



The INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR Victorian Women Writers Newsletter

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

This welcome to the second newsletter is being typed—quite literally—on the eve of a trip to New York for the CUNY “Woman Card” Victorian symposium. So really it’s late afternoon, not late at night, which is just as well as we’re all out of candles.

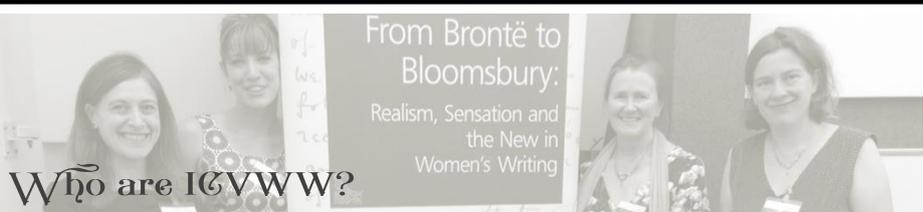


Carolyn Oulton (Director of ICVWW)

It’s been a busy spring for our PhD students, who spent several days of it racing to finish a chapter with only a kettle and a supply of pepperoni pizza to see them through, under the watchful eye of Dr Catherine Pope from the University of Sussex. Our very own Alyson Hunt reports on Thesis Boot Camp in this issue.

In March, ICVWW also joined colleagues in English and Creative and Professional Writing in a research forum to relive the moment we put Lady Audley on trial—love her or hate her, you know we can’t stop talking about her. Or about hysteria—thank you Dr Emma Liggins for confirming that this is *directly* linked to the use of excessive footnotes in scholarly works.

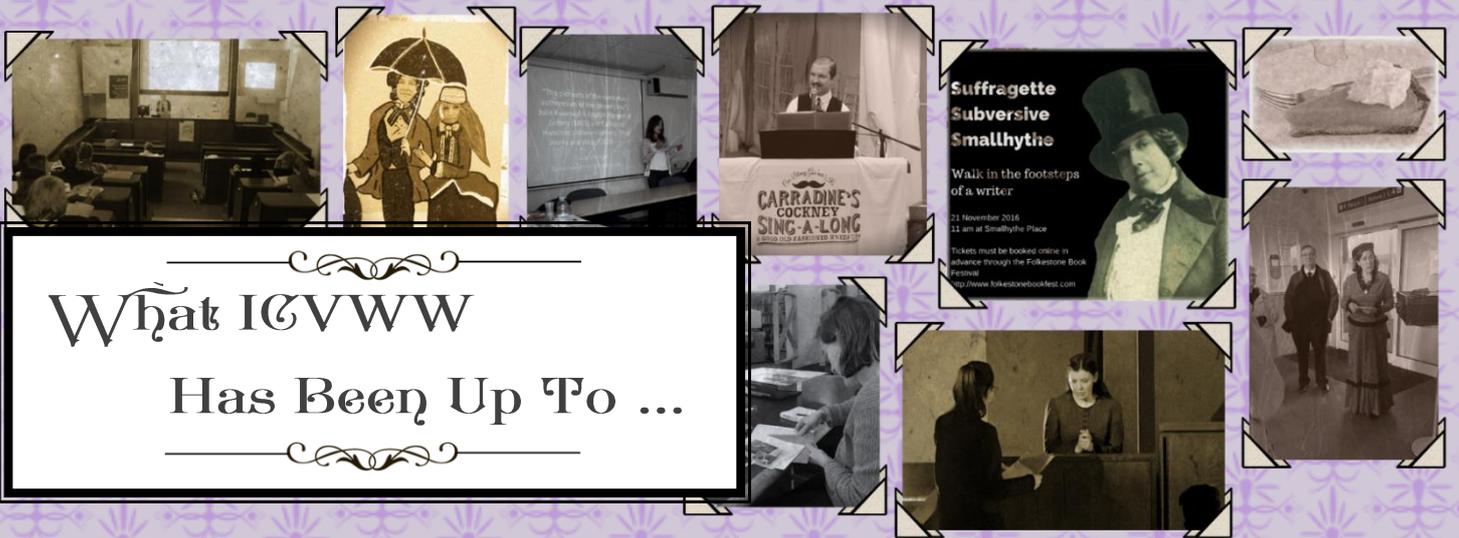
Our interview for this issue is with Dr Mary Clai Jones from Lincoln University of Missouri; while she explains why she dreams of dinner with Marie Corelli, Lizzie Sheppard tells us why we need to be reading Mary Borden in our recommended books column. We hope to see some of you in July to talk more about these and other writers we’d like to know better.



