

Hard Times for the Nineteenth Century and for These Times

Postgraduate Conference 2024

TLC123, Durham University, Wednesday, 24 April 2024

Register by April 12: <https://forms.office.com/e/gCTKvajW33>

9:30 Registration

9:45 Introduction

10:00 Hard Times in Nineteenth-century Economics, Law, and Medicine

Jacqueline Smart (Northumbria), “The Gateshead Poisoning Case: Ralph Crow, William Naylor, John Milnes Favell and the Tensions between Coroners and Magistrates over “Necessary Inquests” in the 1860s”

Adam O’Taylor (Durham), “The Church of England’s Financial Profits from the Deadly Business of Nineteenth-century Coal Mining”

David Labastida (Toronto), “Disease and Medical Uncertainty: Cinchona and the Battle of German Doctors Against Fever, 1800-1840”

11:00 Tea and Coffee

11:30 Writing the Nineteenth Century: Gender, Technology, and Ecology

Anna Ferràndez López (Universitat Pompeu Fabra), “Looking at Life from a Top-floor Window: The “New Woman” in Amy Levy’s *The Romance of a Shop* (1888)”

James Inkster (Newcastle), “Changing Futures by Ourselves: *Villette* and Ecological Re-Direction”

Mario Realini (St. Andrews) “Artery or Vein? French Perspectives on Life along the River Thames, 1840–1879”

Francis Brown (Exeter), “Dark Nights as Hard Times? Modernity, Technology, and Peripherality in Late-Nineteenth-Century Sherborne (Dorset)”

13:00 Lunch (provided)

14:30 Transnational Representations in the Victorian Era

Paolo D’Indinosante (Sapienza/Silesia), “Neo-Victorian Nagra: Rethinking the Victorian Empire in Twenty-First-Century Poetry”

Ben Thompson (Northumbria), “Painted Caricature and Humorous Images in the Long Nineteenth Century: ‘Fine hot joints, greedy monopolists and a financier’s dupes’”

Caroline Gill (Northumbria), “Christopher Dresser and Meiji Japan: Interrogating the Validity of Victorian Connoisseurship and its Post-colonial Context”

15:30 Tea and Coffee

16:00 Keynote Lecture: Dr Ella Dzelzainis (Newcastle)

17:00 Close

Hard Times in Nineteenth-century Economics, Law, and Medicine

The Gateshead Poisoning Case: Ralph Crow, William Naylor, John Milnes Favell and the tensions between Coroners and Magistrates over “Necessary Inquests” in the 1860s

Jacqueline Smart, Northumbria University

In 1839 the strained relations between county coroners and magistrates, who had power to determine whether or not to pay coroners’ fees and expenses for inquests, prompted Thomas Wakely MP, to describe coroners as “standing between the person of authority and the people”.

Inquests highlighted industrial risks and social abuses affecting the poorest in society. Magistrates could suppress the holding of inquests by refusing to pay coroners’ fees.

John Milnes Favell was the first elected coroner for the Chester Ward of Durham, which included urban Gateshead. He served from 1843 to 1873, during a period of immense social, economic, industrial and political change which affected the performance and autonomy of his Office. His obituary in the Newcastle Journal on 26 December 1882 stated “In Mr Favell his poorer neighbours and tenants have lost a kind and sincere friend”.

On 28th July 1859 Ralph Crow, a veterinary smith, died of the effects of excess alcohol consumed in Mr Liddell’s spirit shop in Gateshead. An inquest was held by Favell but the Magistrates ex post facto deemed the inquest as not necessary and withheld his fees.

6 months later, on 4th January 1860 William Naylor, a puddler, died of the effects of excess alcohol consumed in the same spirit shop, in remarkably similar circumstances, with evidence that he had been plied with alcohol by a companion and those serving continued to do so when it was clear that he had had enough. The death was reported to Favell who publicly declined to hold an inquest on the basis that the magistrates would deem it not necessary and withhold payment.

This decision, where the inquest would have addressed concerns about the conduct of the companion, the proprietor and staff of the spirit shop and the quality of the alcohol sold and social responsibility, caused outrage, public meetings, approaches to Favell to reconsider, approaches to the Magistrates, letters to the papers, and eventually a petition by inhabitants of Gateshead to the Home Secretary asking him to intervene.

This paper focuses on the Naylor case and its fall-out, to illustrate the tensions between nineteenth century coroners and magistrates, and, by extension, the impact upon the lives and deaths of ordinary people.

