Connecting Disciplines in the Nineteenth Century

CNCS Inaugural Event
Saturday 10 May 2014
Prior’s Hall, Durham Cathedral

In association with Samling Academy
Welcome

The Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies is delighted to welcome you to Durham University to celebrate this one-day inaugural event marking the foundation of the centre. The theme of the day, ‘connecting disciplines in the nineteenth century’, was chosen to bring academics from different disciplines together to discuss prevalent issues in nineteenth-century studies. Our work at this important inaugural event will advance the vibrant research culture the CNCS has already begun to develop through academic and postgraduate research conversations.

We are privileged to welcome Professor Hilary Fraser, Executive Dean of Arts and Director of the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, to deliver the keynote address. Professor Fraser’s address will complement the interdisciplinarity represented today through academic and postgraduate research presentations. We also welcome six CNCS members from Durham and Newcastle Universities who will deliver short papers on a diverse range of topics including nineteenth century science, history, literature and music. Towards the end of the day, members of the CNCS Advisory Group along with Professor Fraser will lead a panel discussion on the topic of ‘connecting disciplines’, bringing the academic portion of the day to a close.

For the evening concert we are also fortunate to have three students, young singers from Durham and Newcastle who have worked on the Samling Academy programme. They will perform a wide range of music from the nineteenth century alongside outstanding professional musicians and Durham alumni Martha Jones and Jo Ramadan, senior graduates of Samling. This collaborative performance will bring our day to a glorious close, celebrating the educational outreach of the CNCS, and the outstanding qualities of our musicians, in partnership with Samling, a major artistic leader in the North East that develops excellence in classical music for younger singers and professional singers alike.
About CNCS

CNCS was founded by Professor Bennett Zon to increase and enhance research in nineteenth-century studies at Durham University and internationally. Incorporating the contributions of postgraduates working in the field of nineteenth-century studies to publications, conferences and research conversations, the centre seeks to build on the success and excellence of current research projects to improve and deepen our understanding of the nineteenth century. CNCS hosts regular research conversations for academics and postgraduates to foster interdisciplinary dialogue across the humanities, sciences and social sciences. The centre seeks to develop links not only in higher education but through cultural and heritage exchange both regionally, nationally and internationally. CNCS strives to advance and generate new methods of studying the nineteenth century by bringing academics and postgraduates from across disciplinary boundaries together to shape and invigorate future research.

Aims

- **Shaping** research in nineteenth-century studies through regional and international collaboration
- **Advancing** interdisciplinary research by hosting conversations on long nineteenth-century studies
- **Disseminating** scholarly research through seminars, lecture series, publications and conferences
- **Providing** opportunities for postgraduate and early career researchers to engage in research conversations and reading groups
- **Inspiring** students through an interdisciplinary MA and doctoral supervisors with international expertise
- **Developing** new links with cultural and heritage institutions to advance academic research through cultural exchanges.
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Keynote Address

10.30 — 11.30

Hilary Fraser | Birkbeck, University of London
‘Writing in the Margins, Reading between the Lines: Women Art Historians in the Nineteenth Century’

This paper argues that interdisciplinary work is often about making the invisible visible, working in the margins and between the lines, both within and between disciplines. Using my recently completed project on women writing art history as a case study, it will raise questions about the formation and cross-fertilisation of disciplines in the nineteenth century; about being interdisciplinary then and being interdisciplinary now. This involves first of all making women writers visible, because having a sense of the wide discursive and generic range of art historical writing by women, who were typically working outside the establishment, and therefore subject to neither its privileges nor its constraints, helps us understand the diverse nature of the discipline itself. Secondly, it involves acknowledging that disciplines were in the process of formation in the nineteenth century; that they didn’t emerge definitively determined; that the ‘pre-disciplinary’ is a category, and a stage when things are very dynamic and indeed undisciplined; and furthermore that disciplines are still alive and evolving. And finally it makes visible the spaces between disciplines. Writing about writing about the visual – not quite literary studies, not quite art history – opens up, I suggest, an intellectual space for thinking across disciplines, and for complicating notions of disciplinary autonomy.

