



Welcome to the winter 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!

It is our pleasure to extend a sincere thank you to Patricia Pulham, who has expertly marshalled BAVS for the past three years, and warmly welcome Martin Hewitt as he steps into the role of President. We wish him every success!

Some important deadlines are drawing near! The CFP for BAVS 2026 and the latest round of BAVS funding both close on **30th November**. You will find details on pages 2 and 3, respectively. Details of projects supported by BAVS can be found on pages 19-22.

Those of you who attended the Past Presidents Panel at BAVS 2025 will remember Isobel Armstrong's recommendation of Cora Kaplan's seminal anthology *Salt and Bitter and Good: Three Centuries of English and American Women Poets* (1975). On page 4, you will find Professor Armstrong's reflections on this groundbreaking work, which brought many, now canonical, nineteenth-century women poets to critical attention for the first time.

We learn about Elizabeth Gaskell's House in this issue's GLAM Report, and the fantastic work being done there to celebrate Gaskell's life and works. See page 23 for details.

As ever, our fantastic reviewers have shared their insights on a selection of new publications, including a double-review of Jessica Cox's *Confinement: The Hidden History of Maternal Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Britain* and Livia Arndal's *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel* (page 8). We welcome reviews of recent publications, foundational texts, exhibitions, and items of Victorianist interest. Find out more on the [website](#) or by getting in touch with [us directly](#).

Amy Waterson & Ruth-Anne Walbank
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BAVS News

BAVS 2026 Conference Liverpool

BAVS Liverpool, 27 – 29 July 2026

Keynote Speakers: Dr Alison Chapman (University of Victoria, BC), others to be confirmed

Deadline: 30th November 2025

The Centre for Modern and Contemporary History (CMCH) at Liverpool John Moores invites you to Liverpool for BAVS 2026. Founded in 2000, the British Association for Victorian Studies supports and promotes research in Britain and beyond. This year's conference Planning Team represents the richness of Victorian history and research in the City, with colleagues from LJMU, University of Liverpool, Liverpool Hope University and National Museums Liverpool.

There will be no specific theme for the conference. Papers on any aspect of long-nineteenth-century studies from across Art History, Music, Maritime History, Theatre History, the History of Science, Literature and History, to name a few, are welcome.

Liverpool is a cultural port city with a rich, if at times contentious, heritage, providing a framework for discussion of Victorian Studies in the twenty-first century. The City mirrors many of the exciting social, cultural and economic innovations of the period, from the Philharmonic Hall and its Orchestra to the many theatres. We would particularly like to attract papers that engage with this myriad of narratives, reaching across disciplines. Victorian Liverpool encapsulates the diversity of Victorian studies, broadening out to the provinces, bringing migrants from Scotland, Ireland and Wales to the City, extending the reach of Britain into the Empire and beyond; both who went out from Liverpool and who settled here. Here 'Victorian' is not a static concept, but transcends the immediate locale while still being shaped by it. We welcome papers that examine the rich cultural tapestry the city stimulates, whilst continuing to address the broader controversies of the period.

The Liverpool Planning Team welcome proposals for 20-minute papers, but proposals for creative, non-traditional, craft approaches to presentation will be welcome. We would particularly like to attract proposals for Roundtable sessions on areas like Pedagogy, Research Methods, Theatre and Music History. If people would like to organise shorter lightning papers and panels then please contact the Planning Team to discuss this.

Please submit proposals to: bavs2026liverpool@gmail.com no later than **30th November 2025**.

BAVS/BARS Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellow 2025/26

We are delighted to announce that Dr Yasmin Akhter is the 2025/26 BARS/BAVS Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellow, to be hosted at the University of Edinburgh with mentorship from Dr Gerard McKeever.

Yasmin's research critiques the idea of a 'global' nineteenth century by investigating the ways that life-writing represents travel, migration, and cosmopolitanism. Her PhD thesis, from Royal Holloway, looks at the relationship between postcolonial theories of displacements and global cosmopolitanisms in the long nineteenth century. Articles based on this work have appeared in *Victorian Literature and Culture* and *CUSP*. Yasmin's new project is on colonial infrastructures and women's life-writing in Egypt, Palestine, and East Africa.

BAVS Funding Grants: Forthcoming Deadlines

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 are available in the **BAVS website**

To apply, please use the following application form

The deadline for applications is **30 November 2025 at 5 pm (UK time)**. Please direct any queries to the BAVS Funding Officer, **Dr. Francesca Arnavas**.

Going forward, the funding deadlines will be one month earlier than they have been in previous years. The spring round will have a deadline of 30th April 2026 and the autumn round will close on 31st October 2026.

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.

BAVS 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.

Sessions are scheduled for the 24th and 26th of November. There will also be some scheduled in December (dates tbc). Sessions are run by Charlotte Boyce and Madeline Potter. You can opt out of emails at any time by contacting Charlotte Boyce.

Sign up here

Cora Kaplan's Forgotten Anthology: *Salt and Bitter and Good*

Cora Kaplan. *Salt and Bitter and Good. Three Centuries of English and American Women Poets*, London, Paddington Press Ltd, The Two Continents Publishing Group, 1975.

At the BAVS conference, which celebrated the society's twenty fifth anniversary in July this year, the panel representing former Presidents was asked to name a book published in the last twenty-five years that was undeservedly neglected. I was allowed to go off piste and chose the late Cora Kaplan's 1975 publication *Salt and Bitter and Good: Three Centuries of English and American Woman Poets*, an anthology published fifty years ago, twenty-five years before the establishment of BAVS. It is the foundational anthology of women's poetry, particularly for the nineteenth century. Even when people are unfamiliar with it, they are familiar with its forceful opinions, which have circulated well beyond its actual readers. Its title, taken from Elizabeth Barratt Browning, has not helped it, perhaps: much to her amusement Cora once found it in the cookery section of a bookshop, her husband tells me.

Cora Kaplan, one of our founding feminists, died late last year. She was celebrated for her extraordinarily profound and imaginative feminist thinking, but rarely was her anthology of women's poetry given the attention it deserves. It is the pioneering anthology of women's poetry. Beautifully produced in quarto with portraits by Lisa Unger Baskin, it selects poems from twenty-four poets, ranging from Anne Bradstreet to Sylvia Plath; ten of whom are nineteenth-century writers. Poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti, who had just about achieved public visibility by 1975, found a place in the anthology, but Cora went much further afield than this. Included are Phyllis Wheatley and Felicia Hemans – then virtually unknown, and Mathilde Blind and Alice Meynell. Of the known poets she determinedly published Barratt Browning's political poems – 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point', 'A Curse for a Nation' – and only one of 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' – and not 'How do I love thee?'; the one everyone knows. She published the whole of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' and one of the more demanding of Hemans's dramatic monologues, 'Properzia Rossi'.

Cora had to make a case for women's poetry. Her introduction, and the individual introductions to poets are strikingly decisive and well informed. They steadfastly make a feminist case whether they praise or critique. Of Christina Rossetti's subversive 'Goblin Market', for instance, she writes that it is 'doubtful that Christina [...] understood its subversive message' (p. 125), acculturated as she was to a submissive Christianity. She ascribes to Hemans the endorsement of a 'limited passive role for women' (p. 43), and of Elizabeth Barratt Browning she writes that 'her own experience revealed to her the nexus between woman's passivity and the repressive politics of the time. She expresses this knowledge eloquently in her poetry and letters' (p. 107).

These readings are forthright and eloquent and powerfully supported. They are the readings that subsequent feminist critics and anthology editors have endlessly challenged or re-defined, whether they are familiar with Cora's work or not, and they remain today in perpetual circulation as the foundations of critical discourses round women's poetry. Cora was the first to establish a canon of women's poetry. The writers who followed her much later in the eighties and nineties with substantial anthologies of nineteenth-century poetry - Paula Feldman, Angela Leighton, Virginia Blain, myself and my colleagues, Joseph Bristow and Cath Sharrock - owe everything to her initial research. Cora is indeed the foundational critic of women's poetry.

Isobel Armstrong, Birkbeck, University of London

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. 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.*

***Black Students in Imperial Britain: The African Institute, Colwyn Bay, 1889-1911* by Robert Burroughs. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022), 249pp., £29.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-80207-725-4**

Robert Burroughs's book presents an unusual and now little-known school that was established in Colwyn Bay, Wales, by Baptist minister the Reverend William Hughes in 1890 as Congo House, known also as the Congo Training Institute and then African Institute until its closure in 1911. Hughes had been a Baptist missionary in Congo until poor health forced him to return to Wales. Upon arrival he sought a means of continuing his missionary work that would secure an income. After travelling Wales to raise funds with two boys whom he had brought back from Congo, Hughes established Congo House to educate children and young adults so that they could work as missionaries in Africa while supporting themselves in a trade. The school closed owing to several issues, which included the falsification of finances. Hughes died in the workhouse in 1923. Burroughs's study illustrates how the institution was bound up with colonial interests as well as Hughes's own financial preoccupations. The book is organised in two parts: The Congo Institute and the African Institute. Burroughs explains that structuring his research thus illustrates how the meaning and purported purpose of Hughes's school shifted in response to the priorities of those able to financially support it. Hughes's pursuit of personal financial survival is a constant concern, entwined with the activities of King Leopold II and 1890s Congo politics; Leopold supported the school from 1891.

Using archival resources, Burroughs sets out his intention to consider the pupils and their experiences at Congo House through 'contextualised analyses' of African and diasporic people's experiences of Britain (p.19). He outlines the difficulties associated with 'finding colour' in British archives (pp. 77, 78) and explains that this in part is dealt with by using photographs, which were used to raise funds for Hughes and the institution. Most of the material Burroughs uses comes from reports, newspaper articles, and letters.

However, the small number of students who attended Congo House (p. 8) left few records. Burroughs uses records left by another child from Congo who had toured Britain in the mid-1890s with a Scottish Baptist minister to supplement his analysis, which, ultimately, deflects from Congo House.

Education delivered by the Institute is fascinating. Hughes's pupils learned Welsh, which was important for initial fund raising and being part of the Colwyn community where the pupils had apprenticeships. This is striking because contemporary children across Wales were taught and examined in English. However, Burroughs does not mention this, and this is an unfortunate omission. The place of Welsh in a school intended to provide religious and practical training for future African missionaries, that considered itself to be back in the 'geographical' heart of the British Empire (p.53) although in the 'oldest colony' (p.59), and in receipt of funds from the Belgian Empire is intriguing. This aspect of Burroughs's analysis would be more informative with accurate supporting information to compare Hughes's ideas of education with the pupils' contemporaries.

The quality of education delivered by the Institute, however, is unclear. The 1870 Education Act determined schools' grants by exam passes. Hughes's school did not receive the grant so this is not a suitable measure. There is no mention of pupils taking Cambridge or Oxford Local examinations so we cannot use these country-wide criteria. Subjects studied included bookkeeping, poultry keeping, Scripture, history and geography, with Latin and music for some older students. Pupils were not taught French or German, which the students would need when working as anticipated in the Cameroons. Burroughs claimed girls at the Institute followed education patterns of other young women in nineteenth-century Britain and did not take exams until later in the Institute's existence (p.105). This is an inaccurate depiction of girls' schooling: girls had been taking exams, including the Cambridge Local exams, since before Hughes's school existed. This is an area where a lack of historiography is apparent.

Black Students in Imperial Britain could be complimented by Rhonda Anne Semple's *Missionary Women. Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (2003) and Fiona Leach's chapter, 'African Girls, Nineteenth-Century Mission Education and the Patriarchal Imperative' (Diedre Raftery and Maryann Valiulis, eds. *Gender Balance and Gender Bias in Education* (2013)) to gain wider knowledge on women as missionaries, beyond Burroughs's expectation that they would be missionary wives. To understand how Hughes's pupils' education compared with their contemporaries in England and Wales, Lawrence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon's *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c. 1870-1930* (2012) would provide an introduction. Burroughs's book contributes towards knowledge of nineteenth-century education, but its real strength lies in its depiction of late nineteenth-century empires and how their tendrils spread.

Catherine Freeman (Independent Researcher)

***The Lost Orchid: A Story of Victorian Plunder & Obsession*, by Sarah Bilston (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2025), 389pp., £25 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-674-27260-6**

Beginning with the unwitting discovery of an orchid in Brazil in 1818 by the plant collector William Swainson, Sarah Bilston's *The Lost Orchid: A Story of Victorian Plunder and Obsessions* tells the remarkable story of the *Cattleya labiata* orchid, which was introduced to nineteenth-century Britain, America and Europe. Not just a simple history of this mysterious plant, this book offers a wider analysis of the place of orchids within Victorian society and the different people who became intertwined with their story. To explore the history of *C. labiata*, Bilston produces what she calls a 'literary history' (p.13) to highlight the power of narration and storytelling in the history of the *C. labiata* and the wider history of orchid hunting and Victorian botanical culture.

Bilston seeks to tell not just the story of the *C. labiata* but the 'story making that helped power the mania for orchids – and the stories left off the printed page.' (p.5) The story of *C. labiata* was not rigid but was, in its different names and guises, 'part of a story shaped according to subtly different authorial designs' (p.290). This was a story of both the key figures in Victorian science like William Hooker and Charles Darwin, and the plant hunters like Swainson, the orchid collectors and people swept up in the fashion for keeping orchids. To uncover these different narratives, Bilston takes a novel approach to the study of Victorian science, combining a wide range of source materials

from traditional botanical texts and correspondence to more fragmentary materials like packing slips and advertisements to reconstruct the multi-layer networks of plant hunting, botanical collection and the culture of orchids. The inclusion of such a wide array of sources offers a refreshing account of Victorian science, which encompasses both those who had the privilege to leave their mark on the historical narrative through their scientific publications and those whose contributions go ignored.

One of the lost stories that Bilston succeeds in uncovering is the contribution of women to the study of orchids. Chapter 11 'Battles at the Gate' considers the orchid collection of Louisa Lawrence and her rocky relationship with the Horticultural Society. This chapter addresses the difficulty of reconstructing the work of women orchidologists and botanists more broadly, as Lawrence did not publish. However, Bilston utilises traces of her work through catalogue descriptions and lists of her prizes to argue that Lawrence's orchid collection 'transformed Lawrence into the one doing the displaying, not the one on display' (121). Although Bilston does not intertwine women's contributions throughout the book, she successfully argues that women did participate in the collection, showing and study of orchids. As she convincingly argues, 'women could develop expertise and participate in competition with men at the highest levels' (p.122).

Throughout this work, Bilston makes use of the terms 'Orchidelirium' and 'Orchid-Craze' to describe the popular fascination with orchids. While her discussions allow her to unearth the ways that people outside of scientific circles interacted with orchids, she does not address the problematic associations of such botanical 'crazes' with women. Although Bilston does not specifically associate 'Orchidelirium' with women, it is important to recognise the associations of such terms when referring to nineteenth-century popular botanical culture.

Central to Bilston's argument is the idea that orchid collections were deeply linked to colonialism and environmental destruction. In chapter 25 'Some Brazilian', Bilston highlights the centrality of expertise and knowledge of Brazilian people to the success of orchid hunters, and the erasure of their contributions. She utilises correspondence to highlight their role, which was obscured in the published accounts of orchid hunters (p.262, 258). Bilston brings attention to these important and underexplored contributions of indigenous collectors through her approach to the study of Victorian science, which gives equal value to the less traditional sources, like correspondence, which highlight important and overlooked voices.

In the concluding chapters, Bilston addresses the dramatic fall of the *C. labiata* from popularity. Throughout the book, she demonstrates the ways in which orchids could be moulded to fit certain ideals, at once a symbol of tradition or the opposing modernity. However, as the century went on, orchids and the knowledge around how to grow and care for them became increasingly accessible (p.175). It was this commodification that ultimately led to its downfall. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was no longer considered rare and had lost its appeal. Bilston argues that the orchid's popularity was responsible for its ultimate downfall, which further highlighted the profound environmental destruction wrought by the European desire to collect.

