

Benjamin Morgan
Department of English Language and Literature
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Employment

University of Chicago, Assistant Professor, 2010-
Department of English Language and Literature, Committee on Conceptual and
Historical Studies of Science, and the College.

Education

University of California, Berkeley
Ph.D., Rhetoric, 2010
M.A., Rhetoric, 2004

Harvard University
A.B. *magna cum laude* in Literature, 2001

Fellowships, Awards, and Grants

Co-director, “Climate Change: Disciplinary Challenges to the Humanities and Social Sciences,”
Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, 2015-2017
Associated Faculty, “Studies in Climate Change: The Limits of the Numerical,” Franke Institute
for the Humanities/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 2016-
Affiliated Faculty, “Climate Change Project,” Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory, 2013-
Senior Fellow, Harper-Schmidt Society of Fellows, University of Chicago, 2015-
University of Chicago College Research Fellows Grant (Research Assistant funding), 2016-2017
Faculty Fellow, Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago, 2013-2014
American Philosophical Society Franklin Residential Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced
Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, 2013
NEH Summer Seminar, “Oscar Wilde and his Circle,” UCLA, 2012
Graduate Fellowship, Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, UC Berkeley, 2009-2010
Arts Research Center Fellowship, UC Berkeley, 2009
Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, UC Berkeley, 2008
Dean’s Fellowship, UC Berkeley, 2008
Wollenberg Research Grant, UC Berkeley, 2004, 2006, 2007
Center for British Studies Dissertation Research Grant, UC Berkeley, 2005
Wang Family Fellowship, UC Berkeley, 2003
Hoopes Thesis Prize, Harvard University, 2001

Book

The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature (University of
Chicago Press, forthcoming April 2017)

Articles and Chapters – Peer-reviewed

“Scale in *Tess* in Scale.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* (forthcoming).

“How We Might Live: Utopian Ecology in William Morris and Samuel Butler.” In *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire*. Eds. Nathan K. Hensley and Philip Steer. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018 (under contract).

“*Fin du Globe*: On Decadent Planets.” *Victorian Studies* 58.4 (forthcoming Summer 2016).

“Scale as Form: Thomas Hardy’s Rocks and Stars.” In *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geological Times*, eds. Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor. University Park: Penn State University Press, forthcoming 2017.

“Scale, Resonance, Presence.” *Victorian Studies* 59.1 (forthcoming Autumn 2016).

“After the Arctic Sublime.” *New Literary History* 47.1 (May 2016).

“Oscar Wilde’s Un-American Tour: Mormonism, Aestheticism, and Transnational Resonance.” *American Literary History* 26.4 (December 2014): 1-29.

“Critical Empathy: Vernon Lee’s Aesthetics and the Origins of Close Reading.” *Victorian Studies* 55.1 (Autumn 2012).

“Aesthetic Freedom: Walter Pater and the Politics of Autonomy.” *ELH* 77.3 (Fall 2010): 731-756.

“Undoing Legal Violence: Walter Benjamin’s and Giorgio Agamben’s Aesthetics of Pure Means.” *The Journal of Law and Society* 34.1 (March 2007): 46–64. Reprinted in *Democracy’s Empire*. Ed. Stewart Motha. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.

Solicited Essays

“Harmony and Dissonance.” *Classicisms*, edited by Larry Norman and Anne Leonard. Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2017.

“Introduction: Presentism, Form, and the Future of History.” Coauthored with Anna Kornbluh. *Boundary 2 Online*, special issue on the V21 Collective (September 2016).

“Vernon Lee.” *Oxford Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Editorial

V21: Presentism, Form, and the Future of History. Special issue of *Boundary 2 Online*, co-edited with Anna Kornbluh (forthcoming September 2016).

Reviews

Review of *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*, by Vincent Sherry, *Modern Philology* 114.2 (November 2016).

Review of *Wicked Intelligence: Visual Art and the Science of Experiment in Restoration London*, by Matthew C. Hunter, *Critical Inquiry* 41.4 (Summer 2015): 902-903.

Review of *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*, ed. Stefano Evangelista, *Victorian Studies* 54.2 (Winter 2012): 366-368.

