



The INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR Victorian Women Writers Newsletter



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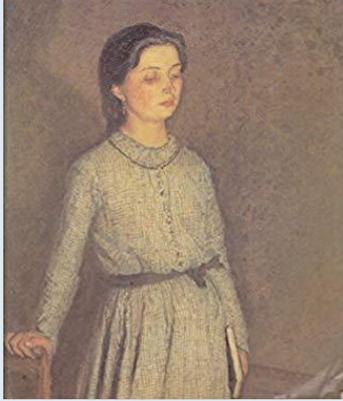


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Director's Cut By Carolyn Oulton

ViragoModernClassics

Sarah Grand The Beth Book

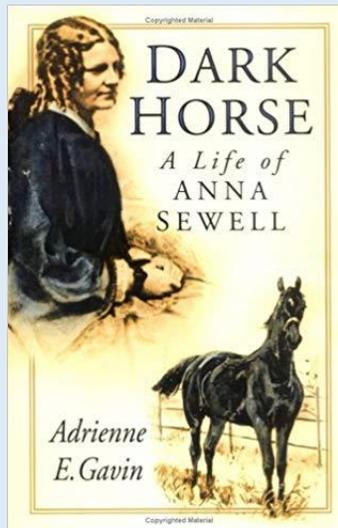


This issue might appropriately be called 'The Problem Page'. Partly because it features a number of women who made waves, caused trouble or were generally held up as BAD. Letitia Landon, we're looking at you. Sarah Grand, don't know what you're smirking about (but to say we're excited about your archive is an understatement). Ann Loveridge's recap of *The Beth Book* guilt trips us all into a trip to the library to rediscover Grand's genius. Elizabeth von Arnim, as we all know, couldn't get through Kent in a caravan without kicking up the dust. But as Jennifer Walker tells us, she really puts the 'enchanted' in April.

While we were at it we thought we'd address a few of your major worries. We bring you advice on any subject you care to name (give or take a few), from acting nothing like a lady in seaside hotels (or anywhere else), to spotting a man who's no good for you, or just how to cope when your friends are slightly more famous than you. Don't mention it - we're here to help.

Stay posted for updates on the #KentMaps project and on our further adventures in the Victorian seaside resorts of Thanet. Come to think of it, Josephine Butler has links with Ramsgate, although Laura Allen clearly thought she'd have more fun in Southampton as her conference review testifies!

On 30 March we'll also be raising a glass to Anna Sewell, arguably more sad than bad - 200 years old and still making us cry for a horse called Ginger. But right at this moment we feel another coffee coming on....



We Want To Hear From You!

Want to work with us? Got a great idea for a project? Want to delve in our archives? Inspired by one of our projects? Get in touch with the ICVWW team via [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ICVWW/) www.facebook.com/ICVWW/, via Twitter [@ICVWW](https://twitter.com/ICVWW), via email ICVWW@Canterbury.ac.uk or even better, by good old fashioned letter c/o Canterbury Christ Church University.



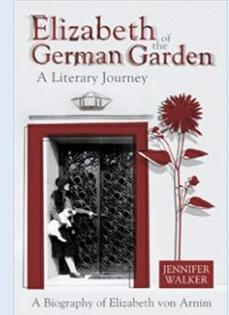
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Inside This Issue:

