



## *Director's Cut*

CAROLYN OULTON

The REF is over (for now), the results are in, and we'll show you our 4\* if you show us yours. NO! NO! NO! This issue is all about collaboration and being genuinely supportive.

But Juan Villarreal is handing out just one prize: for nineteenth century Britain's most confusing sexual politics. Eliza Lynn Linton was the first female Victorian to earn a salary as a journalist; following her separation from her husband she largely devoted herself to promoting domesticity and opposing women's emancipation.

On a more sisterly note, Alex Round introduces us to the female Pre-Raphaelites and tells us how they got by with a little help from their poet friends, and Judith Hendra gives us any number of reasons to learn more about Muriel Ciolkowska (née Hornby). Let's start with her mission as a critic, 'widening the knowledge base of her English-language contemporaries.'

This is also the mission of the biographer, who comes to 'know' their subject as no one else does. But poignantly this sense of intimacy has to be taken on trust, as we set up a relationship with someone we will never meet. ICVWW is privileged to be taking on curatorship of the unpublished MS research on Hesba Stretton carried out by novelist Ann Purser. Ann (through her daughter Emily) is generously donating this material and a substantial collection of Stretton's fiction, for future research. We are very proud to carry on her work for a new generation.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**OUT OF THE ARCHIVES:  
A HOME FOR HESBA  
PP. 3-6**

**INTERVIEW WITH A GUEST:  
ALEX ROUND  
PP. 7-8**

**ON WOMEN WRITERS:  
A FEMINIST ANTIFEMINIST?  
REMEMBERING ELIZA LYNN LINTON  
PP. 9-10**

**ON WOMEN WRITERS:  
MURIEL CIOLKOWSKA: PARIS  
INSIDER, CRITIC, POET  
PP. 11-12**

New Release  
*Down from London:  
Seaside Reading in the Railway Age*  
Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (2022)

We know what you're all thinking. When we finally defeat the piles of marking, what can we read to get the holiday feeling started? Luckily, ICVWW's director is one step ahead of you! Out now with Liverpool University Press. Best served with chips and ice cream.

In the first hundred years of the UK rail network, the seaside figures as a nerve centre, managing and making visible the period's complex interplay between health, death, gender and sexuality. This monograph discusses around 130 novels of the railway age to show how the seaside infiltrates a diverse range of literature, subverting the boundaries between high and low literary culture. The seaside holiday galvanises innovative literary forms, including early twentieth-century holiday crime and romance fiction, which has its origins in the sensational strategies of mid-nineteenth-century authors. Where reading takes place is at least as important as what is read, and case studies on literary Brighton and Dickensian Kent explore the occasionally fraught relationship between seaside towns and the metropolis, as London visitors are represented in – and are the target audience for – literary accounts of the seaside holiday.

The act of reading by the sea is itself overdetermined and problematic, a dilemma that is managed in part through the development of text-free literary tourism in the late nineteenth century. Deploying strategies from literary criticism, histories of reading, libraries and the book, and literary tourism, this book recovers 'seaside reading' as both a literary sub-genre and a deeply contested mode of engagement.



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## *Out of the Archives: A Home for Hesba*

My mother (88) and father (96) are both writers. Until recently they lived in a ramshackle old house in the countryside with live-in carers. But recently ramshackle became hazardous: both have succumbed to Alzheimers Disease and other ailments associated with extreme old age and there was no choice but to move into a nursing home. So now my brother and I are attempting to sort out decades of manuscripts and archives.

My mother Ann Purser, is the author of two series of crime novels and one of more general contemporary fiction set in an English village. Her books have been published all over the world and she has many loyal fans. But as I recalled, one project in which she invested a huge amount of time and effort never found a publisher: a biography of the Victorian writer Hesba Stretton.

With my mother's blessing I have offered the manuscript together with all her research and a collection of 70+ editions (43 titles) of Stretton's novels to the International Centre for Victorian Women Writers. The biography is written largely in Hesba's voice but underpinned by a great deal of research and based entirely on Stretton's own logbook entries which are quoted throughout. It is written in a lively and accessible style much like Stretton's own novels and recreates the world of a small family run business in Victorian England.

