



The INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR Victorian Women Writers

Newsletter



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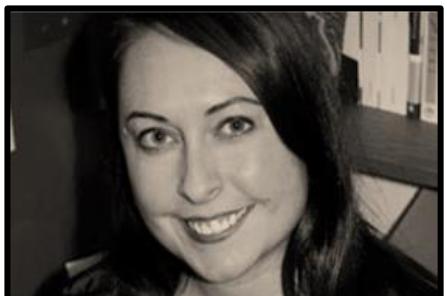
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~ January 2018 ~ New Year Edition ~ Issue No. 4 ~

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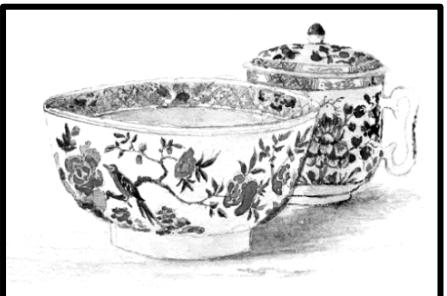
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Welcome ... to the fourth issue of *The ICVWW Newsletter!*

Safely past Blue Monday, everyone. Here in Kent we're in that lovely period where we think this time it will be different, spring really is on its way and the daffodils know what they're doing. Which inevitably means we're in for snow. Luckily Bob Nicholson and Louise Lee are on hand to cheer us all up with some Victorian humour.



Whatever the weather (anyone who chimes in at this point, "We'll weather the weather," stop it—you're

Carolyn Oulton (Director of ICVWW)

showing your age), we all love a good book recommendation. Anyone else not read Victoria Holt since the 1980s? ICVWW PhD student and novelist Mandy Jones might just change your mind. But there is stiff competition from fiction and fashion writer Mary Haweis, ably championed here by Laura Allen, who also wants us to re-examine the Victorian canon and what it meant to be a feminist at the *fin de siècle*.

Across this issue we are thinking about how and when the past stops being "interesting, yet untouchable" and starts to seep into the 21st century for a new generation. Thanks to Maddie Pettit from Langton Boys Grammar School, for reporting on the Braddon Archive and reminding us why we must ignore the decluttering experts and never throw out an old bus ticket. Our guest interview in this issue is with Melissa Purdue, talking about *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies*, too many meetings, and why she just can't get enough of the Brontës. In common with recent studies, Melissa is increasingly drawn to the landscape of their novels. Snow, anyone?

From Brontë to Bloomsbury:
Realism, Sensation and the New in Women's Writing

Who are ICVWW?

Co-founded by Profs Carolyn Oulton and Adrienne Gavin, The International Centre for Victorian Women Writers aims to spearhead new and innovative research in the area of Victorian women's writing, providing an international focus for scholars. We are involved in research projects, and regularly organise conferences, exhibitions, and public lectures in conjunction with our research.



Pedal on to discover more!



What ICVWW Has Been Up To ...

Women's Writing in the Nineteenth Century Seminar Series

ICVWW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar on Victorian Humour

17th October 2017, Canterbury Christ Church University

Dr Susan Civale, Senior Lecturer in English Literature at CCCU and Events Manager of ICVWW, gives us her account of our first research seminar of the academic year ...



In October 2017, the International Centre for Victorian Women Writers hosted an interdisciplinary research seminar on Victorian Humour, featuring Bob Nicholson, Senior Lecturer in History at Edge Hill University, and Louise Lee, Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Roehampton.

Bob Nicholson kicked off the evening with his paper, titled "Droll Dogs and Agreeable Rattlers: Telling Jokes in Victorian Britain," which discussed how jokes occurred and circulated in the Victorian period. Bob also explored the gendered aspects of Victorian joke culture, and sought to dispel the impression (still almost as prevalent now as it was in the nineteenth century) that women do not tell or appreciate jokes. One of the highlights of his talk included an introduction to the late nineteenth-century professional joke writer and advertiser, Annie Partlan, whose popular and lucrative work for the comic weeklies in America suggests that women did indeed participate in joke culture—as well as the genre of joke composition—in the Victorian period.

