



Image: *The Last of England*, Ford Madox Brown, 1855.

**Victorian Expansions:  
Cross-Cultural Migrations Conference 2026**  
24 April 2026  
The University of York  
Programme of Events

## About the Conference

The Victorian age witnessed the mass movement of peoples and ideas, from empire-builders and settlers migrating to colonial peripheries, to artists, writers, and thinkers from around the world moving to the imperial metropole to create eclectic literary, artistic, and musical forms and genres that combined global influences. In a contemporary climate increasingly characterised by anti-immigration rhetoric and policy, “Victorian Expansions: Cross-Cultural Migrations” gathers interdisciplinary research by writers, postgraduate students and senior scholars to uncover the inherent diversity and dynamism underlying Victorian, and indeed British, culture and identity.

The Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York, in collaboration with the Centre for Modern Studies and the Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies at York, is pleased to announce the return of its Victorian Studies conference, on the topic of “Victorian Expansions: Cross-Cultural Migrations.” The conference aims to promote the view of the long nineteenth century as characterised by the mobility and convergence of peoples, ideas and artistic forms, thus offering a historical counternarrative to the isolationism and anti-immigration sentiments that increasingly shape our current moment.

Dr. Pritika Pradhan & Dr. Olivia Carpenter  
Organisers, Victorian Expansions 2026



## Victorian Expansions: Cross-Cultural Migrations Conference 2026

Friday, 24 April 2026

### Schedule of events:

#### 10-10:25 am: Registration & Coffee

Venue: D/L/049 Seminar Room (Derwent College, Block L), Heslington Campus West, University of York

#### 10:25 am – 10:30 am: Welcome

Venue: Hendrix Hall (D/L/028), Derwent College, Block L

#### 10:30 - 12 noon

##### Panel 1: Colonial (Self-)Constructions

*Chair:* Dr. Pritika Pradhan (University of York)

*Speakers:*

Fariha Shaikh (University of Birmingham): “Reading Across Boundaries: T. N. Mukharji’s Travelogue and Short Stories”

Abdul Sabur Kidwai (King’s College London): “Drawing the Line: Indian Muslim Self-fashioning in Victorian London”

Tarini Bhamburkar (University of Bristol): “Feminist Cross-currents: Interview with an Indian Woman in a British Women’s Periodical”

#### 12 noon - 12:15 pm: Coffee Break (D/L/049)

#### 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm

**A Creative Reading and Q&A with Professor Emily Zobel Marshall** (Professor in Postcolonial Literature at Leeds Beckett University and author of poetry collections, *Bath of Herbs* (2023) and *Other Wild* (2025)).

#### 1:15 pm - 2:15 pm: Lunch (Derwent Dining Hall)

#### 2:15-3:45 pm

##### Panel 2: Conflict at Home and in the World

*Chair:* Professor John Bowen (University of York)

*Speakers:*

Danielle Nielsen (Murray State University): “Traumatic Rhetoric: Women’s Ethos in the Survival Narratives of the 1857 Uprising”

Jessica Valdez (Louisiana State University): “The Intimacy of Global War: Migrating Plots and Sensational Trade in Wilkie Collins’s *No Name*”

Ruth-Anne Walbank (Warwick University): “Hellish Migrations: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in the Poetry of the Cotton Famine (1861-1865)”

**3:45 pm – 4:00 pm: Coffee Break (D/L/049)**

**4:00 - 5:10 pm**

**Panel 3: Cross-Cultural Currents**

*Chair:* Professor Matthew Campbell (University of York)

*Speakers:*

Samantha Lukic-Scott (University of York): “Cross-Cultural Spheres of Art and Manufacture: Britain and German States in the Victorian Era”

Charlotte Wilson (University of Oxford): “The Migration of Healthcare from the Home to the Professional: Home Healthcare in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine* (1769) and Thomas John Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1827)”

**6 pm - 7:30 pm**

**Keynote (public lecture)**

*Title:* “‘This strange Dream upon the water’: Charles Dickens Drowning in Venice”

*Speaker:* **Professor Ankhi Mukherjee (Professor of English and World Literatures, University of Oxford)**

*Venue:* Physics Lecture Theatre (P/L/002), Exhibition Centre – Physics and Electronic Engineering Building, Ground Floor, Heslington Campus West, University of York

*Note about venues:*

The conference’s day events (panels and creative reading) are in **Hendrix Hall (D/L/028, Derwent College, L Block)**.