This is from my mother's own introduction:

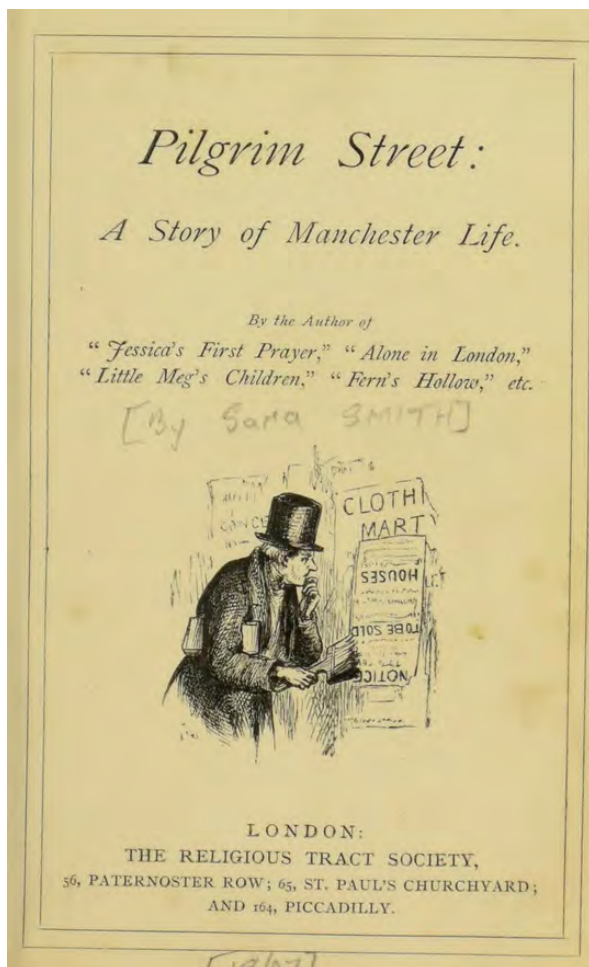
*"In a small village in Northamptonshire, the crumbling Parish Room was to be refurbished. It had once been a much used library for the little community, but had been locked up and neglected for years. All the old books were still on the shelves, and the vicar asked if I would like to take a look before they were taken off to the dump.*



HESBA STRETTON  
IMAGE COURTESY OF WIKICOMMONS

*"The books were foxed with damp cobwebbed and very dirty with years of accumulated dust. I took a pile at random – mainly for their soiled but still promising bindings, masterpieces of the designer's art, decorated with gilt fleurs-de-lys, elaborate patterns and exquisite lettering under the grime of years. Among them was Pilgrim Street, A Story of Manchester Life, by Hesba Stretton. I had never heard of her, but opened it idly, read the first paragraph...and was hooked. Under a fine engraving of a barefoot child asleep in the rain on stone steps, the story began:*

**"The rain had been falling in driving showers all the morning upon the streets of Manchester...and it was a matter of some peril and difficulty for a child to cross the slippery streets through the crowd of omnibuses and cabs which were being driven hurriedly about in all directions...a small child made his way stealthily but swiftly along the crowded causeway, and over the dangerous crossings. A small child, stunted in growth by continual want and neglect with squalid and tattered rags hanging about him, just sufficient to make it possible for him to appear in the streets."**



*"What a beginning! I read straight through to the end. It was moving, tough and had the ring of truth, of reality closely observed. Of course, since it was published by the The Religious Tract Society, it also had a strong evangelical message and this could account for the fact that although Hesba Stretton, born in 1832, wrote over fifty books and stories one of which sold one and a half million copies, very few people now know her name. And yet her books were translated into most languages, she was a founder member of the NSPCC and became famous and beloved by Victorian and later readers of all classes and ages. I began to collect her books, sending them in the most unlikely places from charity shops to specialist collections and became curious about her life.*

TITLE PAGE OF *PILGRIM STREET*  
COURTESY OF THE WELLCOME COLLECTION

*"What lay behind that wonderfully dramatic story-telling skill, the strength of her characters, good and bad, and always an independent spirit peeping through the religious party line of those days?"*

*"I looked her up in the Dictionary of National Biography, found that her real name was Sara Smith, and began a twenty-five year pursuit. I found the greatest treasure: her diaries – "log books", she called them, and her family were "the crew" – still kept safely in Shropshire County Archive. I held these small, leather-bound books in my hand, and felt nervous. Would they record the daily life of a good, upper-class woman, literate and sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged, but no different from many of her kind? The first entry immediately confounded such fears:*

**"June 11 1860: Meeting of the Bible Society. John Tod either drunk or insane. Two of the crew mentioned by name and one alluded to in public."**

