Newsletter

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None of us could have imagined what the last few months would bring, but hopefully we're now in sight of the light at the end of the tunnel. Notwithstanding the global challenges, it's continued to be a busy time for Victorianists.

At BAVS, we've seen some changes to the Executive. Jonathan Memel has stepped down as Newsletter Editor, a role at which he excelled; much of the content in this issue is reflective of the sensitivity, dedication, and intellectual acumen he has brought to the Newsletter. He's taken his prodigious talents to the Treasurer role, taking over from Vicky Holmes, who has been its caretaker for the past few months. Jonathan inherits from Vicky a financial state and system in very good health – and that's been reflected in our ability to offer a series of hardship grants for members struggling during COVID. We are currently in the process of administering the new round. Please see p.2 for details of how to donate to this cause; in the last round, contributions allowed us to double the grants we awarded.

We are also advertising for a new Newsletter Editor. Please see p. 3 for details of what the role entails, and how to apply.

The conference team at the University of Birmingham, led by Fariha Shaikh and Rebecca Mitchell, have been busy adapting to the COVID situation. The conference will, we hope, return in summer 2022; we will keep you updated as we're able.

In the meantime, Claire Wood has been leading a new Events Group, who will be hosting a series of 'BAVS@Home' events in the coming months. The first, 'Victorian Valentines', will be hosted by Alice Crossley and held via Zoom on Monday 8 March at 17.15 (GMT). Please see the [BAVS website] for more details on this and other upcoming events. We hope to see many of you there.

Joanna Taylor
bavsnews@gmail.com

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BAVS News

Hardship Grants

The BAVS committee have been working hard to implement financial support for those members adversely affected by COVID.

In the first stage (August 2020) 5 x £400 hardship bursaries targeted at those struggling to cover the cost of the most basic needs as a result of financial hardship were granted. The Committee has now made the decision to extend applications for hardship bursaries on a rolling basis. Applications may be submitted at any point from February 2021. The committee will continue to review this funding and will post any further updates here.

Hardship bursaries of up to £400 are for those those struggling to cover the cost of the most basic needs as a result of financial hardship (such as those on casual/temporary contracts who have not been eligible for government assistance and those who have had to significantly reduce their paid work due to childcare responsibilities). In the case of high demand, the overall amount of each bursary may be less than £400.

The scheme is open to Postgraduates, Early Career Researchers, members who are not in full-time permanent employment, and Independent scholars.

Click here for the Application Form

We know that this is only a drop in the ocean and there is much more to do. Therefore, as well as looking to raise funds elsewhere, we are asking for your help. A gift of £5, £10, £25, £50, £100, £200, or, if you can, fully funding a £400 bursary will make a huge difference to those struggling. Please give if you can.

Donations can be made via just giving: https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/bavshardshipbursaries

If you have any questions about donating, please do not hesitate to contact me on the following email: holmes.v.j@gmail.com

Vicky Holmes (BAVS executive member)

Newsletter Editor

BAVS are looking for a new Newsletter Editor to join the Executive Committee. As Editor, you will be responsible for compiling and distributing the triannual Newsletter, sourcing and administering the book reviews process, and maintaining regular communication between the BAVS Committee and members. The role is a good opportunity for early career colleagues looking to develop experience in academic administration, and to expand their role in the BAVS community.

To apply, please send a 2-page CV and 1-page covering letter, explaining any previous experience and what you'd seek to bring to the role, to bavsnews@gmail.com by **31 March 2021**.

Reviews

The BAVS Newsletter is always looking for new reviewers, particularly among postgraduate, early-career, and independent researchers. To express an interest in reviewing, please email your name, affiliation, five research keywords, and any titles or digital resources that you are interested in reviewing to bavsnews@gmail.com. Reviewers must join BAVS if they have not done so already. Authors, editors, and publishers of recent work on any aspect of Victorian history, literature, and culture are also invited to suggest titles for review by emailing the same address. Reviews printed in the BAVS Newsletter are distributed to over 600 members around the world and then archived on our open-access website. Reviews will be returned to each book's publisher to aid their publicity efforts.

***Grub Street: The Origins of the British Press*, by Ruth Herman (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2020), 288pp., £20 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4456-8884-8**

Ruth Herman's investigation, *Grub Street: The Origins of the British Press*, reintroduces us to the controversial institution with which we are all too familiar with today. 'I don't think the concept of Grub Street has disappeared,' she writes, but rather 'it has simply changed its name to "media", under which guise it continues to intrigue, delight, and infuriate us' (p. 9). But where did it all begin? Analysing its rise and fall, Herman explores the origins of the British press with entertaining originality, exploring the 'unsung heroes and heroines of the burgeoning press' (p. 9) throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Grub Street begins with the Tudors, and the political 'primordial soup out of which the press emerged' (p. 11). Out of disdain for the King and despite dangerous consequences, a network of radical publications and pioneering journalists began to publicly oppose the actions of the court. In fact, the conflict of ideologies between parliament, monarchy, and the church subsequently led to the English Civil War (1642–1651), a brutal battle that 'was also waged through the words which tumbled from writers' pens' (p. 13). Herman demonstrates throughout her first chapter that the onslaught which ensued on the page entertained the most unlikely of people: the surprisingly literate 'lower orders', a 'newsmongering' (p. 16) audience that were eager to follow the 'political gossip' (p. 15). This is also the point at which the authorities sought to control and punish authors, publishers, and, perhaps amusingly, texts themselves. These attempts often back-fired, for as Herman notes, 'what can be more spectacular for a book's publicity than to see it ceremoniously put to death?' (p. 27).

Chapters Two to Four continue to explore the 'thirst for news [that] was growing across the country' (p. 41), the various types of publication that emerged, as well as ongoing attempts to censor and suppress. Herman 'chart[s] the progress of the press through the entertaining, vicious and plain sensational insults flung across the political divide in the form of Royalist or Parliamentarian pamphlets, 'separates' and other one-off publications' (p. 42) and does so with wit. Despite the court's efforts to regulate what was being publicly distributed, and evident throughout Herman's amusing choice of examples, the press remained unapologetically radical. 'However vicious we think the newspapers are today', Herman remarks, 'it is unlikely they would get away with the kind of accusations, slights and unsupported rumours that were prevalent' (p. 112) throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The proprietors of Grub Street, and Herman herself, also explore other ways in which to utilize their new-found influence. In Chapter Five, 'Something for the Ladies', Herman 'cut[s] a path through the chaotic and unruly set of publications [... to] illustrate contemporary attitudes towards women' (p. 126), analysing texts such as *The British Apollo* (1709) and its rival *The Female Tatler* (1709 - 1710). And in Chapter Six she explores the weird and wonderful world of advertising, demonstrating once more the parallels between Grub Street and the press as we know it. 'As has been said of newspapers today,' she asserts, 'all human life and its desires and needs are there in the classifieds' (p. 180). The end of *Grub Street* sees Herman shifting her focus from the page to the mechanics of the trade itself (Chapter Seven), whilst also looking at 'Into the Provinces' (Chap 8). The book ends with 'a quick round-up of some of the things that have slipped through the net' (p. 240), with Herman sharing some more amusing scandals that were documented within, but also carried out by, the British press.

Grub Street is a useful reference point for those researching British newspapers, publishing or the history of censorship, and — despite its rather imposing front-cover — is an entertaining read for scholars and non-academics alike. Herman's carefully chosen archival extracts ensure that her study of the British press becomes a collaborative effort and that readers are taken along with her on a historical exploration. The book covers a lot of

ground with a great deal of political analysis, which can sometimes be overwhelming, but generally the text is both manageable and enjoyable. And although her investigation stops at the end of the eighteenth century, Victorianists will find that *Grub Street* is an excellent precursor to texts such as Nigel Cross's seminal *The Common Writer* (1985), Ian Haywood's *Revolution in Popular Literature* (2009) or *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (ed. Shattock, 2019), as Herman provides ample political, economic, and societal context for those researching nineteenth-century newspapers, periodicals and the popular press.

