



MIDWEST VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION 2014 Conference | Victorian Violence

— SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS —

In each seminar, participants will write 5-7 page papers that are pre-circulated to the other participants prior to the conference. During the two-hour conversation the seminar leader and participants will identify important points of intersection and divergence between the papers and identify future areas of inquiry and collaboration. The seminar format allows a larger number of scholars to participate in MVSA and seek financial support from their respective institutions as they discuss a shared area of scholarly interest. Seminars are limited to 10 participants.

Left: "The Riot in Trafalgar Square" (detail),
The London Illustrated News, 1887

Sensational Violence: "The Mysteries Which Are at Our Own Doors"

Seminar Leader: Professor Lisa SurrIDGE, Department of English, University of Victoria

In his review of sensation fiction in *The Nation* (1865), Henry James wrote that "to Mr. Collins belongs the credit of having introduced into fiction those mysterious of mysteries, *the mysteries which are at our own doors.*" James's remark captures the sensation novel's capacity to surveil, strip, and probe domestic spaces, lives, and even bodies.

This seminar will welcome scholars interested in the capacity of the sensation novel and/or the sensational press to scrutinize violence in what Victorians strove to construct as the "private" sphere—that is, to expose spousal violence, sexual violence, violence against children, and related domestic crimes. We also invite papers that consider how such texts constructed privacy even as they exploded the very notion of a private sphere free of public surveillance.

Send a 300-word abstract and 1-page CV (both as MWord documents) by **October 31, 2013**, to Lisa SurrIDGE at lsurridg@uvic.ca.

Political Violence at Home and Abroad

Seminar Leader: Professor Bill Meier, Department of History, Texas Christian University

Violence harnessed to political programmes mushroomed in the 19th century alongside the growth of '-isms': socialism, conservatism, trade unionism, nationalism, terrorism, anarchism, and the like. Yet the distinction between "ordinary" crime and "political" crime was a blurry one, and governments, police, journalists, even "political criminals" themselves attributed divergent meanings to their menacing behavior.

This seminar seeks participants who wish to explore such dimensions of "political crime" as its motivations, representation, public perception, and legal definition, among other themes. We also wish to examine the language Victorians used to discuss political violence, including "outrage," "terrorism,"

“atrocious,” and “frightfulness.” We are especially interested to compare political violence in Britain to its manifestations throughout the empire in order to assess how the location of violence shaped Victorians’ understanding of such behavior.

Send a 300-word abstract and 1-page vita (both as MWord documents) by **October 31, 2013**, to Bill Meier at w.meier@tcu.edu.

Colonial Violence

Seminar Leader: Professor Richard Price, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park

Historical studies of violence are legion. Historians have long addressed the legal, social, cultural and political aspects of violence, as reflected both in criminal activity and in domestic interactions. It is well-known, for example, that the violence of “primitive rebels” in peasant societies is structurally and politically distinct from violence in “modern,” urbanized industrial societies. And much attention has been paid by historians and others to the developmental implications of these differences.

It is, therefore, all the more strange that until recently colonial violence has not seemed to greatly interest students of empire. Yet violence in colonial societies was both endemic and quotidian. It was at one and the same time an abiding feature of “official” policy and, it would seem, often an everyday affair that stained and marked social relations in colonial societies. But it remains true that in most accounts of the imperial experience (limiting that just to Britain alone) the nature of violence is not accorded the fundamental importance that it probably deserves. As yet, for example, there is no subject volume on violence in the recent Oxford History of the British Empire. Of course, most historians and others would nod in agreement with the notion that the colonial experience was inherently coercive and violent. But they would be hard pressed to go much further than that to provide a typology of colonial violence. It is only in the last few years, for example, that the fond notion of Britain’s peaceful exit from empire has been undermined by studies that show just how untidily violent it actually was. Similarly, it is only recently that studies have appeared that focus on the historical sociology of violence in particular colonies, such as India.

There is, therefore, enormous scope for an inter-disciplinary discussion and treatment of colonial violence. This seminar will explore the historical and cultural dimensions and representations of colonial violence in Britain’s Victorian empire. We are particularly anxious that the question of colonial violence be addressed from the standpoint of different disciplines. And we encourage scholars working on any aspect of this question to submit proposals. The *kinds* of questions that could be addressed include: the political dynamics of colonial violence; the relationship between violence and settler politics. To what extent is the colonial experience inherently genocidal towards indigenous peoples? What is the psychology of colonial violence? What are the relationships between violence in the colonies and the law? How do the many ideological rationalizations of empire justify and explain colonial violence? How is colonial violence represented in the culture of empire in the metropole—in its literature, its theater, for example?

Send a 300-word abstract and 1-page vita (both as MWord documents) by **October 31, 2013**, to Richard Price at rnp@umd.edu.

The Midwest Victorian Studies Association is an interdisciplinary organization welcoming scholars from all disciplines who share an interest in nineteenth-century British history, literature, and culture.

For more information, please visit www.midwestvictorian.org.