Review of *Gothic and Modernism*, ed. John Paul Riquelme, *Modern Philology* 110.2 (November 2012): 111-114.

Review of Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception, Law, Culture and the Humanities* 1.2 (July 2005): 264-265.

Invited Talks

Upcoming

“The Climate of *The Purple Cloud*.” Victorian Literature and Culture Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University. November 2016.

“V21 and Strategic Presentism” (Keynote). Graduate Student Conference, Loyola University Chicago, October 2016.

“In Human Scale: Forms of the Anthropocene.” Theater Studies Colloquium, Duke University, Fall 2016.

“V21: Presentism and Victorian Studies.” Indiana University, Spring 2017.

Past

“In Human Scale: Thinking Climate Change with Thomas Hardy.” Nineteenth-Century Faculty Seminar, Oxford University, June 2016.

“Aesthetic Play in Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer.” Victorian Psychology Now, Birkbeck College, University of London, June 2016.

“Global Thought in the Anthropocene.” Panel discussion with Ursula Heise, Bill Brown, and Fredrik Jonsson. Center for International Studies, 50th Anniversary Series, University of Chicago, May 2016.

“Scale.” Midwest Faculty Seminar, University of Chicago, April 2016.

“Keywords for Strategic Presentism: Scale, Resonance, Presence.” Plenary roundtable, Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference, Asheville, NC, March 2016.

“Scales without Size in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.” History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science Workshop, University of Chicago, February 2016.

- “Memory: Writing, Traces, and the Unconscious.” Object Roundtable, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, October 2015.
- “From Clouds to Gas: Atmospheres of Industrialization.” Object Roundtable, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, March 2015.
- “Feeling Anthropocene: Arctic Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century.” University of Maryland College Park, Department of English, February 2014.
- “Victorian Neuroaesthetics.” History of Human Sciences Workshop, University of Chicago, November 2013.
- “How Matter Learned to Think: Wilkie Collins, Walter Pater, and Physiological Aesthetics.” Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London, October 2013.
- “Aesthetic Experience and the Embodied Mind in Victorian Science and Literature.” University of Edinburgh, Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, September 2013.
- “Renegade Aesthetics.” Inter-Chicago Circle for Experimental Critical Theory. Newberry Library, Chicago, August 2013.
- “Darkness and Invisibility.” Smart Museum of Art Object-Based Workshop. University of Chicago, April 2013.
- “Critical Empathy: Reading the Movement of Form in Vernon Lee’s Aesthetics.” Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Cultures Workshop, University of Chicago, May 2011.
- “On Physiology and Beauty.” Franke Institute for the Humanities luncheon series, University of Chicago, February 2011.
- “Grant Allen and the Science of Aesthetic Pleasure.” Arts Research Center Symposium, UC Berkeley, May 2009.

Conference Papers and Presentations

Upcoming

- “Climate Change Studies and Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration.” Transatlantic Forum: Big Challenges, Human Solutions. Norwegian Embassy/University of Chicago, October 2016.
- “Utopian World Ecology in Samuel Butler’s *A First Year at Canterbury Settlement* and *Erewhon*.” V-cologies Symposium, University of California, Davis, September 2016.
- “Decadent World Ecologies.” North American Victorian Studies Association, Phoenix, AZ, November 2016.

“Climate Change and Narrative.” Stevanovich Institute for the Formation of Knowledge, Inaugural Conference, University of Chicago, November 2017.

Past

“*Fin du Globe*: On Decadent Planets.” 20th and 21st Century Workshop, University of Chicago, May 2016.

“Presentism, Form, and the Future of History.” V21 Symposium: Presentism, Form, and the Future of History. Chicago, IL, October 2015.

“Cold Paradise: The Arctic’s Utopian Pull.” International Conference on Narrative, Chicago, IL, March 2015.

“After the Arctic Sublime: Aesthetic Categories in the Anthropocene.” American Comparative Literature Association, Seattle, WA, March 2015.

“The Arctic in the Anthropocene: Voyage Narratives, Deep Time, and Planetary Context.” North American Victorian Studies Association, London, Ontario, November 2014.

“Transnational Wilde.” Modern Language Association, Chicago, IL, January 2014.