Overall, *The Lost Orchid* succeeds in uncovering the lost narratives which surround and shape the history of the *C. labiata* orchid, those of the plant hunters risking their lives to collect, the women who sought to break into the male dominated world of botany in the mid-nineteenth century, the nurserymen seeking to outdo each other, the environments permanently damaged by colonial exploitation and the role which the Brazilian people played in identification and collection of specimens. Through its novel 'literary history' of orchids, this book succeeds in presenting the complex history of the *C. labiata*.

Eleanor Gillespie (University of Portsmouth)

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

In an 1879 letter to his friend, the poet Robert Bridges, Gerard Manley Hopkins writes that the chance that his verses 'might be published after my death' was 'unlikely, as well as remote'. This unlikely possibility became a reality almost thirty years after his death when Bridges himself published the first edition of his friend's poems in 1918. The period of time between Hopkins writing the poems and their publication places them within a very different context to that in which they were originally written. This edited collection, consisting of thirty-eight essays, seeks to place Hopkins and his work within the social and cultural contexts in which it was originally produced.

Dubois has arranged the collection thematically, in seven parts, starting with the places Hopkins lived. This section can be read as a literary guide to the places which inspired Hopkins's poems, but it also offers insightful commentaries on the geopolitical and

religious tensions of the mid-nineteenth century and how these affected Hopkins's life and poetry.

The second part of the collection is devoted to aesthetic and cultural contexts, including Visual Culture, Classics, Anglo-Saxonism, and Music. The late Professor Francis O'Gorman's chapter offers an interesting take on Hopkins's relation to music. O'Gorman argues that Hopkins's approach to music was, to say the least, absurd, since he lacked any real knowledge on music theory. Nevertheless, Hopkins still thought he could compose music pieces. While critics have tried to prove the relevance of music in Hopkins's poetry, for O'Gorman his 'musical activities' matter 'for what they reveal about his understanding of, as aspirations for, words' (p.82) but not so much as music in its own right.

The essays in part III do a great job of explaining the complex religious, theological and philosophical contexts that affected Hopkins's life and influenced his poetry, while the fourth section takes 'Nature, Science and the Environment' as its central theme. The writing included here engages with, and goes beyond, ecocritical readings of Hopkins's poems. Joshua King's chapter is particularly insightful, as he demonstrates Hopkins's support of the English Catholic biologist St. George Mivart's, attempts to reconcile Darwinism with Catholic theology.

For those who only know Hopkins as a poet mainly writing on religious and theological themes, part V on 'Gender, Sexuality, and the Body' will be a revelation since it offers thought provoking readings of his poems and prose writings. Seán Hewitt reads queerness in Hopkins's Oxford undergraduate journals while Fraser Riddell's essay traces Hopkins's engagement with masculine ideals by focusing on his depiction of Christ as 'a man of action' (p.194) and puts this in the context of the visual representations of Christ during the mid-Victorian period. Riddell also provides a fascinating comparison between the poems 'Felix Randal' and 'Harry Ploughman', arguing that these sonnets celebrate 'the dignity of labour and the beauty of the working-class body' (p.195). Riddell persuasively argues that while these two poems may not have much in common, both share the same aim, which is to capture the 'instress' of bodily actions.

A noteworthy chapter in part VI is Veronica Alfano's 'Language', which traces Hopkins's admiration and study of Anglo Saxon language, and connects this with 'his interest in the origins of the English language' (p.229). Alfano's analysis promises to advance critical engagement between Hopkins and other nineteenth-century poets, as she compares

Hopkins's use of language with that of Thomas Hardy, and lesser-known Victorian poets like Samuel Laylock.

The final section is devoted to the influence and reception of Hopkins's work following the publication of his poems in 1918. Finn Fordham explores the impact Hopkins had on modernist writers from poets like Dylan Thomas to the reference James Joyce made to 'sprung rhythm' in *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

Emily Taylor Merriman's chapter, 'Poetic Legacies post 1950', examines Hopkins's influence on British, American and postcolonialist poets. The most compelling part of this chapter is her exploration of the, sometimes unwanted, influence of Hopkins on postcolonial contexts. Merriman addresses how Nigerian scholars have criticised how many Nigerian poets were infected by 'the Hopkins disease' (p.313), while other Black poets, like George Elliott Clarke, claim that Hopkins's work 'can forge a space' for marginal poets 'in the realm of English verse' (p.314). Merriman concludes by stating that Hopkins's influence is a topic that is still relevant and deserves further critical attention.

Overall, this volume demonstrates the relevance of Hopkins within Victorian studies and beyond, and it will likely become a reference for all Hopkins scholars in years to come. Its wide-ranging chapters also makes it an appealing companion to students and those who are starting to discover the 'counter [and] original' verses of this singular Victorian poet.

Rosa Ortiz Notario (*Independent researcher*)

***Confinement: The Hidden History of Maternal Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, by Jessica Cox (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2023), 320pp., £25 (hardback), ISBN: 9780750998574**

***Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel*, by Livia Arndal Woods (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2023), 194pp., \$69.95 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-8142-1553-1**

The recent attention to the field of health and medical humanities, combined with current alarming and frightening political, medical, and social conversations in the reproductive rights discourse, has urged a scholarly assessment of the reproductive body and its cultural presence, both past and present. Jessica Cox and Livia Arndal Woods have, respectively, approached pregnancy (not limited to gestation but broadly from (in)fertility to postpartum) in the nineteenth century in compelling examinations of the reproductive body as it appears both in popular fictions, explored in Woods's

Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel, and in snippets of lived experiences seen in letters, diaries, newspapers, and medical literature which have been recovered from the archive by Cox in *Confinement: The Hidden History of Maternal Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Britain*.

These books are timely additions to conversations on reproduction, bodies, and autonomy in Victorian Studies, which speak across time to the contemporary moment to stress the damaging physical, emotional, and social consequences of pregnancy in times of limited and inadequate access to healthcare. If read in conjunction (and I recommend doing so), Cox and Woods's scholarship combines to provide a comprehensive literary, social, medical, and legal framework of the reproductive body in nineteenth-century literature and culture. Through their multifaceted methodologies and analyses, *Confinement* and *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel* encompasses the expansion of Victorian Studies as a field, which, as recently described by Joanne Shattock during a BAVS Talk delivered in June of this year at the University of Leicester, is not just interdisciplinary, but now multidisciplinary. Cox applies health and medical humanities, cultural history, and legal studies to her exploration of 'maternal voices from the past' (p. 25) to provide a historically accurate evaluation of lived experience. Similarly, Woods interprets embodiment, or more appropriately, the lack of embodiment, in an original and artistic literary analysis of Victorian pregnancy narratives, which is informed by a thorough evaluation of the cultural and social forums that these narratives existed within. Bridging literary criticism and women's and gender studies, Woods demonstrates that the cross-evaluation of disciplines is not only valuable in restoring authentic historical approaches to the past, but multidisciplinary scholarship is also useful in the comparison of the past and present. The recent publication of two books which employ several scholarly disciplines in their investigations of the nineteenth-century reproductive body is a testament that Victorian Studies is a multidisciplinary field in which reproductive health is being critically and urgently investigated.

In *Confinement*, Cox showcases a vast selection of lived experiences relating to pregnancy and reproduction, which, until now, have been hidden in the archive. Cox aims to 'rewrite the maternal body back into history' (p. 14) and she achieves this through a moving, yet often harrowing, account of real lives lived across the extremes of the nineteenth century. From 1800 to 1900 and the generations in between, Cox rewrites histories of palaces to workhouses while paying attention to social pressures, medical access, and legal risks distinct to individual experiences depending on social standing. But *Confinement* notices that, in

some aspects of maternity, the body was immune to class, power, and economic structures, and several universal and uncontrollable factors attached to reproduction ‘acted as something of a social leveller’ (p. 29). Cox elucidates this argument by explaining how financial advantage and social status could not translate into biological protection against some of the bleakest anxieties of maternity: notably infertility and maternal mortality, circumstances for which she reserves the phrase ‘social leveller’ (p. 29; p. 127). The observant perception of nineteenth-century realities is one of several successes achieved in this book, and it showcases the meticulous yet extensive research that Cox has applied to this investigation.

Woods’s *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel* is likewise concerned with how maternal experiences varied across social and cultural spectrums, and, from a literary perspective, she argues that the portrayal of pregnancy and the pregnant body in Victorian fiction is often governed by the character’s class and social reputation. Opening the book with the statement ‘Victorian novels treat pregnancy modestly’ (p. 1), Woods suggests that modesty is reserved for middle- and upper-class characters whose somatic experiences are excluded from narrative, whereas immodest pregnant bodies—those outside of heteronormative and gendered expectations, like that of Elizabeth Gaskell’s Ruth and George Eliot’s Hetty—are textually exposed to the judgement of narrator and reader. Woods turns this critical assessment of class to episodes of racial inequality in Victorian novels by emphasising ‘how present anti-Black and Brown racism is in Victorian novelistic narratives of pregnancy’ (p. 76). The neglect of Black and Brown pregnant bodies in Victorian fiction is reflective, suggests Woods, of the severe, unjust, and fatal threats positioned towards pregnant women of colour in contemporary America who face significantly higher risks in pregnancy than white women. It is attentive somatic readings like such which credit this book as valuable to both Victorian Studies and women’s experiences in the contemporary world.

Literary and textual analysis is Woods’s primary methodology. *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel* is full of clever symbolic interpretations like vague narrative impressions as figurative of the physical isolation of pregnancy, which ‘work[s] invisibly within the body of the mother’ (p. 59). Woods also navigates pregnancy in the novel through a modern lens and applies contemporary understandings of medicine, gestation, and birth to her analysis, as seen in her reading of Rosamond’s miscarriage in *Middlemarch* (1871). Whereas Cox’s medico-historical investigation uses nineteenth-century medical literature to inform a close examination of reproductive health in the period. Cox’s evident and compelling attention to health and

medicine in the nineteenth century supports her depiction of the maternal body—and maternal experiences—as worthy of assessment in their own historical position, and not necessarily in need of a comparison to the contemporary maternal body.

Woods seeks to read pregnancy in the Victorian novel in conversation with lived experience, but, in her own words, ‘this project’s interest in the significance of pregnancy to the novel limits my focus on medical texts, women’s pamphlets, or periodicals’ (p. 94). While elements of the book engage with the health and medical humanities through modern medical perspectives and an association between the doctor in fiction and the pregnancy plot, *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel* is limited in its application of medical research from the nineteenth century to the analysis of health and pregnancy in fiction. However, *Confinement* provides an extensive medico-historical and socio-cultural overview of maternity, and several of the fictional experiences analysed in *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel* are historically examined by Cox. Where Woods investigates infertility in Anthony Trollope’s *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-5), Cox explores (in)fertility in advice handbooks and medical articles in *The Lancet*. Similarly, where Cox lists maternal deaths from Mary Wollstonecraft to stories discovered in coroner’s reports, Woods details a literary overview of maternal deaths as they appear in fictions like Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Charlotte Yonge’s *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865). It is for this reason that these texts should be read in conjunction. The historical and medical approach of *Confinement* contextualises the fictional depictions of health and maternity in *Pregnancy in the Victorian Novel*, and Woods’s literary chronology of the pregnancy plot in Victorian fictions demonstrates how lived experiences, like those investigated by Cox, were translated into popular literature and culture.

Hannah Victoria Palmer (Loughborough University)

***William Ewart Gladstone: The Heart and Soul of a Statesman*, by Michael Wheeler, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 240pp., £30 (hardback), ISBN: 9780198881513**

William Ewart Gladstone, the ‘Grand Old Man’, might not have been ‘God’s Only Mistake’, as some of his Tory detractors allegedly labelled him in their mis-translation of the acronym ‘G.O.M.’, but he certainly had a special relationship with God—something demonstrated in his intense and sustained religiosity and the vibrant spiritual elements of his life. This is what Michael Wheeler’s book, published as part of OUP’s ‘Spiritual Lives’ series, is about: an account providing a

richly textured story of ‘the spiritual dimensions’ of the Victorian statesman’s ‘complex inner life’, which Wheeler expertly reconstructs by ‘tracing the movements of his heart and soul’ (p. xiii) from his diary, correspondence, and annotated books, as well as unpublished material. Wheeler’s approach in sketching a more intimate picture of the statesman’s spiritual life is reflected in his choice to refer to him as ‘William’, his baptismal name, rather than ‘Gladstone’.

The book’s eight thematic chapters, following a chronological order, make for a compelling read and provide valuable information on the ‘movements of [William’s] heart and soul’ (p. xiii). Though he somewhat overstates the case, Wheeler finds that extant biographies have given inadequate attention to the importance of religion in Gladstone’s ‘life and reputation’, with their focus being primarily on his ‘public life, particularly in the field of politics’ (p. xv). Nonetheless, Wheeler’s argument is convincing and well-substantiated by the evidence: ‘It was primarily religious rather than political concerns that engaged and motivated this most energetic of Victorian titans’ (p. xiv).

Immersing the reader into William’s diary and tracing his intellectual and spiritual development through his various religious readings and writings, Wheeler begins the process of illuminating William’s religiosity at Eton and then at Christ Church, Oxford, during which he began to move away from his youthful evangelicalism to a more catholic Anglicanism (p. 13). In his adolescence, William’s attempts to ‘walk in the light’ were troubled by his ‘fleshy lusts’ and ‘one besetting sin’ (p. 18), which Wheeler suggests was a reference to masturbation and sexual arousal. The following chapter provides a fascinating exploration of William’s spiritual life from 1832 and his entry into politics until 1845, ‘a year of crisis’, during which he resigned because of the Maynooth grant. As is shown later in the book, this was also the year of John Henry Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism, which disillusioned William and led him to make a decisive move ‘towards a broader understanding of the Church of England and of other traditions’ (p. 113). Readers also learn about William’s strong sense of providence and his response to the Oxford Movement in the 1830s and 1840s. A particularly interesting dimension of the book is how it traces the spiritual life of Catherine Glyne, William’s wife, and uncovers how they both viewed marriage ‘sacramentally’ (p. 41). William’s life was also marked by a series of deaths: his sister, his mother, and his daughter. Wheeler captures his emotional responses to these deaths and William’s theological reflections on his daughter’s suffering, whilst showing how he and his wife found consolation in Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ*. William continued

to struggle with his own lusts: whether reading what he thought to be pornographic content, or holding meetings with prostitutes, or during his ‘rescue work’. Reading Auguste Comte and David Friedrich Strauss perturbed William in regard to the rising tide of unbelief, and led him to view the latter’s book in particular ‘as a deeply disturbing sign of “the times”’ (p. 134). *Lux Mundi* (1889) edited by Charles Gore, which advocated for a theological accommodation of scientific developments, proved less disturbing to William as he was, by this time, moving closer to liberal religious views, though he continued to hold a more ‘conservative position of the specific question of biblical criticism’ (p. 163). The final chapters offer the reader interesting information on William’s project of establishing St Deiniol’s Library (now Gladstone’s Library), and how, in the final stages of his life, he took an interest in the biographies of friends and colleagues, as he avoided writing his own spiritual autobiography.

In the Introduction, Wheeler informs readers that he is quoting extensively from Gladstone to let him speak and to allow us to hear directly the pulsations of his spiritual life. There is nothing inherently wrong with Wheeler’s approach, nor with his close reading practices. But overburdening the prose with endless cascades of quotations sometimes comes at the expense of a more systematic historical analysis that readers would have certainly appreciated. Moreover, Wheeler’s segues between chapters make the book an unbroken, continuous piece, and this is something that engages the reader. Yet in most chapters, readers are left wondering what they are actually about. A clearer outline would have helped with organising the material better. But these are only very minor criticisms. Wheeler’s book is a real page-turner and deserves to be read widely, not just by Victorianists and historians of politics and religion, but also by all those interested in the life of the ‘Grand Old Man’.

