

ABA Program for 2023

Saturday 11 March 2023, Elise Edmonds

KILL OR CURE?: A TASTE OF MEDICINE

Based on an exhibition running at the State Library of NSW until 22 January 2023 which showcase some of the library's oldest and rarest books Elise Edmonds will discuss some of the deadly diseases and dangerous therapies from the 15th to the 19th centuries and the understanding of medicine which would have affected the Brontës during their lifetimes. From the influence of the stars and the phases of the moon, to healing chants and prayers, to the knife-wielding barber-surgeon and game-changing scientific experiments, *Kill or Cure?* takes you behind the curtain of western medicine's macabre history.

Saturday 13 May 2023, Helen Groth

WRITING, LISTENING, RIOTING: THE CASE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S SHIRLEY (1849)

This talk will begin with a close reading of the moment in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* when the narrator, after describing 'a West-Riding-clothing-district-of-Yorkshire rioters 'yell', directly addresses the reader and asks: 'You never heard that sound, perhaps, reader?' A question that opens up a space to consider, as I hope to do, how Brontë tests the acoustic limits of the novel form in this moment. A specific focus, that will hopefully answer another more general question – what can we learn about Charlotte Brontë's writing by revisiting this complex politically charged scene in one of her lesser known novels?

Saturday 15 July 2023: Christopher Cooper

WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND FRANKENSTEIN

It's not known whether Emily Brontë ever read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but almost certainly she knew of it. *Frankenstein* was published in 1816, the year Emily was born. The first popular edition came out in 1831 when Emily was 13. Certainly Emily would have read newspaper reports of the stage adaptations in the years that lead up to her writing *Wuthering Heights*. It is highly likely that, although Emily's novel was a 'groundbreaker', she was inspired by Mary Shelley. Christopher will bring out the similarities – and most importantly the differences – between these two novels.

Saturday 9 September 2023: Lee O'Brien

“STRANGE POWER ... STRANGE PROOFS”: CHASING CERTAINTY IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Wuthering Heights is as puzzling in its authorial impersonality as it is rich and compelling in terms of its characters. The violence in the novel shocked many Victorian readers and raises questions about the limits of conventional assumptions regarding what women were supposed to know. Like Mary Shelley's creature in *Frankenstein*, Heathcliff is a monster who never really left the public imagination once he made it into print. Abusive, dangerous, certainly criminal (with, ironically, a lawyer's help) and even possibly a murderer, where does he come from? One place to look lies outside the world of the Victorian novel: the violent world of the folk ballads, the tales of reckless men and women and fatal acts that Brontë grew up hearing, and that formed a living oral history Emily Brontë deployed with fierce intelligence and skill.

Saturday 11 November 2023, TBA

Saturday 2 December 2022, Christmas Lunch jointly with the NSW Dickens Society (further details later)