Registration and coffee breaks are in **Seminar Room D/L/049**.

The keynote/public lecture is in the **Physics Lecture Theatre (P/L/002)**, Exhibition Centre – Physics and Electronic Engineering Building (ground floor).

## Panel Abstracts

### *Panel 1: Colonial (Self-)Constructions*

#### **Fariha Shaikh (University of Birmingham): “Reading Across Boundaries: T. N. Mukharji’s Travelogue and Short Stories”**

T. N. Mukharji is perhaps best known for his involvement in the organisation of the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London and his subsequent account of his travel to the opening of the Exhibition in *A Visit to Europe* (1889). However, what he is less well-known for (at least to an English-speaking audience) are his literary works – his short stories, and his novel, *Kankabati* (1892). Following Ruvani Ranasinha’s call to attend to the ‘*poetics* as well as *politics* of postcolonial writings’, this paper takes a broader view of Mukharji’s oeuvre, placing the wit and humour found in his travelogue alongside the magical realism found in his fictional work. In so doing, my paper explores how a form of ‘entangled comparative reading’ (Orsini) can help identify methodological questions of how we read ‘minority literature’ and raises the possibilities of reading across linguistic boundaries.

#### **Abdul Sabur Kidwai (King’s College London): “Drawing the Line: Indian Muslim Self-fashioning in Victorian London”**

This paper examines the navigation of social custom and political authority by Syed Abdoollah and Masihuddin Alvi, long-term Indian Muslim residents in London between 1856 and 1863, whose lives can help unsettle the binary of migrant-settler and visitor. By drawing on archives of Urdu, Persian, and English sources, I argue that these figures utilized newsprint as a site for self-fashioning, providing a corrective against an increasingly racialized and hostile British press. Central to this investigation is the imbrication of politics and education, particularly regarding Indian languages in Britain. Through their interactions with British figures like the Cambridge Orientalist Edward Henry Palmer, Abdoollah and Masihuddin interrogated the politicization and racialisation of linguistic expertise. I demonstrate how popular media became a site of contestation, friendship, and authority, between Indians and Britons, but also among themselves.

By focusing on these neglected figures, this paper demystifies the lived reality of Indian migrants whose many (and often failed) attempts to integrate into British institutions reveal a heterogenous historical record of Indian Muslim identity that complicates the flattening narratives often found in English-language historiography. This can tell us of the expansions and contractions of spaces in the Victorian era between the imperial centre, London, and its periphery, India. It also informs our knowledge of long-standing educational and intellectual exchange

between the two sites, through the migration and long-term residence of South Asians in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century.

**Tarini Bhamburkar (University of Bristol): “Feminist Cross-currents: Interview with an Indian Woman in a British Women’s Periodical”**

Two late Victorian feminist periodicals namely *Women’s Penny Paper* and *The Woman’s Signal* featured groundbreaking front-page interviews with two Indian women, the social reformer Pandita Ramabai Saraswati in 1889 and the women’s rights advocate Shevantibai Nikambe in 1896, respectively. They were the only two Indian women, and the only racial minority, given full-length features on the front pages of these periodicals. My paper will discuss the interview with the lesser-known Shevantibai Nikambe, who builds a cross-cultural bridge with her British interviewer while also subtly interrogating her Anglocentric perceptions and stereotypes. Nikambe often travelled from Bombay to the imperial metropole in the late nineteenth century and socialised with British and Indian reformers in London. In context of the phenomenal figure of the New Woman in both colony and metropole, I consider how Shevantibai used this journalistic opportunity in the *Signal* to fashion a modern, cosmopolitan identity for herself. My paper will also discuss how she wielded this emerging feature of Victorian ‘New Journalism’ – the interview – to push forth her efforts for Indian girls’ and women’s education and reform in the Victorian feminist press.