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



Bike ready? Pedal on to discover more!



What ICVWW Has Been Up To ...

English Literature & Creative and Professional Writing Research Forum

Wednesday 1st March 2017, School of Humanities, Canterbury Christ Church University

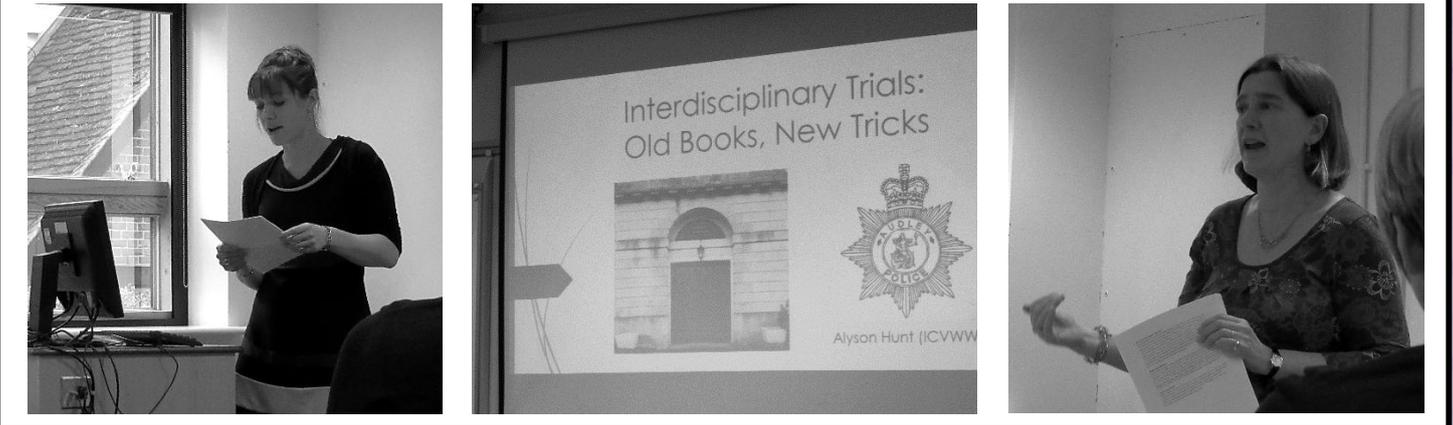
On Wednesday 1 March 2017, the English Literature and Creative & Professional Writing programmes at Canterbury Christ Church University hosted their first annual Research Forum. The one-day research event allowed academic colleagues and postgraduates to share current research and teaching practice.



ICVWW Research Associate and PhD candidate Alyson Hunt spoke about 'Lady Audley on Trial', an event funded by the Being Human Festival and hosted by the ICVWW in November 2016. This event brought in a team of University of Kent law students to stage the criminal trial of Lucy Audley, the heroine of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 bestseller, *Lady Audley's Secret*. Alyson explained how this kind of event brings the novel to a new audience, and also opens up new frameworks of interpretation:

"The lawyers summed up their cases and at this point it became clear that sympathies had shifted [...] the defence team highlighting Lady Audley's miserable plight and her lack of moral options to escape her difficult circumstances. The decision of the jury to clear her on all charges brought a surprising conclusion to the trial, particularly since the majority of humanities criticism unquestionably accepts her to be a manipulative, deceptive character, variously described as heroine or even anti-heroine but never as victim or survivor."

Carolyn Oulton, Professor of Victorian Literature and Director of the ICVWW, also spoke at the Forum. She discussed ongoing research on the Folkestone Free Library, which was established in 1881 during a period when the town was building up its reputation as a fashionable seaside resort. Though one might expect the library's holdings to reflect late Victorian trends in literature (with extensive holdings of sensation novels and other popular fiction, for example), Professor Oulton's archival work suggests otherwise. Between 'Boy' and 'Britain' and between 'Clyde' and 'Confessions of a Thug' the library catalogue pages are uncut, which means that the pages for 'Braddon' and 'Collins' were not consulted. Or does it? Oulton's paper offered insight into the function of libraries and the practices of their readers in the Victorian period, and reflected on the challenges in interpreting archival records.



Thesis Boot Camp: Alyson Hunt Reports!

Wednesday 25th-Sunday 29th January 2017, Canterbury Christ Church University

Firmly promising that the doors would not be locked and no press-ups would be required, Dr Catherine Pope led the inaugural Thesis Boot Camp, designed as an intensive writing event for late-stage doctoral researchers. The camp aimed to provide the time and space for attendees to make significant progress on the first draft of their thesis manuscript, supported by short tutorials, motivational talks, and one-to-one consultations with the facilitator.