Mollie Clarke (University of Roehampton)

***Lucas Malet, Dissident Pilgrim: Critical Essays*, edited by Jane Ford and Alexandra Gray (London: Routledge 2019), 242pp., £120 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-367-14615-3**

As part of Routledge's Among the Victorians and Modernists series, *Lucas Malet, Dissident Pilgrim* invites us to join Lucas Malet (born Mary St Leger Kingsley, daughter of Charles Kingsley) very much among her contemporaries while drawing together various threads from existing scholarship, from Malet's conversion to Catholicism to her relationship to The Woman Question.

The essays of the collection proceed principally through close readings, effective in this sort of 'introduction', giving the reader a sense of intimacy with Malet's œuvre as well as some of the contexts available for her work (p. 21). Featuring scholars from doctoral candidates through to established members of the professoriate, it promises what we can hope will be a sustained critical focus on Malet in the future.

The collection is segmented into four thematic parts, and this approach proves a little uneven. The concluding two parts — 'Malet and Her Contemporaries' and 'Catholic (Proto-)Modernism' — contain only two essays a piece, and 'Malet and Her Contemporaries' is a concern shared across the other sections, 'Maletian Bodies' and 'Dissident Women'. Indeed, the collection is most successful in setting Malet in relation to other authors across a range of contexts, as both an influence and an active interlocutor, making the case for her relevance for scholars and readers interested in a range of themes and authors.

Some of Malet's most popular works —*The History of Sir Richard Calmady* (1901), *The Far Horizon* (1906), and *The Survivors* (1923) — are addressed twice, but in different parts of the collection, helping explain and explore the multifaceted nature of Malet's work. For example, *The Survivors* is paired with Malet's *The Wages of Sin* (1891) in Louise Benson James' opening comparative assessment of 'moral dissecting-room[s]' (the term is from Malet's *Colonel Enderby's Wife* (1885)), which illustrates a 'medical Gothic' (p. 36). Yet that same story emerges rather differently from Jane Ford's assessment of telepathy as both a characteristic of Malet's modernist style and a wrangling with theological challenges, which closes the set of essays. Some of Malet's less commonly addressed works are well incorporated within the collection through close readings, as in Crescent Rainwater's interesting analysis of *Deadham Hard: A Romance* (1919) as a novel of feminist professionalism and Catherine Delyfer's interpretation of *Adrian Savage* (1911) as a 'post-Victorian' blend of aestheticism and politics (p. 109).

What will hopefully be the defining piece of the collection is left for the appendices, however, which house a previously unpublished Malet story — 'In Memoriam, Ernest D. Chesterfield' — and an accompanying essay by Ruth Robbins. Although the story runs to a mere six pages, Robbins uses it as an effective comparison with 'The Birth of a Masterpiece' (1922) to highlight Malet's engagement with aestheticism as a repertoire of tropes, ideas and techniques, while challenging *l'art pour l'art* as a masculine pose. Story and essay offer a fitting end to a collection that will hopefully fulfill its aspiration to generate a 'turning point in the critical fortunes' of Lucas Malet (p. 22).

Dominique Gracia (Collaborative Organization for Virtual Education)

***Victorian Poetry and the Culture of Evaluation,* by Clara Dawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 256pp., £55 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-1988-5610-8.**

Clara Dawson's book, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of Evaluation*, reassesses early and mid-Victorian poems through the lens of 'a poetics of publicness' (p. 1). Dawson identifies how poets were in dialogue with reviewers and demonstrates how the commercial and critical reception of poetry, mediated by the periodical press, actively shaped poetic form. She draws an extensive selection of contemporary reviews into dialogue with close readings of poems to illuminate how poets self-consciously negotiated and renegotiated their relationships with readers.

This relatively slim book ranges across significant poems by Matthew Arnold, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Arthur Hugh Clough, Letitia Landon, and Alfred Tennyson, as well as those of the Spasmodics and a selection of poems from gift annuals. Dawson has achieved this concision through taut prose paired with a clear sense of the elements of text and context that most clearly illustrate her argument, although occasionally this can leave the reader wanting to know more about the ways an idea plays out across the extent of a lengthy poem. Nonetheless, it is an achievement to have marshalled this diverse set of texts to successfully de monstrate 'the centrality of reviewing culture to Victorian poetic form' (p. 23).

The introduction sets up the significance of mass print culture to the development of poetry in the nineteenth century and explores how 'popularity' was a multivalent term that 'enable[d] Victorians to think through the relationship of author and public in the light of literary value' (p. 4). The rest of the book is split into four chapters that proceed broadly chronologically from the 1830s to the 1860s. The first chapter foregrounds the workings of poetic voice in Landon's 'Medallion Wafers' poems as published in the *Literary Gazette* (1823), Tennyson's early lyric poems, and Browning's first volume *Pauline* (1832). Dawson positions these works as navigating the 'literary historical moment of transition' between the idealised voice of the Romantic lyric and the Victorian dramatic monologue (p. 26). She argues that these poets' fashioning of voice – and its auditors – should be understood in the context of the commercialisation of the literary market, their negotiations between sound and meaning responding directly to the conditions of publication and reception.

Chapter Two focuses on the ways that poetry came to be described through shared and interrelated metaphors that evaluate literary worth through comparisons to jewellery. While the opening section on the impact of mechanisation on the nineteenth-century jewellery industry might initially feel like a departure, Dawson convincingly argues that the repeated trope of the gem in reviews must be understood within this context. She emphasises the negotiation between 'the value of the material object and its abstract or symbolic worth' (p. 81) and the related issue of labour (by both creator and consumer) illuminated by reviewers' choice of imagery. The reception of decorative gift annuals is discussed in terms of 'jewelled style' and then Dawson shows how these tropes were resisted in different ways by Barrett Browning in *A Drama of Exile* (1844) and Browning in *The Ring and the Book* (1868).

The last two chapters consider how modes of address illuminate the often-fraught relationship between poets and their readers.
Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the short-lived Spasmodic School that reads William Aytoun's satirical *Firmilian* (1854), Philip Bailey's *Festus* (1845), and Alexander Smith's *A Life-Drama* (1853) through the lens of collective address. It then considers Arnold's more conflicted response to the culture of evaluation via a reading of *Empedocles on Etna* (1852), particularly in the context of its retraction in the second edition of *Poems*. The fourth chapter considers how Tennyson's shifting use of address in *In Memoriam* (1850) and *Maud* (1855) shaped each poem's (very different) reception. Finally, Dawson uses *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) and *Amour s de Voyages* (1849) to illustrate how Barrett Browning and Clough each used versions of a public political mode of address to write about the Italian Risorgimento.

The book is perhaps at its strongest when Dawson identifies instances where poets speak directly to the act of writing and publication, as in her discussions of prefaces, dedications, and proems that actively construct the poet-reader relationship. Throughout each chapter, she is alert to the nuances of rhyme scheme, pronoun use, and shared metaphors, showing how poets' formal choices underpinned their negotiations of the marketplace.

'Critical Heritage' volumes, which document contemporary and later responses to a given writer, inevitably frame published works as static objects around which networks of responses have flourished. Dawson's intervention into this paradigm reanimates the poet within this network, showing them to be active participants. In doing so she successfully illuminates how Victorian poetry's vitality was in part necessitated by its negotiation of a culture of evaluation.

