

"To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life  
Among strangers"

—G. M. Hopkins

**CFP: NVSA 2016**

**Victorian Outliers**

**Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ**

**April 8-10, 2016**

The Northeast Victorian Studies Association  
invites papers for its annual conference; the  
topic this year is *Victorian Outliers*.



John Glover, "Constitution Hill at Sunset, Van Dieman's  
Land," 1840 (State Library of Victoria)

We welcome papers on any individual or type of Victorian Outlier, as well as theorizations of the outlier as a category in aesthetic, geological, historical, imperial, literary, mathematical, musical, natural historical, philosophical, psychological, and other domains.

How did Victorians represent outlying people, ideas, and evidence? Malcolm Gladwell popularized the figure of the "outlier" to rationalize unusual achievements—entrepreneurial, financial, intellectual, and athletic—at the far ends of statistical possibility. How did the Victorians, who published countless biographical and autobiographical narratives of and prescriptions for such achievement, define and mobilize the

figure of the outlier? Many Victorians espoused the work of Francis Bacon, who had privileged the outlying particular—the ostensible exception—as that by which natural philosophers ought to induce the general law. How did Victorian taxonomists—of plants, of poetic meters, of languages, of crystals—decide which phenomena merited naming as categories and which, thereby, become outliers, the exceptions? How did Victorian epistemologies integrate the outlier? What did Victorians think of the outlying regions they inhabited, explored, represented, imagined, and colonized?

Outliers can refer to outsiders or to insiders who seem, from limited perspectives, to be outsiders. They might be colonial subjects, explorers, mavericks, eccentrics, extreme cases, variants, exemplars, or caricatures: instances that stretch the boundaries of a species, family, domain, set, or norm. They might describe degrees of feeling or experience, modes of space or time.

Papers might also consider the genres by which Victorians represented outliers and/or genres that now appear to be outliers. What are the features, functions, and ends of generic outliers, texts whose conventions or occasions put them outside traditional disciplinary parameters? What do we make of best-selling texts that are now marginal to our teaching or scholarship? How, in turn, have we centralized texts that were marginal to most Victorians? How can we revitalize cultural studies by attending to outlying texts? Likewise, what texts, authors, and concepts inhabit the edges of the Victorian period and undermine its coherence, such as it is? What can we learn from Romantic Victorians and Victorian Modernists? What are the outlying methods in Victorian studies and how might they enrich our work? Is Victorian Studies an outlier among disciplines and ought it be? What are the ethics, the costs and benefits, the ideologies and feelings associated with being an outlier?

"She is the oddest-looking person: wears spectacles, caps, enormous bonnets, and has a great scar on her mouth and chin; and though she can't be more than thirty, her hair is grey; she is also slightly lame. But, understand you, she is a *gentlewoman* with it all; and looks one."

—Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*

**Potential topics might include, but are not limited to, the following:**

### **Human Outliers**

Fallen Women, New Women  
Homosexuals, dandies  
Immigrants, emigrants, expats, outcasts  
Transported criminals  
Gypsies  
Monsters, freaks, and teratology  
Geniuses, prophets  
"Heroes," "Messiahs," "Captains," "Sages"  
Celebrities, infamy, and notoriety  
One-hit wonders  
The disabled/mentally ill  
Typhoid Mary  
Anarchists, extremists  
Rebels/Radicals/Revolutionaries  
Jews, Dissenters, Catholics, Muslims  
Fabianists, vegetarians, slummers  
Alcoholics  
Gamblers (seeking outlying luck against odds)  
Marginalized writers: Corelli, Ward, Meredith,  
Clough, Oliphant, Disraeli, Patmore,  
Thackeray, Kingsley, Butler

"Love -- love -- love; a sickening sameness of vulgarity. What is more vulgar than the ideal of novelists? They won't represent the actual world; it would be too dull for their readers. In real life, how many men and women *fall in love*? Not one in every ten thousand, I am convinced. Not one married pair in ten thousand have felt for each other as two or three couples do in every novel."

—George Gissing, *The Odd Women*

### **Outlying Genres**

Autobiography (self as outlier re: social body)  
Graphs, charts, maps, trees, diagrams  
Statistics and blue books  
Melodrama, parody, caricature, extravaganza  
Music and theater and texts about them

Manifestos

Newgate fiction and ghost stories

Anthropology and sociology

Natural histories

Travel narratives

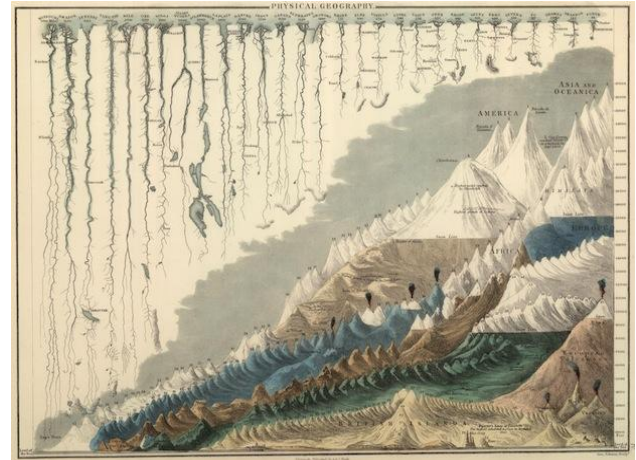
Zeitgeists

Cookbooks, conduct books

Industrial narratives, it-narratives

Ephemera

Pornography



*Physical Geography* (Edinburgh: A & C Black, 1854)

### **Outlying Aesthetics**

Fringes, braiding, hems and cuffs and collars

Edging, veneer

Frames, backgrounds, peripheries

Hedges, borders

Paratext: title pages, notes, margins, covers,  
front and back matter/fly leaves, the  
material edges of books