Petros Spanou (University of Oxford)

***Decadent Plays: 1890-1930*, edited by Adam Alston and Jane Desmarais (London: Methuen, 2024), 426pp., £29.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-3501-7183-1; £95.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-3501-7182-4; £26.99 (e-PDF), ISBN 978-1-3501-7184-8; £26.99 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-3501-7185-5.**

In their introduction to the 2015 collection *The Decadent Short Story: An Annotated Anthology*, Kostas Boyiopoulos, Yoonjung Choi and Matthew Brinton Tildesley position the short story as perhaps the epitome of the decadent art form. Now, a decade on, having read Adam Alston and Jane Desmarais’s anthology, I am left wondering whether the same might be said of plays. As

the first such collection of decadent drama (not to mention that this collection is the first time that some plays have been translated for an English-reading audience), *Decadent Plays: 1890-1930* feels like a bold new step in Decadence Studies.

The collection comprises eleven plays written in Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Ukraine, Russia, America, and Japan between 1891 and 1923. Satisfyingly, this anthology captures the amorphous and wilful ambiguity of decadence, which actively resists easy definition. As a result, it is possible to go from the anti-colonial writing of Lesya Ukrainka working under the rule of a fading Russian empire to the militant Italian nationalism of Gabriel D'Annunzio who, while he may have had a complex relationship with Mussolini, actively promoted Italian Fascism. In order to organise such a diverse cast of aesthetic and ideological positions, Alston and Desmarais have grouped the texts according to intriguingly titled themes: 'Empire and the Ancient World', 'Oblivion and the Occult' and 'Eroticism and Idolatry', echoing 'the diversity of styles, themes, contexts and issues that playwrights associated with decadence explored' (p. 2).

Beginning with Oscar Wilde's 1891 *Salome*, followed by Michael Field's (the composite pseudonym of Katharine Bradley Harris and Edith Emma Cooper) *The Race of Leaves* (1901), the collection swiftly moves to encompass its global incarnation of decadence. Moving our conception of this art form beyond the familiar salons and decadent haunts of 1890s London is perhaps one of the key achievements of this volume in addition to raising the possibilities of drama as a decadent genre. The collection therefore offers intriguing windows into different national incarnations of decadence.

Given the current invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainka's *The Orgy: A Dramatic Poem* (1913) stands out for its contemporary relevance. Set during the Roman occupation of Corinth, *The Orgy* dramatises concerns about cultural degradation and linguistic imperialism under an occupying power, as Latin forcibly replaces Greek as the language of status, song and poetry. However, artistry cannot be suppressed so easily and the titular orgy descends into Bacchic chaos in a rebuke to those Greeks who seek Roman status in place of art.

In addition to highlighting the global scope of decadence as an artistic approach, the fact that the majority of plays were originally written in the early twentieth century rather than the nineteenth contributes to the expansion of decadence studies beyond the Victorian. In this way, *Decadent Plays* takes part in the critical discourse examining how decadence continued beyond the *Fin de Siècle* and allowed for the expression of dissident voices into the age of Modernism (to

borrow a phrase from Alex Murray and Kate Hext's 2019 *Decadence in the Age of Modernism*). Indeed, the final play of this collection is *The Dove* (1923) by Djuna Barnes. While Barnes is often considered a Modernist, Alston and Desmarais's introduction to the play casts her as 'Barnes the anarchist, Barnes the New Woman, and [...] Barnes the decadent' (p. 415). Despite its well-documented obsession with ends and the past, decadence constantly reinvents itself as a genre for the literary and aesthetic ecosystem of its new context.

Alston and Desmarais do not simply present the texts as written works designed to be read – they evaluate them as texts designed for performance. The introduction briefly unpicks the tension between performability, suggesting 'in most cases [...] the playwrights who wrote the plays included in this volume intended [them] to be staged' (p. 5) despite the often evocative and wilfully arcane stage directions. Remy de Gourmont's blasphemous and witty *Lilith* (1892) is a case in point. Retelling the Jewish legend of the first woman (Adam's first wife and equal, formed from the same clay), the act of creation unfolds on stage with directions calling for Jehovah and His angels to be 'borne upon a cloud floating as high as the sun' (p. 178). Such biblical spectacle resists translation to physical performance. On the other hand, the comedic bathos of '**Satan** (who has transformed himself into a dung beetle, enjoying himself by rolling dungballs)' (p. 194) is less magisterial, but equally hard to stage. The editors suggest that this tension is perhaps something to be embraced and the Introduction ends with a provocation for contemporary dramatists to rise to this interpretative challenge by re-staging the decadent for the twenty-first century.

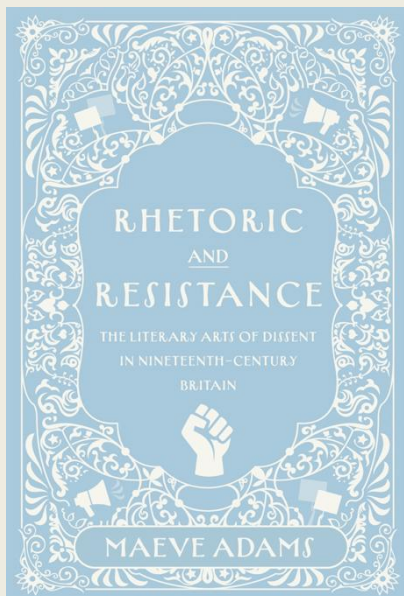
In its exciting range of canonical and more obscure texts, *Decadent Plays* offers a fresh insight into decadence and makes decadent drama accessible. Identifying the proliferation of decadent tropes across geographical and temporal contexts, the collection lays bare the aesthetic similarities and contradictions inherent to decadent drama as a genre. In short, it is a vital source for scholars of drama, decadence and the long-nineteenth century.

Joseph Thorne (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 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.

***Rhetoric and Resistance: The Literary Arts of Dissent in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, by Maeve Adams (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2025), 240 pp., £64.00 (hardback) ISBN 9780821426463**



A fresh perspective on the enduring relationship between literature, democracy, and dissent

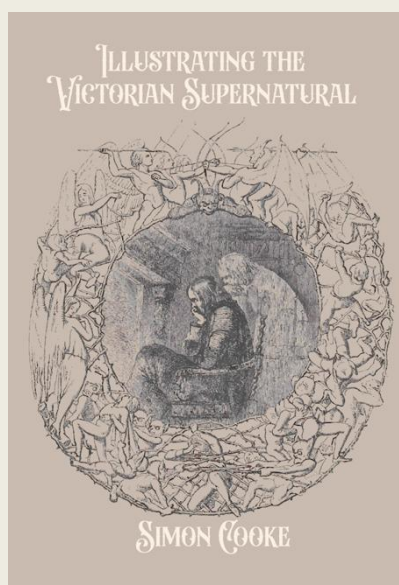
Rhetoric and Resistance explores the transformative role of nineteenth-century literature in shaping modern concepts and practices of democratic dissent. By examining the works of Romantic and Victorian novelists, poets, and journalists, Maeve Adams identifies the origins of modern theories and practices of resistance in nineteenth-century literary forms. Offering a literary history of dissent, the book recovers the intertwined development of democracy and aesthetics, revealing how narrative form became a potent tool for challenging authority.

Tracing the lineage of dissent from the radical fiction and journalism of the 1800s to contemporary movements like #MeToo, Adams offers a genealogy that highlights how literary texts experimented with political power, granting new and consequential voices to working-class individuals, women, colonised peoples, and other marginalised groups.

Adams takes an interdisciplinary approach, weaving together close readings of works by Thomas De

Quincey, Walter Scott, Elizabeth Gaskell, and H. G. Wells, as well as lesser-known journalists, with insights from modern moral and political philosophy. Drawing on theories of democratic ethics and justice from scholars such as Miranda Fricker, Sharon Krause, Martha Nussbaum, and Philip Pettit, the book bridges literary history and contemporary debates about political agency and expression.

***Illustrating the Victorian Supernatural*, by Simon Cooke (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2025), 304 pp., £64.00 (hardback) ISBN 9780821426524**



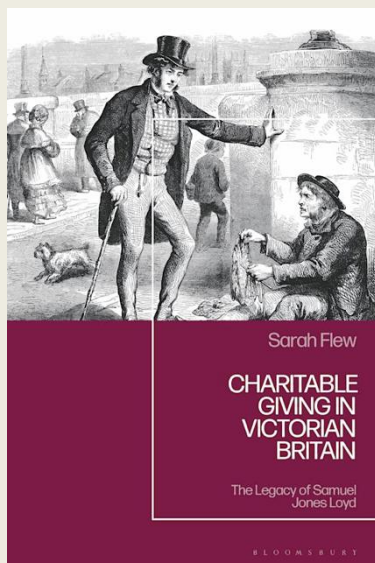
A detailed study of Victorian supernaturalism in book and magazine illustrations and cartoons

Illustrating the Victorian Supernatural explores written and visual texts through which the original Victorian readership encountered and navigated their experience of supernaturalism. Looking across the nineteenth century, Simon Cooke investigates illustrative responses to well-known texts by writers such as Charles Dickens and Henry James while also examining responses to less familiar ghost stories by female authors such as M. E. Braddon and Amelia Edwards. The mix of familiar and unfamiliar carries forward into the selection of artists, both those in the mainstream—John Leech, George Cruikshank, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais—and others whose names are lost to modern

readers and whose work deserves to be better known.

The study addresses two main questions: how illustration responded to key literary texts and how graphic designs related to contemporary contexts of race, gender, and class and to the workings of the supernatural itself. The first chapter focuses on satirical writings about ghosts and ghostliness and the various ways illustrators depicted that mockery. Chapter 2 traces artistic responses to Dickens's writing of the supernatural as a mode of psychological investigation. Chapter 3 looks at class and gender and the problematic practice of male artists illustrating female-authored ghost stories. The fourth chapter examines satirical cartoons' deployment of supernatural imagery to anatomize issues of imperialism and race. Finally, chapter 5 examines how neo-Victorian artists have revisited the classic texts and taken up the themes established by their forebears.

***Charitable Giving in Victorian Britain: The Legacy of Samuel Jones Loyd*, by Sarah Flew (London: Bloomsbury, 2025), 256 pp., £77.00 (hardback) ISBN 9781350424609**



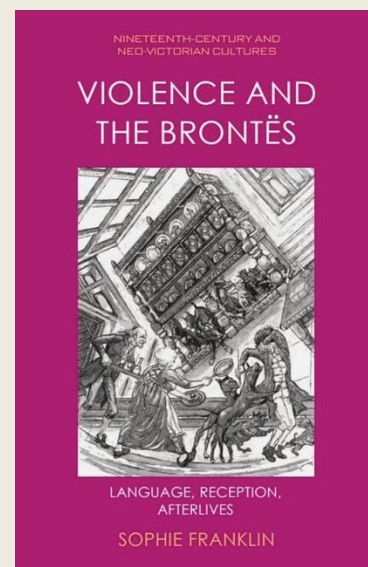
This book examines the growth of charity in 19th century Britain through the lens of the philanthropic activities of Samuel Jones Loyd, 1st Baron Overstone, over a 40-year period.

Sarah Flew incorporates comprehensive archival research, and analyses Samuel Jones Loyd's financial ledgers and letters, in order to illuminate both Jones Loyd's philanthropic motives, and broader social issues in Britain and abroad during the Victorian era. Structured around the different recipients of Jones Loyd's 2,880 donations, this book offers detailed insight into the philanthropic market place of the 19th century,

in addition to a variety of eminent social issues – such as the cholera outbreaks of 1849 and 1866, the education of children and adults, and emergency appeals at home and overseas.

The author demonstrates how instances of charitable action widely increased during Victorian Britain through comprehensive exploration of Jones Loyd's philanthropy. Against the backdrop of a growing British economy, this volume analyses the events contributing to the establishment of the Charity Commission in 1853, in addition to the expansion of voluntary agencies and funds. Ultimately, Flew crafts a detailed insight into the charitable landscape of 19th century Britain, and highlights how one forty-year period of giving can offer new perspectives on the social fabric of the period.

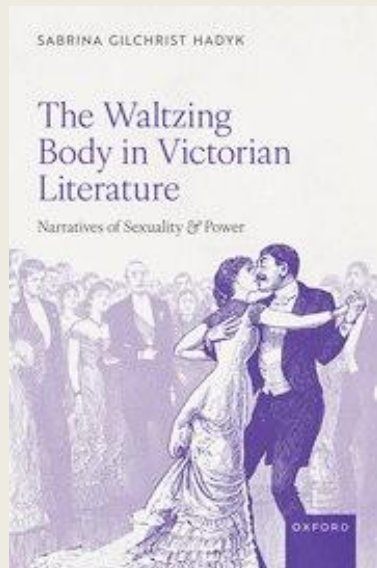
***Violence and the Brontës: Language, Reception, Afterlives*, by Sophie Franklin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2025), 288 pp., £95.00 (hardback) ISBN 9781399523004**



The well-known and well-loved writings of Anne, Charlotte and Emily Brontë are full of violence. From the many battles waged in their early writings to the violent emotions and threats expressed in their published novels, the Brontës' representations of brutality shocked Victorian reviewers and continue to surprise readers in the twenty-first century. *Violence and the Brontës* accounts for such intense reactions by reading the sisters' literary violences as transformational, encompassing harm, pain and suffering while at times also signalling creativity and even renewal. Through a new reading of the Brontës' major works, as well as film, stage and television adaptations, this book argues that violence is at the centre of the Brontës' imaginative engagements with nineteenth-century life. In the process, it demonstrates

how violence continues to be vital to interpreting the Brontës' reception history and afterlives in modern culture.

***The Waltzing Body in Victorian Literature: Narratives of Sexuality and Power*, by Sabrina Gilchrist Hadyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 240 pp., £77.00 (hardback) ISBN 9780198932529**

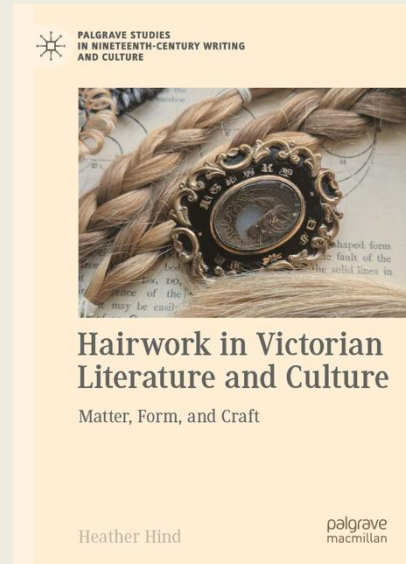


The Waltzing Body in Victorian Literature: Narratives of Sexuality and Power traces the evolution of the waltz from a taboo dance in the early nineteenth century to a gracefully nostalgic practice that must be preserved by the century's end. While Sabrina Gilchrist Hadyk references eighteenth-century authors to frame the waltz's initial reception in England, the study focuses primarily on Victorian authors who shaped how and why this dance was paradoxically viewed as elegant, effeminate, and sterile.

