

Dr. Wieland Schwanebeck

**HS
S**

Victorian Literature

Thu (3)

BAR/218

As the success of the recent Showtime series, *Penny Dreadful* (2014), has impressively demonstrated, the myth of the Victorian Age and its literary legacy are more in demand than ever.

Contemporary assessments of Victorian times usually tend to favour one of two seemingly contradictory readings: on the one hand, the image of the Victorian Age as one of stern morality, of stiff-upper-lip imperialism and of “fools in old-style hats and coats” (Philip Larkin); on the other hand, explorations of the darker side of the human psyche and of what Freud called the Uncanny.

This seminar will try to bridge the gap between these two poles by focusing on close readings of a variety of texts. These will include the ‘social consciousness’ narratives of the mid-19th century, such as the works by Charles Dickens (*Hard Times*, 1854) and Elizabeth Gaskell (*Cranford*, 1853), but also the works of ‘Imperial Gothic’, such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), or the popular crime narratives of the late 19th century.

In the last part of the seminar, we will assess the legacy of Victorianism in the light of our literary discussions, addressing (amongst other things) Foucault’s work on the ‘repressive hypothesis’ (regarding sexuality in the 19th century).

A reader with all the relevant literature will be available on OPAL at the beginning of the term.

NB: This course prepares students for the “Schriftliches Staatsexamen: Klausur Englische Literaturwissenschaft” in the spring/summer of 2015.

You do not have to register in advance – just be there for the first meeting.