Narrators, secondary characters, tangents

Hairlines, necklines, wrists, ankles, décolletage

Fetishes

The *avant garde*

The ideal of autonomous art

### **Epistemic and Statistical Outliers**

Participant observers

Representative men or cautionary tales

Spectacular and unexpected failures

Anomalies and averages

Possibility and probability

Evolutionary variation and divergence

Francis Galton and biometry

### **Epistemic and Statistical Outliers cont'd**

Frequency error, normal distribution  
Standard deviation  
Theoretical population sampling  
Darwin, Wallace, Chambers, Laplace  
Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*  
Galton, *Natural Inheritance*  
Lombroso, *The Man of Genius*  
Augustus De Morgan  
George Boole, *Laws of Thought*  
John Venn, *The Logic of Chance*  
Stanley Jevons  
Malthus, *Essay on The Principle of Population*  
Henry Mayhew

"How can one describe the quality of a peach or a nectarine to those who have only known apples? Until La Svengali appeared, the world had only known apples -- Catalanis, Jenny Linds, Grisis, Albonis, Pattis! The best apples that can be, for sure -- but still only apples!"

—George Du Maurier, *Trilby*

### **Victorian Prototypes or Variants of Gladwell's Categories from Outliers**

"the 10,000 hour rule"  
Opportunity and talent  
Circumstance and capability  
"the rich get richer and the poor get poorer"  
(*"The Matthew Effect"*)  
Birthdate/fortuitous timing  
Anecdotal evidence  
False dichotomies



Mary Seacole (London: Maull & Co., ca. 1873)

### **Geographical/Spatial Outliers**

Archipelagoes and islands: Malay, Hebrides, Celtic fringe, Hawaii, Isle of Wight  
Ghettos, slums, Tom-All-Alone's  
Suburbs, outskirts  
Littoral zones, beaches, shores, fences, borders, cliffs, hedges, margins, sandbars  
Colonies, outposts, penal colonies and prisons  
Explorers/Travelers: Mary Seacole, Percy Fawcett, Richard Burton, David Livingstone, Mary Kingsley, etc.  
Provincials  
Britons abroad and at sea  
Victorian space and astronomy

### **Temporal Outliers**

Time travelers  
Texts and authors that contest periodization:  
Scott, Keats, Wordsworth, De Quincey  
Romantics, Edwardians, and Modernists  
Hardy's *"The Darkling Thrush"* and the Concept of the Century  
Degeneration, Decadence, Millenarian modes  
Babies and elders  
The Infant Phenomenon, the Aged P  
Steampunk, NeoVictorianism

"The butterflies of that island are in many cases characterised by a peculiarity of outline, which distinguishes them at a glance from those of any other part of the world. ... by their form alone."

—Alfred Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*

### **Key Texts and Characters having to do with outliers**

Barnaby Rudge, Nell, Barkis, Infant Phenomenon, etc.  
Jude, Tess, Clym and Eustacia, etc.  
Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea, Deronda, Latimer, etc.  
Sidonia, Coningsby  
Heathcliff, Lucy Snowe  
Alton Locke  
Esther, Ruth, Job  
*The Odd Women*  
*The Rebel of the Family*  
*The Secret Agent*

### **Key Texts and Characters cont'd**

*All Sorts and Conditions of Men*

*Self-Help, Character, Industry*

*Cometh Up as a Flower*

*Sartor Resartus*

*Hester*

*Impressions of Theophrastus Such*

*Cranford*

*Kim*

Doyle, *The Parasite*

*Story of an African Farm*

*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and *Susperia de Profundis*

*Lady Geraldine's Courtship*

"The Gardener's Daughter," "Mariana," "The Lady of Shalott," "St. Simeon Stylites"

C. Rossetti, *Monna Innominata*

Meredith's *Modern Love* (with its "extra" 2 lines per sonnet: outlying form and thought)

"Caliban upon Setebos"

"Hence it must be assumed, not only that half-civilized man succeeded in thoroughly domesticating several species, but that he intentionally or by chance picked out extraordinarily abnormal species; and further, that these very species have since all become extinct or unknown. So many strange contingencies are improbable in the highest degree."

—Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*

### **Contemporary Theorizations of the Outlier**

Periodization, Presentism

Queer Theory

Digital Humanities approaches

Freud

Deleuze and Guattari

Agamben's "state of exception"

Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*

Steven Marcus *Other Victorians*

Audrey Jaffe, *Affective Life of the Average Man*

Seth Koven, *Slumming*

James Kincaid, *Annoying the Victorians*

Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*

Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*

Caroline Levine, *Forms*

Clitoral details

Distant reading

The V21 Manifesto

**Proposals** (no more than 500 words) by Oct. 15, 2015 (email submissions only, in Word format), should be sent to: Jonathan Farina, Chair, NVSA Program Committee: [jvfarina@gmail.com](mailto:jvfarina@gmail.com)

**Please note:** all submissions to NVSA are evaluated anonymously. Successful proposals will stay within the 500-word limit and make a compelling case for the talk and its relation to the conference topic.

Please do not send complete papers, and do not include your name on the proposal.

**Please include your name, institutional and email addresses, and proposal title in a cover letter.** Papers should take 15 minutes (20 minutes maximum) so as to provide ample time for discussion.

The Coral Lansbury Travel Grant (\$100.00) and George Ford Travel Grant (\$100.00), given in memory of key founding members of NVSA, are awarded annually to the graduate student, adjunct instructor, or independent scholar who must travel the greatest distance to give a paper at our conference. Apply by indicating in your cover letter that you wish to be considered. Please indicate from where you will be traveling, and mention if you have other sources of funding.

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