



VICTORIAN NEWS: PRINT CULTURE & THE PERIODICAL PRESS

Seminar Descriptions

Participants in MVSA seminars will write 5-7 page papers that will be pre-circulated to the other participants prior to the conference. During the seminars, the seminar leader and participants will identify important points of intersection and divergence among the papers and identify future areas of inquiry and collaboration. The seminar format allows a larger number of scholars to participate in MVSA and to seek financial support from their respective institutions to attend the conference and discuss a shared area of scholarly interest. Seminars are limited to 12 participants.

All seminar proposals are due **October 15, 2015**. Seminar proposals that are not accepted may be submitted to the general pool of MVSA conference submissions, due October 31.

Left: "The Reading Room, British Museum" (detail). *The Pictorial World*, 1874.

Print Culture and the Mass Public: Dissemination and Democratization

Seminar Leader: Julie Codell, School of Art, Arizona State University

In the nineteenth century, artists and writers seized on the possibilities of print culture to spread social and political values to an upwardly mobile, emerging mass public that was gaining access to the franchise, to education, and to economic opportunities both in Britain and in the colonies. Among the many forms of print culture performing this function were prints of famous paintings from the past and popular paintings from the nineteenth century; cut-and-paste re-printings of items shared among periodicals, especially those aimed at groups previously not included in mainstream readership (women, children, radicals, the working class); the ubiquitous advertisements that swamped the city-dweller; illustrations in magazines designed to be removed and hung on the parlor wall; social and political tracts distributed on city streets; and serialized novels and their later incarnations as pocket books. Exemplary of print culture for the mass public were the penny libraries of John Dicks: the Penny Shakespere [sic], the penny English drama and the English novel series. Texts like these served to disseminate and democratize "high" culture. Yet, however democratic and patriarchal such intentions were, the public was outside the control of journalists, artists, writers, and politicians who contributed to this flood of print culture. Reading and spectating are largely ungovernable activities with unpredictable consequences that we can tease out in this seminar.

In this seminar we will examine popular print culture in several ways, and participants may take up any one or more of these points, or raise other questions: What in the content of print culture might have appealed to, or been intended to appeal to, the new public audience? What information do we have about the reception of popular prints, magazines (including their illustrations), tracts, advertisement, and novels? How important were the places where the public read or viewed print culture—trains, parlors, clubs, print shops, dealers' galleries, meeting halls, mechanics' institutes, political rallies,

factories, etc. Seminar participants are invited to examine *any* aspect of the relationships between print culture and the growing mass public, including the intentions of those who created or disseminated print culture and its reception by members of the public. We hope this seminar will attract participants from several disciplines to share common issues regarding the intersections of print culture and mass culture.

Send a 300-word abstract and 1-page CV (both as MWord documents) by **October 15, 2015**, to Julie Codell at julie.codell@asu.edu.

Finding/Creating a Voice in the Periodical Press

Seminar Leader: Leanne Langley, IMR Lifetime Fellow, University of London

Rapid expansion of the press industry in nineteenth-century Britain had several interlinked drivers, from developments in technology and government tax reform to extensions of the franchise and of public education. At a more personal level, it had consequences for individual writers and readers. The explosion in special-interest journals, for example, opened new opportunity for thousands of novice contributors and would-be editors. The general press, meanwhile, whether daily newspaper, quarterly review, monthly magazine, or weekly arts paper, welcomed more experienced writers seeking work, pay, and public influence. All such divisions by periodicity, writerly status, and subject matter help modern scholars map the broad coverage and prodigious scale of Victorian periodical publishing, much greater than book production. But they mask what was surely one of the most common challenges – and useful tools – for writers in all contexts: finding or creating one's voice.

This seminar seeks papers that look at how Victorian journalists conceived of and used the element of voice. Possible topics might include, but are not limited to: developing a professional identity (as a writer, or in a specialist field); anonymity-pseudonymity (whose voice is speaking? the advantages and disadvantages of press anonymity); traits behind a given writer's critical voice; problems and potential gains in peripatetic writing for more than one title; editorial shaping of content; use of reader views and correspondence to give direction or generate interest; advocating artistic values, perhaps through self-reflection; growth or change in a single journalist's work over time; readers' construction of a journal's collective voice; use of voice or register to expand readership; play or performative writing involving mimicry, satire, overstatement, humor, or reflexivity; the value, or not, of autobiography as evidence; how modern scholars might weigh a "professional" art/music/literary critic's voice against common-reader opinions or other reception markers.

Send a 300-word abstract and 1-page vita (both as MWord documents) by **October 15, 2015**, to Leanne Langley at llangley@tcp.co.uk.

The Transatlantic Periodical Press

Seminar Leader: Jennifer Phegley, Department of English, University of Missouri – Kansas City

Recent studies of nineteenth-century transatlantic culture have overturned the standard narrative of Anglo-American literary relations that cast British literature as original, dominant, or colonizing and American literature as derivative, subservient, or rebellious. As Paul Giles points out in *Transatlantic Insurrections*, transatlantic culture is often characterized by the “more discomfiting figures of mirroring and twinning” indicative of two cultures developing in parallel rather than in opposition to each other. The conception of an American literature borne primarily out of insurgence against British cultural production becomes even more tenuous when we abandon our focus on authorial and national identities to examine the development of the periodical press, which frequently involved collaboration, imitation, homage, borrowing, copying, repurposing, and reprinting of authors, formats, images, serials, poems, and articles on both sides of the Atlantic. In *The Culture of Reprinting in America*, Meredith McGill argues that our author-centered nationalist frameworks have, until recently, prevented us from

examining the importance of the ways in which “foreign literature is repackaged and redeployed” on both sides of the Atlantic. While American editors, publishers, and readers engaged with cheap reproductions of British authors and texts, the more established and centralized British publishing system was also seeking new writers, periodical genres, and markets in the United States.

This seminar welcomes scholars interested in the interdependence of the two national literary cultures or the ways in which British and American authors, editors, and publishers knowingly collaborated or covertly adapted each other’s work. Possible topics include but are not limited to the publication and reception of British writers in the United States and American writers in Great Britain; novel serialization, poetry publishing, and illustration in periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic; the international exchange of news and information through the press; the creation and imitation of magazine formats; and reader responses to transatlantic print culture.

Send a 300-word abstract and 1-page vita (both as MWord documents) by **October 15, 2015**, to Jennifer Phegley at phegleyj@umkc.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.

