphic*, the *Journal of the Society of Psychical Research*, and the *Spiritual Magazine*, to name but a small selection.

Besides the many Victorian volumes that populate the Library's shelves, it also holds a large collection of Victorian pamphlets. Some of these belonged to Gladstone, while others were transferred from the Liberal Club, complementing the materials held elsewhere in the Library.



Given Gladstone's Library's significant Victorian holdings, collecting secondary sources that provide context to and supplement these materials is a priority. In addition to continually purchasing new publications, the Library has recently acquired the History of Technology Collection of Richard Hills, founding director of Manchester's Science and Industry Museum, which covers a wide range of topics from paper making to railways and includes a run of the *Journal of Gaslighting, Water Supply, and Sanitary Improvement* from 1849 to 1972. The Library also holds the personal research libraries of the editors of Gladstone's diaries, H. C. G. Matthew and M. R. D. Foot.

If you would like to work with any or all of these collections, Gladstone's Library is free to join, or you can use one of the Library's 26 bedrooms and experience what it is like to sleep at a library. The Library also offers annual scholarships to help researchers and students who would otherwise struggle to visit for financial or other reasons to complete a project in our Reading Rooms.

For more information, please visit the **Gladstone's Library website**.

## Calls for Submissions

Please email calls for publication submissions and funding opportunities to [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com) for inclusion in future issues.

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### Rethinking Race, Nation and Empire: Charles Dickens, Slavery, and the American Civil War

Call for Contributions

Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025

*Rethinking Race, Nation and Empire: Charles Dickens, Slavery, and the American Civil War* considers how the writings of Charles Dickens are shaped by—and contribute to—Victorian discourses of race, nation, and empire in the middle of the nineteenth century. The “discursive roots of modern racism lie in British, European, and colonial writings,” writes Patrick Brantlinger. But often unacknowledged is the “extent to which racism informed virtually all aspects of Romantic and Victorian culture” (Taming Cannibals 6-7). Major questions about democracy, nation, and race came to the fore as an emerging democracy in England was negotiated, fragile democracy in the United States was thrown into question by Civil War, and black enfranchisement was debated in the current and former slave colonies of the Americas and the Caribbean. As the Civil War divided the United States, how did British writers imagine free Blacks fitting into the “imagined community” of British nationhood? Were they conceived as an inferior and therefore marginalizable racial unit (Dickens’s “hospital procession of negro cupids, several headless and all cripples,” in *The Tale of Two Cities*, for example), against which British subjecthood was defined, or as legitimate partners in the rapidly evolving landscape of British governance? How was England’s sense of itself as a nation tied to its role as an imperial power? Building on foundational work by Michael Banton, Patrick Brantlinger, Linda Colley, Dennis Judd, Catherine Hall, Lillian Nayder, Grace Moore, Robert Young, and others, this volume will examine how these questions were engaged, answered, troubled, and/or evaded in the writings of Charles Dickens.

Authors might wish to explore Dickens’s changing stance on slavery, race, nation, and empire in writings published in the lead-up to and in the shadows of the US Civil War, such as *Little Dorrit*, “Perils of English Prisoners,” *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Drood* (including his work co-written with Wilkie Collins); journals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*; his correspondence; or earlier writings like “O’Thello,” *Oliver Twist*, *American Notes*, and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. We envision a global approach to the American Civil War, in which the fight over slavery pitted whites against whites and threatened the demise of the slaveocracy that was the South, even as Britain’s sense of itself as an imperial power was shaken by events in Niger, the Indian Rebellion, and the Morant Bay Rebellion. Themes could include but are not limited to slavery, race, gender, nation, imperialism, civil war, the colonies, insurrection, and pedagogical approaches to these topics.

Please submit a one-page proposal along with a brief bio no later than **30 September 2025** to the editors, Jude V. Nixon ([Jnixon@salemstate.edu](mailto:Jnixon@salemstate.edu)), Carolyn Vellenga Berman ([BermanC@newschool.edu](mailto:BermanC@newschool.edu)), and Jennifer MacLure ([jmaclure@kent.edu](mailto:jmaclure@kent.edu)).