*"Begun when she was twenty-eight, the log books cover periods of her life up to 1872, but it is the first years in Wellington, from 1860 to 1863, that I found a revelation. Far from being a predictable and humourless lady reformer, writing from the comfort of a comfortable, moneyed background, I discovered a witty, acerbic young woman, working in her father's Post Office and bookshop in Wellington, Shropshire, with a few magazine stories already published and her years of fame and success still ahead.*

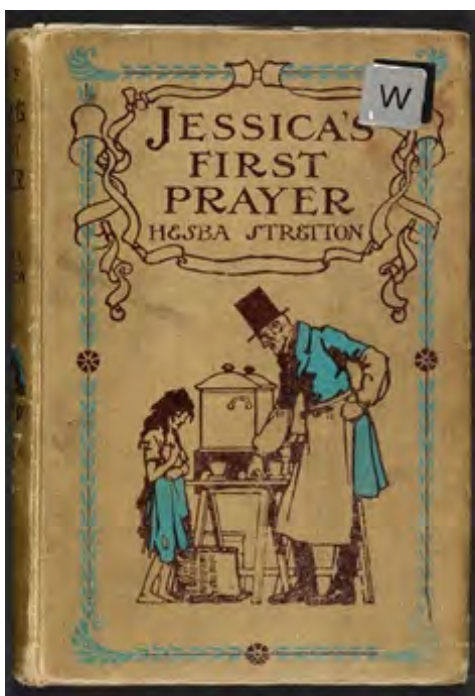
*"She and two unmarried sisters, her widowed father and the invaluable Miss Heighway, ran the busy Post Office in the way post offices have always been run: clearing houses for gossip, the occasional peek at interesting letters, daily dramas: and always the hope of a handsome, eligible young man appearing through the door. Hesba and her sisters had a healthy expectation of marriage and motherhood, and were beginning to feel time was passing.*

*"It was a close family, their mother having died aged forty-four and the eldest girl, Hannah, of necessity taking her place. Hesba Stretton's nom de plume is entirely in keeping with the strong family ties that bound her, her brother, three sisters and widowed father. H for Hannah - E is Elizabeth - S is Sara, B is brother Ben, immigrated to Canada - and A is for Annie, the only one of the sisters who married. Stretton echoes her love for a valley in Shropshire where the family had property and where many happy holidays were spent both in childhood and old age.*



*"I found a book entitled Ministering Angels, by Margaret Nancy Cutt, which included Hesba Stretton among four best selling lady tract writers of the time which provided much useful information, I made a pilgrimage to Wellington where friendly townsfolk added to my knowledge and admired a charming church window to her memory in Church Stretton depicting Jessica the vulnerable pauper child of Jessica's first prayer.*

*"This small volume was her greatest success, describing, with the authority of one who has seen for herself, a child on the streets, struggling against appalling odds, leading a life as destitute as it is possible to imagine. Perhaps the best testament to Jessica's power was that, after an initially enthusiastic reception in Russia, the Czar subsequently banned it, no doubt deeming Hesba Stretton politically subversive.*



COVER OF *JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER*  
COURTESY OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY

*"I would love to have met her but her voice through the log books is so strong that reading them is the next best thing. A conventional autobiography would not, I think, do justice to that voice, and I have risked wrath in the hereafter by expanding her entries. It has been like a conversation between us and I soon began to know when words I had put into her mouth would never have been there. If she's still around somewhere reaping a richly deserved reward I hope she doesn't feel this venture is - her favourite phrase - "an unmitigated disaster".*

A postscript summarises her whole life up to her final years including third hand accounts and listing all her achievements.

It gives me huge pleasure to think that through this gift, future readers will also be fascinated by the life of Hesba Stretton, "The Children's Advocate".

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If you are working on an archival project featuring Victorian(ish) women writers, we'd love to hear from you! Drop us an email at [ICVWW@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:ICVWW@canterbury.ac.uk) or get in touch via Twitter or Facebook @ICVWW.



## *Interview with a Guest*

*THIS ISSUE WE SPOKE WITH ALEX ROUND, A PHD RESEARCHER IN ENGLISH AND ART HISTORY AT BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERISTY*

### **What is your PhD research project about?**

My project is concerned with the networking relationships established amongst some Pre-Raphaelite women. These relationships and connections have hitherto barely been heard of. I look at female friendship as a form of collaboration: ways in which friendships can result in shared visual and literary languages. Some of these relationships range from the social and political networks formed that contributed to the enfranchisement of women in wider society, modelling for each other, genuine friendships and companionship and even just support and encouragement. I have recently been paying attention to Anna Mary Howitt, Barbara Leigh Smith, Bessie Parkes, Elizabeth Siddal and Rebecca Solomon.