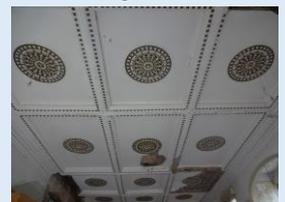


Out of the Archive, p.2



Interview with a Guest, p.3

Hot on our Reading List, p.4



ICVWW Antics and Events, p.5

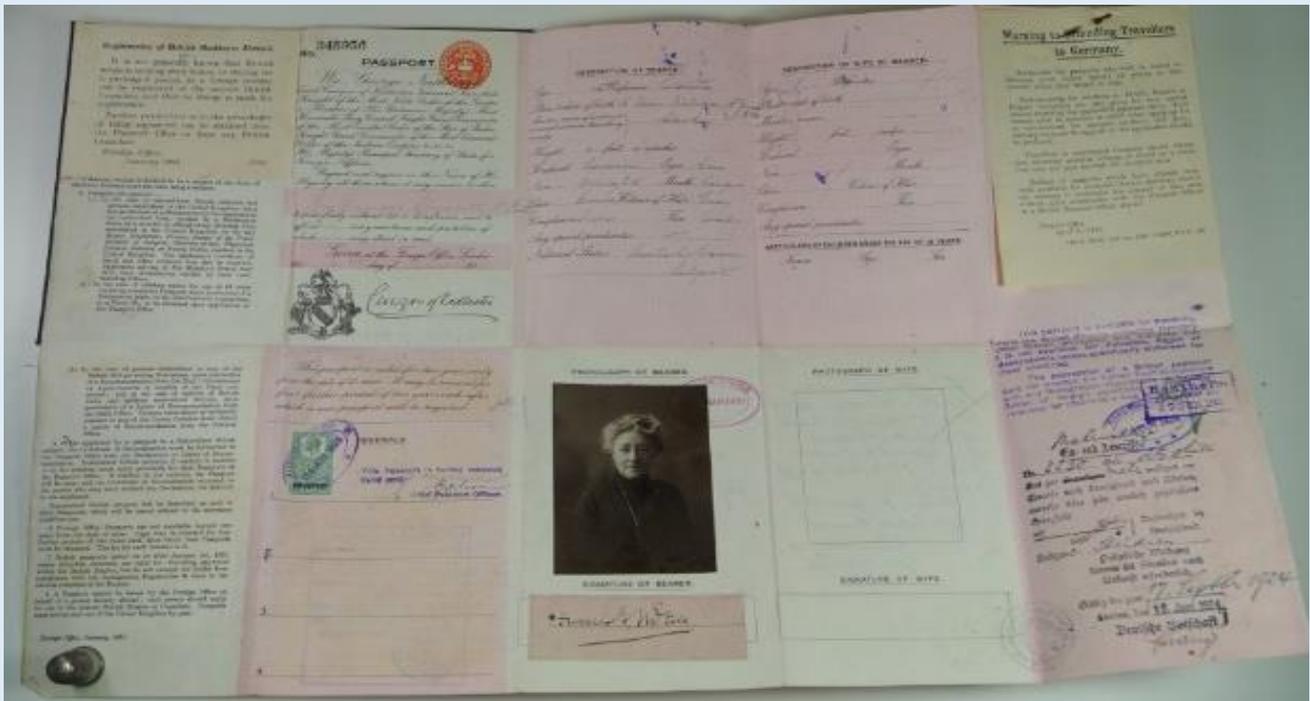


Profile of a Forgotten Writer, p.6

Conference Review, p.7

Dates for the Diary, p.8

Out of the Archive



The Sarah Grand Archive by Carolyn Oulton

It's a temperate afternoon in late summer, the university garden is looking lovely, and I'm talking to the Dean of Arts and Humanities about how you can spot a man with syphilis by looking at his face. According, that is, to Sarah Grand in 1893. And that, I explain wildly, is why we HAVE to get this archive for the library. *The Heavenly Twins* was probably the first female-authored novel to tackle this subject, the angelic heroine dies raving mad, there's some simply unmissable cross-dressing... And - as an afterthought - Grand went on to head up a branch of the Suffrage League in Tonbridge Wells. We can definitely claim her for Kent!

Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke, to give her her right name, was born in County Down, Ireland. At sixteen she made a disastrous marriage to Army surgeon David Chambers McFall. His work in the notorious lock hospitals (where alleged prostitutes were forcibly 'treated' for sexually transmitted diseases) was a major source of tension and the couple separated in 1890. While McFall died in 1898, Sarah Grand (as she became in 1893) enjoyed a successful career as author, suffragist and finally Lady Mayoress of Bath, dying in 1943.

From scandal to pillar of the institution? The archive itself suggests a more nuanced story. There are beautiful objects here: a monogrammed suitcase, a silver trinket box, a fruit knife... There are letters, almost all of them addressed to Sarah Grand rather than to Mrs McFall, many of them from her friend and admirer Gladys Singers-Bigger. There is correspondence with banks and insurance agencies. Grand discusses the sale of war bonds and in the 1930s puts together a detailed inventory of items to be distributed after her death. Ever the pragmatist, she authorises her executors to make what money they can from her published and unpublished letters and mss. Her newspaper cuttings include reviews of Hugh Walpole's novels, in among recipes for healthy salads. Her Boots Library notebook for recording books read and 'Books I would like to read' contains precisely three entries (to put this in context, *The Heavenly Twins* is more than 700 pages long). Nothing too shocking here - but look again. The stubbed remains of a smoked cigarette, a subtle reminder that this was the woman who gave us the term 'New Woman'. In capitals if you please.