Louise Lee continued the evening's discussions with a paper intriguingly titled "Did George Eliot have a theory of laughter?" Though as Victorian scholars, we tend not to pair Eliot and laughter, Louise argued that Eliot admired the kind of sophisticated intellectual humour that involves a dissonance between perceptions, or an element of incongruity. Different from the cultural vapidly associated with a more vulgar kind of laughter ("jocularity"), the delightful mental jolt elicited by this more intellectually refined brand of humour can be seen as important to Eliot's theory of the artist as integral to the "extension of our sympathies" as humans.

The evening culminated in a lively question and answer session with the audience, and then an equally lively meal in a local Italian restaurant.

If you missed this research seminar and would like to hear the talks, a recording of them is available on our [ICVWW website](#), and on soundcloud. Our next research seminar takes places on 6th February on "Queen Victoria and George Eliot in 1859."



CCCU Arts and Humanities
ICVWW Seminar Oct ...
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Out of the Archive



Langton Boys Grammar School Visits Mary Braddon Archive

9th November 2017, Mary Braddon Archive, Augustine House Library, Canterbury Christ Church University

A group of inquisitive 6th Formers from Simon Langton Boys Grammar School paid the Mary Braddon Archive a visit. One of the students, Madeleine, gives us her highlights of the experience ...

I'm here to give an insight into the incredible experience and opportunity Canterbury Christ Church University offered me. As part of a group of year 12 students from The Langton, I was lucky enough to be involved with a local historical and literary project, directed by Professor Oulton, analysing archives and undertaking my own research in our local history.

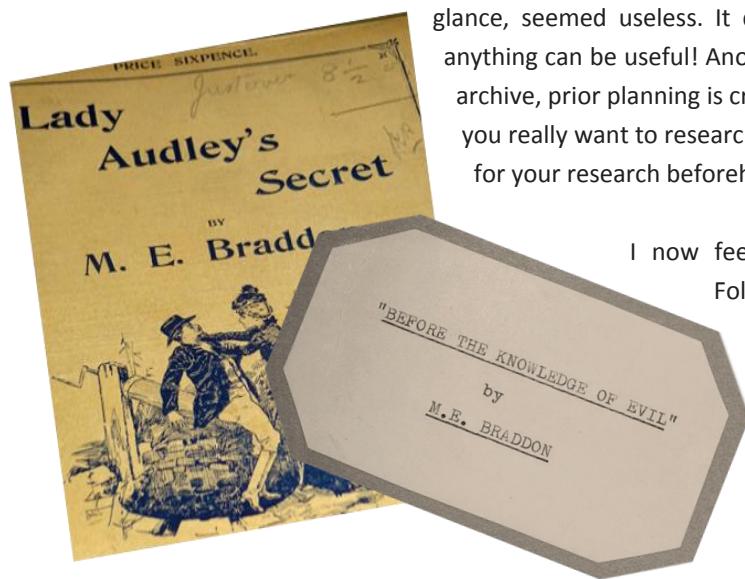
We spent a day examining the Victorian novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon, a lady with an impressive eighty novels to her name.

Braddon's legacy is tied to the "sensation" fiction of the 1860s, the genre which brought together romance and realism, a dichotomy which epitomised Victorian social anxieties. Braddon's most successful novel, *Lady Audley's Secret*, reflected these concerns with regard to the meaning and the permanence of identity.

Examining the Mary Braddon archives gave us an amazing insight into the cultural and literary norms of the Victorian age, and how they progressed and changed with time. There is a real fascination with holding an authentic document in your hand, be it merely a shopping list or a budgeting book. It opens such a wide and tempting window into the past, and makes us question whether such fragments of our own modern society, like a shopping list, will carry so much intrigue for future generations. It really opened my eyes into the way I previously viewed the past, something interesting yet untouchable from where I stand in the 21st century, almost as if it were a film from years before. I now relate to and appreciate the value of history on a different level, having seen for myself treasures of the past.

We learnt some important principles when analysing archives. Firstly, the importance of never writing anything off as "boring." This is because, following more research, you may later see its true value and get a lot of use out of something that, at first

glance, seemed useless. It does not matter what it is—a train ticket, a diary entry—anything can be useful! Another point I picked up was that, before visiting a library or an archive, prior planning is critical to ensure your focus and time can be dedicated to what you really want to research. Even contacting the librarian to see if there are any records for your research beforehand can save time.