Clutching drafts of their research questions and an outline of the thesis prepared prior to the camp, fifteen anxious faces looked around nervously as Dr Pope introduced herself and explained the plan for the weekend. Despite the relatively small number of doctoral researchers within CCCU, many of the attendees had not met before. Distance learners and part-time students in particular utilised the opportunity to make serious headway with their writing without the usual distractions of work and family. After some ice-breaker activities we were all asked to write continuously for five minutes about what we wanted to achieve over the weekend, with the emphasis on continuous writing, rather than spelling, grammar or cohesive structure. This free-writing activity was the first of many designed to get us out of the pitfalls of worrying about how academic our writing seems, whether our arguments make sense, and a host of other anxieties which can inhibit creativity, and instead to let our ideas flow freely and commit words to paper without fear. Most of us managed between 200-400 words in that short five minutes, providing the motivation and the proof that the actual writing part might not be so hard after all!

Over the next three days my fellow researchers and I committed to working on a chapter of our theses, aiming to write as many words as possible. Listening to the continual *tap-tap* of keys on our computer keyboards provided a surprisingly motivating backdrop. The unspoken feeling that we were all plagued by the same anxieties and self-doubts alleviated the paralysing writer's block that can develop when we try to write alone. We all found our own comfortable way of working, some attendees even sporting slippers for the occasion, to give us the greatest possible chance of writing as much as we could. There were times when we struggled to get the words out, when creativity wouldn't flow, or we simply grew too tired. At these times, Dr Pope would talk it through, reassure us that this was normal, and encourage us to take a break for a while to recharge our batteries before continuing. By Sunday evening we had all reached a state of exhaustion coupled with satisfaction at having achieved so much, with some attendees having written *over 10,000 words*. More importantly, we had learned that we share the same feelings, that we are not alone in our struggles, that sometimes we need to forget the highly-polished works we read so often, and remember that all ideas have to start somewhere – the important thing is to get them down on paper!

On the Border: Lesbianism and Hysteria

Thursday 9th March, *Women's Writing in the Nineteenth Century Seminar Series*, Canterbury Christ Church University



Dr Emma Liggins (*Man. Met. University*)

Anyone currently being supervised within ICVWW, look away NOW. But one of the most compelling moments in Dr Emma Liggins' paper was when she argued that *fin de siècle* sexologists use paratexts and substantial footnotes to deal explicitly with difficult or unnarratable subjects that are largely excluded from the main body of the work. Pleasingly this insight immediately suggests a parody of Anne Brontë's Arthur Huntingdon, who knows that the backs of ladies' paintings and the postscripts of their letters are precisely where they keep their secrets.

Liggins argued persuasively that the trope of secrets, and the difficulty of detecting them, infiltrates a number of *fin de siècle* women's novels, where they are often linked to the implicitly dangerous or sexualised female friendship that disrupts the heterosexual love plot. That such threats are generally subordinated to the final resolution of the main plot matters

less, of course, if we pay the same level of respectful attention to the middle of novels as we do to their endings.

Through discussion of the 1880s "glorified spinster," and a series of affective scenes between women, the paper continued one of ICVWW's longest running debates on Victorian fiction's careful tightrope walk, poised uneasily between "critiquing the patriarchal system" and "advocating [lesbianism] as an alternative."



Research and Researchers



Work in Progress

*A taster of the forthcoming ICVWW Fourth International
Conference: From Brontë to Bloomsbury in July*

Those of us with children know that the 20th century is officially ‘the olden days,’ which makes it a generally more welcoming place than we were led to believe when we rashly started a project that would take us way beyond the familiar world of the 1840s, maybe (for some of us) the 1890s, and over the edge of the *fin de siècle* precipice.



With three of our five planned conferences behind us and a contracted essay series with Palgrave—on which more to follow—ICVWW is now taking a deep breath and finding out, as Elizabeth Robins put it, “What came of all this brave nineteenth-century talk?” With Mona Caird we are “striding between two centuries,” and finding some old friends still with us. Admire the stamina of Mary Braddon, stopping for no one in her ratings war with the *New Woman* scourging Marie Corelli. Share the bewilderment of Mary Cholmondeley, who wrote one of the last bestsellers of 1899 (in between being rude about Winston Churchill), as she tries to work out why Modernist writers seem unable to construct a plot. And see who’s trying to change sides as the new ideas come in.



