

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Huxtable, Sally-Anne (2011) Inside the Venusberg : Myth and the Queer Aesthetic Interior 1860-1900. In: Northumbria Research Conference, 5-6 May 2011, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3617/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE



**UniversityLibrary**

## **Inside the Venusberg: Myth and the Queer Aesthetic Interior 1860-1900**

Dr Sally-Anne Huxtable,

Paper Proposal,

University Research Conference

This paper examines some of the ways in which British Aesthetic artists and writers adopted and adapted the medieval myth of Venus and Tannhäuser in the second half of the nineteenth century. It will explore the ways in which the realm of the Venusberg (Venus's subterranean realm) is reconfigured as a specifically Aesthetic interior, an imaginative space through which various cultural and personal concerns can be expressed. In the Aestheticism of the second half of the nineteenth century the myth of Venus and Tannhäuser becomes part of a set of artistic and queer codes which might allude to any number of forbidden passions, acts and ideas for both artists and audiences alike. Not only a cipher for queer sexualities, it also served as a multi-layered set of signs and symbols for other forms of queer anti-establishment discourse such as feminism, the questioning of gender roles, paganism, anti-clericalism and atheism. In particular this paper will focus on Edward Burne-Jones's painting *Laus Veneris* (1873-1875) but will also consider Algernon Swinburne's related and controversial poetic version of the same name (1866) and Aubrey Beardsley's unfinished satirical and pornographic reworking of the myth *Under the Hill or The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser* (1896).

**Dr Sally-Anne Huxtable**  
**Senior Research Assistant**  
**Department of Arts**  
**School of Arts and Social Sciences**  
**Tel: 0191 243 7497**  
**sally-anne.huxtable@unn.ac.uk**