Hilary Fraser holds the Geoffrey Tillotson Chair of Nineteenth-Century Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, where she is also Executive Dean of Arts. She became Director of Birkbeck’s Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies in 2002 and was the founding editor of its online journal 19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century, launched in 2006. Her latest book, Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman, will be published by Cambridge University Press in September. She has also written monographs on the Victorians and Renaissance Italy, aesthetics and religion in Victorian writing, nineteenth-century non-fiction prose, and gender and the Victorian periodical.
Research Conversation

12.00 — 13.30

Professor Julian Horton | Department of Music, Durham University

‘Music Analysis, Canon Formation and the Social Contexts of Nineteenth-Century Instrumental Music’

Canon formation is a pressing concern for research into the analysis of nineteenth-century instrumental music. The period up to 1850 is pivotal to the formation of modern notions of the musical canon, their constitutive notions of marginal and central repertoire, and the geographical orientations thus engendered. Our modern idea of the centrality of the Viennese-classical repertoire was formed in this time; and the paradigms habitually used to explain instrumental forms are similarly indebted to the efforts of early nineteenth-century theorists to establish Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven as exemplars of best practice.

Drawing on William Weber’s work in particular, this paper evaluates the cultural and social background to the process of canon formation in this period, focussing specifically on its implications for the analysis of piano concerti composed between 1789 and 1850. I pay close attention to the tensions between the inherent cosmopolitanism of this repertoire and the residual ethnocentrism engendered in prevailing theoretical attitudes, and conclude by sketching the framework for an alternative approach.

Respondent

Dr Simon Grimble | Department of English Studies, Durham University

Dr Michael Mack | Department of English Studies, Durham University

‘Coming to terms with the Modern Loss of the World: From Hannah Arendt and B. Latour to the French Revolution’

The paper analyses the way in which modern literature has questioned mind-body distinctions as a response to—on a political level—Robespierre’s reign of terror and the ensuing scientific positivism of the nineteenth century. Literature has proved resistant to such illusions of all-encompassing visibility and measurability, not least because one of its subject matters is subjectivity which is another word for what goes on in our minds. Nineteenth-century novels react not only—as Eliot’s Middlemarch does—to the positivism in the human and natural sciences but also to the quest for certainty in the everyday praxis of politics and economics. Long before twenty-first century neuroscience, literature discovered the human mind as embodied and yet invisible. By engaging with positivism
nineteenth-century literature anticipates Hannah Arendt’s and Walter Benjamin’s respective critiques of a modernity that is no longer situated in the world. The paper analyses how modernity loses the secular (the world) when it denies the existence of invisible factors which constitute the workings of our mind. Denial may give rise to repression or to aggression. Nineteenth-century literature explores the ways in which the self-deluding or fictitious aspects of the modern constitution first deny or repress (sexuality in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*) and then attack (the obsessive and violent quest for the white and quasi-invisible whale in Melville’s *Moby Dick*) what remains hidden, invisible or ghostly sensory (the result of the first violent encounter with the whale which leaves Captain Ahab with the invisible sensation of his amputated leg).

Respondent

Professor Bennett Zon | Department of Music, Durham University

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Dr Peter Garratt | Department of English Studies, Durham University

‘Dickens and Voice’

Hearing voices and inventing character were indivisible aspects of Charles Dickens’s creativity. Dickens not only ‘heard’ the voices of his characters in the act of summoning them into language, he also appears to have had experiences that might be termed involuntary auditory sensation, or delusion, or even hallucination (though the adequacy of such classifications is precisely at issue). In such moments, fictional voices seem to have attained an unusual degree of vividness and even quasi-autonomy, a quality paralleled perhaps in the way that individual characters from the Dickens universe have subsequently assumed a life beyond the page in our collective cultural memory. Critics have long associated Dickens’s fiction with heightened or hallucinatory states, from G. H. Lewes, who in the 1870s likened his art to a kind of sustained mild insanity, to Dorothy van Ghent in the twentieth century, who interpreted the Dickensian mood as one of hallucinatory unease. Dickens himself enjoyed playing up the unsolicited nature of his characters’ voices - and, indeed, the origins of his own creativity in a kind of inner audition - in ways that suggest more than a creative analogy with voice-hearing; infamously, he was unable to silence the intrusive voice of Mrs Gamp from *Martin Chuzzlewit* while sitting in church. My paper will explore voice and audition in Dickens, particularly in relation to the creation and performance of unreal others, and through the wider context of Victorian scientific, literary and cultural understandings of the voice, fictionality, delusion, and the individual will.