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### More Pride, Less Prejudice: Jane Austen at 250

Call for Papers

Deadline: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Faculty of Arts and Humanities I University of Porto  
Faculdade de Letras | Universidade do Porto  
2-3 October 2025

Keynote Speakers

John Mullan (University College London)

Fiona Stafford (University of Oxford)

On Jane Austen's 250th anniversary, we invite scholars/enthusiasts to join us at the University of Porto for a two-day celebration of both her literary genius and enduring legacy. As an inescapable figure in the English literary canon, and a popular cross-generational phenomenon, Jane Austen has always been the subject of the most diverse and innovative academic approaches. Scholars have explored various aspects of her work, from the ways in which her novels negotiate femininity (Cho 2006; Steiner 2012; Lints 2024) and subvert prevailing notions of masculinity during the Romantic era (Ailwood 2019; Woodworth 2024) to the deep psychological complexity of her characters (Mullan 2005). Additionally, research has examined Austen's engagement with the medieval tradition of courtly love (Schubert 2023) and the significance of garden landscapes within her narratives (Bending 2024). Uncountable cinematographic and television adaptations, as well as retellings of Austen's novels have catalyzed the development of studies concerning the intermediality of her work (Martin 2007; Cartmell 2010; Sutherland 2011; Pereira 2016; Ursa 2018). These varied lines of enquiry underscore the enduring relevance and complexity of Austen's contributions to literature. Her works being products whose critical fortunes inevitably surpass the author's own time and geography, it is the aim of this conference to foster new and thought-provoking (re)interpretations of the Austenian corpus – namely the novels that brought her fame – and the lenses through which it can be revisited in our day and age.

We thus welcome papers on all aspects of the author's life, and encourage contrasting perspectives on her oeuvre. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Afterlives: translations, adaptations, transmediations (e.g., films, TV/streaming series, retellings, video games, fanfiction, etc);
- Global Austen;
- The life of Jane Austen (family, education, juvenilia);
- The rise of the novel: books and reading practices;
- Landscape(s) and travelling;
- (Re)Defining masculinities;
- Womanhood, girlhood & rebel women (or not so much);
- Regency life: fashion, manners, sociability;
- Economy: love and the marriage market;
- Language, style and structure;
- Critical responses (early and recent);
- Literary scene: from sentimental to gothic;
- Nationalism, war and empire;
- Digital Humanities;
- Conventions and transgressions.

We welcome 250-word proposals for 20-minute presentations in English at [morepridelessprejudice@letras.up.pt](mailto:morepridelessprejudice@letras.up.pt). Please include a short bio (max 150 words, including the author's academic affiliation). The deadline for abstract submission is 16 May 2025.

The standard conference fee is 80 euros. A reduced fee of 30 euros is available for students. The conference will be held in person at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto. All delegates are responsible for their own travel arrangements and accommodation. More information available later at <https://sites.google.com/view/morepridelessprejudice/>.

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## Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: A Companion

Call for Contributions  
Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025

This volume aims to offer a cross-disciplinary re-exploration and re-appreciation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) to capture the most recent, and most recently diversified approaches in literary and affiliated fields of study. It is designed as a complementary volume to *ALICE: Through the Looking-Glass, A Companion* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024).

Similarly to the previous endeavour, this volume will adopt a multi-pronged approach, combining approaches from literary theory, literary history and interdisciplinary humanities studies, such as environmental and medical humanities to historicist readings of *Alice*, with cognate approaches in fields pertinent to *Alice's* author, such as medical history, theology, logic and mathematics, including theatre studies. The resulting book thus aims to be an exploration that allows us to see the different facets of the author, and how these come to play in *Wonderland*, and its manifold afterlives.



It encourages authors to think internationally and intersectionally, to include approaches that challenge canonical readings of the text. As such, it particularly invites creative re-thinkings of *Wonderland*, as well as professional and/or practice-based reflections on completed or ongoing projects, such as curating *Wonderland* in museums, media settings, or education.