### **While you've been working on your research project, is there anything that you came across that particularly surprised or excited you?**

It turns out that some of the women produced literature as well as art! For instance, I had no idea that Anna Mary Howitt not only sketched and painted, but contributed papers on women's suffrage to many journals and published her own writing. It's also incredibly lovely to see the literary correspondence between these women, as many of them composed informal pieces of poetry that complimented each other's artworks. It is actually bizarre that so many of their works have either been lost or left unpublished - they really give you a sense of who they were and the nature of their friendships.



SKETCH OF ANNA MARY HOWITT  
BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI  
COURTESY OF WIKICOMMONS

### **Can you tell us about any of your recent publications?**

I have had a series of essays on Rebecca Solomon published by the Victorian Web which was incredibly exciting. These essays turn to Rebecca Solomon as a social activist and feminist artist, providing a close feminist reading of a selection of her works. The majority of work I have been doing as of late has been conference based. I have been presenting papers for the Pre-Raphaelite Society, the University of Worcester, and the London Nineteenth Century Studies Seminar over the past couple of weeks. I have also had my review on Azelina Flint's brilliant book *The Matrilineal Heritage of Louisa May Alcott and Christina Rossetti* has been published in the latest issue of the BAVS newsletter. I would also like to take this opportunity to promote the Pre-Raphaelite society's upcoming podcast that the committee and I have currently been working on. We have been busy recording episodes that are being edited as we speak and released very soon! So stay tuned! I'm super keen to get involved with the research community and jump at the chance to present my work.

### **What would your dream research project be?**

My dream research project would definitely be a monograph on Rebecca Solomon. It would be the first of its kind as there is next to nothing on Solomon. It is a shame as she is a true talent who had such a fascinating life! My main aim is to uncover more of these women and bring them to the forefront of academic and public discussion. Following this, I would love to help curate an exhibition dedicated to Solomon, comprising of a collection of her works that have fortunately been found. I have also always been interested in organising a Pre-Raphaelite women's network of my own in association with the Pre-Raphaelite society.

### **What are your favourite Victorian texts, and why?**

So my first is definitely Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), the language is beautiful and I can recite it word for word - I have read it that much! Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868-9) is also a true favourite of mine as every time I read it I sob hysterically. There's something about Alcott's protagonists that makes you feel so close to them as they are so relatable! Alfred Tennyson's poetry is also a worthy mention for me. In particular, 'Mariana' (1832) is a poem that I hold close to my heart. The poem, along with Millais' painting were the focus of my undergraduate dissertation and the poem ignited my interest in Pre-Raphaelitism! So I have Mariana, Millais and Tennyson to thank.



# *A Centenary Special*

## *A feminist antifeminist? Remembering Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898)*

JUAN PEDRO MARTÍN VILLARREAL

Summing up the prolific writer, journalist and polemicist Eliza Lynn Linton is rather complicated, but her bicentenary seems reason enough to revisit her lengthy work and kaleidoscopic image. Born in Keswick, Cumbria, in 1822, she is known for being the first female salaried journalist in Britain. However, she is also remembered for her opposition to women's suffrage and her caustic critique to "new women", giving her the label of the best-known antifeminist writer of the fin-de-siècle.

Was Eliza Lynn Linton an antifeminist? This question is easily answered by reading her best-known article, "The Girl of the Period" (*Saturday Review*, 1868). Other opinion pieces such as "La Femme Passée", "The Shrieking Sisterhood", or "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents" would reaffirm the unavoidable answer. Yes, it seems she was it. Yet despite her antifeminist writing, she enjoyed a freedom and independence that she censored for other women; devoted herself professionally to journalism despite her father's opposition; and even separated from her husband, W. J. Linton. The enormous discrepancy between her personal life and her conservative public projection raises questions as to why Eliza Lynn Linton fought so fiercely against her own rights as a woman.