Hadyk explores female sexuality and the concept of choice in the ballroom; a shifting and sometimes contradictory understanding of masculinity through male performance; the erasure of and reclamation of queer desire in heterosexual courting spaces; and the rhetoric of new technologies that attempted to contain, shape, and memorialize a temporal art form. A brief epilogue considers how late-Victorian (and heavily sanitized and romanticized) depictions of the waltz reverberate today in popular films and reality TV, which perpetuate Victorian assumptions about class, gender, sexuality, and more. By understanding the history of the waltz, the reader is invited to examine the dizzying discomfort that many Victorians expressed about forging ahead into a modern (and modernizing) world, particularly at the turn of the century. With comparatively little scholarship around understanding dance scenes and dance semiotics in literature, this book

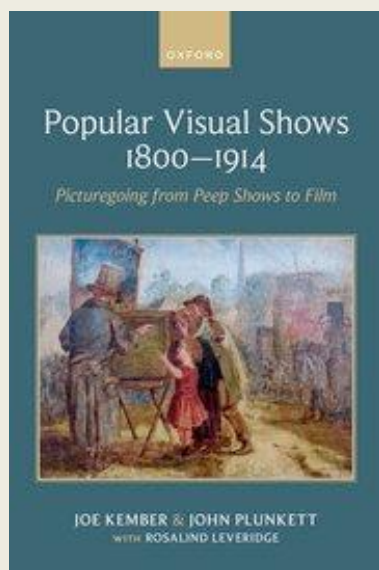
articulates a new interpretive path for familiar and unfamiliar nineteenth-century narratives, offering new ways of understanding and engaging with the role and culture of dance.

***Hairwork in Victorian Literature and Culture: Matter, Form, and Craft*, by Laura Rotunno (London: Palgrave, 2025), 256 pp., £109.99 (hardback) ISBN 9783031787782**



This book presents an original and engaging study of the cultural history and literary significance of hairwork – the crafting of decorative objects, such as jewellery, from human hair – in Victorian Britain. Hairwork became increasingly fashionable and commercialised in the mid-nineteenth century, before swiftly declining in popularity. Yet, in the Victorian imagination, hairwork held a peculiar capacity to emerge from and capture moments of tension: it was made to mark relationships as they were redefined or consolidated; to process transitions and articulate hope for the future; and to express identities as they were questioned and explored. This book reconstructs and interprets the role of hairwork in revealing and negotiating such desires and anxieties by studying its historical trajectory, surviving artefacts, and practices alongside its literary representations in works by Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, Wilkie Collins, and Margaret Oliphant. It shows how the combination of hairwork's matter, form, and craft – the material of hair, the designs and uses of hairwork, and the processes of its making – expose the complexities and tensions within identity, affective relationships, and social relations and thus contributed to its unique place in Victorian culture.

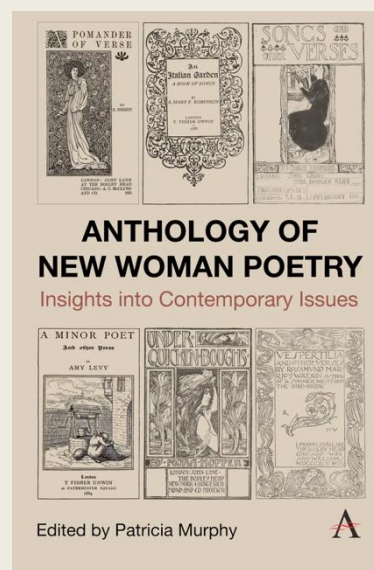
Popular Visual Shows 1800–1914: Picturegoing from Peep Shows to Film, edited by Joe Kember and John Plunkett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 496 pp., £ 113.00 (hardback) ISBN 9780192849861



This book tells the story of the growth of picturegoing as a popular habit between 1800 and 1914. Encouraged by urbanisation and changes in transportation, education, and leisure patterns, the regular and widespread provision of exhibitions and shows became a defining characteristic of cultural life. Painted panoramas and dioramas awed with enormous tableaux; the stereoscope immersed viewers in a 3D world; the many varieties of peepshow promised a marvellously garish experience of patriotic battles, gruesome murders, and far-off places. If that was not enough, the ever-versatile magic lantern projected hundreds of thousands of slides of every imaginable subject, from travelogues and temperance tales to illustrated hymns and adaptations of popular fiction. Then, after 1896, audiences experienced the cinematograph, and were able to enjoy film at the many fixed venue cinemas that emerged from around 1908.

Moving and projected images were displayed not only in town halls, theatres, and other large exhibition spaces, but also in workhouses, schools, churches, empty shops, and fairgrounds. Picturegoing, in all its variety, became a national pastime, integrating itself more and more pervasively into the structures of everyday life as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries progressed. Drawing on a wealth of new evidence, this book details the shows that were on offer, where and what they were, the networks and infrastructure they existed within, and, above all, how their audiences experienced them.

Anthology of New Woman Poetry: Controversies and Insights, edited by Patricia Murphy (London: Anthem Press, 2025), 270 pp., £80.00 (hardback) ISBN 9781839994098



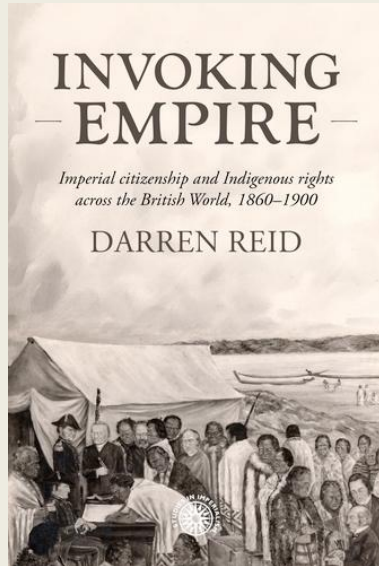
An anthology that explores the poetry of iconoclastic New Women from the late Victorian era.

Women poets of the late Victorian period created much fascinating verse from the standpoint of the independent and advanced New Woman, a profoundly important figure with her iconoclastic perceptions of public and private matters. The New Woman sought to improve women's lives on a variety of fronts, bringing this individual both approbation and disdain. This anthology features a broad range of crucial subjects addressed by these poets, including marriage, motherhood, female desire, and social problems.

Although the iconoclastic New Women have garnered much interest in recent decades, relatively little attention has been devoted to the valuable poetry these authors produced. Many of the New Woman poets are barely known today, if at all, but their writings offer an exceptional lens onto contemporary conditions that provide inestimable value for Victorian studies. Although much of the work has languished in obscurity, this expansive anthology brings the fascinating poetry to the fore.

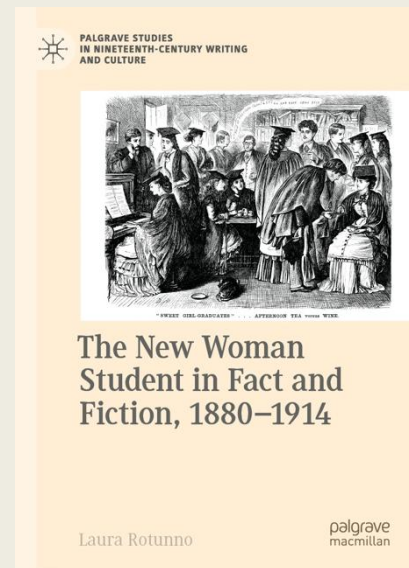
This volume provides an invaluable aid by uncovering poetry that has been long neglected or infrequently explored. Several of the poets developed extensive oeuvres investigating matters of special interest at the fin de siècle. It is not an easy task in the twenty-first century to identify, obtain, and review the nineteenth-century books containing these poems. This anthology provides a ready resource to access the poetry, which has had limited exposure in other modern collections.

Invoking Empire: Imperial citizenship and Indigenous rights across the British World, 1860-1900, by Darren Reid (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2025), 224 pp., £85.00 (hardback) ISBN 9781526181619



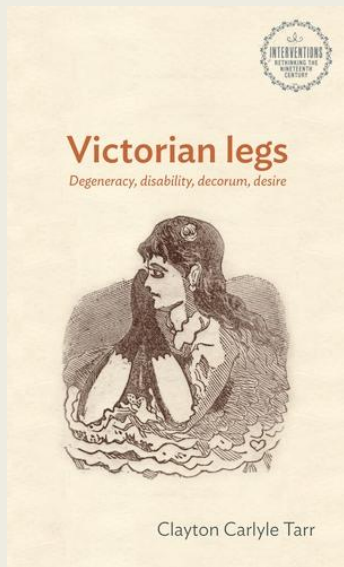
Invoking Empire examines the histories of Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand during the transitional decades between 1860-1900, when each gained some degree of self-government yet still remained within the sovereignty of the British Empire. It applies the conceptual framework of imperial citizenship to nine case studies of settlers and Indigenous peoples who lived through these decades to make two main arguments. It argues that colonial subjects adapted imperial citizenship to both support and challenge settler sovereignty, revealing the continuing importance of imperial authority in self-governing settler spaces. It also posits that imperial citizenship was rendered inoperable by a combination of factors in both Britain and the colonies, highlighting the contingency of settler colonialism on imperial governmental structures and challenging teleological assumptions that the rise of settler nation states was an inevitable result of settler self-government.

The New Woman Student in Fact and Fiction, 1880-1914, by Laura Rotunno (London: Palgrave, 2025), 273 pp., £109.99 (hardback) ISBN 9783032012258



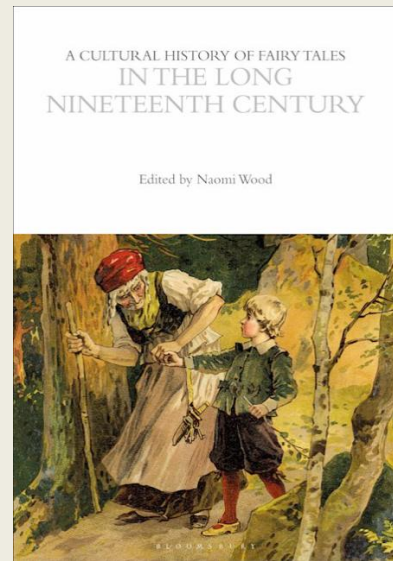
This book explores the representation of the first generations of women who studied at Oxford and Cambridge in popular fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Familiarly termed "Girton Girls", these women were depicted as intent on overthrowing the ancient universities and, by extension, English society. This study argues that the powerful and influential vision of the Oxbridge woman was both exploited and expanded in novels of the time. It shows that this fiction offers not only an informed critical view of this simultaneously anxiety-ridden and intermittently hopeful period of English life between 1880 and 1914, but also reveals popular fiction's underexplored contribution to the move towards Modernist themes and literary techniques. The book posits that the Girton Girl was not simply a bit part in the sub-genre of the "university novel" or even within the confines of the New Woman fiction, but rather her character was rich and malleable enough to animate a variety of plots that respond to readers' burgeoning demands for the women who would inhabit their fiction.

Victorian legs: Degeneracy, disability, decorum, desire, by Clayton Tarr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2025), 350 pp., £85.00 (hardback) ISBN 9781526188953



Victorian legs is about the science (sometimes spurious) and sexuality (often frivolous) of legs during the Victorian period. The book argues that legs occupy a particularly vexed position in Victorian culture. Strong legs formed the foundation (or the columns) of the civilized subject, but the politics of who could show their legs remained gendered. For the most part, men exhibited and admired, while women concealed and demurred. This book not only joins and advances the lively critical discourse on the Victorian body, but also marks new paths to pursue. While legs made us human, they could also dehumanize.

A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in the Long Nineteenth Century, edited by Naomi J. Wood (London: Bloomsbury, 2025), 248 pp., £75.00 (hardback) ISBN 9781350095366



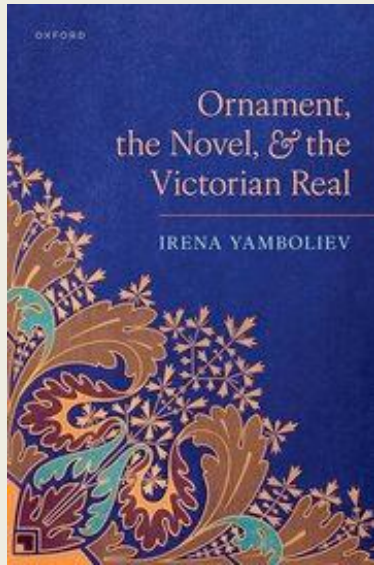
How have fairy tales from around the world changed over the centuries? What do they tell us about different cultures and societies?

This volume explores the period when the European fairy tales conquered the world and shaped the global imagination in its own image. Examining how collectors, children's writers, poets, and artists seized the form to challenge convention and normative ideas, this book explores the fantastic imagination that belies the nineteenth century's materialist and pedestrian reputation.

Looking at writers including E.T.A Hoffman, the Brothers Grim, S.T. Coleridge, Walter Scott, Oscar Wilde, Christina Rosetti, George MacDonal, and E. Nesbit, the volume shows how fairy tales touched every aspect of nineteenth century life and thought. It provides new insights into themes including: forms of the marvelous, adaptation, gender and sexuality, humans and non-humans, monsters and the monstrous, spaces, socialization, and power.

With contributions from international scholars across disciplines, this volume is an essential resource for researchers, scholars and students of literature, history, and cultural studies.

Ornament, the Novel, and the Victorian Real, by Irena Yamboliev (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 256 pp., £77.00 (hardback) ISBN 9780198958154



"All real art," wrote William Morris, "is ornamental." If Morris is right, then ornament is not, as some would have it, a triviality, a sign of "want," or a crime. Instead, *Ornament, the Novel, and the Victorian Real* argues for the many and varied ways in which the novel is indebted to ornament. Victorians and Victorianist scholars have compared the novel to "fine" arts such as Dutch genre painting or to photography, emphasizing these visual forms' investment in gritty particularity and exhaustive detailing of appearance. But this story loses sight of a key fact that this book recovers: ornament represents a distinct, describable Victorian method of

realism, a method for boiling down essentials and making palpable the invisible, fundamental laws that govern form in nature. This book grounds itself historically in Victorian theories and practices of decoration developed in the middle of the nineteenth century, a moment when Victorian designers overhauled the reigning principles of decorative art, and shows the rise of the newly developed theory of ornament to have explanatory power for contemporary novelistic practice too. The compositional principles in ornament—far from trivial, extraneous, or deceptive—furnish a new theory of form, a new concept of the real, and a new method for reading novelistic prose.

Ornament is at work churning away at the heart of the Victorian novel. Wallpaper patterns, hinge-work, stained glass: these visual forms articulate principles of form such contrast, symmetry, flatness, and stylization. And novelists turn these design principles into literary principles, importing them into their narratives as syntax, word by word and phrase by phrase. This book proceeds by way of very close readings that focus on the scale of the sentence and analyzes the rhythm, meter, and repetition of prose. This method allows an appreciation of how, in the hands of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, A. C. Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, and D. H. Lawrence, ornamental prose opens up representational possibilities not otherwise available. Ornament allows novelists to render the patterning of human minds, the dynamics of relationship, and the intense realities of the more-than-human world.

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).

Research Funding

The Pekingese Dog and Changing Views of Chineseness, 1862–1912



Kennel Club Gallery

My current research project at the University of Edinburgh focuses on the Pekingese dog and its entanglements with loot, colonial violence, and race from 1862 to 1912. The first “Pekingese” dogs arrived in Britain as loot from Beijing’s Summer Palace in 1860. After their formalisation as a breed in 1898, everything about the Pekingese dog was up for debate, with endless arguments and articles being written about the “correct” nose, ears, tail, and size of the dog, often using allusions to Chinese art, racial science, or Oriental imaginings.

Recent studies have explored the relevance of dog bodies in asserting racial or social identities, focusing primarily on male and European identities. The Pekingese, however, was largely owned by women and, as looted treasure from China’s palaces, the dogs were treated as living embodiments of Chineseness. The body, behaviours, and branding of the Pekingese breed were subject to constant reworking across the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, providing a new lens on British imaginings of the “Oriental Other.” Despite involving sources from the decade following Queen Victoria’s death, my research situates the Pekingese body as a living archive capturing changing

views of Chineseness, empire, race, and colonialism during, and in response to, the Victorian period.