As a counterpart to its sister volume on *Through the Looking-Glass*, any potential contributions to the present *Companion* should focus primarily on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and/or its afterlives. We specifically encourage authors to address the conflation of “Alice’s Adventures” and “Wonderland” – as *AAIW* meaning “Alice in Wonderland” (rather than its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* or other works by Lewis Carroll). Suggested topics and approaches might include, but are certainly not limited to:

#### LITERARY APPROACHES:

- ***Wonderland and its Literary Histories***  
Reflections on the shifting histories of the critical approaches applied in interpreting *Wonderland* – especially as separate from the works of Carroll, and the impact this had on the work’s understanding, and situatedness in literary studies and its sub-fields.
- ***Alice’s Adventures Under-Ground***  
New understandings that might be facilitated by re-considerations of *Wonderland’s* manuscript.
- ***Wonderland and its protagonists***  
From the Cheshire Cat to the iconic Hatter and Tea-Party, this book invites explorations of individual scenes and characters and their iconic nature in the immediate reception of *Alice* and its afterlife.
- ***Wonderland and its poetry***  
Poetry in Victorian education, musical and childhood culture; parodies and re-writings of well-known poems, and their trans-/re-creations in other cultures and languages.
- ***Wonderland as/ not as children’s literature***  
Engagements with assessments of *Wonderland’s* uniqueness in this setting, shifting target audiences in translation, illustration, annotated editions and other transformative approaches of the text.
- ***Wonderland’s Intertextualities***  
Examinations of literary interactions of *Wonderland* with the work of other contemporary authors, for instance Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley, Marget Gatty, Phillip Henry Gosse.

#### HISTORICAL APPROACHES:

- ***Wonderland and Pedagogic Cultures and Histories***  
*Wonderland's* relationship with Victorian education, Lewis Carroll’s own understanding of *Alice* as education, the theme of education, and educational verse in *Wonderland*, as well as uses of the text in pedagogical settings from the Victorian age onwards, particularly with attention to its use in the context of the British Empire.
- ***Logic and Linguistics***  
Comparative readings of Carroll’s work on logic, especially for children, such as *Game of Logic* and *Wonderland*; the significance of language, sense and nonsense in *Wonderland*.
- ***Theology and Religion***  
Fresh perspectives on *Wonderland* in the context of Religion, in children’s education, religious literature for children, Carroll’s own shifting religious views and their significance for his works.
- ***Mathematics, Science, Medicine, and Environment***  
Dimensions of *Wonderland* with regard to Carroll’s preoccupation with Mathematics and Logic, in the context of contemporary psychology, and recent ecocritical approaches to Victorian literature.
- ***Music and Theatre Studies***  
*Alice* as a product of, and/or in correspondence with contemporary cultures of theatre and music.
- ***Sir John Tenniel and his work***  
New perspectives on Tenniel’s illustrations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and their legacy.

## AFTERLIVES:

- **Myths of Wonderland**  
From erroneous and misattributed quotations online, to “that” Queen Victoria episode, the ever-present “Carroll myth”, or the genre of fictionalised imaginings of the relationship between Alice and Carroll, this volume seeks critically rigorous engagements with their impact on the public’s understanding of *Alice* over the past century-and-a-half.
- **Art & History of Photography**  
Wonderland in fine arts, Surrealism, pictorial representations, *Alice* and Victorian photography.
- **“Works of the *Alice* type” and “*Alice* in \_\_\_-land” type works**  
Explorations of pastiches of *Wonderland* in the many forms they have taken.
- **Politics and Caricature**  
Uses and recycling of *Wonderland* images, text, and symbols in politics, caricature and the press.
- ***Alice* abroad**  
From contemporary translations, re-illustration, to specific adaptations and afterlives in specific national and cultural settings, *Alice* in the former British Empire and internationally with an emphasis on rare or unique approaches to the text.
- ***Alice* and Digital Wonderlands**  
Games, game books, theme parks, video games, and online fandom as shaping new *Wonderlands*.
- **Popular Culture**  
Fresh and recent explorations of *Wonderland*’s enormous afterlife in any other form of ‘popular culture’, including music, fashion, film, etc.
- ***Alice* further adventures in Education**  
Origins and afterlives of *Alice* in and as educational literature (for instance in language learning, and adaptation/ translation), teaching editions, etc.
- ***Alice* and Language**  
The post-publication evolution of “*Alice* in *Wonderland*,” “down the rabbit hole” as a figure of speech.
- **Social Science & Cultural Studies:**  
*Wonderland* as sociological agent, as both high culture (*Wonderland* and nation-building, in Tourism), and as counter-cultural, protest cultures or subcultures (from Woodstock, Brexit-critical movements, Punk and Goth sub-cultures).

