

Program for 2022

Saturday 12th March 2022 Jonathan Cooper

Parallel visions: writers who create art

Although much better known for her novels, Charlotte Brontë also drew, and painted watercolours. In her younger years, she even thought of herself more as a potential painter than a budding novelist. But is this just a curiosity of history, or does it point to something more significant? This lecture will explore the phenomenon of creatives in more than one field, particularly art and narrative writing, and examine some interesting parallels. For example, what do artists and writers aim to achieve when they create?

Jonathan Cooper worked as an educator at the Art Gallery of NSW for more than 30 years. He is now a freelance writer, lecturer and website manager. Among his other interests are philosophy, physics and the international language, Esperanto.

Saturday 14th May 2022 Alison Hoddinott (University of New England)

How To Be A Good Wife: Charlotte Brontë And Charles Dickens

Villette and *Bleak House* were both published in book form in 1853. At the time the two novelists were thinking about marriage and the situation of the Victorian wife. Charlotte Brontë (born 1816) was wondering which of her suitors, if any, to choose. Charles Dickens (born 1812) was considering the incompatibility of his marriage to Catherine, which had taken place in 1836, when she was six weeks short of being of age. Their reflections on marriage are mirrored in their biographies, which quote freely from their letters, and in both novels.

Saturday 9th July 2022 Rachel Givney

The Heart or the Pen – the Brontë's Choice

Writers like The Brontë sisters, Jane Austen, Louisa May Alcott, and Emily Dickinson form cornerstones of female literary endeavour. But their achievements came at a price - none of these women ever married or had children (except for Charlotte Brontë, who married towards the end her life, but wrote very little afterwards). As a teenager, Rachel Givney loved reading the great novels of these pioneers. But she wondered, did these women have to forgo love and family to write? That's how her novel, *Jane in Love* was born. She'll be talking about what inspired her to write her novel and the choices early female writers faced between love, family, and career.

Saturday 10th September 2022 Brendan Somes

The Only Book He Had Cheap from A&R – David Scott Mitchell and the Brontës

David Scott Mitchell owned a very rare first edition of Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell – published by London by Aylott and Jones 1846. It is now held in the library that Mitchell founded, Sydney's Mitchell Library. This book of poems by Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë was for a Mitchell a rare acquisition - in the words of Fred Weymark of Angus and Robertson - Mitchell 'told me that the only book he had cheap from A&R was a copy of the right first edition of Currer Bell poems'. This talk will tell the story of this book from its publication in London in 1846 to its late 19th century acquisition by Mitchell and its 20th and 21st century life in the Mitchell Library.

Saturday 12th November 2022 Penny Gay

Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: Speaking Out in 1848

“Oh, reader! If there were less of this delicate concealment of facts – this whispering, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace ...” (Anne Brontë, ‘Preface’ to the Second Edition).

In the light of recent speaking out by young women about the abuse they have suffered from apparently respectable men, Penny will focus on the novel’s depiction of masculinity and violence – or, as a critic of the day called it, Brontë’s ‘morbid love of the coarse, if not of the brutal’. She will argue that Anne Brontë’s speaking out – via her first-person narrators, both male and female – offers a new style of fiction that points the way (nearly 200 years later) to the brave life-narratives of today’s victims. Penny’s argument will include close analysis of the speech-patterns of major characters.

Saturday 3rd December 2022 Christmas Lunch jointly with the NSW Dickens Society (further details later)