

Gender and finance in Victorian culture: A seminar on literature, historiography, and investment



Time: Thursday March 19, 2020, 13:00-16:00

Place: Langelandsgade 139, DK-8000 Aarhus, building 1584 room 118

The event is open to all. Please register by sending an email to jgn@cc.au.dk by March 10.

Programme

13:00-13:10: Opening remarks

13:10-14:20: Silvana Colella (Coventry/Macerata): "Reading the 'great unread': a curatorial approach"

How do we read the 'great unread'? What approaches have been elaborated, in the recent past, to validate scholarly exercises in archival recovery? Forgotten, non-canonical or marginalised works – dormant in the vast storehouses of Victorian fiction – are more easily accessible today, in digitised archives, than they were only a few decades ago. Is ease of access changing the way we read Victorian fiction now? Addressing these issues, my talk offers tentative reflections on the curatorial approach, drawing on current debates in the adjacent field of critical heritage studies. The second part focuses on the 'recuperation' of Charlotte Riddell's City novels using the small portion of literary heritage she created as a test case to explore the viability of a curatorial mode of reading.



Silvana Colella is Professor of English Literature at the University of Macerata, Italy. She also holds a professorship at Coventry University. In 2016, she published the first book-length study of Irish novelist Charlotte Riddell's financial novels: Charlotte Riddell's City Novels and Victorian Business: Narrating Capitalism (Routledge).

14:20-14:40: Coffee break

14:40-16:00: Janette Rutterford (Open University): "The forgotten investors: women shareholders in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries"

The number of individual shareholders boomed in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Explanatory factors include legislation facilitating the limited liability company; the need to finance infrastructure both at home and abroad; a growing middle class with smaller families and increased savings; and the need to finance old age. What is less recognised is the role of women investors. The 1851 Census brought to light a 'surplus' of single women relative to single men, reflected in a number of Trollope novels. This surplus continued to grow until after WW1. These spinsters and widows (as well as married women after the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882) were able to directly own shares, vote at Annual General Meetings, and had investment preferences which influenced company financing decisions and, indeed, corporate governance. By the 1930s, women outnumbered men in a number of share registers, and no family was complete without its maiden aunt nor its nieces and nephews with expectations. This presentation describes this phenomenon both in practice and how it was portrayed in fiction.

Janette Rutterford is Emeritus Professor of Finance and Financial History at the Open University Business School. Prior to joining the OU, Janette worked at Credit Lyonnais as a gilts analyst, taught finance at the London School of Economics, and worked in corporate finance at N.M.Rothschild & Sons Limited. She has co-edited Women and their Money, 1700 to 1950 (2009, Routledge) and Men, Women and Money: Perspectives on Gender, Wealth and Investment, 1850-1930 (2011, Oxford University Press).

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