...any other, and especially interdisciplinary explorations of the intersections of any of these fields.

## ABSTRACTS

Abstracts of 200-300 words should be submitted using [the submission form](#) by **15 May 2025**, with completed pieces around 3000 words for submission in the first quarter/half of 2026, for publication in a peer-reviewed volume in the Peter Lang *Companions to Genre Fiction and Film* series. Any questions about the publication should be directed to [wonderlandbook2025@gmail.com](mailto:wonderlandbook2025@gmail.com), cc’ing the editors Franziska Kohlt ([f.e.kohlt@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:f.e.kohlt@leeds.ac.uk)) and Justine Houyaux ([jhouyaux@uliege.be](mailto:jhouyaux@uliege.be)).

## Nineteenth-Century Legacies Colloquium

Call for Papers

Deadline Extended: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025



In June 2025, Royal Holloway, University of London, in collaboration with the British Association of Victorian Studies and the British Association of Romantic Studies, will host an in-person research day on Tuesday 3rd June examining realisms across literary, artistic, theatrical, and critical forms, and considering the continuing influence of nineteenth-century thought on our current moment.

Presentations will be held during the morning in which delegates present 15-minute papers attending to nineteenth-century realisms (broadly conceived), followed by an afternoon discussion-based roundtable, structured around the topic: “Managing Difficult Legacies”.

We have undertaken to discourse here for a little on Great Men, their manner of appearance in our world’s business, how they have shaped themselves in the world’s history, what ideas men formed of them, what work they did; – on Heroes, namely, and on their reception and performance what I call Hero-worship and the Heroic in human affairs. Too evidently this is a large topic; deserving quite other treatment than we can expect to give it at present. A large topic; indeed, an illimitable one; wide as Universal History itself. For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here.

**Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History***

Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People. Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life. It is not so very serious that we should have false ideas about evanescent fashions – about the manners and conversation of beaux and duchesses; but it is serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in the life of our more heavily-laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned towards a false object instead of the true one.

**George Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life”**

Human beings are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past. They have a value which is independent of any temporal processes—which is eternal, and must be felt for its own sake

**Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians***

In “The Natural History of German Life”, George Eliot condemns contemporaneous social novels which claim to “represent the people as they are” while tending to idealise their presentations of rural and working-class life. Eliot understood the far-reaching implications of realist representation. In misrepresenting their subjects, these writers direct the sympathy of their audience towards a false object which, as Eliot sees it, undermines the moral imperative of their work.

The way the real is constructed across literary, artistic, social, and political discourses is instructive. Realism is a mode of aesthetic presentation which claims to correspond with real life, designed to strike the reader or viewer as realistic or lifelike through the deployment of certain conventions and strategies. The ways in which authors, artists, and thinkers use these techniques to convince their audience that their work is correspondent with real life can be revealing in how they see themselves, others, their own historical moment, their place in the wider world, and beyond. By way of example, The Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh was championed by Thomas Carlyle who insisted that “the History of the World [ . . . ] was the Biography of Great Men”. Those who were deemed to have contributed significantly to Scotland and the wider world are celebrated in William Brasseley Hole’s processional frieze which encircles the building’s Great Hall. It presents a calculated version of Scotland’s past, which purports to be true and, by extension, real to observers in the nineteenth century and through to our current moment. The policies, ideas, and images which prop up these versions of reality created within nineteenth-century cultural, social, and political discourses continue to resonate today.