*Panel 2: Conflict at Home and in the World*

**Danielle Nielsen (Murray State University): “Traumatic Rhetoric: Women’s Ethos in the Survival Narratives of the 1857 Uprising”**

While many migrant Anglo-women’s writings of the long 19<sup>th</sup> century are penned by those who immigrated to the settler colonies of Canada, South Africa, and Australia, the number of women living in and writing from and about the Indian subcontinent increased significantly during mid-century. This presentation looks to women’s writings from the 1857 Indian Uprising to understand how British women positioned themselves in their new home turned conflict zone. To frame the discussion, I will apply the rhetoric of trauma and the rhetoric of expertise to two works: Adelaide Case’s *Day-By-Day at Lucknow* (1858) and Frances Duberley’s *Campaigning Experiences in Rajpootana and Central India, During the Suppression of the Mutiny, 1857-1858* (1859). This reading will analyze how these women, through their depiction of trauma, developed a rhetoric of expertise and created a rhetorical ethos or trustworthiness. I will illustrate how women depicted their movements outside of

the home and into spaces, like war-torn Indian cities and military regiments, where the presence of British women was unexpected. Through their narratives, the women challenged stereotypes of Victorian women, demonstrated an expertise of life abroad, and situated themselves as a complicated part of the colonial project. Though contexts are widely different – for despite complexity of Victorian imperial femininity, the Anglo women writing these narratives certainly had more power than contemporary migrants – the rhetorical framing, trauma begets a rhetorical ethos, remains important today as immigrants speak to their own experiences.

**Jessica Valdez (Louisiana State University): “The Intimacy of Global War: Migrating Plots and Sensational Trade in Wilkie Collins’s *No Name*”**

With the outbreak of the American Civil War, many in Britain worried that it would cause a “fearful falling off” in the supply of raw cotton to Lancashire manufacturing. On 17 January 1861, the *Leeds Mercury* warned that “it is impossible to look forward to the consequences of such a calamity without a shudder.” Newspapers were full of the suffering in Lancashire, using it to advocate for and against intervention in foreign conflicts to support Britain’s so-called “natural” rights to free trade. What I call economic sensation – the invocation of domestic dread to legitimate arguments on behalf of free trade and British involvement in foreign conflicts in its name – pervaded newspaper and political writing of the era. It is no accident that the sensation novel emerged in this context. This paper argues that novelistic sensation is intertwined with economic sensation marshaled in response to the global wars and interrupted trade routes of the 1850s and 1860s, particularly the U.S. Civil War and the Taiping Rebellion.

Wilkie Collins’s sensation novels of this period portray an England that is not an imperial metropole but a place interfused with signs of conflict from elsewhere: from the deteriorating marshlands of Norfolk to the importation to England of the tragic octoroon plot and the missionary plot. *No Name*, which was serialized in 1862 during the U.S. Civil War and Taiping Rebellion, draws attention to the ways in which economic and political thought are shaped by physiological sensations emerging from global events. The novel intermingles the language of free trade, territorial disputes, and sovereignty with individual experience, thereby showing the ways in which global wars become part of intimate life.

**Ruth-Anne Walbank (Warwick University): “Hellish Migrations: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in the Poetry of the Cotton Famine (1861-1865)”**

In 1864, Lancashire poet, Samuel Laycock, lamented that ‘thousands on thousands of our fellowmen / Have left [...] To try their fortunes on some foreign shore’. He prayed that all his now-distant friends would ‘meet in heaven, to part no more’. The

event that caused this strange mixture of despair and well-wishes is known today as the Lancashire Cotton Famine. It refers to a period during the American Civil War (1861-1865) when the Unionist blockade of Confederate-controlled ports led to a drop in cotton exports and a resulting surge in unemployment across Lancashire. As hundreds of verses appeared in response to the crisis in newspapers across North-West England, the event became what Simon Rennie describes as ‘a moment in history where poetry mediates the relationship between the Victorian global and local’ (2020; p. 197). News about the conflict and ideas about abolition freely migrated across the Atlantic; in some cases, this migration extended to people desperate to escape the conflict. This paper explores the cross-cultural exchanges in poetry from the Lancashire Cotton Famine. To focus my discussion, I foreground the eschatological religious language within this body of predominantly working-class literature, such as those referenced by Laycock of Heaven, Earth, and Hell. To conclude, I foreground potential avenues for future research, drawing together Lancashire poets with American abolitionist campaigners, such as Frederick Douglass and George H. Boker, to compare how such eschatological language operated in transatlantic discourse.