BAVS Research Funding covered six months of subscription fees to the British Newspaper Archive, through which I have accessed ladies’ interest journals, including *The Queen*, *Ladies Field*, and *Tatler*, which all featured dedicated “kennel columns.” This funding also generously supported a research trip to the Kennel Club Library and the UCL Archives in London. I spent three days at The Kennel Club Library this March, which is nestled in the basement of the grand Kennel Club in Mayfair. Here, I was able to access the exclusive holdings of the Library – most especially its wide range of breed histories, including some of the earliest “doggy” encyclopaedias, and an amazing array of photographs and ephemera. The librarians even showed me a fantastic oil painting of Ah Cum, often considered a blueprint of the breed who, after his death, was stuffed and donated to the Natural History Museum (where he’s sadly gathering dust in a storehouse somewhere).



Pekingese Ephemera

During this trip, I also consulted the UCL Special Collections and its holdings relating to the Galton Laboratory. In 1911, eugenicist Karl Pearson began to experiment with hereditary albinism by breeding Pekingese dogs. He and his collaborator

George Nettleship did not ignore the network of breeders and breed clubs that had emerged to steer the Pekingese breed after the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Instead, I found that the scientists engaged in continued correspondence with a range of breeders, seeking their practical advice and requesting dogs for experimentation. Their letters further show a deep interest in the Pekingese breed's history and its supposed links to the Summer Palace, blurring the lines between scientific and pedigree breeding. Of particular interest for my research was that they had even preserved far earlier newspaper snippets and letters, which were otherwise inaccessible.

Both the research trip and online newspaper access have given me the chance to consult a wealth of primary sources, which I would otherwise not have been able to access. As I now begin work on the resultant article, I'd like to sincerely thank BAVS for supporting my research.

Kelsey Granger (University of Edinburgh)

Event Funding

Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voicing Dissent conference University of York, 27th and 28th June 2025

Our conference *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voicing Dissent* took place on 27th and 28th June 2025 at the King's Manor in York, and online. The conference celebrated the life and work of Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825), a poet, educator and polemicist, who was celebrated after her death as 'unquestionably the first of our female poets, and one of the most eloquent and powerful of our prose writers'. The conference was timed to mark the two-hundredth anniversary of Barbauld's death, and the publication of a new four-volume scholarly edition of her *Collected Works* by Oxford University Press. It was the first conference dedicated to Barbauld in over a decade, and the work of our speakers showcased the vital developments in Barbauld scholarship in recent years.

The conference featured short papers by twenty-two speakers, in addition to four keynote presentations. These papers engaged with the whole spectrum of Barbauld's career in pairs of panels on Community and Citizenship, and Empiricism and Experiment. As the title of our conference attests, we as organisers were particularly keen to emphasise the oral and vocal aspects of Barbauld's work, which were the focus of a panel on Sound and Speech, and were the inspiration for a musical performance of her hymns at an evening reception on day one of the conference.

Barbauld's dissenting religious and political identity was another crucial throughline, addressed in various papers and by our keynote speaker, Prof Elizabeth Kraft. Our second keynote speaker, Prof William McCarthy, presented an account of his long career as an editor of Barbauld's work, which has been crucial for Barbauld scholarship in the last four decades.

The conference was also designed to consider Barbauld's legacies in the nineteenth century and beyond. Our panel on Prophecy and Legacy addressed these questions directly with discussions of the uses and influences of Barbauld's works for children in the Victorian period, not only in Britain but also in the United States and the British colony of Sierra Leone. Keynote papers by Prof Emma Clery and Prof Scott Krawczyk developed these discussions of Barbauld's dissenting legacies further, thinking about the connections between her poetry and anti-war verse of the early twentieth century, and mapping the circulation of her works in nineteenth-century newspapers.

The support of BAVS for our conference was absolutely invaluable. Funds from BAVS enabled us to employ high-quality technical support for the hybrid aspect of our conference. This was critical as two of our keynote speakers and two regular panellists were able to present their papers from bases in North America. In addition, we had online delegates not only from the UK, but also from the US, Canada, and Japan. BAVS also provided generous support for us to employ conference assistants in paid roles. Lastly, BAVS funds supported an early-career researcher lunch on day one of the conference. Delegates and speakers who identified as early-career researchers met with the conference organisers to get to know one another and to discuss networking, publications and funding opportunities; it was really good to get everyone together early on in the conference so that those connections could continue to be built over the two days. We wish to extend our warm thanks to BAVS for the generous support.

*Mary Fairclough (University of York) and Jo Wharton
(University College Cork)*

Undercover Agents: Women, Crime, and Detection in the Global Nineteenth Century 28-29 August 2025, School of English, University of St Andrews

Funded by the British Association for Victorian Studies, Prof. Sara Lodge and I organised a two-day hybrid conference on the global female detective in St Andrews. Along with the generous BAVS funding, we also received support from the School of English and St Leonard's Postgraduate College, University of St

Andrews. Additionally, the organisers utilised some of their personal research funding and SGSAAH scholarship to help bring the conference to fruition.

The event brought together a global community of scholars interested in tracking the fictional and real-life presence of the nineteenth-century female sleuth across media forms and cultural contexts. We succeeded in drawing people from across the world to a tiny town on Scotland's east coast. Researchers from Taiwan, India, Canada, the United States, and France joined us, along with colleagues from British universities. Our keynote speakers included Prof. Sara Lodge from the University of St Andrews and Dr Lucy Sussex from La Trobe University, Melbourne. It was a truly eclectic mix that generated conversations and discussions equally polyphonic and multivalent.

The conference included four panels over two days, interspersed by the two keynote speeches, and a "meet-the-author" event with celebrated local crime-fiction author, Marion Todd, who spoke about the experience of writing her female detective, DI Clare Mackay. Speakers on Day 1 presented on such diverse subjects as Russian female crime writers; the paranormal, cross-dressing sleuths of Catherine Crowe; the power of inanimate witnesses in crime fiction; the presence of the camera as detective in early cinema; and the (in)efficacy of ChatGPT in generating an ecosystem of female detectives. Prof. Lodge kept her audience enthralled with an animated lecture on the Bond Street diamond heist of 1871 and the theatre of inadmissible desire while also drawing out Marion Todd in free-ranging conversation on writing crime fiction.

Panellists on Day 2 discussed the many faces of the Indian female detective and global variants of the New Woman sleuth. Dr Sussex's keynote on textual and physical mobilities across continents and formats shed light on circulations and erasures in relation to the works and legacies of Mary Fortune and Ellen Davitt. The BAVS funding was thus instrumental in facilitating a unique experience that widened engagement with the transnational figuration of the Victorian female detective and helped in the ongoing effort not only to 'decolonise the curriculum' but the archive and research space as well. In this era of big-budget conferences with high ticket prices, it helped sponsor an intimate event that was free for postgraduate students and precarious early career researchers, was fully catered, and limited ticket prices to £50 (early-bird bookings). The majority of attendees were PG or other ECRs; many PhD students from St Andrews, School of English, were involved in helping to organise and chair panels. This assisted in giving them valuable experience in professionalisation. Feedback from attendees was hugely positive, and a publication (an issue of a

periodical or an edited volume of essays) is planned as a result of the conference.

Maitrayee Roychoudhury (University of St Andrews)

"Empire, the West Country and Thomas Hardy"

This fully booked public lecture, held at the Dorset Museum and Art Gallery on July 4th, 2025, brought together Professor Corinne Fowler and Dr Rena Jackson for a richly illustrated joint talk exploring the histories and heritages of the British Empire in the West Country. The event was a collaboration between the Dorset Museum and Art Gallery, the Dorset History Centre and the Thomas Hardy Society, and was part-funded by BAVS.

Making vivid connections between local histories and global imperial contexts, the talk drew extensively on Dorset Museum displays in the "People's Dorset" and "Hardy's Dorset" galleries, and, additionally, on Hardy's notebooks, correspondence and other archival material held in the Dorset History Centre. The talks drew attention to the understudied historical and literary connections between Britain's expansionist programme overseas and the changing nature of work and community in Britain's southwest regions.

Corinne Fowler (University of Leicester), author of *Our Island Stories: Country Walks Through Colonial Britain* (Penguin Allen Lane, 2024), traced Dorset's diverse colonial connections through transatlantic slavery, cotton and wool trades, indentured labour, and the penal colonies in Australia and Tasmania, in addition revealing how agricultural changes such as enclosure were intertwined with imperial wealth.

Rena Jackson, author of *The Imperial World-System and Cultures of Dissent in Thomas Hardy's Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), showed how imperial wars on land and at sea, the British Raj, the Indian Civil Service, imperial adventure, finance capital, and emigration feature widely and often critically in Thomas Hardy's Wessex imaginary.

The Q&A was chaired by Mark Chutter (Chair and Academic Director of the Thomas Hardy Society) and included input from a mixed audience of Hardy enthusiasts, museum-goers and other members of the public. The session prompted further discussion around Hardy's stance on Irish Home Rule, the links between Charborough Park and slavery, and the potential to read Hardy's Wessex as a kind of domestic colony.

The launch of the **Thomas Hardy Archive online catalogue**, among the other special collections available through the **Dorset History Centre**, was flagged up as auspicious timing for further engagement with the topics covered.

Interest has been expressed in furthering the conversation around the lecture's key themes, for example as part of a Thomas Hardy Study Day and/or at the International Thomas Hardy Conference and Festival.

The public lecture fulfils BAVS's aim to strengthen diverse forms of knowledge, ensuring that research and innovation within Victorian Studies remain relevant and accessible to all as part of an inclusive culture and practice.

Rena Jackson

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 with your ideas for future feature articles.

Celebrating 10 Years of Elizabeth Gaskell's House



View of Elizabeth Gaskell's House through autumnal leaves

October 2024 marked 10 years since Elizabeth Gaskell's House was first opened to the public, and over the past year, we have been celebrating this milestone. The journey to becoming a visitor attraction and museum took many years of tenacity and some serious fundraising from a dedicated group of volunteers who brought the House back to life.

Elizabeth Gaskell's House in Manchester is the former home of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), who lived here with her family from 1850 until her death in 1865. Elizabeth wrote nearly all her best-loved works while living at the house, including *Cranford*, *North and South* and the biography of her friend, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

The house was built around 1838, as part of a new development in a leafy suburb on the edge of Manchester, away from the noise and pollution of the factories and mills yet within easy reach of the city centre. When Charlotte Brontë visited in 1852, she

reinforced this idyllic image, commenting that Elizabeth 'lives in a large, cheerful, airy house, quite out of the Manchester smoke.' This is in sharp contrast with the bustling student and residential area it is today.

When Elizabeth and her husband William, along with their four daughters, moved into the House, it was their third Manchester home, and the rent was considered expensive at £150 a year. After Elizabeth's death in 1865, members of her family continued to live in the House until 1913. The contents were auctioned in 1914, and the House was sold to another family, who lived here until the late 1960s. Manchester University then bought it to use as the home of its International Society.

By the mid-1990s, and still owned by The University of Manchester, the house was far from being the beauty it had once been and was at serious risk of being lost to dereliction. Thanks to the efforts of an incredible group of people led by Janet Allan, Manchester Historic Buildings Trust was formed in 1998 with the main aim of saving the Grade II* listed building. After a long campaign and years of fundraising, the House was finally restored and opened to the public in 2014, thanks to £2.6 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other donors.

The majority of objects in the collection are from the 19th century, with some objects dating earlier, from the late Georgian period to the early Regency, on the basis that Victorian families would likely have 'recycled' furnishings from earlier periods, acquiring second-hand items or items inherited from family. Objects have been chosen either because they were period-appropriate for a late Regency/early Victorian suburban villa, to resemble furnishings described in Gaskell family records, such as in Elizabeth Gaskell's surviving letters, or because they matched objects described in the 1914 auction catalogue.



The reading room at Elizabeth Gaskell's House

We are also lucky to have some original items on loan from the Gaskell family collection, including a wedding veil and paisley shawls, alongside books and objects that the family owned.

The study and its collection of over 1500 books is a favourite amongst visitors and volunteers alike. The books have been chosen as they either match records of books the Gaskell family owned, were mentioned in Elizabeth's books or letters, were books that the Gaskells borrowed from Manchester's Portico Library or because they have an association with the Gaskell family. But the best thing by far is that visitors can handle and touch pretty much all of the books. It is a book lover's dream!

Over the past 10 years, the team of staff and volunteers have continued to develop the House, restoring Elizabeth's bedroom during the pandemic, creating new permanent and temporary exhibition spaces and launching a rich and varied online events programme that allows thousands of fans all over the world to participate in the conversation around Elizabeth, her writing and more. And in 2024, the House achieved accredited museum status, which was no small feat for a team of less than four full-time staff.

During its anniversary year, the House hosted two temporary exhibitions, the first, *From Dereliction to Delight*, explored the building's restoration and launch as a cultural attraction through oral history accounts and memories of those who came together to fight, against the odds, for the House's survival. The centrepiece of the exhibition was a quilt created by textile artist Dr Sarah-Joy Ford, inspired by the stories shared.

Early in 2025, Elizabeth Gaskell's House announced its inaugural writers' residency, in collaboration with The Writing Squad and Manchester City of Literature. The project was funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and celebrated the House's 10-year anniversary.

Three young writers, Georgia Affonso, Princess Arinola Adegbite and Guruleen Kahlo, were chosen and asked to respond in any written form to one of three themes: the House itself, social equality as explored in Elizabeth's writing and Elizabeth's experience as a female writer. We specifically wanted writers who hadn't read Elizabeth Gaskell.

Their resulting experience and work formed the exhibition *I've Never Read Elizabeth Gaskell*, which was displayed at Manchester Central Library for the Manchester Festival of Libraries and then at the House from July until November this year. The response has been incredibly positive, and you can read their work on the website.

The House is open to the public every Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, and on other days for private tours and schools. See the website for details: elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk.

Sally Jastrzebski-Lloyd (Director at Elizabeth Gaskell's House)

Calls for Submissions

Please email calls for publication submissions and funding opportunities to bavsnews@gmail.com for inclusion in future issues.

Volcanic Materiality: Cultural Phenomena in the Age of the Anthropocene

Editor: Dewey W. Hall

Call for Contributions

Deadline 30th November 2025

Volcanic Materiality: Phenomena in the Age of the Anthropocene asserts that volcanic eruptions during the long nineteenth century contributed to the rise of the Anthropocene, which has been viewed as human impact on the climate and environment since James Watts's reinvention of the steam engine in 1784. Whereas in the past geologic epoch, the Holocene, the Earth evolved and changed over deep time, unprecedented changes have occurred in the past 240 years inducing a global, existential crisis as a direct result from human intervention due in part to capitalist industrialism, which has disrupted the climate and environment. *Volcanic Materiality: Phenomena in the Age of the Anthropocene* stakes out the claim that volcanic eruptions in their fiery reality with a Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) of 4 or greater created shocks to the system that exacerbated the growing threat of carbon emissions. Subsequently, with implications for the 21st century, the edition considers these two major questions: 1) How have volcanoes and humanity contributed to the rise of the Anthropocene due to volcanic and anthropogenic activity? 2) What sort of evidence appears in literary and visual representations during the long nineteenth century?

Volcanic matter really matters. During a one hundred year span from the 1780s to 1880s, a series of volcanic eruptions occurred that altered the atmosphere, disrupted weather conditions, and caused unprecedented loss due to famine and widespread disease: Laki, Iceland (1783-1784); Vesuvius, Italy (1794); Pico Viejo, Canary Islands (1798); Tambora, Indonesia (1815); Ferdinandea, Sicily (1831); Hekla, Iceland (1840, 1845); and Krakatoa, Indonesia (1883). Various critics have written about the systemic effects geologically, meteorologically, and ecologically such as Richard Altick, David Higgins, Monique Morgan, Marilyn Olsen, Nicholas Robbins, Jesse Oak Taylor, and Gillen D'Arcy Wood.

A variety of writers and artists documented the effects due, in part to a great extent, to the eruptions, which may include the sky watchers identified, but are not limited to the following.