The purpose of this research day is to examine nineteenth-century realist presentations and consider their present-day implications. Nineteenth-century ideas continue to feature within the twenty-first century consciousness. During the morning, panellists will present 15-minute papers followed by Q&As. These presentations will help lay the foundation for a discussion-based roundtable event held during the afternoon, where participants will be encouraged to reflect upon how nineteenth-century ideas, understandings, and problems raised during the morning presentations continue to influence university structures and the courses they deliver, institutions in the GLAM sector, as well as shaping contemporary cultural and political discourses.

We invite contributions that attend to nineteenth-century realisms across literary, artistic, theatrical, architectural, and critical forms, which pursue new directions that demonstrate the capaciousness of the form, and its scope for providing insight into, or renegotiating, perceptions of historical, cultural, or social moments.

Researchers from all disciplines are invited to submit proposals for 15-minute paper which consider nineteenth-century realisms. Papers may address, but are not limited to:

- Realism: literary, artistic, theatrical
- Subjectivity, the primacy of the individual
- ‘Otherness’ and othering
- Journalism and print culture
- Authors and Artists
- Cultural memory and the recent past
- Religion
- Philanthropists, philosophers, activists, and innovators
- Empire and colonialism
- Institutions: Workhouses, galleries, libraries, museums, how they were founded, and by whom. The intellectual ideas underpinning them and whether they have survived into the present day
- Education: The Education Act (1870), National schools, Sunday schools, Ragged schools, Workers’ Educational Association, YMCA lectures, technical colleges, women’s education, curricula, pedagogy.
- Events: The Napoleonic wars, the Acts of Union (1801), the Peterloo Massacre, the Great Reform Act (1832), abolishment of Slavery in the British Empire (1838), Chartism, the Paris Commune.
- Technological Developments: development of the railway, development of photography.
- Science: Natural history, Darwinism, eugenic thought, phrenology

Please send proposals of no more than 300 words, and a biographical note of no more than 100 words to Amy Waterson ([amy.waterson@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:amy.waterson@rhul.ac.uk)).

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## **Symposium: Transnational Encounters in/through South Asia: Routes of Influence and Affect**

**Call for Papers  
Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> April**

8-9<sup>th</sup> January, 2026

Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad

Keynote Speakers: Dr. Tara Puri and Professor Supriya Chaudhuri

This workshop, organised by Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad and the Victorian Diversities Research Network brings together Victorian Studies’ scholars who seek to elucidate the many encounters between Britain and Asia in the nineteenth-century. In this context, we understand encounters as both methodological and textual (Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 2000). We are interested in Ahmed’s conceptualisation of these embodied ‘encounters’, as well as in what Ahmed calls the affective construction of cultural/national ‘otherness’ - the ways these cross-cultural interactions were affectively structured – just as their neo-colonial geopolitical echoes continue to be (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2024). We observe how, not just nineteenth-century socio-cultural approaches to otherness, but scholarly studies of the period also continue to be affectively imbued (see, for example, the title of Nasser Mufti’s essay “Hating Victorian Studies Properly”, 2020). At a time when these distinctions between the citizen and the alien, the national and the migrant, the legitimate and the undocumented are merging with horrific force, we urge a re-examination of the idea of national encounters and cultural difference as they were staged at the British-Indian interface over the long nineteenth century.