I now feel prepared for my project on "The Belgian Refugees in Folkestone," excited and ready to begin my own research.

Be sure to also read ICVWW Director Carolyn Oulton's account of the day on the School of Humanities blog!

[KEEPING SECRETS \(YOU SHOULD BE SO LUCKY\): KYLIE MINOGUE, LANGTON BOYS GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND THE MARY BRADDON ARCHIVE](#)

Research and Researchers

Work in Progress

Laura Allen, PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University, shares with ICVWW where she is currently with her research on Mary Haweis, and her recent revelations a year into post-graduate study ...

Mary Eliza Haweis may be (at this time) a non-canonical author, but my research aims to show how important it is to rediscover women who aided in the development of feminism. This is no easy task, however.

Post-graduate study in itself poses many challenges; the sheer length of research is certainly daunting! Coupled with an obscure topic it may seem impossible! A year in, however, I have discovered that it is not as difficult as it at first may seem.

Initially, I was insecure about approaching a writer without the support of other academics, but unburdened by the opinions of others I am free to study Haweis from an utterly new perspective. This makes my research so much more exciting!

One of the few to have read Haweis's only novel *A Flame of Fire*, I am in the unique position of being an authority on a text so early on in my studies. What is truly delightful about researching a non-canonical writer like Haweis, however, is discovering how she links to existing research and can broaden it. For example, feminist scholars are now attempting to break down the binaries of feminist New Woman writer or anti-feminist writer, which can be tempting to apply when it comes to categorising female authors.

My research into Haweis proves how flawed this approach can be; Victorian women writers were, especially at the turn of the century, often struggling between these two categories, perhaps even within a single text. Haweis herself oscillates between, on the one hand, encouraging women take up 'new work' and, on the other, adhering to a code of femininity and domesticity seemingly endorsed by patriarchal discourses. Whilst this certainly makes it exasperating to attempt to define Haweis, it is also what makes her works so fluid – a characteristic of the New Woman writer.

As I discover more about Haweis, I begin to form a new type of feminist – one whose 'work' may be domestic, but who prides herself on the elevation of femininity. With such fascinating and evolving subject matter, the anxiety surrounding the intensity and duration of study seems to fade away until just Haweis and I remain – two women trying to get our voices heard.



Laura speaking last year at CCCU's English Literature & Creative and Professional Writing Research Forum

Has this whet your appetite for more research?

ICVWW has announced its [Fifth International Conference](#), this year focussing on Women's Writing of the 1920s & 1930s. The deadline for submissions is 2nd March 2018, in time for the conference on 16th-17th July. Be sure to make a note in your diaries!

Interview with a Guest

Name: Dr Melissa Purdue

Title: Associate Professor of English at Minnesota State University, Mankato

What is your current research project?

I am working on a few different things right now. First, I am currently editing an edition of *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke Lady Detective* for Victorian Secrets. I taught a class on detective fiction last year and was excited to share with students understudied female detective characters from the 19th century like Loveday Brooke, Mollie Delamere, and Judith Lee. I hope the edition will be a useful and affordable addition to the classroom. The next project examines chase scenes in New Woman literature. I explore moments of trauma in this literature that culminate in climactic chase scenes in which transgressive and/or progressive women are pursued by frightened characters attempting to restore order. The final project, which I am just beginning work on, examines Neo-Victorian fiction. Specifically, I am looking at Gail Carriger's fun "Parasol Protectorate" series and the ways in which Neo-Victorian fiction handles gothic tropes differently. In 19th-century gothic fiction, hybrid animal-human figures like werewolves, vampires, or other supernatural creatures are often expressions of repressed societal desires and fears. In Carriger's Neo-Victorian fiction, however, these figures become moral barometers in different ways. Characters who demonstrate acceptance of those outside the norm become the heroes and heroines of the story.

What would be your dream research project?

I am not sure that I have a dream research project. I have been lucky enough to be able to pursue my various research interests thus far in my career. Creating *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* twelve years ago was definitely a dream of mine, and I am so happy to still be working with the journal. I suppose having more time to write (and spending less time in meetings) so that I can complete more research would be my dream.