Many of the intellectual battles of the Edwardian period were fought in the periodical press, and, as ever, *Punch* had something to say about women’s changing role. Which is fine with us, because several of our speakers, including 2015 keynote Clare Horrocks, have a fair bit to say about *Punch*. Across both decades a striking theme of this year’s conference papers is the continuing search for identity, whether that involves reassessing the past or looking to the future. As the centenary commemorations continue, and at a time of worldwide uncertainty about the future, we will inevitably be thinking about the impact of WW1, and how women writers used literature to record and shape their own experience a century ago.

Attention Aspiring Researchers!

Has the work of ICVWW sparked an interest in becoming a researcher?

The deadline for CCCU’s **MPhil/PhD in English Literature** is looming!

Applications for October 2017 must be submitted by:

Wednesday 31st May 2017

For more specific details on course content, applications, and funding, visit
Canterbury Christ Church University’s website



Interview with a Guest

Name: Dr Mary Clai Jones

Title: Asst. Prof. of English & Writing Area Coordinator, Lincoln University, Missouri

What is your current research project?

My current book project, *Women on the Move: Navigating Gendered Spaces in Victorian Fiction*, demonstrates how heroines' manipulation of conventional objects of feminine culture departs from uses associated with Victorian marriage plots. Growing out of my dissertation, the book project shifts its focus from self-fashioning to women's manipulation of material culture to procure mobility. Rather than use feminine things to gain male attention, I propose that heroines employ femininity as a means to travel past thresholds of domestic space. Whereas recent Victorian literary and cultural criticism identifies female pleasure in the form of consumption and homosocial/erotic desire, my readings of Victorian fiction, from doll stories to the novels of Charlotte Brontë, Wilkie Collins, and Marie Corelli, consider that heroines find pleasure in utilizing gender to navigate spaces outside the home. The deployment of female objects—dolls, clothes, cosmetics, and jewellery—provides access to public realms of Victorian culture typically off limits for women. For example, the final chapter takes up *fin de siècle* constructions of gender in the public sphere by investigating how Marie Corelli designs a new model of the woman writer in one of her lesser-known works, *The Murder of Delicia*. Corelli revises associations of jewellery and clothing with Victorian marriage and heterosexual love, reimagining them as symbols of women's economic success.

What would be your dream research project?

While visiting family in Paris in 2014, I was writing a dissertation chapter on Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. I was so close to London (I'm American, and the journey from the U.S. to London is usually much greater than a few hours) that I booked a Eurostar trip, so I could trace Lucy Snowe's journey through the city. My pilgrimage inspired a dream project called *Women on the March*, which would explore the cultural and political history of gendered walking. The first chapter would examine Lucy Snowe's travels through *Villette* and conclude with a chapter on the International Women's March of 2017. My fantasy project would be a hybrid that brings together my research interests in women's mobility,

social geography, material culture, and my own gendered experiences moving through public space.

Critical sources you can't live without?

I find myself revisiting Caroline Levine's "Strategic Formalisms: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies" because her reading of the term separate spheres offers a flexibility I continue to find useful and applicable. While I would never call myself a formalist, her approach to form is surprising and fresh, in which I discover renewed pleasure and use upon each reading.

What is your favourite work by a Victorian female writer?

My favourite work by a Victorian woman writer is a draw between *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. I cannot get enough of them. In both books, the heroines traverse so many kinds of social and geographic space. I always feel transported by Brontë's brooding, misty, landscapes in each book as well.

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

Oscar Wilde, Marie Corelli, and Vernon Lee, because I imagine they are all sharp-witted conversationalists in their own right, but together they would be a veritable verbal circus. Critics either loved or hated Corelli with fierce vehemence, so talking with her in person would give me a sense of what in her personality inspired such loyalty and disdain. I'd love to ask them questions about their favourite books, foods, drinks, and places to visit.

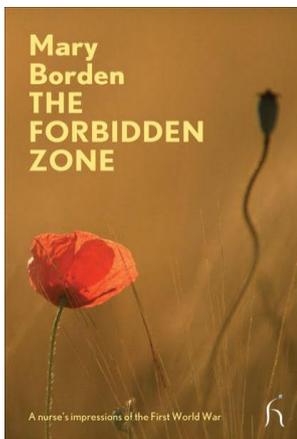


Books We Come Back To ...



Book Recommendations

In keeping with the upcoming ICVWW Fourth International Conference's move into the twentieth century, Lizzie Sheppard, postgraduate at CCCU, gives her recommendations for fictional and critical sources ...



The Forbidden Zone (1929)

Mary Borden

"You may think that 1929 is venturing a little *too* far into the long nineteenth century, but Mary Borden's memoir of her experience as a nurse on the frontline during WW1 was in fact first penned during her service in 1917. Its publication was delayed until 1929, perhaps due to its bluntly realistic accounts of the war, and was unfairly

overlooked until quite recently.