Respondent

Professor Martyn Evans | Department of Philosophy, Durham University
Postgraduate Research Conversation

14.30 — 16.00

Ellen Crabtree | School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University
‘From Jean Jaurès to Madeleine Rebérioux: the Interconnecting Narratives between History and Activism’

Established in the nineteenth century through political crises such as the Dreyfus Affair, the interplay between history and militancy had a lasting impact on the twentieth century. The complex relationship between history and activism can be explored by looking at the links between Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) – historian, politician and leading French socialist – and his historian Madeleine Rebérioux (1920—2005). An eminent historian of the Third Republic in France, Rebérioux’s own historicity and activism were shaped by the example of Jaurès, from her anticolonial engagement during the Algerian war to her presidency of the prestigious Ligue des droits de l’Homme (1991—1995). This year marks the centenary of Jaurès’s assassination, on the eve of the First World War. The current plethora of Jaurésian commemoration in France has led to a series of questions regarding how his legacy can be understood. What kind of Jaurésian was Rebérioux? How can her intimate knowledge of nineteenth-century political engagement be traced throughout her own work as a historian and intellectual? Unpicking Rebérioux’s use of Jaurès offers an invaluable insight into the world of the engaged academic across the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Respondent
Tomas Cubillas | Department of History, Durham University

...
consequences in meticulous detail, but also conflates it with genius. Likewise, the narrator of Henry James’s *The Turn of The Screw* (1898) holds intense but contradictory convictions about the precocious children in her care. However, *The Turn of the Screw* not only represents its narrator’s ambivalent response to precocity; it is also a study of that ambivalence. James Kincaid suggests that ‘the child could be a repository of cultural needs or fears not adequately disposed of elsewhere’ during the Victorian period (78).

By examining the ambivalence in, and of, the representation of precocity in *Contributions to the Study of Precocity* and *The Turn of the Screw*, this paper will analyse the child these texts create, to suggest that the precocious child is a repository for ideas about the adult in the literary and medical culture of the turn of the twentieth century.

Respondent
Siobhan Harper | Department of English Studies, Durham University

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Elizabeth Blackmore | Department of History, Durham University

‘Boys Sing like Organ Pipes’: Unacknowledged Languages of Gender in Debates over the Late Nineteenth-Century Anglican Choir

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a series of public debates developed concerning whether boy trebles or adult female sopranos were more suitable for Anglican choral worship. Throughout the discourse each voice type was described in terms markedly resonant with broader conflicts over gender and religion in late Victorian society. What is striking, however, is the extent to which commentators failed to recognise this, their arguments framed through the ‘neutral’ language of musical aesthetics. Historicising these ostensibly musical debates offers a window into the unacknowledged pervasiveness of anxieties over faith and sexuality in British culture. At the same time, a critical reading of these arguments serves to remind us of the extent to which music and music criticism – despite their contemporary and indeed ongoing language of aesthetic autonomy – have been shaped by broader societal concerns.

Respondent
Douglas Bachorik | Department of Music, Durham University
Panel Discussion

16.30 — 17.30

Professor Bennett Zon | CNCS Director
Department of Music, Durham University

Professor Simon James | CNCS Associate Director
Department of English Studies, Durham University

Dr Michael Rossington | CNCS Newcastle University Liaison Officer
School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics, Newcastle University

Professor Hilary Fraser | Executive Dean of Arts
Birkbeck, University of London

The panel will discuss the theme of ‘connecting disciplines’ as well as debating current research and teaching methods in nineteenth-century studies. The panel would also like to invite further questions from the audience to facilitate a broader discussion.

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At the end of panel discussion we warmly invite you to join us in the Music Department Common Room for a wine reception before the evening concert which will be held in the Music Department Concert Room at 18.30.
Acknowledgements

The Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies wishes to thank the following people and organisations for supporting the inaugural event:

Durham Cathedral

Department of Music, Durham University

Samling Academy

Dr Julian Wright for organising the evening concert

Members of the CNCS Advisory Group from Durham and Newcastle Universities

Dr Michael Mack for contributing his paper to the Research Conversation at short notice following Professor Máire Cross’ withdrawal from the event.

CNCS Advisory Group

Durham University Representatives

Professor Bennett Zon — CNCS Director, Department of Music

Professor Simon James — CNCS Associate Director, Department of English Studies

Dr David Craig — Department of History

Dr Claudia Nitschke — School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Professor Malcolm Smith — Department of Anthropology

Dr Julian Wright — Department of History

Nicole Bush — Department of English Studies

Elizabeth Blackmore — Department of History

Andrew Moss — Department of Theology and Religion

Newcastle University Representatives

Dr Kirsten MacLeod — School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics

Dr Michael Rossington — School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics

Harriet Briggs — School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics
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