Clare Stainthorp (Queen Mary, University of London)

Fieldwork of Empire, 1840-1900: Intercultural Dynamics in the Production of British Expeditionary Literature, by Adrian S. Wisnicki (London: Routledge, 2019), 206pp., £120 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-367-20745-8

Fieldwork of Empire, 1840-1900 has a mission, namely to recover the impact of non-western

cultural, political and social forces and agencies on the production of British expeditionary literature and, perhaps even more importantly, to highlight the hitherto mostly silenced voices of the colonized other in this process of discourse production. The book argues with urgency that the non-western impact upon both the discursive and material dimensions of expeditionary discourses (for instance, in the realm of cartography) has hitherto not been given sufficient attention in a scholarly context. In order to approach this challenge of recovery, Adrian S. Wisnicki suggests the necessity for a localized focus, addressing selected expeditions to specific African regions or locations, and aims to develop a new theoretical model of expeditionary discourse production. This is a commendable and necessary project, but Wisnicki's study has an evident blind spot – the contribution of women explorers – and, while extremely well-researched, gets lost in detail. Occasionally, it is quite a reading expedition, too – the argument developed in each chapter is interrupted by an astounding number of footnotes, the record being ninety three footnotes in Chapter 4 (on 'Victorian Field Notes from the Lualaba River, Congo'). On the one hand, this shows that there is indeed a vast amount of material that needs to be unpacked and put into conversation with one another. On the other hand, one would expect a more focused approach, especially from a study that is from the beginning framed as being 'illustrative, not comprehensive' (p. 1). In addition, while it mirrors the explorers' mission, it is somewhat cumbersome for readers to have to wade through research overviews at the beginning of each chapter and technical passages describing the structure of the argument (for instance on p. 42). At the same time, however, it does help readers to locate themselves in this detailed study.

Each chapter takes on the focal point of an explorer and traces the intercultural encounters that brought his expeditions and accounts thereof to fruition. From the outset, the very concept of an 'expedition' is reflected critically as having been framed from an eurocentric perspective, namely as the organization of spaces 'that were 'unknown' (to Europeans) and so worthy of exploration (by Europeans), particularly if such exploration could lead to 'discoveries' (for Europeans, p. 4). The case studies address various explorers including David Livingstone, whose Missionary Travels (1857) casts South Central Africa as a 'very inviting field' and 'interstitial site for British colonial intervention' (Chapter 1, p. 21); Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, who as the leaders of the East Africa Expedition conducted cartographical work and produced four maps of East Africa (Chapter 2); Samuel White Baker, who recorded his travels to southern Sudan and then Bunyoro (today's northwest Uganda) in 1863-64 (Chapter 3); and David Livingstone, Verney Lovett Cameron and Henry Morton Stanley in the small village of Nyangwe in Central Africa (Chapter 4). Finally, in a detour to fiction, Wisnicki ends with an account of how non-western agencies and forces and historical events shaped Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1899) Chapter 5).

Wisnicki's aim is to capture the 'textual nature of history' and deconstruct the 'conventional' hierarchy of knowledge production by drawing on 'all sorts of archival materials', such as field diaries, maps, photographs, notebooks and letters (p. 11). This is indeed an approach that should be taken more seriously in studies of travel writing. However, the present study could have done more with the material at hand: for instance, in Chapter 1, we learn that knowledge of one Bantu language enabled Livingstone to 'overhear otherwise inaccessible conversations' and 'participate in the practices of indigenous governments' (p. 25). In a similar vein, Chapter 2 includes the information that the armchair geographer William Desborough Cooley wrote of his (not entirely accurate) map of Lake Tanganyika in Southern Africa that it had 'gained in accuracy and authenticity because of its recourse to native informants' (p. 46). These are precisely the moments in which the reader, prepared for a project of recovery, would like to know more. Admittedly, it is the dilemma of this branch of cultural studies that the sources one is most interested in (the 'layers of oral testimony', p. 58) are inaccessible. But the ''raw' record[s]' (p. 72) sometimes are, and this is where, if possible, the explorer-critic should 'dig' in.

The aforementioned blind spot of the study is the silencing of women explorers; even though the study of the exploration of Africa is described as a study of the 'cumulative accomplishments of individual men' (p. 9), this is a tradition Fieldwork of Empire, 1840-1900 perpetuates. In a study that wants to reshuffle hegemonic and Eurocentric processes of knowledge and discourse production it is ironic to merely brush into a footnote the contribution of explorers such as Mary Kingsley and May French-Sheldon by arguing that they fall outside the study's primary period. However, the book's main impetus to inspire future scholarship in travel writing studies and expeditionary history by adopting a non-western focus is an extremely timely one and will hopefully be taken into account in the years to come.

Heidi Liedke (University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany)

***Literary Illumination: The Evolution of Artificial Light in Nineteenth-Century Literature,* by Richard Leahy (University of Wales Press, 2018), 288pp., £65 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-78683-268-9.**

Richard Leahy's *Literary Illumination* is the second in the University of Wales Press's Intersections in Literature and Science series, one the interdisciplinary series positioned at the intersection of literature and science that have emerged in the last decade or so. It traces the transformation of 'the symbolic relationship between light and dark' from a 'primarily binary' relationship to one in which '[a]rtificial light sits awkwardly' between good and evil, 'reflect[ing] something more complex than just dichotomous opposite' (p. 1). Divided into chapters organised around distinct types of illumination (firelight, candlelight, gaslight, and electric light), the study considers an impressive compliment of fiction by a diverse range of authors, notably Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Emile Zola, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, E. M. Forster, and Edith Wharton. The study also covers substantial historical and conceptual ground, following the shift from life in the primarily rural, pre-industrial late eighteenth century to the consumer culture of the early twentieth, and from the individuality of the candle to the collective, impersonal mass of gas and electricity networks. It is disappointing, however, that even though Leahy draws on creditable and more recent secondary criticism such as Jane Brox's *Brilliant* (2012) and Chis Otter's *The Victorian Eye* (2008), in addition to twentieth-century theorists like Gaston Bachelard and Walter Benjamin, his discussion of artificial light has not evolved much past Wolfgang Schivelbush's problematic *Disenchanted Night* (1988). This is the inevitable drawback of a study more interested in tracing concepts and themes across the literature of a defined period than in performing rigorous, historicist research. Moreover, unlike other recent works in the field of literature and science such as Rachel Crossland's *Modernist Physics* (2019) or Gregory Tate's *Poetical Matter* (2020), *Literary Illumination* neither attempts to offer a critical or theoretical approach to the discipline nor makes a case for whether literature can (or, indeed, should) be more than just evidence for historical, ideological, political, cultural, or aesthetic arguments. As a result, the study does not achieve the calibre of scholarship one would expect from the better-established Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine, or Bloomsbury's more recent Explorations in Science and Literature series.

Beginning with a close reading of Byron's 1816 poem 'Darkness', written before the widespread use of gaslight in public and private spaces, Leahy evokes an understanding of the light-dark binary that coalesces in the eighteenth century around the Enlightenment's association of light with knowledge, proposing that artificial light 'troubles' this binary and these traditional associations by 'suggest[ing] states *between* rigid structures of light as positive and darkness as negative' (p. 2). The argument Leahy subsequently advances hinges on the premise that this light-dark binary is a dead metaphor amidst the illuminary complexities introduced by the developments taking place in artificial light across the nineteenth century. However, the very nature of a study which sets out to examine the 'evolution' of artificial light across the nineteenth century seems to necessitate eschewing complexity in favour of the general, as Leahy himself acknowledges the difficulty in 'maintain[ing] focus on one particular time, place or writer' (p. 4). The broadness of this approach has its limitations, evident from the outset with Leahy's use of the term 'evolution' – such a charged term when discussing the history of science and technology during this period. The complexities of the relationship between humanity and nature are simplified by the observation that this relationship simply '*evolved* in this period' (3, italics added for emphasis). Serious causal implications raised by the assumption that this evolution was one begat by technological development go unexplored. Leahy's methodology is insufficiently developed to either articulate how 'examples of artificial illumination symbolism [...] develop and evolve over the course of a text' or uncover how the 'literary analysis concerning nineteenth-century light [...] reflects ever-evolving contemporary relationships with the period's constantly changing lightscape' (p. 4). By the end of Leahy's introductory preamble, 'evolution' has itself become a dead metaphor.