In literary studies, one might think of literary and non-literary records:

- Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* (1789) in response to the effects of the Laki eruption
- William Wordsworth's Lucy poems written in Goslar, Germany (e.g., "Strange fits of passion" and "A slumber did my spirit seal") influenced by the Pico Viejo eruption
- George Gordon, Lord Byron's "Darkness" (1816) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) in response to the Tambora eruption
- Gerard Manley Hopkins's "Remarkable Sunsets" in *Nature* (1883) and John Ruskin's "The 'Storm-Cloud' of the Nineteenth Century" (1884) shaped by the Krakatoa eruption

In visual art, a host of artists captured the dramatic stratovolcanic eruptions and the sky altering effects:

- Joseph Wright of Derby's *Vesuvius from Portici* (1774-1776)
- J.M.W. Turner's *Eruption of Soufriere Mountain* (1812)
- J.M.W. Turner's *Vesuvius in Eruption* (1817)
- Caspar David Friedrich's *Woman before the Rising or Setting Sun* (1818-1824)
- Georges Seurat's *Bathers at Asnieres* (1884)
- William Ascroft's *Twilight and afterglow effects at Chelsea* (1888)

Scholars interested in submitting to the call for contributions to the edited collection *Volcanic Materiality* will be asked to include a 200-300 word abstract along with a 100 word biography sent to Dewey W. Hall, Ph.D. at dwhall@cpp.edu. The deadline will be **November 30, 2025**.

Victorians Journal Winter 2026 Special Issue

Reading Victorian Religion
Guest Editor, Amanda Vernon
Deadline 1 December 2025

The Victorians witnessed a significant reconfiguration of the religious landscape over the course of the nineteenth century. Increased freedom for religious minorities, new historical approaches to biblical criticism, renegotiations of the relationship between science and theology, and the emergence of alternative spiritual movements impacted the ways in which religion was imagined, understood, practiced, and expressed. This dynamic and vibrant religious culture is reflected in the period's literary culture, with periodicals, literary criticism, novels, and poetry engaging with the diverse forms in which religion was present. This special issue invites papers that read the varied forms of Victorian religion and/or responses to it. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Readings of Victorian religion with reference to current theoretical approaches (e.g. post-secular, post-colonial, ecological)
- Religious novels/poetry/periodicals
- Working-class poetry and religion
- Religion and race
- Gender and/or sexuality and religion
- Supernatural fiction and religion (e.g. ghost stories, fantasy, fairytales)
- Reading practice and religion (e.g. devotional reading, communal reading)
- Religious readings of literature (e.g. Shakespeare)
- Natural theology
- Victorian readings and/or rewritings of religious texts (e.g. the Hebrew Bible, Christian Bible, Bhagavad Gita, parables, wisdom literature, typology)
- New movements (e.g. theosophy, spiritualism)
- Representations of the Victorian religious 'other'
- Victorian books and religion

Deadline for submission is December 1, 2025. Finished essays should be 7,000 – 10,000 words in length, inclusive of endnotes and bibliography. Please follow MLA (7th edition) formatting and documentation. Authors may submit manuscript through our submissions portal: Victorians Submissions. Please direct any questions or expressions of interest to Amanda Vernon amanda.vernon@icloud.com. Thank you for considering publishing your work in this special issue!

The George Eliot Fellowship Essay Prize

Prize of £500 for a previously unpublished paper on George Eliot's life and work
Deadline: 12th December 2025

The winning essay will be published in the 2026 GEORGE ELIOT REVIEW. The author will also receive two years' honorary membership of the Fellowship.

The competition is open to all, but may be of particular interest to graduate students. Essays should not normally exceed 4000 words, and should be typed (or printed out) in double spacing on one side of A4 paper, leaving margins of approximately 3.5 cm. Two copies should be submitted not later than 12 December 2025, and addressed to:

The Chairman
39 Lower Road
Barnacle

Coventry CV7 9LD

Alternatively, essays can be submitted as an email attachment to: johnkburton43@gmail.com.

The George Eliot Fellowship will appoint a panel of judges, which will include a Member of the Editorial Board of The George Eliot Review. The decision of the panel will be final.

The prize winner will be announced by 31 March 2026.

After the adjudication, entries will be returned only if a large, stamped addressed envelope has been enclosed with the entry.

CFP: Sensation Fiction and the Health Humanities

A VPFA Study Day

Loughborough University, 27 March 2026

Deadline: 31st December 2025

The Health Humanities and Victorian popular fiction intersect in revealing ways, offering insights into how 19th-century literature shaped and reflected contemporary understandings of health, illness, and the body. Popular narratives not only mirrored anxieties surrounding public health and medical progress but also contributed to shaping public perceptions of health and healing. Health Humanities approaches re-examine these texts to uncover how cultural narratives and literary representations influenced attitudes toward physical and mental well-being, gendered experiences of illness, and the ethics of care in an age of rapid scientific change.

Health Humanities is a particularly useful approach to sensation fiction because it illuminates the ways in which these emotionally charged, often morally ambiguous narratives explore and interrogate concepts of the body, illness, and mental health. Sensation fiction, with its focus on secrets, trauma, nervous disorders, and abnormal psychological states, frequently dramatises the anxieties of Victorian society surrounding health, gender, and identity. By applying the lens of Health Humanities, scholars can uncover how these texts reflect and shape contemporary medical discourse. Interdisciplinary approaches also highlight how sensation fiction critiques institutional medicine, domestic care practices, and the pathologisation of women's experiences. Ultimately, Health Humanities allows us to see sensation fiction not just as entertainment, but as a culturally significant form that negotiates the meanings of illness, morality, and human vulnerability in a rapidly changing world.

20-minute papers are invited on any aspect of the health humanities and sensation fiction. Topics may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Madness, Hysteria, and the Sensation Heroine
- The Role of Doctors and Medical Authority in Sensation Novels
- Mental Illness and the Gothic: Psychological Trauma in Sensation Fiction
- Poison, Addiction, and the Victorian Body
- Insanity as Inheritance: Medical Anxieties and Family Secrets
- Disability, Disfigurement, and Moral Judgment in Sensation Narratives
- Contagion and Fear: Illness as a Metaphor
- Sleepwalking, Hypnosis, and Altered States in the Victorian Imagination
- The Medicalisation of Women: Gender, Power, and Diagnosis
- Health, Class, and Medical Access
- Asylums, Institutions, and the Fear of Confinement
- Domestic Illness and the Unwell Home
- The Nervous System, Neuroscience, and Sensation Fiction
- Medical Ethics and the 'Mad Scientist'
- Narratives of Recovery and the Idea of Cure in the Sensation Novel

Please send proposals for 20-minute papers as a Word or PDF attachment to a.m.beller@lboro.ac.uk by **31 December 2025**. Proposals should be a maximum of 250 words and accompanied by a short (70 words) biographical note. This will be an in-person event, and refreshments will be provided.

A limited number of travel bursaries are available for PhD students, independent scholars and unwaged participants. If you would like to be considered for one of the bursaries, please email Dr Anne-Marie Beller on the email above.

This event is free, thanks to funding from the [VPFA](#) and the [Health Humanities Research Group](#) at Loughborough University.

Visual Theology III Beauty and Faith – *Part Two: Beauty and the Revival of Faith*

8-10 May, Archbishop's Palace, Southwell, Nottingham, U.K

Deadline: 11th January 2026

The world is charged with the grandeur of God / It will flame out, like shining from shook foil

- Gerard Manley Hopkins

This event is centred on hope, renewal, and revival. It is an interdisciplinary conference designed to bring together academics, artists, and scholars working in art history, literature, aesthetics, religious and church history, philosophy, and theology. We seek to encourage comparative conversations that examine art, architecture, and the religious imagination in order to understand the intrinsic value of beauty to the Christian faith and its rich material culture. Where [Part One](#) focused on visions of fractured faith, Part Two is a restorative companion piece. We ask how Christianity has used beauty as a form of reinvigoration and transformation during times of social upheaval, a theme exemplified by the Archbishop's Palace and its role within key moments of the Reformation.

Firstly, we invite papers on aspects of visual art and architecture of the long nineteenth century that demonstrate the importance of Christian aesthetics, and Christian visual and material culture, during periods of revival and change. How have artists, patrons, and churches responded to times of crisis? When and how do formal philosophies of beauty, and engagement with early Christian ideas, correlate with spiritual growth and cultural transformation in the long nineteenth century or today? How has beauty been consciously used within art and architecture to reawaken and reaffirm Christian truth in the near past? How has the Church actively translated ideas of beauty into the wider world, and what social values and behaviours flow from the concept of beauty as found within its art and architecture?

Secondly, we invite papers that demonstrate what can be learned from historical examples of beauty as a source of reconciliation and revival. Can a reacquaintance with philosophies of beauty, classical or otherwise, become a way of reinvigorating society today? What art is important for churches and public spaces today? What aspects of beauty are necessary to revive and renew public spaces and places of worship? What aesthetic qualities belong in new commissions? How might engagement with beauty of the past reignite beauty within the public and private religious imagination today?

This conference seeks to invite re-engagement with the idea and philosophy of beauty in all its aesthetic forms, in order that we may better understand and better preserve the beauty found within Christian material culture, particularly in Britain. We welcome papers that address the aesthetic, spiritual and theological aspects of these issues.

Time Period of Interest: the long nineteenth century, and / or present-day reflections on that timeframe

Possible proposals might include, but are not limited to, considerations of the following:

Artisans and Architecture: architectural innovations within the surge of church building (e.g. the Gothic Revival, A.W. N. Pugin, William Butterfield, Philip Webb); denominational imperatives of the patrons of religious, civic, and private buildings in towns and cities (e.g. Christian Socialists); masonry carvings of botanicals, saints, icons, and biblical hermeneutics; the renewed respect given to artisans such as the stonemason (per Thomas Hardy, John Ruskin, and projects such as the Oxford Natural History Museum); revival of skilled craftsmanship and handiwork (e.g. Working Men's College) and renewed mastery of dying arts; artisanship as redemption (e.g. Elizabeth Fry, the Rajah Quilt)

Charity and Social Change: efforts to improve the religious imagination through public art (e.g. the National Gallery, the Free Society of Artists); improving the physical, working, and environmental conditions of the poor, social outcasts, artisans and workers, the elderly, and children (e.g. Dickens, Gaskell); village and neighbourhood societies, fundraising, and charity schools (e.g. Charterhouse); architectural designs for prisons, workhouses, sanatoriums, and hospitals as theological imperatives; journalistic, literary and artistic evocations of such institutions as St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the Foundling Hospital, the Magdalene Hospital, the Coal Smoke Abatement Society

Commissions and Collections: commissions of church decoration such as stained glass, sculptures, paintings, books; changing theological and aesthetic emphasis in vestment styles (Gothic, eucharistic, liturgical colours, chasubles, clerical dress, and the rediscovery and Gothic revival of *opus anglicanum*); changes in scriptural subjects as found within church art and commissions; the role and influence of church artists; the resurgence of religious subjects within exhibitions (e.g. the Royal Academy); attitudes toward church collections, displays, and loans (both within and outside the Church)

Heritage, Conservation, and Preservation: changing attitudes toward material culture; the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the National Trust, National Churches Trust, Open Spaces Society; Stonehenge, Hadrian's Wall, Chester Cathedral, Southwell, and many other ancient and medieval sites; artistic and literary representations of churches and church history (Hablot Knight Browne ('Phiz'), John Constable, Thomas Hardy, Nikolaus Pevsner, Anthony Trollope, J.M.W. Turner); considerations of the twenty-first century charities Save the Parishes and Friends of Friendless Churches, and the growing appetite to preserve rural and disused churches as a national good

Miracles, Messengers, and Ministry: representations of miracles (Canterbury Cathedral's 'Miracle Windows', the Holy Hand of St. Edmund Arrowsmith, Lourdes); images of messengers, and the myriad of angels; saints and canonization (e.g. the Venerable Bede); spreading the word of God (e.g. the Bible Society, the Salvation Army) and the image of Christ (e.g. the international tour of William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World*, James Tissot's Bible illustrations); missionaries (John and Charles Wesley, David Livingstone, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael); the spiritual power of places such as Reading Abbey and Evesham Abbey; ideas of metaphysics and the cosmos

Monasteries and Convents: monasteries, such as Pugin's Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, designed as part of a mission to revive the religious experience and promote social ideals of contemplation, prayer, refuge, and sanctuary; public spaces and design with numinous or spiritual overtones; monasteries as portrayed within art and literature (challenges to Gothic excess and anti-Catholic sentiment and reception of corresponding high aesthetics); representations of convents as mysterious and mystical or mythical female enclosures; visual and literary representations of spiritual choices and female piety (Guinevere, Puseyite Nuns, Mary Francis Cusack, Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale)

Nature and the Grand Designer: nature and spiritual health (as found in the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth); the preservation of the natural world (e.g. public parks and spaces, Octavia Hill, and the Bermondsey Beautification Committee); characterizations of genius loci; religious retreats and spiritual revelations within the natural world (e.g. the Lake District, the Peak District, the Welsh Valleys); spiritual restoration and spa towns (Bath, Harrogate, Cheltenham); naturalism and theophany in landscape painting (e.g. paintings by John Brett, William James Stillman), studies of ecology and botany (e.g. Beatrix Potter, Anne Pratt, and Marianne North)

Photography and Place: recreating or reviving ideas of faith and the religious imagination of the past via photography; tableaux, portraiture, landscapes and travel imagery related to Christian history, the Bible as mythology and theology; archaeological, architectural, and botanical photography; photography as record keeping and religious memorial (e.g. baptismal, wedding, and death portraits) in the work of William Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton, Eadweard Muybridge, Julia Margaret Cameron, Anna Atkins, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, Lady Clementina Hawarden; nation and community in photography (e.g. military portraits, images of ceremony, pageantry, and place)

Play and the Imagination: theories of play as beautiful, uplifting, improving (including moral philosophy, Muscular Christianity, the Young Men's Christian Association, representations of the body in sports); imaginative play as a form of engaging with God's action within the world; religious literary, artistic, theatrical, and musical invention as efforts to beautify everyday life (T.S. Eliot, Dorothy L. Sayers, Christopher Fry); humour, wit, and delight as aspects of human flourishing; the psychology and ethics of play within imagination and belief; visual play and the concept of time (e.g. Augustine's *distentio animi* and the concept of the soul, as found within later art and literature)

You can meet our four keynotes [here](#).

Please email your 250 word abstract and your C.V. to conference@visualtheology.org.uk by 11th January, 2026.

Successful applicants will be notified by February, and conference proceedings will be announced shortly thereafter. Papers should be 20 minutes long. Please note, we are Visual Theology; given this, captioned images are an expected component of all presentations. Those working within literary, historical, or philosophical disciplines (etc.) are requested to please include some visual analysis to anchor their readings to their theses (though we do not expect everyone to speak as art historians). Please note that applications are accepted on the premise that speakers have sufficient funding to cover all of their own travel and accommodation costs, as well as the conference registration fees (which will be published in due course). Speakers are expected to attend in person; attendance is necessary if presenters wish to be considered for publication. We look forward to welcoming you and hearing your research.

Visual Theology is a symposia for conferences, publications, and art commissions that explore the relationship between the spiritual imagination and visual culture. Through academic and creative events, VT explores the rich tapestry of both historical and contemporary religious imagery and architecture in Europe and beyond. Embracing an interdisciplinary approach, VT encourages dynamic conversations between academic specialists, curators, theologians, professional artists, and church leaders. Exploring the value of religious imagery, particularly its place and function in the twenty-first century, VT seeks to encourage new forms of critical dialogue with a compassionate and objective eye, rather than a doctrinaire approach. VT's central tenet is to ask how sacred art and ideas of the numinous can play a transformative role in public discourse, public spaces, and public architecture. This is a conversation for those with or without faith.