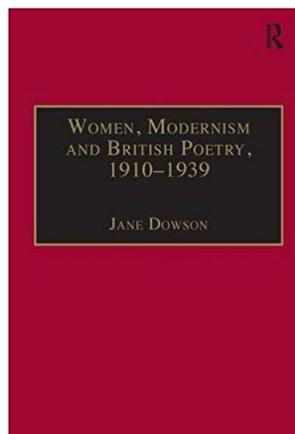
Borden is arguably one of the best and most affecting writers on the First World War, earning her place amongst more well-known male writers such as Brooke, Hardy, and Sassoon. Her unique position both as a female non-combatant with a distanced perspective and as a nurse with first-hand experiences of soldiers' suffering informs her distinctive, fragmentary depiction of WW1."

Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939: Resisting Femininity (2002)

Jane Dowson

"A handy critical source for those familiar with the *fin de siècle* and who are crossing the literary threshold into women's writing of the early 20th century.

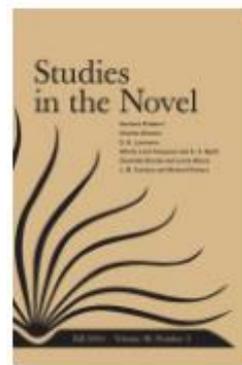
Dowson discusses the literary and political voice of overlooked women writers within the developments of Modernism, placing women's poems of 1910-1939 within their historical contexts, including WW1."



Recent Publications

"Reader, I did not even have coffee with him:' Lorrie Moore's Adaptation of *Jane Eyre* (1847) in *A Gate at the Stairs*" (2009)

Studies in the Novel, vol. 48 no. 3, 2016, pp. 343-363



Susan Civale

Civale's recent article explores Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs* (2009) as a neo-Victorian rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Available on Project Muse:
[doi:10.1353/sdn.2016.0040](https://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2016.0040)

Upcoming Publications

Keep an eye out for a new entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online.

Susan Civale's entry on Victorian writer Catherine Jane Hamilton will soon be released this year!



Upcoming Events Calendar

May 2017

Tues 16 May 2017	Editing Women: Reflections on Birkbeck International Women's Day Wikipedia Edit-a-thon	Birkbeck University of London, 43 Gordon Square, London Room G04 (7:40-9:00pm)
Thurs 18 May 2017	London & Southeast Romanticism Seminar: Reading 1817 – William Godwin, Mandeville	University of Greenwich Campus, London (6pm)
Fri 26 May 2017	George Eliot and Her Circle: A One-Day Conference	19th Century Studies Unit, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge

June 2017

Thurs 8 th June 2017	Medicine and Mystery: The Dark Side of Science in Victorian Fiction	National University of Ireland, Galway
Fri 16 June 2017	Women on the Verge: Transformations in Literature, Gender and Society	University of Manchester, Manchester
Tues 27 June 2017	Appropriate Forms: A One-Day Conference Celebrating Barbara Hardy	Institute of Education, London

July 2017

Mon 10-Tues 11 July 2017	The ICVWW Fourth International Conference: From Brontë to Bloomsbury	Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, Kent
Thurs 13-Sat 15 July 2017	Reputations, Legacies, Futures: Austen, Staël and their Contemporaries, 1817-2017	Chawton House Library, Alton, Hampshire
Wed 19-Fri 21 July 2017	VPFA 9th Annual Conference: Travel, Translation and Communication	Institute of English Studies, Senate House, London
Fri 21 July 2017	London & Southeast Romanticism Seminar: Reading 1817 – Jane Porter, The Pastor's Fire-Side	University of Greenwich Campus, London (6pm)

Call for Papers

Publication/Conference	Theme	Deadline	Information/Contact
Special Issue of <i>Victorians Journal of Culture and Literature</i>	"Women of the Press in the 1890s"	01/06/2017 (Notification: 01/08/2017) (Publication: Autumn 2017)	Submissions of 5-6000 words (more info) Send to: C.L.Horrocks@ljmu.ac.uk a.hunt@kent.ac.uk deborah.logan@wku.edu
Special Issue of <i>Victorian Poetry</i>	"Gender and Genre"	18/09/2017 (Publication: Summer 2019)	Submissions of 20-25 pages (more info) Send enquiries to: veronica.alfano@gmail.com lee.obrien@mq.edu.au

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Don't Miss the Next Issue of *The ICVWW Newsletter* – Out September 2017!