Interview with a Guest

Name: Jennifer Walker

Current position: Biographer and happily retired music teacher.
Now enjoying life in Suffolk - walking, writing and being a grandmother.



What drew you to write a biography of Elizabeth von Arnim?

My work on von Arnim has a close relationship to my own life experiences - especially my study (in the 1970s) of literature and music with the OU, the time (15 years) I spent living in Switzerland, and my lifelong interest in landscapes, gardens and gardening. However, I have also recently undertaken further research on her birthplace location in Sydney, Australia - that is now posted on the Elizabeth von Arnim Society website:

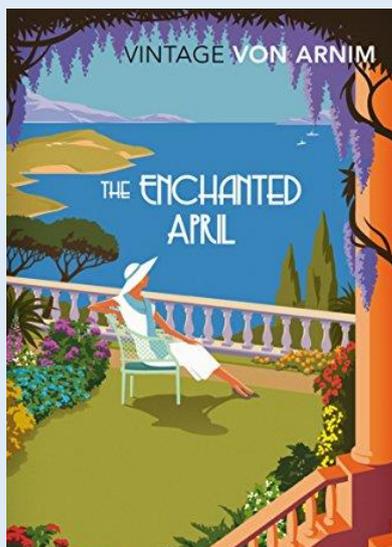
www.elizabethvonarnimsociety.org

How did you get started?

My biography of von Arnim (born Mary Annette Beauchamp) was begun about fifteen years ago, when, having discovered the actual location of Elizabeth's Chalet Soleil (near Crans Montana in Switzerland), I tried to piece together the story of its existence and realised that the only way to do this would be to write a new biography. This was really the starting point. As my work progressed, I was grateful to receive much support and encouragement from several von Arnim and Beauchamp family members as well as various like-minded scholars, particularly those I met through Lucy Cavendish College. Since the publication in 2013 of my book (Elizabeth of the German Garden – a Literary Journey), I have undertaken further study in the form of articles on the writing of von Arnim, and also worked on the fascinating story of Beauchamp family history (this is published on the KMS website in their archive section).

Were there any particular challenges?

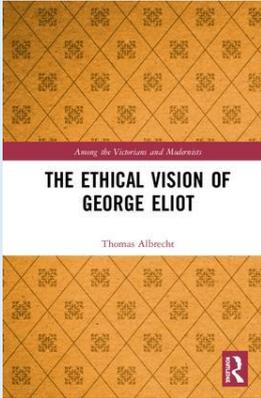
The main challenge has simply been facing a lack of knowledge or interest in von Arnim's work, even among those who take an interest in women's writing. It usually had to be identified by mentioning her two better known works: 'The Enchanted April', or 'Elizabeth and her German Garden', and then hoping for a positive reaction. It was useful to approach any publicity by means of the greater current interest in von Arnim's friends, especially Forster, Wells, and her younger cousin, Katherine Mansfield. In fact, my study of von Arnim has often had to progress in parallel with work on Mansfield; the Katherine Mansfield Society has been most helpful with this. It is ironic though that in the days when von Arnim and Mansfield knew each other in the early 1920s, von Arnim (known then always as 'Elizabeth') was the better known.



What's next?

As part of the Elizabeth von Arnim Society's event in Cambridge on 6 June, I will be giving a brief illustrated talk based around von Arnim's gathering of fascinating friends at her Chalet Soleil in the summer of 1920. Other future plans remain uncertain, but I intend to follow up various Elizabeth-related lines of interest and research, and also aim to try to organise all the material I have gathered over the years to make it accessible to other scholars. Now in my mid-70s, I enjoy reading, listening to music and walking in the Suffolk countryside with my golden retriever dog. I also hope to continue as far as possible with my work for the Elizabeth von Arnim Society, which I helped to set up in 2016.

Hot On Our Reading List....