Women, Money, and Markets: Crisis and Resilience (1650-1950)

Call for Papers: Annual Conference
The Foundling Museum, London,
Friday and Saturday, 12-13th June, 2026
Deadline: 15th January 2026

We invite submissions for our 9th interdisciplinary conference exploring how women's interactions with money, markets, and finance have shaped, and been shaped by, economic crises, financial literacy practices, and strategies for resilience across time and borders. This year, we especially welcome reflections on how evolving political landscapes reshape economic power, knowledge access, and inclusion. womenmoneymarkets.co.uk

We will be celebrating the publication of our first edited collection, *Women, Money, and Markets: Uncovering the Invisible Hands of the Economy* (Boydell & Brewer, 2026).

Possible areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

Material Culture and Financial Activism

- Drawing inspiration from The Foundling Hospital's archives, how material items, including sewing/knitting, tokens, calendars, etc., were used by women to teach, learn, or execute financial skills, especially when formal institutions excluded them; how artifacts—e.g. pocketbooks, receipts, letters, teaching pamphlets—help to reveal financial practices that women adopted when formal systems were under threat or failed.

Resilience in Marginalisation

- Women's survival strategies, real or fictional—e.g. cooperatives, informal credit, communal aid—in the face of systemic exclusion from formal markets, such as through.

Literature, Media, and Representation

- Historical and fictional portrayals of women's money agency, and financial roles during economic collapses or shifts.

Comparative and Cross-Cultural Dimensions

- Global case studies comparing diverse legal and economic environments, from colonial economies to more recent policy changes.
- Differences and commonalities in how women in different societies responded to economic marginalisation or inclusion.

Surviving Economic and Political Backlash

- Fictional depictions of women exhibiting financial ingenuity against barriers, or amidst repression, particularly when legal safeguards are weakened.
- Women's resilience practices during discriminatory regimes or policy rollbacks. How women acquired, deployed, or withheld financial knowledge during periods of political and economic upheaval.
- How diminished legal protections have disrupted women's financial agency.

Submission Guidelines

- **Abstracts:** Up to 300 words for individual papers.
- **Panel Proposals:** Include abstracts (≤300 words each) for up to three speakers.
- **Formats:** Individual papers, panels, or roundtable discussions.

Submit to: Enquiries to **Dr. Emma Newport**.

Submissions via **Google Form** in link or via QR code.

Order and Chaos: Vernon Lee and the Politics of Disruption

University of Liverpool, School of the Arts Library

1-3 September 2026

Attendance online will also be available.

Registration opens 1 May 2026

Deadline: 18 January 2026

“It is only in our own day that people are beginning to question the perfection of established rules of conduct, to discuss the drawbacks of duty and self-sacrifice, and to speculate upon the possible futility of all ethical systems, nay, upon the possible vanity of all ideals and formulas whatever.”

-- Vernon Lee, *Gospels of Anarchy*, 1909

A radical breakdown of trust in institutions across government, media, education, religion— is currently gripping Western Europe and the US. An atmosphere of uncertainty and fear has been created: for individuals, for groups holding common goals, and even for whole nations as the spectres of authoritarianism and anarchy become increasingly real. Among much else, freedom of thought the right of assembly, personal/medical rights, gender preference and expression, efforts to save the environment—all are under attack throughout the world.

In 1908, Vernon Lee (1856-1935) – a writer always sensitive to new political, social and cultural formations - wrote *Gospels of Anarchy* with her signature blend of irony, and literary flair. The book explores, and sometimes devastates, the theories of Order and Anarchy, and of Utopia and Dystopia, promulgated by literary and philosophical giants of the nineteenth century such as Emerson, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, William James and H. G. Wells. In 1912, her book *Vital Lies* expanded on these themes. In a manifesto that speaks loudly to our own era of post-truth politics, she vehemently attacked those who were “redefining truth in such a way as to include edifying and efficacious fallacy and falsehood” and thus helping to dissolve the whole idea of truth altogether.

This conference aims to explore the political questions and challenges we face today through the lens that Vernon Lee brought to the same kind of challenges in her time: a lens that is simultaneously thought-provoking, curious, playful, radical, and multidisciplinary. Papers may wish to explore the breakdown and/or the imposition of illusory order or structure in various fields (educational, social, commercial, entertainment, literary, scientific, information), what damage it is doing and whether it can somehow be harnessed or managed to be beneficial; how resistance, rebellion and nonconformity in public, academic, and private life, thought and publication can modify “however infinitesimally, the opinions and ideals and institutions of the present and the future” as Lee suggests in *Gospels of Anarchy*.

We welcome presentations, lightning presentations, panels/ roundtables, workshops, or creative practice sessions that engage with the following topics (but are not limited to)

- Freedom of Thought, Speech, and Expression
- Pacifism, anti-violence, anti-nationalism, anti-imperialism
- Protest, strikes, rebellion
- Philosophy, ethics, and morality (individual, governmental, national, corporate)
- Feminisms, local, global and radical
- Trans studies
- Human and animal rights
- Psychology, psychiatry, neurology, and mental health
- Environment, ecology, and the Anthropocene
- Sustainable futures
- Education and self-development

We would particularly like to hear about the ways in which Lee's works speak to current events and trends, and postulate or enable the development of healthy, sustainable futures.

Papers (15 minutes) Roundtable/panel (60 mins), workshops (60 mins), creative practice session (60 mins), and lightning papers (10 mins).

We would be delighted to discuss proposals for panels or individual presentations, and to answer any questions you may have. Please submit questions, abstracts (**300 words**) and a **short bio** (100 words) in a Word/ GoogleDoc to the review committee email vernonleealliance@gmail.com by **18 January 2026**.

Thanks to the generosity of the International Vernon Lee Society, we hope to offer bursaries to early-career/precarious scholars - more details on the application process will be made available in due course.

The conference is organized by members of The Vernon Lee Alliance (VLA): Matthew Bradley (The University of Liverpool, UK), Elisa Bizzotto (*Iuav University of Venice, Italy*), Sally Blackburn-Daniels (Teesside University, UK), Mary F. Burns (Independent Scholar, US), Mandy Gagel (University of Michigan, US), Mary Clai Jones (Chadron State College, US), Tomi-Ann Roberts (Colorado College, US)

Romantic Elements: Rocks, and Stones, and Soil, 1750–1850

Symposium at The University of Manchester, 25–26 June 2026

Deadline: 30th January 2026

Dreams hang on every leaf: unearthly forms
Glide through the gloom; and mystic visions swim
Before the cheated sense.

– Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'To Mr. C[oleridge]'

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.
– William Wordsworth, 'A slumber did my spirit
seal'

Mont Blanc appears—still, snow, and serene;
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; ...

– Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Mont Blanc'

Keynote Speakers

Dr Jeremy Davies (University of Leeds)
Dr Stephanie O'Rourke (University of St Andrews)

- Earth, earthiness, and literary form/genre
- The subterranean/undercommons
- The components of earth: mud, soil, clods, dust, sand
- Earthy elements as sites of affect or criticality
- Poetic and/or epistemological obscurity
- Images or forms of burial and concealment
- Images or forms of unearthing, unveiling, or revelation
- Earth as generative, fertile, life-giving
- Earth as a site of labour and resource extraction
- Earth as gendered, queered/queering, racialized, classed
- Formalist, ecocritical, queer, and affective approaches to earth, earthiness, and unearthing

Please send proposals for 20-minute papers in the form of a 250-word abstract and an author biography (150 words) to **James Metcalf** and **Millie Schurch** by **Friday 30 January 2026**.

Please note: this will be an in-person meeting only. With thanks to support from the Swedish Research Council, there will be no conference fee for speakers, other than to attend the optional conference dinner at the end of the first day. Food and refreshments will be provided on both days (coffee and pastries; lunch; tea-break snack).

We are particularly keen to encourage the participation of early career researchers and scholars on precarious employment contracts. We are pleased to be able to offer up to 10 bursaries to cover accommodation and travel within the UK for those without access to institutional support for research activities. Please indicate with your abstract submission if you do not have access to institutional financial support and would like to be considered for a bursary.

Tennyson 2026: Ecology, Landscape, Environment

CFP for International Interdisciplinary Conference

Lincoln, UK, 14-17th July 2026

Deadline: 31st January 2026

Address inquiries and submit proposals as attachments to Tennyson2026@bishopg.ac.uk

Sponsored by the Tennyson Society and Lincoln Bishop University (UK), this interdisciplinary conference will convene in Lincolnshire, the landscape into which Tennyson was born (see <https://tennysonociety.com/tennyson-2026-conference/>.)

Tennyson's poetry was central in forming Victorian responses to the natural world and to scientific advances which underpin today's emerging fields of environmental studies and plant humanities, as well as interdisciplinary studies of literature and science, literary geographies, literature and the arts, and literature and print culture. His evocative idyllic settings inspired painters from the Pre-Raphaelites to Edward Lear, while his struggles with evolutionary theory engaged with a different vision of 'Nature, red in tooth and claw'. His poetic sonorities inspired new soundscapes in music and even later film adaptations. This will be a timely opportunity to explore the varied legacies left to us by the Victorians and their Poet Laureate, and to assess their relevance to the global climate and social justice crises of today.

Our conference welcomes proposals that range widely, from geology to garden design, from the celebration of landscape to warfare and the destruction of landscape, from the minutiae of the 'Flower in the Crannied Wall' to the 'Vastness' of Space, from the threat of industrialisation and global capitalism to the promise of a utopian future, from imperial land-grabbing to the preservation of local identities and dialects.

Possible topics (among others):

- Science and Evolution

- Tennyson and “Nature Poets”
- Neo-Victorian Afterlives
- Tennyson and the Arts, Sculpture, Architecture
- Industrialization, Pollution, Extractive Capitalism
- Tennyson and Ruskin, Morris, Meredith, Hardy
- Landscape and Gender, Sexuality
- Tennyson, Music, and Soundscapes
- Sites of Devastation, War, and Warfare
- Tennyson & L.E.L., E. Brontë, EBB, C. Rossetti
- Environment and Psychology
- Tennyson’s Personal and Literary Networks
- Dialect, Regionalism, and the Sense of Place
- Tennyson and Horticulture, Gardens, Farming
- Poetry’s Periodical and Print Ecologies
- Tennyson and the Sea
- Walking, Walking Tours, and Poetry
- Tennyson, Imperialism, and Foreign Lands
- The Lives of Flora and/or Fauna
- Cemeteries, Waste, Dust
- Ecologies, Landscapes, and Race
- Poetry and the Cosmos
- Class Hierarchies, Law, and Land Inheritance
- Plant Humanities

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dinah Birch, “Tennyson and Ruskin: Versions of the Modern”; Clare Pettitt, “Tennyson’s Garden: *Idylls of the King* and the Technologization of Nature”; Lindsay Wells, “Tennyson, Horticulture, and the Plant Humanities”
Sponsors’ support has enabled a very affordable conference rate, with affordable housing as well.

Please send all abstracts (300 words max.) with a bio (150 words max.) to Tennyson2026@bishopg.ac.uk by 31st January 2026.

The Gaskell Journal

Joan Leach Memorial Graduate Student Essay Prize 2026

Deadline for submissions: 1st 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.

Please direct any queries to the Editors, Dr Ben Moore: B.P.Moore@uva.nl and Dr Rebecca Styler: rstyler@lincoln.ac.uk.

Announcement from the Editor of *The Gissing Journal*

The editor of *The Gissing Journal* would welcome contributions from Victorian scholars and enthusiasts. Essays between 1500-10000 words are welcome in MS Word format with endnotes and images (300dpi) if required. Book reviews of Gissing-related publications are usually between 1200-3000 words in length.

The Gissing Journal publishes essays, book reviews, lists of recent publications, as well as current news about George Gissing and his circle. It has been published since 1965 and is one of the best single-author journals in existence. It is indexed by the Modern Language Association, the *Victorian Studies Bulletin*, reviewed annually by *The Year's Work in English Studies*, and regularly praised on the back page of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Many academics and enthusiasts as well as university and national libraries across the world subscribe to the journal. *The Gissing Journal* is published four times a year, in January, April, July, and October.

Keats-Shelley Essay Prize 2025-26

Deadline: 2nd February 2026

The Keats-Shelley Poetry and Essay Prizes 2025-26 are open. The Chair of this year's judging panel is author, critic and journalist Rupert Christiansen.

Poets are asked to write a new work inspired by this year's prize theme of "Dystopia" or "Utopia", chosen to mark the 200th anniversary of the publication of Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man*.

Keats-Shelley essayists are invited to write on any aspect of the work and/or lives of the Romantics and their circles. Keats-Shelley Prize winners receive £1000. Two highly commended entrants in each category will receive £500. All winning and highly commended poems and essays will be published in [The Keats-Shelley Review](#) and on the Keats-Shelley website.

Deadline for all submissions is 10am (GMT) on Mon, 2nd February 2026.

More information and how to enter both prizes, visit www.keats-shelley.org or click [here](#).

Have a question about 2025-26's Prize? Email: prizes@keats-shelley.org

Of Victorianist Interest

Please email relevant notices to bavsnews@gmail.com for inclusion in future issues.

The Thomas Hardy Society is looking for a new Student Representative to join the Council of Management.

As Student Representative for the THS you will represent the views of students to the CoM and wider society, act as a central point of contact for the student body of the THS, think of innovative ways to encourage student participation, manage the annual essay competition, support the delivery of academic and public engagement events, and much more!

To apply for this position, you must be under the age of 25 and a full-time student at a UK university (undergraduate or post-graduate), with your dissertation or thesis featuring work on any aspect of Hardy. You must be able to attend bi-monthly meetings held on Saturday afternoons (either online or in person) at a minimum of four per year, and you must be able to commit to a minimum of two years within the role.

To apply, please send an expression of interest to Rebecca Shipp, Journal Editor, at editor@hardysociety.org. Please include your name, affiliated institution, and course and level of study with a short explanation of why you are suitable (max 300 words). Please note that this is a voluntary role.

The Thomas Hardy Society is committed to inclusivity, diversity, and equal access and thus we welcome applications from students of all backgrounds.

Call for Reviewers

Journal of Literature and Science

The *Journal of Literature and Science* is looking for reviewers to review various articles published in the last year to 18 months in the field of literature and science.

Please find below a number of articles that we would like to offer for review. It's largely first come, first-served, so do get in touch with an offer to review a specific article by emailing Michelle at m.geric@westminster.ac.uk. **The list is certainly not definitive**, and I would be very happy to receive suggestions for other relevant articles for review that aren't listed below – please do let me know.

Reviews should be 750 words long. For more details, please follow the link: <https://www.literatureandscience.org/> or contact me at gericm@westminster.ac.uk to register your interest.

SUGGESTED ARTICLES:

Birtwhistle, J. "The Discrimination of Science and Poetry in Humphry Davy's Nitrous Oxide Researches." *Romanticisms* 31. 1 (2025): 22-35.

Collins, S. "Marianne Moore and the Environmental 'Octopus' of Modernist Collage." *Journal of Modern Literature*, 48. 2 (2025) 40-59.

Cullen, L. I. "'Almost as a Person Would': The Thinking Animal in Margaret Marshall Saunders's Beautiful Joe (1893)." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. 53. 1 (2025) 112-139.

Hanlon, A. R. "Abraham Cowley against Bacon's 'Idols of the Mind'." *Configurations* 32. 1 (2024) 51-70.

James, F. A. J. L. "Sociability in the Early Royal Institution: Thomas Richard Underwood, Humphry Davy and Samuel Taylor Coleridge." *Romanticisms* 31. 1 (2025): 58-73.

James, K. (2024). "Particules Flottantes: Mutable Identity and Postmodern 'Schizophrenia' in the Works of Michel Houellebecq." *Journal of Modern Literature*, 47. 2 (2024) 17-36.