Emily Brontë, BBC's *To Walk Invisible* (2016)

Critical sources you can't live without?

I return to classics like Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments*, and Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* and *The Female Malady* repeatedly in my teaching. Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* and Kelly Hurley's *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siecle* have also been foundational in my work and teaching. As for more recent publications, I really enjoy Sara Ahmed's work.

What is your favourite work by a Victorian female writer?

This rotates between *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Villette*. I'm thrilled when I get to teach my Brontë Sisters course! I would say that *Wuthering Heights* is my favorite at the moment, though. I was interested in the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff when I was young, but now I find myself drawn to descriptions of the landscape and all of the animals/animal imagery. And as many times as I have read it, I'm still not sure if I like Nelly.

If you could have three Victorians round for dinner, who would you have, and why?

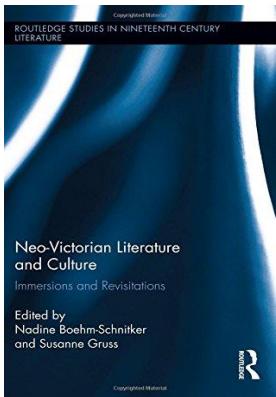
Definitely Emily Brontë, though I'm not sure that she'd be a great conversationalist since she is remembered as being pretty reserved and antisocial. I have always loved *Wuthering Heights* and couldn't pass up an opportunity to talk with its author. I would invite Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Victoria Cross too. I know Cross is pushing the bounds of "Victorian," but I have been fascinated by her since writing my dissertation. How did she come up with the ideas for works like *Martha Brown M.P.* or *Hilda Against the World*? How insincere is her defense of Gerald in the preface to *Anna Lombard*? I just taught a class on Braddon this semester so there are many questions fresh in my mind for her as well! I imagine Braddon and Cross would be fun and lively dinner guests, and would have plenty to say, even if Brontë was brooding in the corner.



Books We Come Back To ...

Book Recommendations

In this issue Mandy Jones, ICVWW PhD student and novelist ([check out her work here!](#)), gives her critical and fictional book recommendations ...



Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations (2014)

Edited by Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss

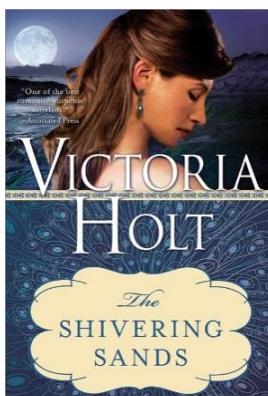
"I first discovered this book whilst writing my MA dissertation, but it's a book I like to keep close by me as it covers most of the major neo-Victorian concerns. The introduction provides an excellent overview of neo-Victorianism;

individual chapters, written by important critics, provide insight into key areas of critical concern. Canon formation, immersion, nostalgia, fictional biographies, gay fictions, spectrality, sexual trauma, medical sensationalism and terminology are all investigated in relation to some of the key neo-Victorian texts. A recurring theme is 'Why the Victorian period? What is it about Victorian literature and society that still exerts a strong hold on the present?' A pertinent question for Victorian, as well as neo-Victorian, studies?"

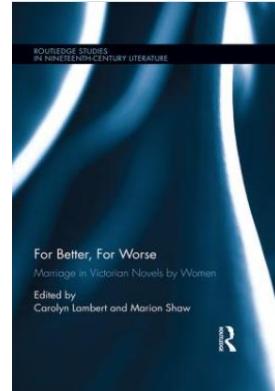
The Shivering Sands (1969)

Victoria Holt

"This book launched my interest in neo-Victorianism. I first read it decades ago, before I (or anyone else!) had heard of neo-Victorianism, and enjoyed it as a page-turning read. The Victorian setting immediately had me on board. Caroline Verlaine, a young widow, goes to a Gothic mansion to teach several children. In Jane Eyre fashion, the house conceals a secret, which revolves around Caroline's search for her missing sister. The mystery, the appearance of two very different men who fall in love with her, as well as the sensational ending, all make it a memorable read. When I returned to it for my MA I discovered more than a "good read." I found a multi-layered, neo-Victorian novel which set the force of Longfellow's idyllic poem "The Children's Hour" (1860) against a darker view of childhood."