We invite papers that revisit the colonial encounter in creative and productive ways, allowing for redefinitions of the ideas of alienness, intimacy, influence, and hybridity. Papers can examine how British-Indian networks were constituted through the language of feeling and institutionally routed through the rhetoric of emotion. We also welcome papers that reflect on and reconfigure academic encounters with Victorian studies through new pedagogical and methodological approaches. We are interested in papers that explore nineteenth-century colonial encounter from a

public humanities perspective – studying how nineteenth-century colonialist structures define modern social/legal/technological approaches to, and exclusions within, the fields of health, climate, religion, (social) justice, or heritage. WE especially welcome papers that lead to new encounters with marginalised writers from the nineteenth century.

Thanks to AHRC funding, this is a free but limited capacity event. Campus accommodation is available at a reasonable cost for participants. You can email for more information. Please send your bios and abstracts (300 words) to Dr. Shuhita Battacharjee ([shuhita@la.iith.ac.in](mailto:shuhita@la.iith.ac.in)) and Dr Éadaoin Agnew ([e.agnew@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:e.agnew@kingston.ac.uk)) by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

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## Pictorial *Punch* – Treasures from the Archive

### Call for Papers

**Deadline: May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

British Library Study Day, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Keynote Speakers: Patrick Leary (Historian of the Victorian Press) and Julia Thomas (Cardiff University)

For over 150 years, *Punch* magazine was renowned for its original and provocative satire. From early cartoons such as John Leech's anti-establishment "Substance and Shadow" (1843) to its later conservative social commentary, *Punch's* pithy observations on both national and international affairs ensured the longevity of its success and confirmed the brand as a cornerstone of the British popular press. The *Punch* Archive attests to the historical and cultural import of the brand and its evolving publication portfolio through its eclectic range of print culture materials and artefacts. Acquired by the British Library in 2004, it comprises three sub-fonds all of which, to this day, remain largely unknown to both the academic community and the wider public. Among these resources is a full collection of *Punch's Pocket Book* (1843-1881), a lavishly illustrated annual which, over a period of forty years, efficiently promoted the brand.

In line with *Punch's Pocket Book Archive*, an international digitisation project which proposes to deliver an open-access database based on a full run of these annuals, a symposium entitled "Pictorial *Punch* – Treasures from the Archive" will take place at the British Library on 7 November 2025. Organised by the *Punch's Pocket Book Archive* team with the support of the Archives and Manuscripts Department, the event seeks to explore the breadth and diversity of this unplumbed material, and provide an opportunity for experts and enthusiasts alike to discover and discuss the Archive's extensive catalogue, as well as other related items within the British Library's collections.

**Possible topics** to explore include, but are not limited to:

- Material from the *Punch* Archive, particularly unexplored items and collections
- Special collections curatorial practices – Approaches, strategies, impact.
- Bradbury & Evans / Bradbury, Evans & Agnew publishing house.
- *Punch* cartoons and cartoonists (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c.)
- Women and other underrepresented groups in the Archive
- The mechanics of image publishing (from the sketch to the page)
- The *Punch* brand and extensive range of by-products
- *Punch* contributors: writers, artists, editors, engravers, photographers
- Digital preservation of nineteenth-century archival material
- *Punch's* impact on the print culture of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c.
- *Punch* responses and versions from around the world

**Submission Guidelines:** We invite proposals for 20-minute individual papers. Proposals of 300 words, along with a short biographical note, should be sent to [PPBkACaen@gmail.com](mailto:PPBkACaen@gmail.com) by May 30, 2025. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by June 16, 2025

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**The Gaskell Journal**  
**Joan Leach Memorial**  
**Graduate Student Essay Prize 2026**  
**Deadline for submissions: 1 February 2026**

*The Gaskell Journal* runs a biennial Graduate Student Essay Prize in honour of Joan Leach MBE, founder of the Gaskell Society. The winning essay will be published in the *Gaskell Journal* (with revisions as appropriate), and its author will receive £200 from the Gaskell Society, and a complimentary copy of the Journal.