Biography

I am Jacky Smart, an Assistant Professor at Northumbria University. My background is as a barrister called in 1981 (my postgraduate qualification). I practiced at the Chancery Bar until recently and am still a member of Trinity Chambers. I joined Northumbria to teach full time on the Bar Course and some undergraduate teaching. However, I have now also moved into academia, researching 19th century legal history; at present the role of a 19th century coroner in his social context.

The Church of England's Financial Profits from the Deadly Business of Nineteenth-century Coal Mining

Adam O'Taylor, Durham University

This paper looks at some of the unequal settlements caused by nineteenth-century coal mining in North East England, with a particular focus on deaths from mining disasters and financial profits that accrued to the Church of England.

Quite how important church lands were to the development of the coal industry is often elided in the historiography. However, the Lord Bishop of Durham and Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral dominate the 1843-1852 Bell royalty maps to a quite remarkable degree. Whilst the Church faced religious challenges and structural upheaval, its own *Hard Times*, it also made substantial financial profits from one of the nineteenth-century's most deadly industrial activities.

Much has been written looking at how so much wealth could be generated within a region, but that region be left so economically deprived today. Very little has been done to point to where stocks of mining wealth exist today that are directly drawn from landscapes of historic inequality. Income and capital will be followed as forensically as possible through the accounts of Durham Cathedral, the Prince Bishops and later the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, from the 1820s until the church was compensated on nationalisation in 1942 as the largest owner of coal royalties in the country.

The research is taken from an interdisciplinary PhD in history and theology, which looks at the networks of entanglement between key actors, including the church, and the connection of their ideas to the wider colonial project. This was the period of most explosive growth for the coal industry; to what extent do we find an anthropology which was dehumanising, in which lives and safety were important, but insufficiently important to restrain the pursuit of profit?

Biography

Adam O'Taylor is a Northern Bridge-funded PhD student at Durham University working on a thesis with the title "Of their time? Empire state of mind on the great northern coalfield: Coloniality, inequities, and the call for reparations". He has a Research MA in Theology and Ethics from Durham University and a BA in History and Economics from Oxford University.

Disease and Medical Uncertainty: Cinchona and the Battle of German Doctors Against Fever, 1800-1840

David Labastida, University of Toronto

In his groundbreaking work, “The Great Divergence,” Pomeranz illustrates how maritime colonies and extensive Atlantic trade were instrumental in Europe's material ascension and subsequent divergence from the rest of the world in the 19th century. However, European prosperity also brought forth challenges and setbacks. The vulnerability of German states to diseases like cholera in the 1830s highlighted the risks posed by rapid disease spread through trade ties with Britain, Russia, and Austria. During this era, febrile diseases prompted German doctors and pharmacologists to develop new solutions to a medical uncertainty surrounding illnesses associated with poverty and vagrancy. Cinchona, a botanical specimen from Peru, emerged as a prominent anti-febrile remedy in German medical literature and pharmacopeias. How did cinchona become ubiquitous among German doctors between 1800 and 1840?

I argue that Cinchona gained significance in German anti-febrile research due to Germany's trade and intellectual connections with European colonial commodities and imperial scientific concepts. I show that British, French, and Spanish colonies provided Germany with access to various Cinchona specimens, cultivated under exploitative conditions and distributed through capitalist trade networks. This accessibility spurred German research into the varying efficacy of different Cinchona species in treating febrile diseases.

Furthermore, I argue that German cinchona-related research proliferated as it symbolized an epistemological domination over nature, with attempts to engineer Cinchona's plant life as a techno-scientific tool against disease. This endeavor reflected a desire to create idealized, healthy German societies by chemically manipulating plant life to combat disease-inducing environments. I show that these notions resonated strongly within the German medical community, influenced by cultural beliefs in vitalist forces within both human bodies and plants. For this paper, I examine medical treatises produced by German doctors that exhibit their philosophical conceptions of health, disease, and healing, as well as the technical processes involved in experimenting with Cinchona.

Biography

David is currently a PhD candidate in German and Transnational History at the History Department. David's dissertation investigates the intersection of botanical knowledge and law in an imperial and global context. In particular, David is interested in understanding how Prussia, Bavaria, and the Austrian Empire engaged in projects of informal imperialism in Brasil and Mexico through scientific expeditions and overseas legal practices during the XIX century. David works under the supervision of Jennifer Jenkins, William Nelson, Kevin Coleman, and Eric Jennings. He can conduct research in Spanish, English, German, French, and Portuguese.