“Living Matter in Victorian Physiology and Aesthetics, 1840-1860.” Modern Language Association, Chicago, IL, January 2014.

“Mapping the Sublime: Scientific Knowledge and Aesthetic Judgment in the Arctic and the Alps.” North American Victorian Studies Association, Pasadena, CA, October 2013.

“Bodies as Networks in Victorian Aesthetics.” North American Victorian Studies Association, Madison, WI, September 2012.

“Some Objects of Victorian Aesthetic Theory.” Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts, Milwaukee, WI, September 2012.

“How Things Look: Clementina Anstruther-Thomson and the Aesthetics of Material Vision.” North American Victorian Studies Association Conference, Montréal, November 2010.

“Aesthetics/Hedonics: The Science of Pleasure at the *fin de siècle*.” Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Conference, Skidmore College, April 2009.

“A Lot of Art is Boring: The Psychological Aesthetics of Grant Allen and Vernon Lee.” Northeast Victorian Studies Association Conference, Wellesley College, April 2009.

“Regeneration: Evolutionary Aesthetics and the Biology of Form.” Nineteenth Century Studies Association Conference, March 2009.

“Lucretian Aestheticism: The Materialist Flux and Aesthetic Subjectivity.” North American Victorian Studies Association Conference, Yale University, November 14–16, 2008. Also given at the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association Conference, Pomona College, November 2008.

“The Pleasures of Sinking: Decadent Self-Loss as Sublime Immersion.” Northeast Victorian Studies Association Conference, University of Toronto, April 2008.

“Is Bad Aestheticism Good Politics? William Morris and the Debate over Individualism.” Rhetoric Department Faculty/Graduate Student Panel, UC Berkeley, December 2007.

“Pater’s Ethical Materialism.” North American Victorian Studies Association Conference, University of Victoria, October 2007.

“The Aesthetics of ‘Pure Means’: Violence and the Law in Benjamin and Agamben.” Association for the Study of Law, Culture, and the Humanities Conference, Syracuse University, March 2006.

“Spectatorship as Action: Arendt’s Lectures on Kant and the Futurist Spectacle.” “Rethinking Reception,” Graduate student conference, Duke University, March 2005.

Teaching

University of Chicago

Graduate

Science Fiction: Theories and Origins, Fall 2016

Aestheticism and Decadence, Fall 2015

Victorian Speculative Fiction: Agency, Time, and Utopia, Autumn 2014

Oscar Wilde and His Contexts, Spring 2013

Science and the Literary Imagination, Winter 2012

Psychology and Literature in the Nineteenth Century, Winter 2011

Undergraduate

Media Aesthetics: Image, Text, Sound, 2010-2016

Climate Change Fiction, Winter, 2016

Literary Environments, Winter 2015

Oscar Wilde’s London (Study Abroad), Fall 2012

The Politics of Aestheticism, Winter 2012

Late Victorian Literature, Winter 2011

University of California, Berkeley

Writing Courses

Science and Literature: The Two Cultures, Summer 2009

Irrationality, Madness, and Superstition in Victorian Prose, Summer 2008

Aestheticism and Decadence, Summer 2007

Introduction to Literary Theory, Spring 2007

Reading and Meaning, Fall 2005

The Aesthetics of Evil, Summer 2005
The Politics of Performance, Summer 2006
The Scientist and the Detective, Spring 2004
Violence and Persuasion, Fall 2003

Teaching Assistant

Early Modern Europe and its Others, Fall 2004
Theories of the Lie: Plato to Derrida, Spring 2005, 2008, 2009
Twentieth-Century Theories of Interpretation, Fall 2006

Advising

Dissertations

Rebecca Oh, “The Common Climate: Biopolitics, Cosmopolitanism, and Climate Instability in the Global South” (in progress)
David Womble, “Collectivized Flesh: Mass Bodies and the Novel, 1819-1907” (in progress)
Jose Moctezuma, “The Three Automatisms: Labor, Reproduction, and Violence in the Work of William Morris, Mina Loy, and Wyndham Lewis” (in progress)
Dustin Brown, “Ambivalent Subjects: Disinterest, Affect and the Psychological Body of Late Victorian Literature” (in progress)
Daniel Harris, “Reforming the Organism: Physiological Individuation and the Nature of Political Selfhood in Victorian Literary Culture” (defended 2014)
Chris Bench, “Mediating Autistic Worlds”