Eschewing the nuanced discussion of the various forms of artificial light in the preceding pages, which is necessary to the 'intimacy' and 'individuality' his account seeks to re-establish, Leahy concludes that the 'evolution' of artificial light over the course of the nineteenth century facilitated the 'transition to a world of modernity' (p. 194). His findings, that light increased in 'presence' and 'influence' in the literature of this period and that certain literary techniques adapt to accommodate the new technology, have some significance, although they are never substantively set alongside the literary

concerns of the period. Is it enough to know that '[a]rtificial light *changed* literature during the nineteenth century' (p. 194, italics in original) through its influence on language and on the social and political forces and spaces that underpin the production of literature? While undoubtedly true, such conclusions are secondary to Leahy's stated aims and less compelling than his subsequent observations that artificial light prises open the light-dark binary and enables a 'markedly liminal area of discourse' (p. 195).

What emerges from Leahy's study is the sheer challenge of articulating the many impacts artificial light had on literature in the nineteenth century. This challenge originates, in part, from the cosmopolitan and protracted nature of the history of artificial light during this period, but also from the disparate nature of its literature and culture. One approach to this challenge might be a narrowing of either historical or geographic focus to achieve a certain specificity of time or of places. Another approach is to focus on well-defined aspects of this impact on language, genre, and the modes of literary production, which Leahy has done, also adapting methodologies from sociology, psychology, and literary theory. There may, indeed, be further ways to approach this challenge but, given the paucity of literary criticism directly addressing the question of the relationship of artificial light to literature, they remain possibilities to be developed through future study.

Laura Ludtke (University of Oxford)

***Dealing in Deceit: Edwin Pearson of the 'Bewick Repository' Bookshop, 1838–1901*, by Nigel Tattersfield (Newcastle: The Bewick Society, 2020), 92pp., £28 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-5272-5642-2**

Nigel Tattersfield's book is an engaging narrative of the life of the engraver Edwin Pearson. Pearson successfully deceived several people to part with their hard-earned money to buy alleged Bewick's wood engravings which were, in fact, fakes. The book is well researched with supportive endnotes that allow the reader to search elsewhere for further insights into Pearson's genius for deception.

Tattersfield raises interesting questions regarding human frailty and readiness to be deceived. The narrative brings to mind other similar deceptions, such as Thomas Keating who, as a protest against a gallery system that he deemed rotten, issued art forgeries with deliberately created hidden flaws in order to be discovered later. Pearson fraudulently claimed that his wood engravings for sale were by Bewick, not as a protest but purely for profit. The principal impact of Pearson's lies was not lost on Tattersfield, who quotes Adam Gopnick on our willingness to be deceived: 'The human will towards ingenious deception is matched only by the human gift for ingenuous self-deception' (pp. 40–66).

Pearson is presented as a figure who is both unconscionable and cunning. He only succeeds because his victims are gullible enough to take him on trust. Indeed, one of them, an antiquary and book collector by the name of Thomas Hugo, comes across as unimaginably pompous and remarkably gullible, although he was probably blinded by his sheer enthusiasm as a collector. Pearson grows on the reader as his fortunes rise and fall. Eventually, he is shown as an abuser of both his wives, his ageing father and his clients. His wretched fall and eventual death in penury in the much-dreaded workhouse is oddly moving, even if was a natural outcome of his 'indulgent self-destruction' (p. 61).

Tattersfield's book is entertaining as well as informative. It is the result of scholarly research and an apparent encyclopaedic knowledge of Victorian England. The narrator stands back from his protagonist and lets the reader respond in any way that she or he wishes to the vicissitudes of his eventful life.

When the book is put down, Edwin Pearson's story reverberates for some time to come. The book has a similar impact as a Dickens novel in that it fills the reader's mind with characters, such as Pearson himself; his unfortunate, kindly and much abused father; his first and second wives Jane Sarah Manning and Elizabeth Anne Blake; and his victims of deceit, Thomas Hugo and others. The presence of the many woodcut images in the book is reminiscent of the wonderfully evocative illustrations that appeared in the Dickens monthly numbers at the time.

The main strengths of Tattersfield's book are the narrative style and the supporting and unobtrusive endnotes for those readers who wish to refer to them. The narrative is a lively one which allows us to get to know, and perversely take to, Edwin Pearson, despite our knowledge that his behaviour is most reprehensible. A possible limitation of the work is its short length, which means that we are left with a feeling that we would like to know more about the man. Although we get carried away with his skills at deception, he remains a somewhat elusive figure to the reader. This apparent shortcoming could also be deemed a strength, since Pearson was actually a slippery chap whose real character, like all con artists, hid behind the façade.

The script is punctuated with references to twenty pages of detailed, interesting and beautifully reproduced plates. Indeed, the book itself is very attractively produced. Held in the reader's hands, it gives a luxurious feeling of having had no cost spared. For anyone interested in Victorian life and manners, and for those interested in nineteenth century fiction, this is a book well worth reading. It reads like a good novel and is as engaging in its narrative presentation as it is scholarly in its research. Tattersfield's book is an interesting story of the life of a man on the margins of the Victorian criminal classes. Pearson was an unsavoury, alcohol-fuelled misogynist whose woeful end nonetheless touches the reader's heart.

Faysal Mikdadi (Independent Researcher)

***Victorian Skin: Surface, Self, History*, by Pamela K. Gilbert (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 434 pp. , £. 43.00 (hardback), ISBN 978 -1-5017 - 3159 - 4**

Pamela K. Gilbert's latest monograph, *Victorian Skin: Surface, Self, History* (2019), is a big book, both in terms of length and scope. Over more than four hundred pages, Gilbert rallies visual arts, literature, medical sciences, social sciences, and philosophy to describe how during the nineteenth century the skin came to be conceived as the preeminent site of selfhood: both an envelope, which contained, defined, and displayed the individual, and a porous membrane that mediated one's relation to the external world. Gilbert's previous scholarship has concentrated on the social body and on how the concept of public health and its attendant practices – medical and social mapping, the census, statistical sciences – developed during the Victorian period. Here, her focus is both narrower, limited to a specific organ, and broader, as she considers how skin figured in Victorian historiographies, evolutionary theories, and realist aesthetics.

For the Victorians, Gilbert notices 'the surface of the body seemed particularly to evoke the question of historical change' (p. 4). History and change are, indeed, overarching themes of the book: both in terms of specific events (the French Revolution in particular) and its *longue durée.* It is Gilbert's contention that skin's alterations were understood as simultane ously signalling personal, political, and evolutionary development. Whether involuntary and transient (e.g. blushing and its antithesis, paling), permanent (e.g. scarring, the signs of ageing and of illness), or voluntarily procured (e.g. tattoos), marks on the skin externalised more than personal traits or moral worth. They were symptoms of and vehicles for the individual's participation in the metanarratives of progress, modernity, or, increasingly towards the end of the century, those of degeneration, regression, and atavism.

Gilbert locates the emergence of the 'surface self' (p. 1) in the scientific and philosophical milieu of the French Enlightenment, maps its shifting conceptualizations during the nineteenth century, with a specific focus on the realist representation, and concludes her analysis in the early-twentieth century when psychoanalysis and modern ism placed a renewed attention on individual 'depth'. The book however eschews a strictly chronological order. Its thematic structure – four sections each consisting of two chapters – appears, aptly considering the subject matter, organic. The arguments expounded in the early chapters do not simply provide a base for those following but are also revisited in and made clearer by the later chapters.