New and Upcoming Publications



For Better, For Worse: Marriage in Victorian Novels by Women (2017)

Edited by Carolyn Lambert and Marion Shaw

Director of ICVWW, Carolyn Oulton and PhD student, Laura Allen, have been busy, both submitting articles in this new edited book which

explores the fictional depiction of marriage by female novelists through the nineteenth century.

Carolyn provides us with her article on the 1867 sensation novel *Cometh Up as a Flower*:

"Could my hero tell lies?": Romance and the Marriage Plot in Rhoda Broughton's *Cometh Up as a Flower*

Laura further explores the focus of her PhD research on Mary Eliza Haweis and her 1897 novel, *A Flame of Fire*, in her article:

"The laws themselves must be wicked and imperfect": The Struggle for Divorce in Mary Eliza Haweis's *A Flame of Fire*

For more details, look on the publisher's [website](#)



Upcoming Events Calendar

January 2018

Thurs 25 th Jan 2018	London and Southeast Romanticism Seminar: Romantic Novels 1818. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein	University of Greenwich, (Room QA039, 6:00pm)
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February 2018

Tues 6 Feb 2018	Women's Writing in the Nineteenth Century Seminar Series: Queen Victoria and George Eliot in 1859	Canterbury Christ Church University (Ng01, 5:30pm)
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March 2018

Thurs 22 Mar 2018	London and Southeast Romanticism Seminar: Romantic Novels 1818. Sydney Owenson, Florence Macarthy	University of Greenwich, (Room QM169, 6:00pm)
Mon 26 Mar 2018	The Business of a Woman's Life: Female Authorship, Celebrity, and Fandom in the Long 19th Century	University of Reading

May 2018

Fri 11-Sat 12 May 2018	Curiosity and Desire in Fin-de-Siècle Art and Literature	Clark Library, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Thurs 24 May 2018	London and Southeast Romanticism Seminar: Romantic Novels 1818. Patrick Brontë, The Maid of Killarny	University of Greenwich Campus, (Room QM169, 6:00pm)

June 2018

Mon 18 June 2018	Victorian Fears Colloquium	Newman University, Birmingham
Fri June 29 2018	Centennial Reflections on Women's Suffrage and the Arts	University of Surrey

July 2018

Sun 1-Fri 6 July 2018	Virginia Woolf Summer Course	Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
Tues 3-Sat 7 July 2018	VPFA 10th Annual Conference: War and Peace	Institute of English Studies, Senate House, London
Sat 7-Sun 8 July 2018	Women Writing Decadence: European Perspectives, 1880-1920	St Cross Building, University of Oxford
Mon 16-Tues 17 July 2018	ICVWW Fifth International Conference: Women's Writing of the 1920s and 1930s	Canterbury Christ Church University
Thurs 19 July 2018	London and Southeast Romanticism Seminar: Romantic Novels 1818. Susan Ferrier, Marriage	University of Greenwich, (Room QM268, 6:00pm)

Call for Papers

Publication/Conference	Theme	Deadline	Information/Contact
<i>Emily Brontë Bicentenary Conference</i>	Emily Brontë: A Peculiar Music. Range of topics welcome (details)	01/02/2018	500 word abstracts to: katarzyna.mc@bronte.org.uk
<i>ICVWW Fifth International Conference</i>	Women's Writing of the 1920s and 1930s. Flash papers also welcome (details)	02/03/2018	300 word abstracts and 100-150 word bios to: ICVWW@canterbury.ac.uk
<i>VPFA 10th Annual Conference</i>	War and Peace (details)	02/03/2018	Proposals 300 max words and 50-word bio to: vpfainfo@gmail.com
<i>Special Issue of Women's Writing</i>	Women Writing Men (details)	01/05/2018	500 word abstracts and brief bio to: j.parsons1@bathspa.ac.uk and ruth.heholt@falmouth.ac.uk

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Don't Miss the Next Issue of *The ICVWW Newsletter* – Out May 2018!