*Panel 3: Cross-Cultural Currents*

**Samantha Lukic-Scott (University of York): “Cross-Cultural Spheres of Art and Manufacture: Britain and German States in the Victorian Era”**

Throughout the Victorian period, the images that formed the Western canon of art were primarily known to British audiences through reproductions. While there has been extensive research into copies made through drawings, paintings, photographs and prints, this paper presents research into the more radical transformation of two-dimensional images into three-dimensional objects. Images such as Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* were repeatedly transformed into objects as varied as enamelled porcelain plaques, cast iron firebacks, needlework pictures and stained-glass windows. Such objects were key in popularising famous images and new materials, with many being imported from German manufacturers.

This paper focuses on the prominent role taken by these objects in the cross-cultural relationship between Britain and German states, particularly Saxony and Prussia. Through examining the mobility of objects between these states, we can gain a new appreciation of the depth of German influence on the development of manufactures and art objects in Victorian Britain. This expands previous scholarship on the role of Prince Albert to explore other key figures and manufacturing trends in the cross-cultural migration of ideas and artistic influence between Britain and German states during the Victorian period. In doing so, this paper reveals German design and

manufactures as key to the development of design reform in Britain, and for the consumption of popular visual culture across the nineteenth century.

**Charlotte Wilson (University of Oxford): “The Migration of Healthcare from the Home to the Professional: Home Healthcare in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine* (1769) and Thomas John Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1827)”**

This paper examines the migration of ideas concerning domestic healthcare across different literary forms, from medical manuals to fictional novels and vice versa. It focuses on how Anne Brontë’s determination to honestly depict the struggles of alcoholism in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) builds on ideas present in non-fiction medical writing, particularly William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine* (1769) and Thomas John Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1827). Both these lay medical works were in the Brontë family library and, as evidenced by Patrick Brontë’s annotations, were actively consulted.

This paper sheds light on the wider cultural influence of these domestic medical publications written by professionals for lay readers, exploring how they sought to shape ideals of caregiving within the home. I also highlight the migration of healthcare advice across Britain and Europe, by examining Buchan’s influence from the Scottish and French Enlightenment movements. In so doing, I position the home caregiver as an important agent in medical treatment and explore the ways in which both fiction and non-fiction examine what it means to care, day after day, for another human being. I examine the complex interplay between the Victorian novel and medical literature to explore the opportunities and challenges these forms offer to medical recommendations to caregiving and reveal the mutual exchange of ideas between these two forms.

## About the Speakers

**Tarini Bhamburkar** is a research affiliate in the Department of English at the University of Bristol. Her research focuses on women's Anglophone and regional-language feminist magazines from late-Victorian Britain and India. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and *Victorian Periodicals Review*. She currently holds a Curran Fellowship from the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals.

**Abdul Sabur Kidwai** is a final year PhD student of Comparative Literature at King's College London. His doctoral research, supported by the AHRC, explores Indian Muslim travel writing to Britain in the nineteenth century, with a focus on Urdu and Persian manuscripts, combining history and literature. He is particularly interested in the dynamics of religion, travel, and empire.

**Samantha Lukic-Scott** is an Honorary Research Associate in the History of Art Department at the University of York, where she completed her PhD in 2025. Her thesis explored how objects reproducing the designs of famed paintings cemented and disseminated a popular canon through a multitude of materials in the long nineteenth century. Her most recent publication was 'Experiencing and re-experiencing the monument to William Shakespeare', *Sculpture Journal* (2025). Samantha's research incorporates a strong focus on underrepresented voices and communities, drawing on her experience working for arts and culture charities. She currently works as Community Participation Manager at York Museums Trust.

**Danielle Nielsen** is Professor of English at Murray State University in Murray, KY. A scholar of rhetoric, the British Empire, and late-Victorian literature, she's interested in how we navigate the world around us through texts, from classroom texts to cookbooks and travel narratives and Keanu Reeves' memes. Her scholarly work has been published in *College Teaching*, *Gender & History*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, and other scholarly venues. She received her undergraduate degree from Nebraska Wesleyan and her MA and PhD from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH.

**Fariha Shaikh** is Associate Professor of Victorian Literature at the University of Birmingham. She is the author of *Nineteenth-Century Settler Emigration in British Literature and Art* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), and has published widely on literature and empire. She is the co-editor of *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Her current work focusses on what we mean by 'global' Victorians and the remit of 'world literature'.