Writing the Nineteenth Century: Gender, Technology, and Ecology

Looking at Life from a Top-floor Window: The “New Woman” in Amy Levy’s *The Romance of a Shop* (1888)

Anna Ferràndez López, Universitat Pompeu Fabra

While the Lorimer sisters unprecedentedly manage to open their own photography studio after the death of their father, they do not enjoy the same liberties as the men around them. Instead, their only taste of freedom comes from staring out their drawing room’s window. Introducing the struggles of the “New Woman” in the late nineteenth century, it becomes apparent that employment alone would not grant women the independence that they coveted, nor easy access to the male public sphere. Moreover, as single and unsupervised young middle-class women in London, the question of propriety haunts the protagonists of *The Romance of a Shop* (1888) until the very end of the novel. Gertrude, the second oldest sister, soon realises that their new circumstances may result in social ostracism and cannot fully embrace her new role as an autonomous and self-sufficient woman. Her inner turmoil leads us to wonder whether the “New Woman” can also love and be loved like other women and if the advancements that women achieved in the working field hindered their positions towards what had never been a problem before: marriage. By examining the role of the Lorimer sisters’ “top-floor window”, this paper will present how the economic freedom gained by late modern women did not immediately confer them access to the “male” world and how the pressure and expectations upon the “New Woman” may have kept her away from her real desires.

Biography

Anna Ferràndez López is a PhD student at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. Her current research explores the ‘woman at the window’ topic in nineteenth-century English literature and the nuances attached to this motif. Anna’s previous research has dealt with British women writers, women’s education, and the connection between Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Jane Austen’s novels

Changing Futures by Ourselves: *Villette* and Ecological Re-Direction

James Inkster, Newcastle University

One of the problems nineteenth-century authors faced in the present was the problem of the future. In particular, they became aware of the potential for an ecological disaster; figures like John Ruskin (1884) watched the looming storm clouds, and geologists like Robert Chambers (1844) warned that extinction was a real possibility.

Shawna Ross, in her recent monograph *Charlotte Brontë at the Anthropocene* (2020), finds that Brontë's book *Villette* (1853) explores how humans might adjust their behaviour to prevent such crises. She writes that the narrator (Lucy Snowe) is confronted by a series of 'sudden revelations that her actions and material traces will shape the future' (5), and Ross displays how Lucy then tries to interact beneficially with nature – nurturing a garden and contending with a storm. What Ross's reading largely neglects, however, and what my present paper will address, is the way that *Villette's* form and genre is specifically entangled with its ecological arguments.

Brontë's book is a fictional autobiography. A fictional autobiography is usually told by the narrator *after* the events have taken place, but the reader is presented with an account of those events in an incremental sequence and the information accumulates gradually, so that every page alters and realters our perception of the narrator who is waiting at the end of the story. As Heidi L. Pennington (*Creating Identity*, 2018) observes, a fictional autobiographer is constantly evolving in a cycle of 'self-making processes' (5): instead of being pre-determined from the start, they are constructed as we move throughout their book.

Fusing Ross's ecocriticism with Pennington's formalism, I argue that Brontë's text hints at analogies between this subgenre's on-going production of the narrator and the potential re-direction of our ecological fate, demonstrating that we *can* transform the future through a careful and continued modulation of the now.

Biography

James Inkster is a PhD student at Newcastle University. His thesis is provisionally entitled *Self-Preservation: Ageing, Extinction, and the Fictional Autobiography*, and it explores how nineteenth-century authors use the fictional autobiography to wrestle with the methods and morality of self-preservation and collective survival. His research interests include Victorian poetry and memory, ecocriticism, the form of auto/biography, and nineteenth-century archaeology.

Artery or Vein? French Perspectives on Life along the River Thames, 1840–1879

Mario Realini, University of St. Andrews

In their combined visual and narrative work, *London: A Pilgrimage*, Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrold defined the Thames as London's artery. With this epithet, they emphasised its role as a vital conduit, feeding the city upstream economically and downstream with cleaner waters. Absorbed from the river, other French observers witnessed Victorian London and left behind, from various perspectives and at different times, valuable accounts of diverse nature. The Thames, inevitably, became protagonist of such accounts, along with considerations on its filthy waters, hygiene, and environmental transformation.

Literary historian Hippolyte Taine and the anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus depicted a river that had become a record of the Londoners' poor hygienic habits. Particularly, the social role of the polluted river emerged: beyond the concerns about its impact on health ignited by Snow's discovery, Taine and Reclus portrayed the resignation felt within London society due to constant exposure to filthy waters. In this sense, the Thames, rather than an artery bringing oxygen to the body, resembles a vein, devoid of its nurturing function and instead carrying away used nourishment.