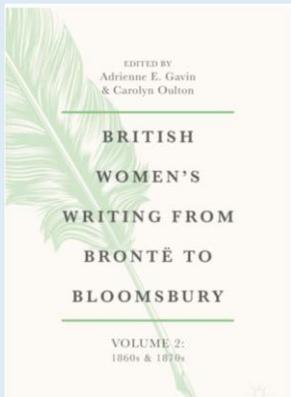
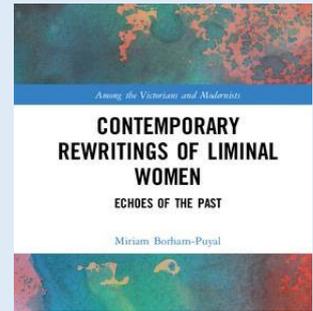


The Ethical Vision of George Eliot

Thomas Albrecht analyses Eliot's fiction, essays and letters to consider how her ethics developed and changed over the course of her career. Considering narrative ethics, realism, separateness, difference and moralism amongst other themes in novels including *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* and *Adam Bede*, the study is due to be published by Routledge in February 2020 and is now available to pre-order in hardback [online](#).

Contemporary Rewritings of Liminal Women: Echoes of the Past

Miriam Borham-Puyal considers women's liminal representations in C18th and C19th literature through to modern video games, films and graphic novels. She explores depictions of vampires, prostitutes, detectives and 'other' women through feminocentric discourses. Available now to pre-order from [Routledge](#) – also released in February.



British Women's Writing from Brontë to Bloomsbury, Volume 2: 1860s and 1870s

Ok, there may be a little bias in this choice as the series is edited by ICVWW's very own Carolyn Oulton and Adrienne Gavin! The essays in this volume stem from the second ICVWW conference which took place back in 2015 and features Braddon (of course), Ellen Wood, George Eliot, Rhoda Broughton, Eliza Lynn Linton, Anna Sewell, Elizabeth Gaskell – and some favourite authors you haven't even met yet...

What We've Been Reading By Ann Loveridge

Sarah Grand's novel, *The Beth Book. Being the Study of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, A Woman of Genius* (1897) explores the constraints facing late nineteenth-century women and how these issues might be mastered. Echoing the interest in autobiographical fiction of the mid nineteenth-century, the novel opens the day before Beth's birth, and explores whether she will be 'born ... a child of light' (10)¹ - suggesting promise. Grand admits that she 'used some incidents of [her] life' in the novel but *The Beth Book* is not wholly autobiographical (Randolph 78²). Like Beth, Grand's education was compromised in favour of her brothers, and both women married medical men with links to the local Lock Hospitals, in which suspected prostitutes could be forcibly detained and physically examined under the Contagious Diseases Act (1864). Neither Grand nor Beth entertained feminine self-sacrifice and demanded a new relationship between the sexes that embraced progressive social and sexual freedoms.

Frances Elizabeth Clark McFall (1854-1943) reinvented herself as the New Woman writer Madame Sarah Grand, who became a leading figure in late nineteenth-century social purity feminism. *The Beth Book* predominantly engages with a woman's place in society and Elaine Showalter defines the novel as a 'nineteenth-century portrait of the artist as a young woman' (xi). Grand protested against gendered double-standards in all their guises – a timely topic against the current backdrop of the #MeToo movement, alongside the cultural diversity emerging from the Brexit debate – Beth's father had a 'drop of the dark in him' (04). Although a rebel from childhood, throughout the novel Beth was 'afflicted with [an] inability to speak at critical times' (14) but the words of Beth's mentor, Sir George Galbraith, provide a fitting analysis as to why Grand's writing is relevant to a current readership. In discussing Beth's writing he declares, 'I like a long book myself when it is rich in thought. The characters become companions then, and I miss them when we are forced to part' (307). The late-Victorian feminist voices emerging from *The Beth Book* create an ongoing dialogue that still has much to offer current scholarship and to this end, Grand, and Beth, provide the perfect companions.

1. Grand, Sarah. *The Beth Book*. Intro Elaine Showalter. London: Virago. 1897

2. Randolph, Lyssa. 'The Child and the "Genius": New Science in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*. *Victorian Review*. October 2000. Vol. 26:1 64-91.