**Jessica R. Valdez** is an Assistant Professor of nineteenth-century British literature at Louisiana State University and Visiting Fellow at Durham University. Prior to joining LSU, she taught at the University of East Anglia, UK, and the University of

Hong Kong. Her research and teaching interests include nineteenth-century British literature, novelistic form, empire and migration, and media and periodical studies. Her first book, *Plotting the News in the Victorian Novel* (EUP 2020), examined competing understandings of national identity in nineteenth-century novels and the newspaper press, concluding with Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill's portrayal of the Anglo-Jewish press in his 1892 novel, *Children of the Ghetto*. She is currently working on a book-length project tentatively called, "Despots and Democrats: China and America in British Literature, 1832-1901," that examines intersecting imaginaries of the United States and China in nineteenth-century British writing.

**Ruth-Anne Walbank** is an AHRC-funded PhD candidate at the University of Warwick, researching ecological hellscapes in the industrial North during the nineteenth century. Archival work from their thesis culminated in the "Weaving History" podcast, which was shortlisted by the Independent Podcast Awards in 2024. In 2023, Ruth was awarded a Doctoral Fellowship from Warwick's Humanities Research Centre.

**Charlotte Wilson** is a post-award member at the University of Oxford. She has recently completed her DPhil in English Literature examining the representation of domestic caregivers in nineteenth-century medical literature and fictional novels. Her research considers how ideas about home caregiving were shaped in the medical and cultural imagination. More broadly, her research interests include the medical humanities, disability studies, and gender studies.

## A Creative Reading and Q&A with Professor Emily Zobel Marshall

*12:15 pm - 1:15 pm*

**Speaker:** Professor Emily Zobel Marshall (Professor of Postcolonial Literature, Leeds Beckett University)

**Venue:** Hendrix Hall (D/L/028), Derwent College, Block L, Heslington West Campus, University of York

### *About the Speaker*



**Emily Zobel Marshall** is a poet and Professor of Postcolonial Literature at Leeds Beckett University. Of French-Caribbean and British heritage, she grew up in North Wales and is also a qualified Mountain Leader.

Her work explores the cultures and literatures of the African diaspora, focusing on folkloric trickster figures, Caribbean carnival traditions and Decolonising the outdoors. She is widely published and the author of two acclaimed academic books: *Anansi's Journey: A Story of Jamaican Cultural Resistance* (UWI Press, 2012)

and *American Trickster: Trauma, Tradition and Brer Rabbit* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019). Her debut poetry collection, *Bath of Herbs* (Peepal Tree Press, 2023), has been described as 'spellbinding' (Jason Allen-Paisant). The collection explores the complexities of mixed-race, hybrid identities and the deep, sometimes uneasy relationships between self, place, and the landscapes of England and Wales.

Her second collection, *Other Wild* (Peepal Tree Press, Oct 2025) explores the liminal, boundary-crossing wildscapes of the land and heart and the lives of errant women and creatures who refuse to adhere to official paths. It has been described by the acclaimed nature writer Robert MacFarlane as a 'glorious, various collection: embedded and embodied in the living world, zinging throughout with love, joy, passion, loss and profusion. Rivers flow and forests grow through it; memory here is made as much of matter as well as metaphor. The whole book pulses.'

Emily will be reading a selection of poems from both her collections.

