



Bishopsgate  
Events

# Tailored Trades: Jack London, Turn-of-the-Century Slum Tourism and the Sweated Industries of the East End

Speaker: **Dr Vike Martina Plock**

Thursday 22 May 2014 | 7.30pm

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This talk will focus on the popularity of slum tourism at the turn of the 20th century. In particular, it will look at the ways in which the sweated industries are represented in literary texts by Jack London and other writers from the same period. It will also discuss how middle-class authors and philanthropists “dressed down” to blend in with the East End residents to explore in detail “how the other half lives.”

**Dr Vike Martina Plock** is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Exeter. She grew up in Germany but received her MA and PhD from the University of York. Her research focuses on early 20th century literature and culture. She is particularly interested in the relationship between literature and medicine and has written a monograph on the Irish writer James Joyce and his lifelong engagement with the medical sciences. It was published in 2010 by the University Press of Florida as *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity*. In addition to numerous articles and book chapters on modernist literature, she is now completing a second book on interwar women novelists and fashion. This recent academic interest in clothes, fashion, and appearance has brought her to the current research project “Tailored Trades” on the interrelated histories of work and clothes at the turn of the 20th century.

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## Tailored Trades: Clothes, Labour and Professional Communities (1880-1939)

Organised jointly by researchers at the University of Exeter and Northumbria University, and partnered by the Bishopsgate Institute, this Research Network investigates how clothes and labour influenced and assisted in the development of professional communities at the turn of the 20th century (1880-1939). The Network is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities programme.

### About

During the long 19th century mechanised manufacturing, accelerated modes of production and innovative trades and industries created employment possibilities for an increasingly professionalised workforce. While factory and clerical workers, shop girls and other members of a newly established workforce faced changing working hours and environments, a transformation of clothes paralleled this revolution in trades and industries. New vocations required new vestments at a time when the affordability of mass-produced clothing launched the ready-to-wear industry. Social mobility expressed itself in new sartorial patterns and specific uniforms or dresses became the markers of professional identity and social mobility. At the turn of the 20th century the histories of dress and labour shared many common threads.

[tailoredtrades.exeter.ac.uk](http://tailoredtrades.exeter.ac.uk)

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