ICVWW Antics and Events



Risk Assessment in Ramsgate: ICVWW checks in to the Granville by Carolyn Oulton

‘So shall we have coffee first or would you rather go straight to the hotel?’

Not a standard Monday morning email for ICVWW either. But I am arranging an initial meeting with Rob Kenyon, the man behind Ramsgate’s Heritage Lab, to talk about their campaign to save ‘Pugin’s Chambers’ at the Granville Hotel. [<http://heritagelab.org.uk/projects/pugins-chambers/>]

We meet outside the Granville with the customary British ritual of looking questioningly at each other and tentatively muttering a name from around 10 yards away. He later admits he recognised me because he had the sense to look up my photo the night before. I happen to be face blind, but it’s 8:45 in the morning and who else would be standing on the pavement dressed for work but carrying what looks like a burglar’s toolkit?

Two minutes later we are standing in a stunning but dilapidated Victorian bar, tantalisingly lit by our enormous yellow torches. I am only yawning, I hasten to explain, because Rob is legally obliged to talk me through the health and safety. I remark cheerfully that this will be the only time he bores me all morning, and I’m right. In the course of our travels – and believe me, the Granville is huge – we take in a ballroom, what may possibly have been a sauna, and a stunning mural, as well as possibly the most ornate fireplace I have ever seen in my life. Used as a military hospital by the Canadian government during WW1, the hotel still has the downstairs storage shelves, a reminder of the very different uses to which the building has been put since its 1860s heyday.

Florence Nightingale said of the Granville that it was ‘too London-y, and I don’t like acting the “lady”’. Punch editor F. C. Burnand described the cuisine as ‘fairly satisfactory’. All I can say is that I would act anything you like to have a chance of staying here, and Burnand clearly hadn’t set foot in the beautifully appointed kitchen.

We opt for coffee at Townleys, where there is electric light and rather less dust. But one day in the not too distant future, I can see myself sitting drinking a cappuccino in a room at the Granville.



Guest Seminar by Alyson Hunt

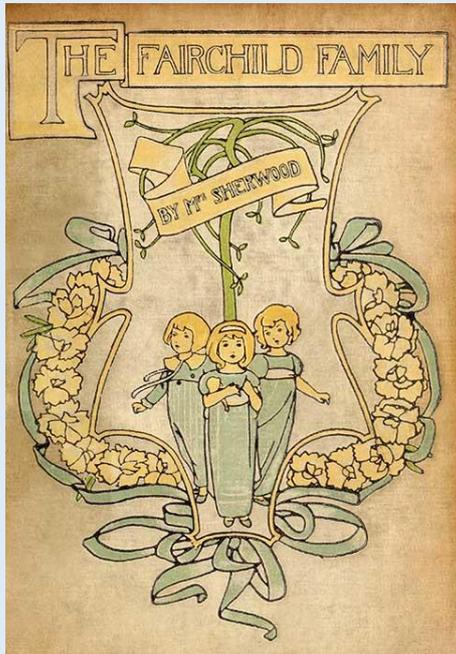


Lucasta Miller brought us an early Christmas treat with her guest seminar based on her recently published book *L.E.L. — The Lost Life and Scandalous Death of Letitia Elizabeth Landon, the celebrated Female Byron* (March 2019). In her paper “Letitia Landon: Portraiture and the Slippery Subject in Post-Byronic Literary Culture,” Lucasta highlighted Landon’s popularity as a writer in the 1820s and 30s before her life was tragically cut short under questionable circumstances at the tender age of 36. By all accounts, Landon found her immense fame disorientating and struggled to maintain the reputation of an innocent teenager which she courted through her poetry column. This was all too apparent in the illuminating series of portraits which Lucasta highlighted, in which Landon’s image was subtly infused with signifiers of immorality and sexual subtexts.

Landon’s vulnerability in the hands of her publisher and her three illegitimate children were subtly covered up by her memoirists, who opted to construct a public barrier to defend her memory. Lucasta’s talk beguiled us all, raising some interesting questions about the agency of biographers and portraitists and leaving us with the sense that Landon’s genius is irrevocably bound up with her unseen personal struggles.

Profile of a Forgotten Writer

Here at ICVWW Towers we are often asked for information about writers who have faded into relative obscurity. In this feature we will profile some of those authors and ask for your corrections and contributions, so do let us know if you can shed any light on our featured authors or if there is anyone you'd like us to investigate! This issue we focus on Mrs Sherwood in response to a Facebook request from Milagros Eiroa de la Puente.