In this presentation, I intend to discuss the different roles attributed to the Thames, particularly focusing on the conception of hygiene and the development of environmental concerns, in the writings of French commentators. These will include observations from Frédéric Le Play and Flora Tristan, other than Doré, Taine, and Reclus.

Biography

A former student of the University of Milan, Sciences Po Lille, and Paris-Sorbonne, I obtained a MLitt in Global Social and Political Thought from St Andrews one year ago. Hoping to return to academia in the near future, I now work in science communication, while engaging in independent historical research

Dark Nights as Hard Times? Modernity, Technology, and Peripherality in Late-Nineteenth-Century Sherborne (Dorset)

Francis Brown, University of Exeter

One of the most pervasive ways in which discourses around the ‘hard times’ of the long nineteenth century have been structured is in terms of a cultural slippage between ‘the country and the city,’ largely since the publication of Raymond Williams’ influential study of the topic in 1973. In particular, a related binary between the modern city and the backward country has continued to underpin studies of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century English society, often building on the thesis of the so-called ‘English Industrial Decline’ popular in the late-twentieth century. A recent critical turn, originating partly in British landscape history but now gaining wider popularity, has seen the problematisation of this binary, and a marked tendency to use ‘modernity’ more as a method than as a category for cultural analysis. In this paper, taking the provincial town of Sherborne in Dorset as a case study, I will look at one particular infrastructure through which ‘modernisation’ was enacted—street lighting—as a window onto the experience of modernity in the later nineteenth century, offering a narrative of gradual and erratic, rather than consistent and linear, improvement of this public convenience, but also questioning the extent to which the lived reality of this ‘half-light’ was necessarily felt as backward. I will engage in particular with the theme of ‘peripherality,’ which Avner Wishnitzer has recently identified as the primary mode in which inadequate street lighting was experienced in late-Ottoman Jerusalem, encouraging similar studies focussing on other provincial centres. This paper will therefore shed light on the use of technology as a yardstick for ‘progress,’ and the consequent experience of modernity, or not, as a geography of inequality; as a geography of ‘hard times.’

Biography

Originally from Kent, Francis is a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter, researching Modernity, Heritage, and Historical Culture in Provincial English Society, 1850-1944, focussing on Sherborne and Sherborne Abbey in Dorset.

Transnational Representations in the Victorian Era

Neo-Victorian Nagra: Rethinking the Victorian Empire in 21st-Century Poetry

Paolo D'Indinosante, *Sapienza University of Rome & University of Silesia in Katowice*

Daljit Nagra's three Faber poetry collections all appropriate Victorian literature and culture at same time as they grapple with the difficult heritage of British colonialism and other crucial questions that have long concerned scholars of postcolonialism. A relatively early and oft-cited example of his engagement with a Victorian literary text is the title-poem from his first Faber volume *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* (2007), which rethinks Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' (1867), but this is certainly not the sole instance of Nagra's Neo-Victorianism. And yet, criticism on this aspect of his poetry has usually been confined precisely to the discussion of the relationship between his award-winning 'Look We Have Coming to Dover!' and Arnold's poem. Even so, neither this nor any other of Nagra's various reworkings of Victorian literature and culture appear to have been interpreted in the light of the well-established critical category of 'Neo-Victorian', which, in fact, continues to be only rarely applied to poetry (Morton 2024). In an attempt to highlight a meaningful but largely neglected thread of Neo-Victorian experimentation in Nagra's poetry, my paper will particularly focus on his creative engagement with the writing of Elizabeth Sarah Mazuchelli, Flora Annie Steel and Rudyard Kipling in *Tippoo Sultan's Incredible White-Man-Eating Tiger Toy-Machine!!!* (2012). Building upon John McLeod's recent analysis of 'Meditations on the British Museum' (2017) as a text in which Nagra revisits 'the past to confront and contest the colonial present by striking up new relations' (McLeod 2023), I aim to assess the political significance of Nagra's Neo-Victorian writing within his larger poetic output, which often takes the form of a reflection on and a response to the difficult history and heritage of the British Empire from the standpoint of the twenty-first century.

Biography

Paolo D'Indinosante (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9437-6639>) is completing his PhD in English Literatures, Language and Translation at Sapienza University of Rome, in cotutelle with the University of Silesia in Katowice. In 2023, he was a Visiting Research Student at the University of Roehampton, London. In 2024, he was an Occasional Postgraduate Research Student at Newcastle University. His doctoral project focusses on British imperial poetry in the long nineteenth century. His other research interests include the Italian reception of the literary works of Rudyard Kipling, the poetry of Daljit Nagra and the intersections of literature and video games.