ELIZA LYNN LINTON  
COURTESY OF WIKICOMMONS

Although the feminist/anti-feminist dichotomy is full of edges, especially in the fin-de-siècle context, Eliza Lynn Linton's writing shows how the defence of conservative values might well have been used strategically. Her participation in the "Woman Question" debate brought substantial profits and a fame that she capitalised on through her continued presence in the media. This success was far removed from her less-popular literary beginnings. In fact, while her first two novels *Azeth, the Egyptian* (1847) and *Amyone* (1848) are erudite and historical, her third novel was a radical and proto-feminist novel, titled *Realities* (1851).

She had to finance herself after Chapman and Bentley's editorial rejection and its resounding failure prompted Eliza Lynn Linton to reinvent herself and devote herself to writing for a socially conservative audience especially preoccupied for the abrupt moral changes in Britain.

After a long silence, her mature literary work reproduces the traditionalist ideology that is to be found in her articles. However, it is not uncommon to find ambiguous messages about female independence in her novels. Although *Sowing the Wind* (1867), *The Rebel of the Family* (1880) or *The One Too Many* (1894) condemn alternative models of femininity, they also represent them. Besides, Linton's sympathies sometimes rest with rebellious women, as we see in the case of Perdita, the main character of *The Rebel of the Family*, or in Effie Chegwin, who risks her social position to maintain her happiness in *The One Too Many* and survives, while Moira West – the prototype of the angel of the house – ends up committing suicide.



ARTISTS WERE INSPIRED BY FEMINIST/ANTI-FEMINIST DISPUTES DURING THE LATE C19TH AND C20TH.  
E.G. CHARLES DANA GIBSON, 'THE REASON DINNER WAS LATE', 1912  
COURTESY OF WIKICOMMONS

Nowadays, Eliza Lynn Linton's works remain unknown by most of the public. Although some of her novels have been reissued in recent years, many others are difficult to find. Undoubtedly, the stereotypical image surrounding her as the quintessential anti-feminist writer has conditioned the way in which critics and the public have approached her work. The second centenary of her birth is a great opportunity to rethink her figure; indeed, we might consider moving away from and escaping the binary and simplistic perception of her as this emblem of anti-suffragism, one which distances us from her literary productions.

# *Muriel Ciolkowska: Paris Insider, Critic, Poet*

JUDITH HENDRA

Muriel Ciolkowska nee Hornby was an art critic, poet, journalist, literary critic, intimate of visual artists and intellectuals, and a true cosmopolitan. Born in England in 1880, Hornby fully established herself in Paris in her twenties, married French-Polish graphic artist H. S. Ciolkowska, and explored productive friendships with an impressive number of Paris-based artists and writers. Muriel's writings suggest the Ciolkowskas knew just about everyone worth knowing within that exciting Paris milieu; as a critic her mission was widening the knowledge base of her English-language contemporaries. She published an English-language monograph *Rodin* (1912) inspired in part by Auguste Rodin telling her he couldn't understand why the public made a fuss about him "isolating limbs." She interviewed her fellow cosmopolitan James Wilson Morrice in 1913 (for *International Studio*), and vividly described him carrying his entire painter's kit in his pocket ("Memories of Morrice," *Canadian Forum*, 1925).

Ciolkowska wrote for *Egoist* magazine, edited by intrepid Dora Marsden followed by Harriet Shaw Weaver, for four years. Typically her initial offering reviews a French-language anthology of "the lesser realms of French literature" and an art book that causes Ciolkowska to exclaim about the critic who has a "red-hot passion for art." ("Two French Books by Madame Ciolkowska," *Egoist*, Jan. 15, 1914) As a regular columnist, Ciolkowska writes "Passing Paris"; Paris cultural life seen through the eyes of a critic and journalist; and when war comes, "Fighting Paris."



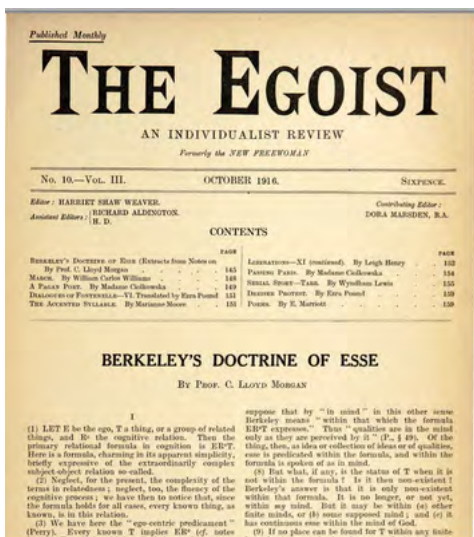
PARIS STREET SCENE, COURTESY OF WIKICOMMONS