Mary Martha Sherwood, widely published as Mrs. Sherwood

Researched by Gemma Aldridge

Beginning her career at just seventeen when she published her first novel, *The Traditions* (1794), it seems that Sherwood was destined for literary success from an early age. This was only the first of many: throughout her lifetime she wrote hundreds of books. Literally hundreds – far too many to count! Although she wrote both adult and children's fiction alike, her most famous works *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818-49) and *Little Henry and his Bearer* (1815), were both works of children's literature. The latter was “translated into French, German, Spanish, Hindustani, Chinese and Sinhalese” (Demers¹) within her lifetime alone, an undeniably impressive achievement. And yet she is near unheard of today, a fact we can't quite fathom.

You don't have to read the work of Sherwood very long to get a sense of her character; just two pages into the novel and we find lengthy religious paragraphs. Flick on a few more pages, and you realise that the rest of the book is much the same: with chapter titles like 'Man Before the Fall' and 'Story on the Commandments', Sherwood's agenda is stamped across the page plain and clear for all to see. Even her pen name, the prim and proper 'Mrs Sherwood', presents her almost like a Sunday School teacher... which she was, by the way.

Sherwood didn't just express her religious convictions within her writing: she lived them from day to day. Living in India she and her husband “gave time and thought and strength and enthusiasm to the teaching of the heathen, the care of orphans, and the general religious life of the country” (Conch²) in what the Gentleman's Magazine referred to as “her zealous labours in the cause of religion”². The Sherwoods even went so far as to adopt two orphans themselves, adding to their already large family.

She continued writing all the way up until her death at age seventy-seven and is said to have “preserved a religious cheerfulness to the last” (Gentleman's Magazine³). In the years after her death, her novels lost popularity due to the changing landscape of children's literature, which were becoming less focused on reinforcing Christian values and moral lessons in a didactic manner. Sherwood's style was increasingly viewed as patronising and barbaric. Interestingly, in more recent years Sherwood has attracted attention as a travel writer, having written about her time spent in India.

It's fair to say that few people have heard of *The History of the Fairchild Family*. Fewer still could name its author. While Mary Martha Sherwood hasn't quite sunk into the abyss of unknown authors yet, she isn't a celebrated part of the canon either. And considering her impressive literary output and her popularity in her time, we have to ask ourselves, why is that? Perhaps this is something we should strive to change? Because whether you love or hate her literature, there is one thing that we can all agree on: to call Sherwood “a strong character” (Conch) is something of an understatement.

1. Demers, Patricia, 'Sherwood [née Butt], Mary Martha (1775–1851), children's writer and educationist.' ODNB.

2. Conch, Lillian Quiller. 'Mrs Sherwood.' *The Bookman*, Vol. 38, No. 225, London, 1910, pp. 127-128.

3. Unknown, 'Mrs. Sherwood.' Nov. 1851, *The Gentleman's Magazine: and historical review*, ed. John Gough Nichols, ProQuest, p. 548.

Conference Review

By Laura Allen



Romance, Revolution and Reform Conference
(15th January 2020) University of Southampton

As the sun finally peeked its face from beyond the stormy clouds that had welcomed me on that dreary Wednesday in January to Southampton, I took a quiet stroll around the university campus, my mind abuzz with new and fascinating information. From English women's campaigning to Keatsian Romanticism, it was a day packed to the brim with diverse and interdisciplinary papers. I found the perfect spot to sit and muse a while, as the little stream gently trickled its way past me...

As I reflected on the women writers I had been introduced to, I was overwhelmingly aware of just how much we owed them. Women, for instance, like Josephine Butler, the social reformer who campaigned for women's education and suffrage and against coverture and the Contagious Diseases Act. Without *The Journal of the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth Century Research* I, at the very least, would still be woefully ignorant. Indeed, without the open and encouraging atmosphere of the academic conference many of the Victorian period's key figures might just fall to the wayside...

...figures like Mary Eliza Haweis, who, despite her somewhat modest reputation when sat alongside Keats and Conan Doyle, managed to hold her own in the 'Reform, Charity, and Campaigning' panel. With just a little help from me (forever Haweis's number one fan!) her works shone. It was beyond thrilling to generate a genuinely interested discussion about my little-known research topic.