The first section, 'The Self as Surface', looks at how new insights into the role of the nervous system (and its surface sensors) impinged on nineteenth century aesthetics. This is not uncharted ground, Gilbert explicitly sets *Victorian Skin* in conversation with William A. Cohen's *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (2009) and follows in the steps of Benjamin Morgan's more recent *The Outward Mind* (2017), which provides an outstanding exploration of Victorian aesthetics through the prism of contemporary scientific enquiry into the senses. However, Gilbert here makes a persuasive case for the skin's singular relevance to a materialist turn which provides a springboard for her far-reaching exploration. The section has the added merit of introducing the reader to the otherwise little-known, early-nineteenth-century Scottish surgeon, neurologist, and artist Charles Bell whose work and person epitomize the contemporary entanglement of science and aesthetics, and whose influence stretched from Darwin to the Pre-Raphaelites. In the second section, 'Permeability', Gilbert moves on to rather familiar (to her) ground in order to link nineteenth-century renditions of complexion in a variety of media to contemporary sanitary theories that regarded the skin's porous structure as both exposing one's health to

environmental factors, and as facilitating the transmission of disease from the individual to society. It makes for particularly poignant reading at a time of pandemic. Part III, 'Alienated and Alienating', delves into a fascinating, if at times slightly opaque, reading of flaying. The section focuses for the most part on nineteenth-century iterations, in art and literature, of the myth of Marsyas, the *aulos*-playing satyr whose unsuccessful musical challenge to Apollo literally costs him his skin. Occasionally, the complexity of her argument about myth, history, subjectivity, and aesthetics seems to overwhelm even Gilbert's otherwise masterly command of the subject. The following and final section, 'Inscription', shows how, throughout the nineteenth century, skin's colour became increasingly relevant to racial narratives via its association with sexual disfunctions, and concludes with a brilliant discussion of tattoos as inscriptions that further complicate the protean nature of Victorian skin.

Is *Victorian Skin* a ground-breaking text? Probably not. No one single idea, phrase or formulation is given prominence over the others in ways that would seem to radically transform the course of Victorian Studies. But this book is a great addition to the field, a thought-provoking, wonderfully erudite, and seminal text. I foresee it engendering a plethora of PhD research, studies, articles, and conferences. I, for one, look forward to all of the above.

Gloria Hoare (Independent Researcher)

***Tennyson Echoing Wordsworth*, Jayne Thomas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 210pp, £75 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4744-3687-8**

Tennyson Echoing Wordsworth provides an in-depth analysis of how the writings produced by one Poet Laureate have informed the poetic work of another. Thomas utilises close reading of several key texts to argue that what she terms as Tennyson's 'echoes and borrowings' from Wordsworth create a symbiotic relationship between the two poets through which Wordsworth stabilizes and elevates Tennyson's poetry. Tennyson, in turn, re-energises Wordsworth, enabling his words to engage with a new generation of readers (p. 2). There are five chapters, each analysing and discussing a different poem by Tennyson, and Thomas employs rigorous close reading of words used, phrases adopted, line patterns preferred and stanzas ordered to draw parallels with the tropes and meanings shared by both poets.

Thomas begins with Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' (1852), arguing that Wordsworth's presence in the poem is 'clearly felt', both linguistically and thematically (p. 22). By echoing Wordsworth, Tennyson is able here to strengthen his own poetic voice and consolidate his reputation as a suitable heir to his predecessor whilst at the same time helping to create 'a more complex view' of the earlier poet's thinking (p. 44).

The second chapter discusses 'Ulysses' (1833), a dramatic monologue sporting 'a gallery of Wordsworthian echoes' (p. 54). Their echoes, Thomas suggests, have not so far been fully recognised by critics. She argues that 'Ulysses' signposts the 'fragility of the transcendental imagination', a trope which is to be found in several of Wordsworth's poems, most particularly in the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood' (1815) and she highlights specific words and phrases which appear to have been deliberately borrowed – sometimes re-worked, sometimes not (p. 58). In so doing Thomas creates a strong and detailed argument for this cross-fertilisation of thought between the two poets.

The next chapter considers the elegiac poem 'In Memoriam' (1850), written as a lament for Arthur Henry Hallam who died aged twenty-seven. Elegies and monologues were popular in Victorian poetry and Thomas argues that Wordsworth was a powerful influence on this art form. Here, Tennyson's 'borrowings' helped him to work through his own emotional response to Hallam's untimely death. As Thomas puts it, Tennyson borrowed Wordsworth's language in order to 'unravel the complexities of his faith', enabling him to more fully 'make communion with Hallam' through the 'complex pattern of echo and allusion' at work within the poem (p. 114).

The poem analysed in Chapter Four is 'Maud' (1855), a monodrama that was criticised in its day for being too innovative. Thomas quotes Hallam Tennyson who said that 'the peculiarities of this poem is that different phases of passion in one person take the place of different characters' (p. 122). Thomas argues that 'Maud' is far more indebted to Wordsworth than has been generally recognised and that Tennyson's 'borrowings' operate alongside 'the well-established echo-chamber of voices the poem is known to contain' (p. 123), suggesting also that the 'passion' expressed in the poem 'is an example of Wordsworth's powerful overflow of feeling taken to extremes' (p. 130).

The final chapter considers Wordsworth's influence on Tennyson's poem 'Tithonus' (1860)

which is a monologue tracing the effects of 'eternal life without eternal youth' (p. 163). In it, Thomas shows that Tennyson disrupts Wordsworth's 'psychologised relationship with nature' by foregrounding nineteenth-century scientific findings (p. 165). However, despite Tennyson's revisionism of Wordsworth's Romantic ideology, Thomas notes that he still perpetuates Wordsworth's trope of the silent woman, in silencing the female voice in this poem. The goddess Aurora has a distinctive voice of her own, but is only allowed to 'whisper' (p. 172). Similarly, the Lady of Shalott is speechless, although allowed to sing, her only validation being through a mirror which is subsequently cracked by Lancelot. Like Wordsworth's Dorothy in 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey' (1798), both Aurora and the Lady have voices which we are not allowed to properly hear. Thomas argues convincingly that Tennyson's 'borrowings' therefore do not actively challenge Wordsworth's 'male-centric subjectivity', but rather helps to endorse it (p. 99).

Overall, this is quite a dense book in the sense that there is a lot of close reading of key texts and detailed references to influential themes and tropes. Thomas refers to her book as 'the first major study of Tennyson and Wordsworth' (p. 2), arguing that 'Tennyson's poetry is the place where the real relationship with Wordsworth is played out' (p. 10). As such, this book is a valuable resource for anyone who has an interest in understanding the complex relationship that existed, in fiction and in fact, between these two Poet Laureates.

Linda Claridge Middup (Independent Researcher)

***Gothic Invasions: Imperialism, War, and Fin-de-Siècle Popular Fiction*, by Ailise Bulfin (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 292pp., £85, (hardback), 978-1-7868-3209-2**

Ailise Bulfin's *Gothic Invasions: Imperialism, War, and Fin-de-Siècle Popular Fiction*, published as part of the Gothic Literary Studies series, examines what is termed 'invasion anxiety': an underlying fear that Britain would be invaded either by uprising colonies or other expanding European powers as a perceived price of 'ceaseless imperial expansion' (p. 3). While previous gothic studies have noted the connection between gothic fiction and imperialism, Bulfin argues that there is a need to examine the topic from a 'transgeneric perspective (p. 15). *Gothic Invasions* thus offers an extensive analysis of the articulation of invasion anxiety through gothic tropes across multiple genres. This contributes to a wide field of scholarship on the role of the supernatural in articulating British imperial anxieties, which was initially defined by Patrick Brantlinger as 'imper ial gothic' in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830–1914* (1988) and later revised by Roger Luckhurst as 'colonial gothic' in his chapter in Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend's *The Gothic World* (2013).

Chapters One and Two of *Gothic Invasions* explo re how invasion anxiety is articulated through the 'familiar monsters' (p. 21) of fin-de-siècle gothic fiction. Chapter One investigates how the fear of colonial rebellion in the East and West Indies is embodied by vampires, mesmerists, and demons in the work of Bram Stoker, Florence Marryat, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Grant Allen, among others. Chapter Two links Britain's anxiety over its tenuous imperial influence in Egypt, particularly in relation to control of the Suez Canal and the Egyptian gothic narratives which emerged 'in this fraught historical milieu' (p. 69). Bulfin considers a wide range of fiction from lesser-known texts such as 'The Curse of Vasartas' (1889) and 'At the Pyramid of the Sacred Bulls' (1896) to the more familiar 'Lot No. 249' (1892) and *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), ultimately suggesting that whether facing an ancient, undead mummy or those of 'hostile modern Egyptian ethnicity' (p. 88), such fiction was continually preoccupied with the Egyptian Question. *Gothic Invasions*'s analysis of Egyptian gothic texts provides an important source for more recent studies on ancient Egypt's role in nineteenth century literature such as *Victorian Literary Culture and Ancient Egypt* (2020), edited by Eleanor Dobson.