- McAllister**, D. (2024) “Geology, the Imagination, and Speculative Writing: Gideon Mantell’s Fossil Poetry in Anna Birkbeck’s Album.” *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 36 (2024).
- Reisman**, M. “Grotesque Spaces and Transformative Nature in Patrick McGrath’s *The Grotesque*.” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 48. 3 (2025) 131-148.
- Ruston**, S. “Humphry Davy’s Inventions.” *Romanticisms* 31. 1 (2025): 10-21.
- Shaub**, K. “Modelling Genius: Performance and Pedagogy in Coleridge’s Royal Institution Lectures.” *Romanticisms* 31. 1 (2025): 37-47.
- Tanaka**, S. “Ulysses’s Ecological Epic.” *Modernism/modernity*, 31. 4 (2024) 755-772.
- Tierney**, O. “‘The Age of Plasticene’: A Review of Ranjan Ghosh’s *The Plastic Turn*.” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 48. 2 (2025) 163-167.
- Weng**, J. M. “An Irish Modernist Dialectic of Enlightenment: Singing the Artist Electric.” *Modernism/modernity*, 31. 1 (2024) 513-538

Events Manager for the International Tennyson Society

Postgraduate/ECR Volunteer Opportunity



Are you a postgraduate or early career researcher with a passion for 19th-century literature or history? The **International Tennyson Society**, founded in 1960 by Sir Charles Tennyson and boasting a global membership, is seeking a volunteer **Events Manager** to help bring its prestigious events to life.

What You’ll Do:

Coordinate three key annual events that honour the life and legacy of Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

- A **Weekend Conference in May**
- The **August Memorial Service** in Lincolnshire
- The **Wreath-Laying Ceremony at Poets’ Corner**, Westminster Abbey, in October

This role averages around 4 hours per month and is a fantastic opportunity to gain high-level organisational experience while working flexibly around academic commitments. Mentorship provided.

Why Apply?

- Gain **invaluable experience** in running a renowned literary society
- Build **academic networks** and connections with leading scholars
- Help shape and promote the Society’s **Global Tennyson Talks** – a virtual international lecture series
- Enjoy occasional opportunities to introduce **esteemed speakers** at Global Tennyson Talks
- Keep abreast of **current academic debates**

Experience with social media is a plus – help us share Tennyson’s legacy with the world!

Term: Initial appointment for **three years**. All expenses covered.

Remote-friendly, with travel to key events in the UK

This is a unique opportunity to become actively involved in the world of literary heritage and global scholarship.

Interested?

- Take a look at the society [website](#) for more information
- Send your CV with a cover letter outlining your interest in the role to Professor Valerie Purton at: vpurton@hotmail.co.uk.
- Closing date: 31st December 2025.

Julia Wedgwood, an intellectual icon of the Victorian era

<https://www.juliawedgwood.org/>



A new web resource collects many of Julia Wedgwood's (1833-1913) diverse writings, including lots of newly attributed (originally anonymous) ones, as well as a short biography and helpful primary and secondary bibliography.

Julia Wedgwood (1833-1913) was a major intellectual force of the Victorian period. She wrote two biographies, two major books - *The Moral Ideal* (1888) and *The Message of Israel* (1894) - and over 100 journal articles, a few collected as *Nineteenth-Century Teachers* (1909). She was the niece of Charles Darwin, the second love of Robert Browning, and a mentor to E. M. Forster. Her female friends included Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, and Frances Power Cobbe.

Some of her key interests:

- How do we reconcile science and religion, Darwinism and Christianity?
- How have ideas developed historically by reacting against each other?
- What moral lessons can we learn from the major world civilisations?
- What's distinctive about Christian and modern thought compared to Ancient Greece and Rome?
- What is nature?
- Do we have free will? How should we understand our existence, torn between spirit and nature?
- How does fiction illuminate historical upheavals in thought?
- Feminism
- Advocacy for animal welfare

Website created by Prof. Alison Stone (Lancaster University) - please get in touch if you have questions, feedback etc: a.stone@lancaster.ac.uk

Illustrated Rivals

Exact Editions Provides New, Fully Searchable Window into The Illustrated London News, The Illustrated War News, The Graphic & The Sphere
London, 15th September 2025



History scholars, students and enthusiasts alike can browse, search and read over 14,000 issues of four of Britain’s most influential illustrated newspapers, published between 1842 to 2003: *The Illustrated London News (ILN)*, *The Illustrated War News (IWN)*, *The Graphic* & *The Sphere*. Digital platform Exact Editions are offering IP-authenticated, multi-user subscriptions to these dynamic resources to libraries internationally. Offering a unique window into Victorian and Edwardian society, as well as documenting the defining events of the 20th century, the new digital editions are fully searchable and can be seamlessly accessed across web, iOS and Android devices through digital platform Exact Editions.

The four titles are intricately intertwined as historic competitors and collaborators in the realm of illustrated journalism. The *ILN* (1842 – 2003) was a revolution in journalism and defined visual reporting of the era through its vivid chronicling of the lives and times of royals, politicians and society at large. The *IWN* (1914–1918) originally published as a supplement to the *ILN*, was established during the First World War to provide focused, detailed visual coverage of the conflict. *The Graphic* (1869 – 1932) was first created as a direct rival to the *ILN* under the guidance of social reformer William Luson Thomas. Its issues captured authentic scenes across London, the wider UK and around the world, reflecting Britain’s attitude to empire and society. *The Sphere* (1900-1904) was subsequently created as a rival to both the *ILN* and *The Graphic* at the height of the Boer War, with extensive coverage of world events to aim the publication at British subjects overseas.

The Exact Editions platform presents the detailed illustrations, diagrams, advertisements and editorials of all four archives in high definition, capturing the distinct visual identity that set these titles apart. A powerful search function allows readers to instantly locate references to key historical events and figures, while every page includes advanced accessibility features such as a ‘Read Aloud’ option and a plain text version for enhanced readability.

Annual or **Perpetual and Ongoing Access** subscriptions are available for libraries in Exact Editions’ institutional shop:

- **The Illustrated London News**
- **The Graphic**
- **The Sphere**
- **The Illustrated War News**

Gary Thorpe from Consolidated Archives Holding Ltd (CAHL) commented: “Our collaboration with Exact Editions has breathed new life into these pioneering titles. It’s a unique opportunity for us to reach the platform’s engaged

audience of librarians around the world. Subscribers to the archives will experience British history as it unfolded during a period of unprecedented social, political and technological change.”

Daryl Rayner, Managing Director of Exact Editions, has said: “These titles are so much more than newspapers; they are fascinating visual chronicles of over 160 years of history. The platform’s search function can be used to pinpoint references at the click of a button; something that would have taken weeks with physical archives. We are delighted to have transformed these important historical materials to such useable and discoverable resources.”

About Consolidated Archives Holding Ltd (CAHL):

Consolidated Archives Holding Ltd (CAHL) specialises in archive ownership and management and acquired the Illustrated London News archive in July 2017.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.consolidatedarchives.co.uk/>

About Exact Editions:

Exact Editions is the premium magazine platform for readers, libraries, and publishers. Creating, selling and streaming fully searchable access to archival and ongoing digital editions, it is proud to work with hundreds of magazine publishers, including *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Dazed*, and *The Spectator*.

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The Medium is the Message

9 October 2025 – 31 January 2026

The College of Psychic Studies, 16 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2EB



This autumn, The College of Psychic Studies unveils *The Medium is the Message* — a major exhibition exploring the rich, complex, and often mysterious relationship between artistic practice and mediumship.

Marking the centenary of the College’s move to its historic South Kensington home in 1925, the exhibition spans four floors and brings together over 100 artworks with rare archival treasures. More than 35 artists, from the mid-19th century to the present day, reveal how art has been used to visualise supernatural connection and imagine radical futures shaped by the ghostly and unseen.

At its core, *The Medium is the Message* invites audiences to see the artist as a channel between worlds — a receiver of visions, energies, and ideas. The exhibition also shines a light on women artists and mediums whose creativity and courage redefined both spiritual practice and artistic innovation, underscoring mediumship’s enduring place in the College’s history.

Exhibition Highlights

- Anna Mary Howitt Watts (1824–1884) — pioneering artist, medium, and feminist activist — in a landmark presentation featuring important new acquisitions. Archival displays outline her connections to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and women’s rights activism of the 1850s.
- ‘The Earth is a being...’ — a curated room inspired by a donation to The College of British occultist Ithell Colquhoun’s dream diaries (1906–1988), with works by Nicole Frobusch, Samir Mahmood, Chantal Powell, and Sandra Vásquez de la Horra.
- UK debut of Paulina Peavy (1901–1999) — American visionary whose extraterrestrial-inspired drawings and experimental films remain ahead of their time.
- Selection of never-seen-before and newly acquired works by Finnish visionary Aleksandra Ionowa (1899–1980), presented in a dedicated solo display.
- Rediscovered spirit drawings by Ethel Le Rossignol (1873–1970), shown in conversation with Ann Churchill, Victoria Rance, and Ariela Widzer.
- Historic women mediums connected to the College, reinterpreted through responses by Susan MacWilliam and Shannon Taggart.

Participating artists include: Mary Bligh Bond, Ann Churchill, Ithell Colquhoun, Joseph Crépin, Alice Essington Nelson, Nicole Frobusch, Madge Gill, Anna Hackel, Stanislav Holas, Alme Hordijk, Anna Mary Howitt Watts, Aleksandra Ionowa, Louise Janin, Freda Köhler, Augustin Lesage, Ethel Le Rossignol, Susan MacWilliam, Cara MacWilliam, Samir Mahmood, Sidney Manley, Margot, Cecile Marková, Allen Moore, Allen Moore o2o, Heinrich Nüsslein, Paulina Peavy, František Jaroslav Pecka, Alice Pery, PIC, Chantal Powell, Victoria Rance, Arild Rosenkrantz, Victorien Sardou, Austin Osman Spare, Sarah Sparkes, Shannon Taggart, Mimei Thompson, Sandra Vásquez de la Horra, Ethel Annie Weir, Ariela Widzer, and others.

Quotes

“The College of Psychic Studies holds one of the world’s most remarkable collections of spiritualist and esoteric art in the world. It has been a privilege to draw from this rich heritage and bring rarely seen historical works and artefacts into dialogue with contemporary artists. The Medium is the Message invites audiences to consider new ways of thinking about creativity and the role of the artist — as collaborator with spirit and unseen energies, and messenger of hidden knowledge.”

- Jacqui McIntosh, Curator & Archivist, The College of Psychic Studies

“For over a hundred years, our community has been a place of learning — where curiosity is encouraged, knowledge is shared, and creativity is nurtured. The Medium is the Message reflects that tradition, inviting audiences to explore and learn through the mediumistic and visionary voices of our past and present.”

- Gill Matini, Principal, The College of Psychic Studies

Curator: Jacqui McIntosh

Jacqui McIntosh’s research focuses on feminist, mediumistic, and esoteric histories, particularly artists whose spiritual development evolved alongside their creative practice. From 2023-2024 she was a recipient of a Curatorial Research Grant from The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and curated the exhibition *The Time of Our Lives* (Drawing Room, 2024), which explored the role that drawing has played within feminist activism.

Mediating Medicine

Health and Illness in the Victorian Age

Eighth Digital DACH Victorianists Workshop

5 December 2025, 10:15-16:30 on Zoom

Organisers: Julia Ditter (Bremen) and Anne Korfmacher (Graz)

Programme

(all times in Central European Time)

10:15-10:30 Welcome & Introduction

10:30-11:45 Panel I

Kalina Janeva: “‘From her own pen’: Female Food Restraint, ‘Perverted Will’, and Voice in Victorian Medical and Popular Writing”

Frauke Harms: “Fabricating Illness: Cloth, Contagion, and Class in Victorian Sanitary Discourse”

Anne-Marie Millim: “‘Pain comes without a voice’ (Kempner): The Voice of Migraineurs in Victorian Periodicals”

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-13:15 Panel II

Felix Behler: “Baked Apples and Bitter Ales: Richard Jefferies, Rural Health, and the Medical Imagination in *Amaryllis at the Fair* (1887)”

Ariane de Waal: “Skin as Form: The Morphological Turn in Victorian Dermatology and Literary Realism”

Tereza Brala: “A Woman’s Place: Neurasthenia and (Anti-)Feminism in *Ouida* and Amy Levy”

13:15-14:15 Lunch Break

14:15-14:45 Current Research Projects in Victorian Studies

Amanda B. Vernon: “The Spiritual Roots of Victorian Therapeutic Reading”

Fabia Büscher: “Nursing the Wounded Soldier in the Crimean War”

Kevin C. Wolf: “Gothic Waters in Nineteenth-Century British Literature”

14:45-15:00 Break

15:00-16:15 Panel III

Anne-Marie Beller: “Authors and Alienists: Psychiatric Discourse and Fictional Form in Victorian Sensation Fiction”

Nina Marie Voigt: “The Abortive Doctor: Medical Authority and Conceptions of Nonreproduction in 19th-Century England”

Anna-Maria Grill: “A Dangerous Apprentice: Woman Medical Apprenticeship in Wilkie Collins’s *Jezebel’s Daughter*”

16:15-16:30 Future Events & Announcements

Hannah Pardey and Carolin Gebauer announce the summer 2026 DACH workshop

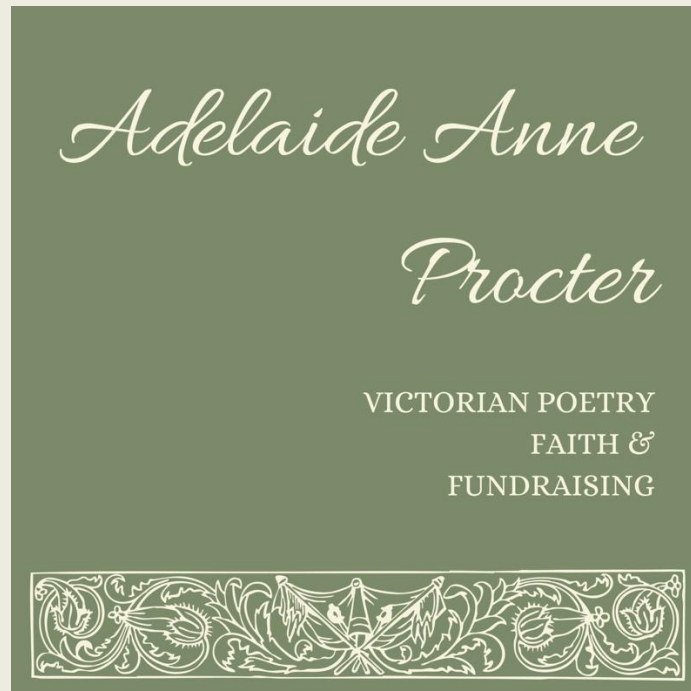
Registration

To register for the workshop, please email jditter@uni-bremen.de and anne.korfmacher@uni-graz.de.

The link will be shared with all registered participants a few days before the workshop. Speakers are automatically registered.

For further information about the DACH Victorianists network, go to dachvictorianists.blogspot.com.

New podcast celebrates Adelaide Anne Procter in her bicentenary year



A new 5-part podcast series, with hosts Elizabeth Ludlow and Amanda Vernon, has been released to commemorate the life and work of Victorian poet and activist Adelaide Anne Procter (1825-64). While Procter was a bestselling poet in the nineteenth century, she is not as well remembered now. In this bicentenary year, we take the opportunity to reflect on the significance of her poetry, journalism, editing work, and social activism and suggest how her writings might connect with us today.

Through this new series, *Adelaide Anne Procter: Victorian Poetry, Faith and Fundraising*, we speak to experts on Victorian religion and literature, print culture, and literary feminism, including Emma Mason, Lesa Scholl, Jim Mussell, and Alex Round. We also hear about the continued work of Providence Row, a charity with which Procter was involved, from Community and Events co-ordinator Maria O'Donoghue. In our final episode, we reflect on the powerful experiences of collective reading with Josie Billington and address how readers might engage with Procter's work today.

The podcast is available on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#), with new episodes coming out weekly. We'd love for you to leave comments or reviews and share on social media. We hope you enjoy listening!