With papers on postal reform, and urban lighting, there really was something for everyone, which is testimony to the inclusive nature of the triple R journal. The Open Access publication began with a set of principles that have seen it publish (as of this month) two issues! The third issue is currently seeking papers on 'reform'. Its commitment to Postgraduate and Early Career Researchers has never wavered and it was a genuine delight to attend the conference and watch as the Journal passed hands to a new editor in chief!

We wish them the very best for what is undoubtedly an even brighter future!

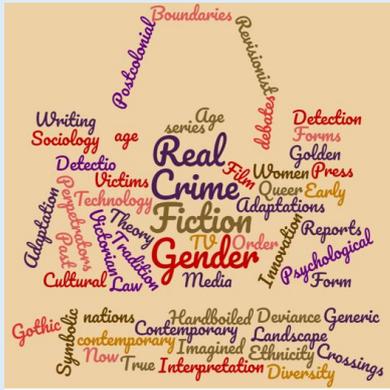


(Did I mention how pretty the stream was?)

Romance, Revolution and Reform Journal

Following their recent successful conference, Romance, Revolution and Reform seek submission for Issue 3 of their open access journal. Papers of 4-8000 words are invited on any aspect of reform during the long-nineteenth century. Potential topics could include reform legislation, education, politics, philosophy, literary and print culture, gender and sexuality, religion and dissent and (dis)enfranchisement. The deadline for articles is **12th April 2020**. More information about submission is available on their website at www.rrrjournal.com and you can also download previous issues. Email RRR@soton.ac.uk for queries.

CFPs and Events for 2020



Captivating Criminality 7: Crime Fiction: Memory, History and Revaluation (2-4th July 2020) Bath Spa University

Building upon and developing ideas and themes from the previous six successful conferences, Memory, History and Revaluation will examine the ways in which Crime Fiction as a genre necessarily incorporates elements of the past – the past in general and its own past, both in terms of its own generic developments and also in respect of true crime and historical events.

Please send 200 word proposals to Professor Fiona Peters, Dr Ruth Heholt and Dr Eric Sandberg, to captivatingcriminality7@gmail.com by **15th February**

The Neo-Victorian and the Late-Victorian: Texts, Media, Politics (3-4 Sept 2020) University of Brighton

This conference explores the ways in which the late-Victorian is re-envisioned and reconceptualised within the neo-Victorian via neo-Victorian literature, steampunk, media archaeology, fashion, documentaries and period dramas, among others.

Please send 300-word abstracts accompanied by a 90-word bio to conference organisers Victoria Margree and Aris Mousoutzanis at neovictorian@brighton.ac.uk by **27 April 2020**.



BAVS 2020 (20-22 July) University of Birmingham

For the first time in its history, the conference will not have a theme. Submissions invited for papers, panels (3-4 speakers) and roundtables (5-7 speakers) from across the disciplines that address any aspect of Victorian Studies, its past, and its future.

Submissions to two new Forums: the Digital Forum and the Pedagogy Forum. The Digital Forum are also encouraged.

Proposals via the BAVS submission portal on their website by **1 March 2020**.

Maternal Bodies in the Long Nineteenth Century (21 April 2020) The Foundling Museum, London

Maternal experiences were often central to the lives of women in the long nineteenth century, yet to date the everyday lived experience of the maternal body in this period has received relatively limited attention. This one-day symposium seeks to bring together researchers from a variety of disciplines working on the subject of the maternal body from a diverse range of perspectives. Abstracts (250 words) and short biographies (150 words) should be submitted to the organisers at jessica.cox@brunel.ac.uk / holmes.v.j@gmail.com by **20 February 2020**.



Women Writers and Social/Political Activism: A special issue of *Women: A Cultural Review*

This special issue explores the relationship between women's writing and social and political activism, from the 1890s to the 1940s. The collection will be comprised of a series of case studies, with a focus on non-canonical and ephemeral archival materials. Prospective contributors are invited to submit a 500-word abstract and a brief bio to Lise Shapiro Sanders (lsanders@hampshire.edu) and Carey Snyder (snyderc3@ohio.edu).

Deadline for Submissions: August 1, 2020.