Chapters Three through to Five explore invasion anxiety's subtle and previously overlooked presence in other genres. Chapter Three examines how invasion anxiety both shaped crime fiction while also providing an outlet to transmit further anxieties, focusing on the 'imperially charged' (p. 129) and uncontainable figure of the master criminal, particularly Doyle's Professor Moriarty and Guy Boothby's Dr Nikola. Chapter Four explores the recurrence of the 'yellow peril' myth (p. 132) in late nineteenth century fiction by Boothby, William Carlton Dawe, and M.P. Shiel. Bulfin's analysis links the threat of invasion from the Far East to the colonial-migrant authors' negative experiences with Chinese immigration in colonial territories. These themes link closely with Chapter Five, which explores the social effect of military invasion

tales. Bulfin loosely connects these military invasion tales to early science fiction, highlighting in particular George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) and William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906).

These final two chapters probe the influence of invasion fiction, suggesting that its impact extends far beyond capturing the imperial anxieties of a particular moment. Specifically, Bulfin traces the connection between yellow-peril fiction and Britain's 1905 anti-immigration laws (p. 167), while in Chapter Five she draws a link between the horrors of invasion as portrayed in military invasion tales and atrocity propaganda supporting Britain in World War I (p. 207).

While *Gothic Invasions* largely works to identify how invasion anxiety underpins a wide range of nineteenth century genres, Bulfin is quick to note the importance of reading such texts in their precise 'imperial quandaries and conflicts' rather than using a broad 'lens of empire' (p. 7). *Gothic Invasions*'s ambitious scope succeeds through Bulfin's skilful ability to discuss multiple texts from the same author across individual chapters without losing sight of the specific cultural moments and personal backgrounds which inform each one. Thus the analysis of Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899) in Chapter Two is equally effective at illuminating invasion anxiety surrounding the Egyptian Question as it is in revealing how yellow-peril fiction contributed to growing anti-immigration sentiment in Chapter Four.

Such dynamic readings make great strides in deepening the understanding of the relationship between imperialism and the gothic in the nineteenth century. The significant analysis of invasion anxiety in *Gothic Invasions* persuasively defines it as an underpinning theme of late nineteenth century fiction, offering rich and fertile ground for future studies.

Sara Woodward (Leeds Trinity University)

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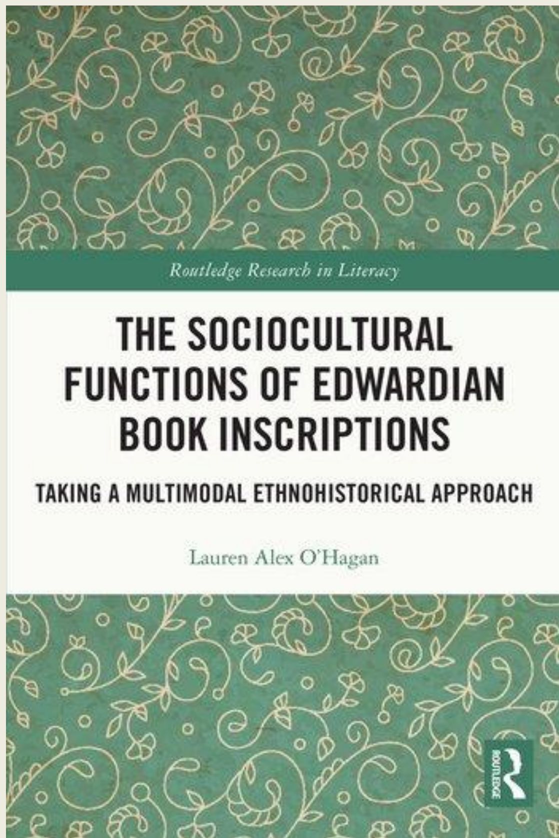