Ciolkowska describes recent publications, theater and art shows, tit-bits about Paris life; and with the coming of war, beleaguered civilian Paris. "January 19: this evening it was rumoured a Zeppelin had been sighted a few miles from Paris." "February 4.—To-day I sent a small parcel to a prisoner of war. I was one of a line of people each bringing a little bundle carefully tied in cloth or linen with the same purpose to the railway office." (*Egoist*, March 1, 1915). Her lengthy columns provide day-to-day insights into a city filled with injured soldiers and refugees. She shares anxiety over her husband registering for conscription (he is given an exemption) and copes with chronic food shortages and inflated prices.

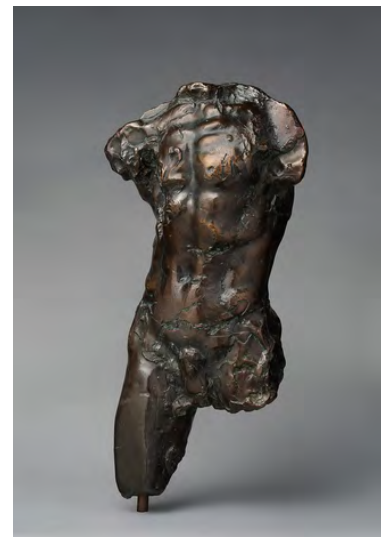
She mourns fallen Paris writers and artists, some known personally to the Ciolkowskas. When she resumed "Passing Paris" in April 1915, she records more deaths and the fates of the living: "the poet-humourist Guillaume Apollinaire, who has occasionally been quoted in these columns, is a second lieutenant." She is concerned about the French public's reflective vilification of Germany and balances it with excerpts from first-person accounts of devastated villages and maimed children. She theorizes about her stoic neighbors, noting it's rare to see an armchair in a French house (*Egoist*, August 1917). She reviews important books-- a neglected novel by Henri Barbusse, *l'Enfer (Under Fire)*; and writes an extended tribute to the enigmatic poet Renee Vivien (Pauline Mary Tarn) (*Egoist*, October 1916). Ciolkowska has the journalist's knack for engaging readers who may or may not be familiar with the personalities and issues she writes about.

*The Egoist* ceased publication in 1919. In 1921 Harriet Monroe's magazine *Poetry* featured Ciolkowska's "Snow": "*This night my body is an offering, / I am carried to you.*" Ciolkowska remained in Paris and continued to write for publications like *International Studio* magazine. She died in 1932.



LEFT: *THE EGOIST*, 1916

RIGHT: AUGUSTE RODIN'S 'TORSO', 1877-78



# *Upcoming Conferences, Events, and Calls for Papers*

- Upcoming VPFA Study Day: 'Women and the East: Gendered Narratives of Encounter in Victorian Popular Writing'. The study day will take place on the 10th and 11th June 2022, online and in-person. The focus will be on narratives by women writers or writings about women of the East.
- Upcoming VPFA Annual Conference: 'Purity and Contamination in Victorian Popular Fiction and Culture'. The conference will take place on 13th-15th July 2022 and will be hosted online and in-person by Loughborough University. Follow @VPFA1 on Twitter to keep updated!
- From 31 May to 21 June 2022 the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Lancaster University will host a series of events that will contribute to the decolonisation of women's studies through celebrating the political, literary, artistic, spiritual and reformist achievements of women of colour, especially those who are affiliated with other marginalized communities, such as the disabled, or LGBTQ+ communities. It will begin with a hybrid interdisciplinary symposium, 'Bearing Untold Stories' from 31 May – 1 June, hosted by the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing. For more details, visit: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/english-literature-and-creative-writing/decolonising-womens-studies/>
- The Kent Maps Symposium is back and will be taking place on 26 May between 1-5pm at Canterbury Christ Church University. The event will be both in-person and online. The event will also launch Carolyn Oulton's recent publication, *Down From London: Seaside Reading in the Railway Age* (2022). To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kent-maps-symposium-2022-tickets-336486218337?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>.
- CFP: Victorians Journal of Culture and Literature. *Victorians Journal* seeks new work for Winter 2022 number. All topics related to Victorian culture and literature are welcome. The deadline is 15 July 2022. For more details, contact: [Deborah.logan@wku.edu](mailto:Deborah.logan@wku.edu).

**If you have an upcoming event or CfP to share with us, please get in touch!**