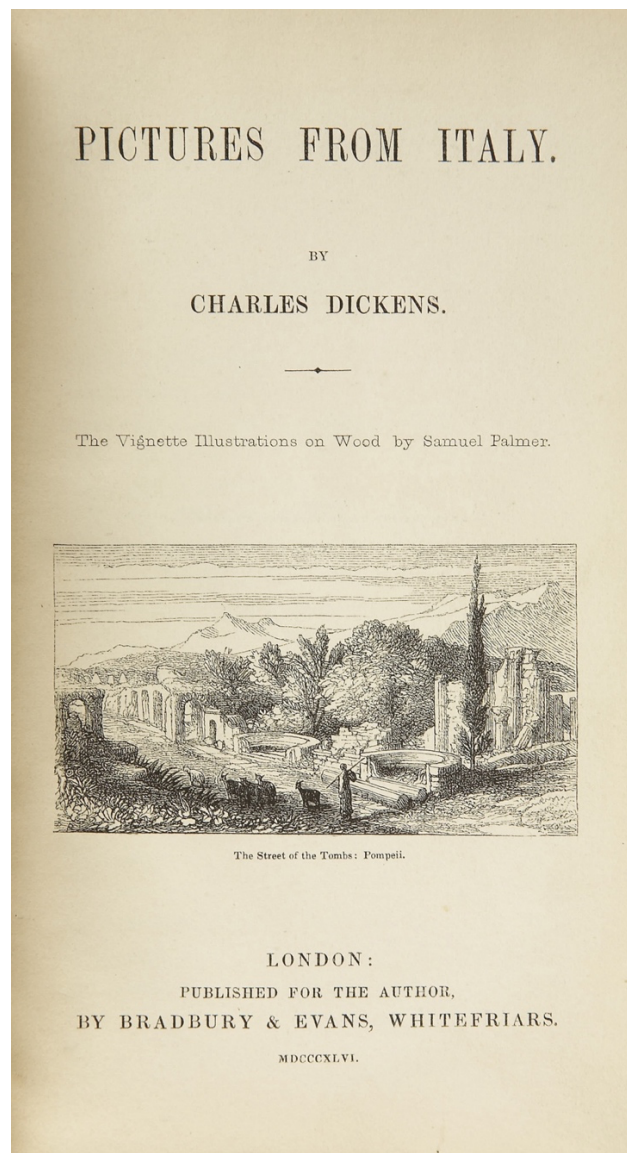


*Keynote (Public Lecture): 6:00 – 7:30 pm*

**Title:** “‘This strange Dream upon the water’: Charles Dickens Drowning in Venice”

**Speaker:** Professor Ankhi Mukherjee (Professor of English and World Literatures, University of Oxford)

**Venue:** Physics Lecture Theatre (P/L/002), Exhibition Centre – Physics and Electronic Engineering Building, Heslington West Campus, University of York



In Dickens’s “An Italian Dream” (1846), one of the chapters in his travelogue titled *Pictures from Italy*, the restive traveller uses the noun and verb forms of ‘dream’ in a variety of ways, some of which contradict each other. The sensory overload of

an “unbroken succession of novelties” is comparable, he says, to the recall of half-formed dreams. In a pattern we see repeated in several works of nineteenth-century fiction and poetry, dreaming is not only related to movement and travel but depicted as dynamic itself: the black boat, which the author boards after the coach ride, marks a “dreamy kind of track” towards the mysterious lights shining like tapers on the dark waves. This talk uses “the Dream” to examine fugue states, or states between sleep and wakefulness, active aesthetic reception and passive sufferance, as explored in Dickens’s works. The “Italian Dream” is an act of moving closer to “the heart of this strange place”: it is also the strange place itself, Venice, a bulwark of the majesty and magnificence of the European civilisation, which is also, from some angles, “gorgeous in the wild luxuriant fancies of the East.” Venice is described as “this strange Dream upon the water,” a dream of death by drowning. Dickens presciently warns readers against the Anthropocene, when water will eventually subsume the solid realities of the old city.

*About the Speaker*



**Ankhi Mukherjee** is Professor of English and World Literatures at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Wadham College. Her most recent book, *Unseen City: The Psychic Lives of the Urban Poor* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), has won Columbia

University's Robert S. Liebert Award for "outstanding scholarship in the field of applied psychoanalysis." Mukherjee's second monograph, *What Is a Classic? Postcolonial Rewriting and Invention of the Canon* (Stanford UP, 2014), was awarded the British Academy Prize in English Literature. Her other publications include *Aesthetic Hysteria: The Great Neurosis in Victorian Melodrama and Contemporary Fiction* (Routledge, 2007), and the collections of essays she has edited, namely *A Concise Companion to Psychoanalysis, Literature, and Culture* (with Laura Marcus, Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), *After Lacan* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), and *Decolonizing the English Literary Curriculum* (with Ato Quayson, Cambridge UP, 2023). Mukherjee has published in competitive peer-reviewed journals and sits on the editorial boards of several international journals. She has been a postdoctoral research fellow of the British Academy (2003-2006), a visiting fellow at the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University (2015), and the John Hinkley (Visiting) Professor at Johns Hopkins University (2019). She was invited faculty at Harvard University's Institute for World Literature (IWL) in summer 2023 and 2024, and will be returning to teach for IWL at this year's host institution, Humboldt University of Berlin. At present, Mukherjee has two books under contract. She is working on *A Very Short Introduction to Postcolonial Literature* in the widely circulated VSI series (Oxford UP) and her fourth monograph, *Mavericks and Charlatans: Empire, Modernity, and the Authorization of Dreams* (Princeton UP).