The essay competition is open to all graduate students currently registered for a PhD or MA. Entries must offer an original contribution to the field of Gaskell studies, whether to read her work in relation to Victorian social or intellectual contexts, or in the light of critical theory, or to offer a comparative study connecting Gaskell with another author. Essays will be shortlisted by the *Gaskell Journal* Editorial Board, with the final winner being chosen by our guest judge who is an eminent scholar in Victorian Studies. Previous judges have included Professor Kate Flint, Professor Joanne Shattock, and Professor Jill Matus.

Essays should be 6000-7000 words, and not under consideration for publication elsewhere. All shortlisted submissions will be considered for potential publication in the *Gaskell Journal*. Please see the *Gaskell Journal* website for submission details and style guide: [www.gaskelljournal.co.uk](http://www.gaskelljournal.co.uk). Please direct any queries to the Editors, Dr Ben Moore: [B.P.Moore@uva.nl](mailto:B.P.Moore@uva.nl) and Dr Rebecca Styler: [rstyler@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:rstyler@lincoln.ac.uk)

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**Visual Theology: *Beauty and Faith***  
**A two-part conference event beginning 24-26 October 2025**  
**Call for Papers**  
**Deadline for Part One proposals 30th April, 2025**



Visual Theology's third event is a major two-part conference, the first of which will take place in New York City, 24-26 October 2025, and the second part in the UK, summer 2026. (Details forthcoming.)

Part One: *Imperfect Beauty: Visions of Fractured Faith* will use the history and material culture of the Met Cloisters as a starting point for conversations about the space between brokenness and beauty, and to consider how art, in its many forms, can replant, remake, and reaffirm Christian truth, even when the results demonstrate synchronic anxieties between the past and the present, and faith and fragmentation.

**More about Visual Theology here**

## Of Victorianist Interest

Please email relevant notices to [bavsnews@gmail.com](mailto:bavsnews@gmail.com) for inclusion in future issues.

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### Public Lecture: Empire, the West Country and Thomas Hardy

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025 Dorset Museum & Art Gallery, Dorchester (Victorian Hall) 18:00 – 19:00

Speakers: Professor Corinne Fowler and Dr Rena Jackson

With extensive reference to Museum displays, this joint talk explores the histories and legacies of the British Empire in the West Country, as well as considering creative and critical responses to its' legacies. Professor Corinne Fowler's talk covers the bewildering variety of Dorset's colonial connections from transatlantic slavery and indentured labour to the African historical presence and penal colonies in modern day Australia and Tasmania. It will show how Dorset's agricultural history, particularly enclosure, the loss of common land and agricultural labour, is linked to the influx of imperial wealth during the colonial period. Dr Rena Jackson's talk considers literary responses to the Empire from a major Victorian West Country writer. The global flows of people and commodities in Thomas Hardy's rural imaginary, Wessex, show how the region was entwined with then Empire through colonial adventure and exploration, finance capital, wars (land and sea), emigration and transportation, the East India Company and the Indian Civil Service.

This event is supported by and in partnership with the **Dorset Museum and Art Gallery**, **The Thomas Hardy Society**, and the **Dorset History Centre**, and is generously supported by **the British Association for Victorian Studies**.

Ticket discounts are available for students

To book tickets: <https://www.dorsetmuseum.org/whats-on/empire-the-west-country-and-thomas-hardy/>

Please contact the Dorset Museum & Art Gallery with any questions

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### North-West Long Nineteenth-Century Research Seminar: Transnational Popular Print in the Long Nineteenth Century

Wednesday 2 April, 12.00 - 17.00 BST

Manchester Metropolitan University

Geoffrey Manton Building, GM.09A & ONLINE (Hybrid event)

This hybrid seminar provides an opportunity to trace the transnational dimensions of print culture in the long nineteenth century. It explores the uneven dynamics of both popular and personal print networks, as conveyed across borders in a range of modes, forms, and media. The plenary will be delivered Dr Jeroen Salman (Utrecht) and other guest speakers include Dr Clara Dawson (Manchester), Dr Clare Horrocks (LJMU) and Dr Jodie Matthews (MMU). We are also hosting a 'PhD Work in Progress' panel for early career scholars. For further information and to register, please click [here](#).

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