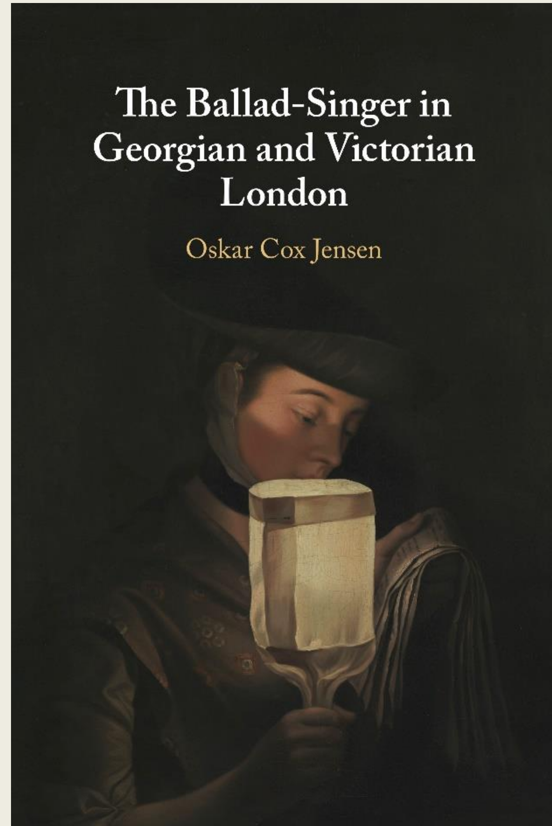

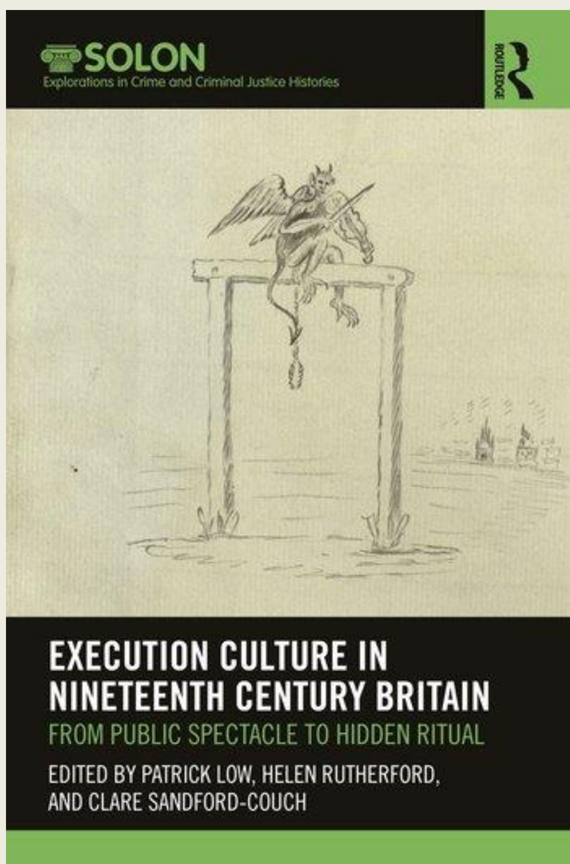

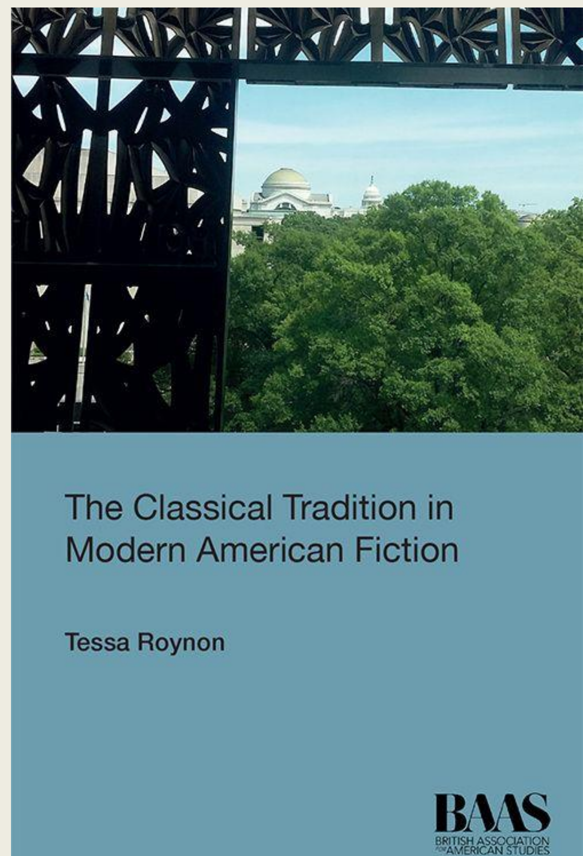

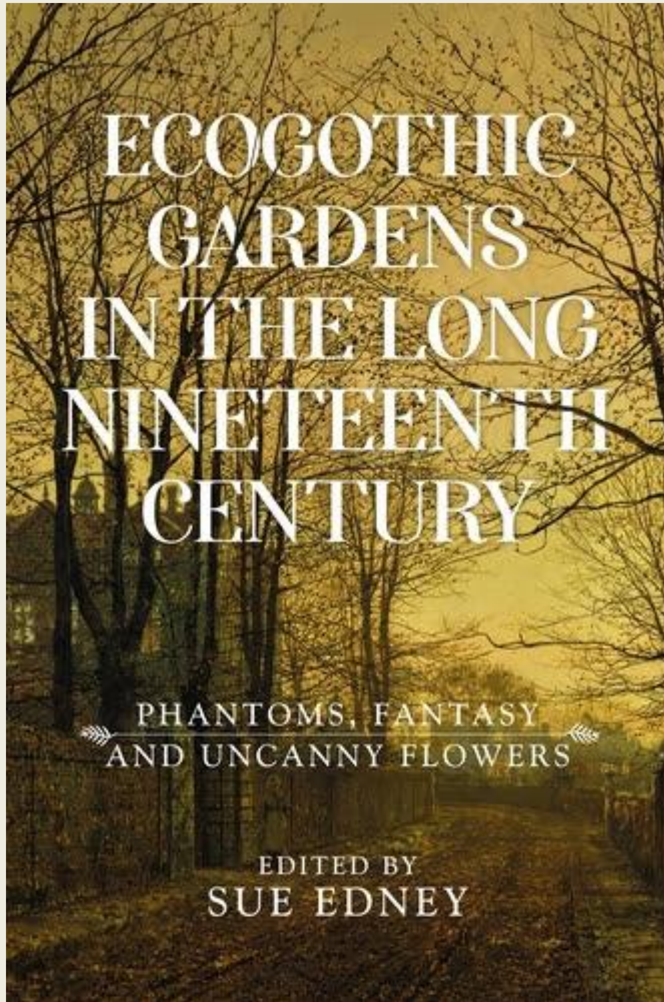
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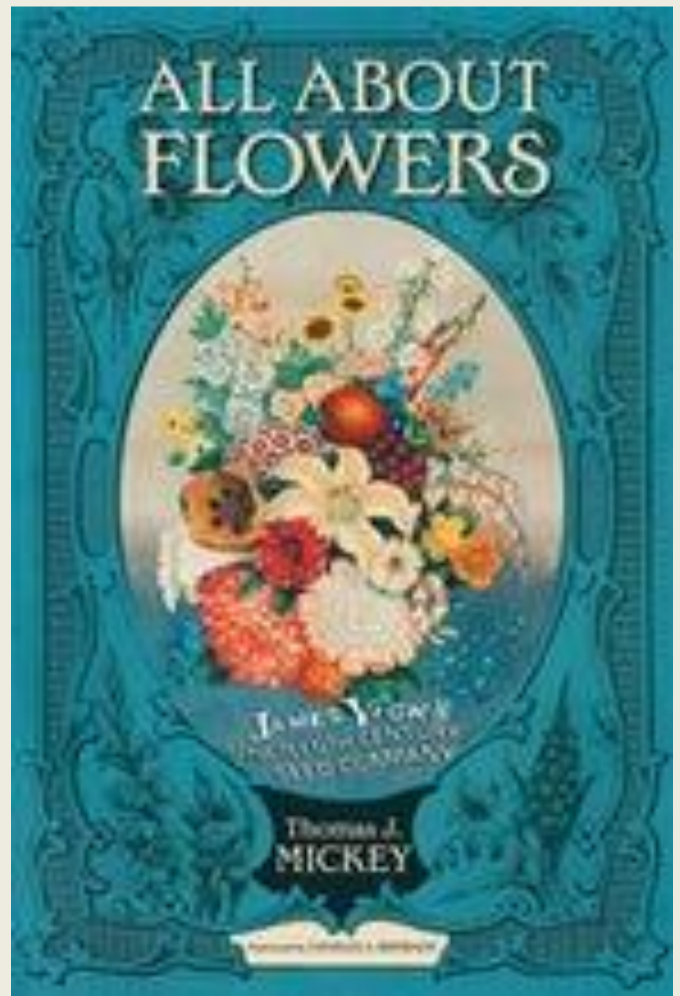
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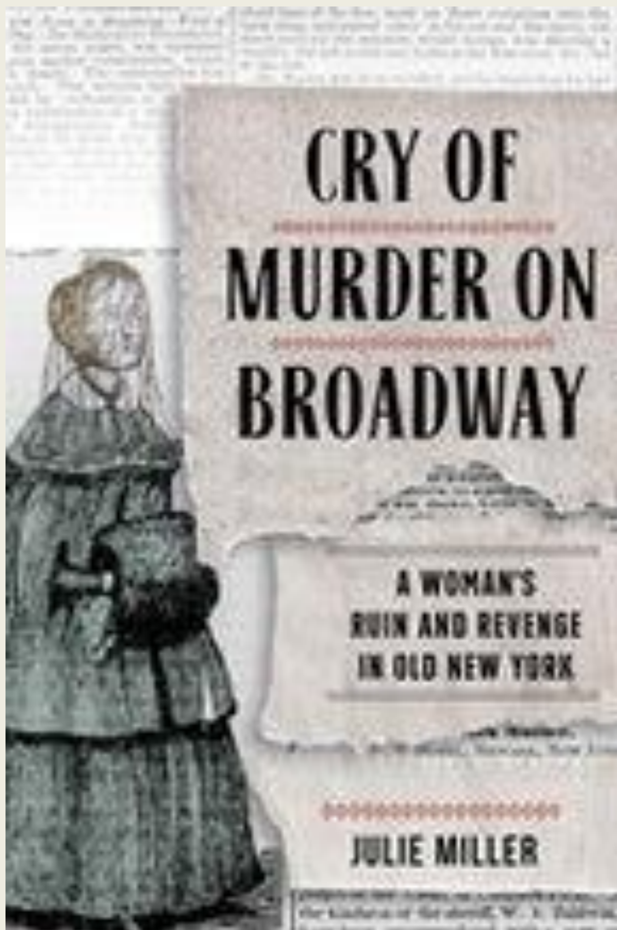
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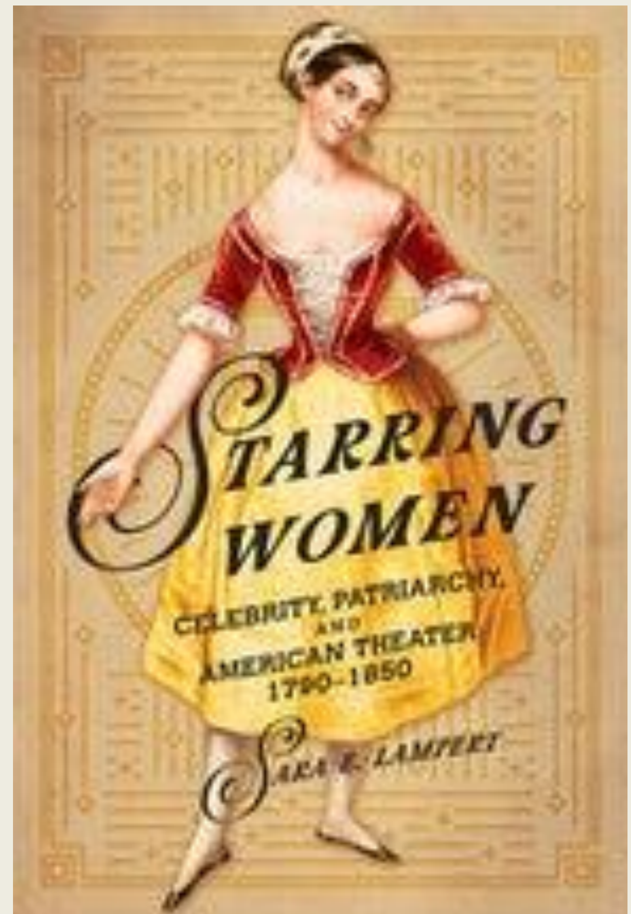
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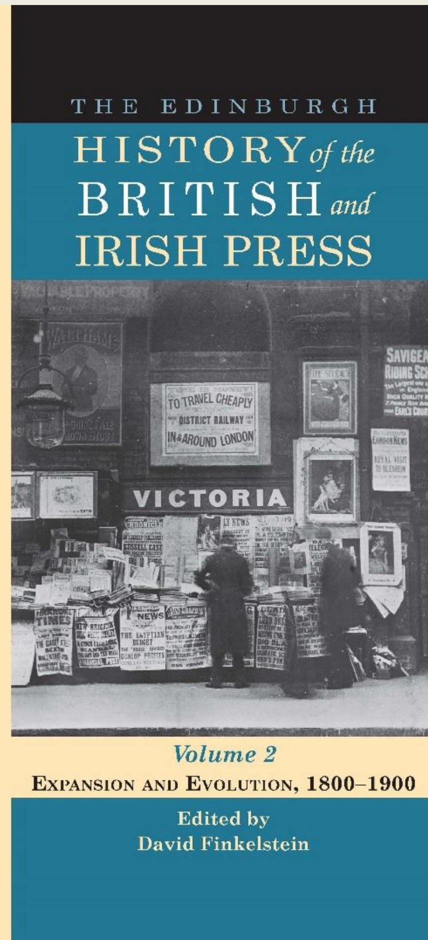
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BAVS Funding Reports