Orals Exam Committees

Mabel Mietzfeld, Victorian Literature, Crime, and Detection
David Womble, Victorian Literature and the Social Sciences
Rachel Kyne, Sensation and Perception in Victorian Literature
Mary Gibbons, Victorian Aesthetics
James Duesterberg, Aestheticism and Decadence
Brady Smith, Victorian Children’s Literature

MA Theses

Jared Spitz, “How the Change Came: Blasé and Profound Boredom in William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*”
Madeleine McGann, “The ‘Will as a Project’: Determining the States and Effects of the Transitional Will in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*”
Alena Jones, “Unfolding the Surface of the Earth: The Dynamics of Movement on Elizabeth Bishop’s Shoreline”
Crystal Lie, “‘A Repulsive and Extraordinary Face’: (Re)shaping Disability in H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau*”
Amanda Ehrhardt, “Demented Temporality: Mental Illness and Lost Memory in The Glass Menagerie”

BA Theses

Chris Fincher, Postcolonial Ecology and the Poetry of Toru Dutt (in progress)
Kristin Zodrow, Literature and the Environment in the American South (in progress)

Anastasia Klimchynskaya, "The Sign and the Symbol: The Question of Interpretation in the Literature of French Romanticism and of the Late Victorian Period" (Comp Lit/English)
John Lisovsky, "St. Sebastian Melmoth: The Political Aesthetics of Oscar Wilde's Investment in the Figure of the Martyr"
Jordan Reece, "Generations in the Greenwood: From Sterility to Sympathy in E.M. Forster's Maurice" (Gender Studies/English)

Service

Department Service

Faculty advisor, English Department Graduate Student Conference, 2016
Third-year PhD Advisor, 2015-2016
Nineteenth-Century Search, final round reading and interviews, 2013-2014
Nineteenth-Century Search Committee, 2012-2013
Admissions Committee, 2011-2012; 2014-2015
Program Review Committee, 2010-2011; 2011-2012

University Service

College Council, 2016-2019
Chair, Media Aesthetics core sequence, Fall 2014; 2015-2018
MAPH Advisor, 2014-2016
Co-chair, 18th- and 19th-Century Atlantic Cultures Workshop, 2014-2016
Co-chair, Science, Literature, and the Arts reading group, 2013-2014
Fulbright Interview Committee, 2014
Midwest Faculty Seminar discussion leader, Winter 2013
Fulbright Interview Committee, 2012
Co-chair, 18th and 19th-Century Cultures Workshop, 2011-2013

Professional Service

Conference organizer, "Climate Change: Disciplinary Challenges to the Humanities and Social Sciences," June 2016
Conference organizer, V21 Symposium, October 2015
Founding member and online editor, V21: Victorian Studies for the 21st Century
Manuscript review, *PMLA*; *Nineteenth-Century Literature*; *Victorian Studies*; *Art Bulletin*; *Mediations*; *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*
Advisory committee, Northeast Victorian Studies Association (NVSA), 2012-2015
Sonia Rudikoff First Book Prize Committee, NVSA, 2013-2015

Talks related to teaching and service

"Teaching in the Core," Forum on Teaching in the Core, September 2016
"Using Special Collections and the Smart Museum in Teaching," April 2016
"Introduction to Media Aesthetics," Chicago Academic Achievement Program, August 2014 and August 2015
"Negotiating Early Careers," English Department Professionalization Day, May 2013
"Pop hits and Parodies," "Guilty Pleasures" talk for English majors, October 2012
Disciplinary discussion group leader, Workshop on Teaching in the College, July 2012
"Successful PhD Applications," Masters of Arts Program in the Humanities, May 2012

Professional Affiliations

American Comparative Literature Association
Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Association
Modern Language Association
North American Victorian Studies Association
Northeast Victorian Studies Association
Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts
V21: Victorian Studies for the 21st Century