Painted Caricature and Humorous Images in the Long Nineteenth Century: 'Fine hot joints, greedy monopolists and a financier's dupes'

Ben Thompson, Northumbria University

The Monopolist (1840, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) a caricature by the neglected painter Robert William Buss (1804-1875) and William Powell Frith's (1819-1909) Hogarthian five picture series, *The Race for Wealth* (first exhibited in 1880), highlight Victorian criticism of high-capitalist ascendancy. Unfettered speculation often left behind 'hard times' for 'clergymen, widows, and rough country folk'. Both artists appear to align themselves with voices of moderation and reform, something which remains contestable in the twenty-first century. Both Buss and Frith through caricature and ridicule in paint identify the crime of abusing wealth. This fits into a contextualisation of Charles Dickens's connection to both artists, John Ruskin's views on toil, Protestant sects, and Northern industrialists such as, ironmasters Henry Bolcklow (1806-1878) and Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell (1816-1904), and engineer Sir William Armstrong (1810-1900). The financier Albert Grant (1831-1899) dealt in stocks and shares which afforded him no socially redeeming features. This contrasted with manufactured goods.

Both Buss's and Frith's mockery of speculators stylistically presents itself with differing degrees of severity. Their written accounts also differ in their vitriol. Stylistic choices in paint and in language in their written accounts demonstrate how the London born Buss and the Yorkshire born Frith navigated *Genteel Caricature*, or acceptable critique. Their artworks could not be too offensive to the middle-class Victorian audience, whom they wanted their works to be well received by. They challenged hierarchies of art and hierarchies of power, through caricature and humorous images pregnant with socio-economic commentary.

Biography

I am an Art History PhD candidate at Northumbria University (expected completion, 2026). My individual contribution to scholarship aims to address the lacuna on caricature painting and modes of Victorian humour in the long nineteenth century. This is based upon close visual forensic analysis. Stylistic and social understandings of artworks act as a catalyst for further historical contextual evaluation. My research is timely given the current scholarly appetite for study of nineteenth century caricature. I have previously studied History of Art at Aberdeen (M.A. 2016) which developed my understanding of art as a social and cultural record.

Christopher Dresser and Meiji Japan: Interrogating the Validity of Victorian Connoisseurship and its Post-colonial Context

Caroline Gill, Northumbria University

How should contemporary Britain interrogate the problematic legacy of valuing art from other cultures through the lens of Victorian connoisseurship? With the expansion of the middle class during the Victorian era, the 19th century saw a new demand form for art objects to decorate homes that embodied the ideal ‘house beautiful’ of the Aesthetic movement. This new market pushed for more affordable decorative arts and looked to connoisseurs and tastemakers to inform the public of what was considered ‘good taste’.

One of the most prolific designers for mass manufacture was Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), a self-declared ‘art director’ whose designs catered toward this new middle-market. After a trip to Japan in 1877, where he provided advice on industrial manufacture, he fashioned himself as an expert on the arts of Japan. Through positioning himself as a gatekeeper to what he viewed as the Japanese aesthetic, he capitalized on the rise of Japonisme and Britain’s stereotypical view of Japan as a perceived ‘medievalist fairyland’ untouched by industrialisation. Dresser never formally studied Japanese art and from a Japanese art historical prospective the objects he imported for sale were specifically made for the export market and did not reflect domestic Japanese taste.

In examining the transnational dialogue between Dresser and Japan, the problematic nature of fully embracing individual connoisseurship in the 19th century as the basis for judging the importance of historical art objects is made evident. Self-purported Victorian tastemakers and their supporters illustrate art market manipulation with lasting implications to the present day. In interrogating the mythology surrounding these figures, in line with current, postcolonial art history trends, museum collections will hopefully reconsider how objects relating to these figures are valued, displayed and interpreted for public consumption.

Biography

I am currently a third-year postgraduate researcher in the Department of Arts at Northumbria University and part of the Northern Bridge Consortium. My background is in Japanese art history and the commercial art world. My current research examines transnational design exchange in the late 19th century between Britain and Japan with a focus on Nishijin textiles produced in Kyoto and the studio of British designer Christopher Dresser (1834-1904). My research also involves postcolonial theory as it applies to Japan in the 19th century and the problematic nature of Victorian connoisseurship.