The British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS) is committed to the support of its members' activities such as conferences, events and research activities. The application forms, including guidance notes and deadlines, are available from: http://bavs.ac.uk/funding. There are two rounds of funding each year, with deadlines in May and November. For further information, please contact the BAVS Funding Officer, Amelia Yeates: yeatesa@hope.ac.uk.

It was a privilege to be awarded a Research Funding Grant in early 2020 for my project titled "Recovering Anna Alma-Tadema (1867-1943)". The focus of the proposed project was to undertake a trip to the Bodleian Library in Oxford in order to investigate their collection of papers and letters that belonged to members of the Alma-Tadema family so as to learn more about Anna Alma-Tadema. Whilst my trip was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am thrilled to now provide a report regarding this trip.

Anna Alma-Tadema is an artist who has, thus far, received little scholarly attention and whose life and career has often been framed in the context of her father's work (Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema). She is known to have exhibited a significant body of work throughout her career (exhibiting both in the UK and internationally in her lifetime); however, of this work, only a handful of paintings and studies have been located and are held in public collections. Through greater scholarly recognition of Anna Alma-Tadema, it is my hope that further works will be encouraged to resurface from private collections. As a consequence of this, scholars working in the field of British art history and Victorian society and culture, as well as the public, will be able to appreciate the variety of interests, subjects and techniques exhibited in her work throughout her career (that extends far beyond just the watercolour studies of interiors that she produced in her late teenage years, for which she has become quietly known).

I had begun an intensive project of research on this artist for my Masters degree dissertation (University of London, Birkbeck, 2019) which drew upon previously neglected primary sources surrounding her life and work and attempted to resolve the discrepancies and inconsistencies that have previously been reported in order to provide a comprehensive introduction to the artist. Owing to various personal circumstances, my research was limited to London archives and online digitised sources. However, through this support from BAVS, I was able to undertake necessary archival research in order to expand my analysis and understanding of this artist. Two key subjects I had sought to investigate were the nature and breadth of the artist's travels, as well as the nature of the artist's poor health that had been alluded to in prior sources. Through my research at the Bodleian, I was able to uncover information regarding at least one trip to Florence (undertaken without her family) for which the enjoyment of art appears to have been a notable reason for the visit. I was also able to uncover letters relating to issues with Anna Alma-Tadema's eyesight that halted all artistic activities for a full year at the turn of the century, as well as evidence of a surgery for an unexplained serious physical ailment in her later years. Whilst only a few written sources appear to have survived from Anna Alma-Tadema's hand, my analysis of these papers and correspondence revealed a great deal about the close affection felt by the Alma-Tadema family to one another. This research trip also provided me with the opportunity to learn more about the artist's sister, Laurence Alma-Tadema, and her expansive social mobility which I believe is incredibly important to take note of in the continued examinations of celebrity in the Alma-Tadema household: looking beyond the elder Alma-Tademas (Sir Lawrence and Lady Laura Theresa Alma-Tadema (née Epps)) to recognise the social agency of the two daughters. However, perhaps the most unexpected and notable find from this trip was a photograph of a lost painting by Anna Alma-Tadema. It is my intention to conduct further research of these discoveries for the production and publication of an article dedicated to Anna Alma-Tadema.

My thanks are given once again to BAVS who, without their support, I would not have been able to undertake this important research project.

Susie Beckham (PhD student, University of York)

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Please email calls for publication submissions and funding opportunities to bavsnews@gmail.com for inclusion in future issues.

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The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals happily announces the creation of a new $1000 prize named in honor of Sally Mitchell for her pioneering research and invaluable contributions to our society. If you defended a dissertation in the calendar year of 2020, and if it explores the 19th c British periodical press (including magazines, newspapers, and serial publications of all kinds) as an object of study in its own right (and not simply as a source of material for other topics), please consider applying. Dissertation projects may range from a variety of disciplinary perspectives focused on any aspect of the periodical press within Britain itself, or in the many countries within and outside of the empire where British magazines and newspapers were bought, sold, and read during the 'long nineteenth century' (ca. 1780-1914). More information and submission guidelines can be found at http://rs4vp.org/awards/the-sally-mitchell-dissertation-prize/. The portal opens for applications on 1 February 2021 and closes on 1 March 2021.

The Thomas Hardy Society
Patrick Tolfree Student Essay Competition 2021 "Hardy And Religion"

Welcome to this year's Patrick Tolfree essay competition, open to students of any academic level over the age of 18 and living anywhere in the world. This competition honours the late Patrick Tolfree, avid Hardy reader and scholar, author of monographs and tireless promoter of interest in Hardy's life and works in local schools.

The theme for this year's competition is 'Hardy and Religion', perhaps a well-known research topic for students of Hardy's work. Essays of not more than 4000 words in length are warmly invited. They may focus on, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- Hardy's own relationship with faith and how this is translated across his work. • His depiction of alternative forms of religion.
- Spirituality, or belief in the afterlife.
- The effect class has on Hardy's characters' sense of religion.
- The way faith is presented in rural areas versus the city.
- Hardy's lifelong love of church music.
- Hardy and religious architecture.

Entries may follow any standard referencing style for foot- or endnotes and bibliography. Any aspect of Hardy's prolific output may be focussed upon, whether it be novels, short stories, poems, essays, or his contribution to architecture.

The author of the best entry in the opinion of the judges will receive £250, and one year's free membership in the Thomas Hardy Society. The winning entry will be published (following the usual process for feedback and amendments) in the Thomas Hardy Journal.

Please send your entry by email to students@hardysociety.org or by post to TOLFREE ESSAY COMPETITION, Thomas Hardy Society, c/o Dorchester Town Council, 19 North Square, Dorchester, DT1 1JF.

The closing date for submissions is 31st October 2021.