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Reviews

GILLIAN BEER, *Alice in Space: The Sideways Victorian World of Lewis Carroll*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pp. x + 296. \$35.

Of the enigmatic mind at the center of *Alice in Space: The Sideways Victorian World of Lewis Carroll*, Gillian Beer asks: “But where did Alice get in? And how did Charles Dodgson become Lewis Carroll?” (p. 7). Both questions have been asked before—many times. In “Was the Snark a Boojum?” Carolyn Sigler reviewed four recently published monographs about Carroll’s life and rightly called him “one of the most biographed Victorian authors” (Sigler, “Was the Snark a Boojum?: One Hundred Years of Lewis Carroll Biographies,” *Children’s Literature*, 29 [2001], 229). Since then at least seven more book-length biographies of Carroll have appeared, in addition to numerous interpretations of the *Alice* books and histories of their cultural impact. Despite its airy title, then, Beer’s *Alice in Space* jostles for elbowroom in a crowded field of study. Masterfully, however, Beer manages to offer a fresh take on *Alice*—not merely because she provides new contexts for appreciating both the author and his books, but also because she pulls off a remarkable sleight of hand. Recognizing that, in the *Alice* books, Carroll warped the conventions of children’s literature, Beer rewrites the rules of scholarly discourse and recovers, for her audience of *Alice* fans and literary critics, parallel pleasures to those that Carroll invented for his first child readers.

Though establishing Carroll’s “world,” *Alice in Space* is not a biography. Beer’s readers will learn little about Carroll’s childhood in the Daresbury parsonage, his despondency at boarding school, his cryptic feelings for Alice Liddell, or the unknown contents of those missing diary pages. These are stories, as Beer knows, that we have already heard. Instead, *Alice in Space* aims to revive Carroll’s “habits of mind” by examining the books and magazines that he owned, read, enjoyed, saved, scrapbooked, and talked about with friends and colleagues (p. 2). Beer’s exploration of Carroll’s reading draws, in part, on Charlie Lovett’s instructive bibliographic catalog, *Lewis Carroll Among His*

Books: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Private Library of Charles L. Dodgson (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2005), which augmented and corrected Jeffrey Stern's earlier *Lewis Carroll, Bibliophile* (Luton: White Stone, 1997). But Beer rejects Lovett's and Stern's limited interest in only the books that Carroll privately owned and expands her scope to encompass the holdings of the Christ Church Library and the periodicals to which the Senior Common Room subscribed—though she is always careful to highlight those texts that Carroll confirmed having read. Herself immersed in the full range of Carroll's literary, scientific, religious, and diversionary reading, Beer plays the part of an ideal guide as she lures us back down the rabbit hole for a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour of both the singular mind and the manifold cultural contexts that composed *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found* (1872).

In each chapter, Beer presents a suggestive series of relations between episodes in the *Alice* books and passages from Carroll's reading. The irreconcilability of a rabbit with a watch, which begins Alice's adventures, is placed alongside Edward Bulwer Lytton's mockery of his contemporaries' obsession with minute temporality in *Pelham* (1828); Alice's slow fall down the White Rabbit's hole is associated with John Stuart Mill's comic take on Copernicus's discussion of falling rocks in *System of Logic* (1843); her impromptu occupation of the pawn's position on *Looking-Glass's* chessboard is likened to Thomas Henry Huxley's use of chess as a metaphor for natural selection in "A Liberal Education and Where to Find It" (1868); the taxonomic chatter of Carroll's flowers is coupled with Alfred Tennyson's adoption of floral emblems in *Maud* (1855); and the dream logic of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* finds counterparts among Lord Byron's, Emily Brontë's, and George Henry Lewes's meditations on the same psychic phenomenon. *Alice in Space* demonstrably reads the *Alice* books "sideways"—opening up Carroll's texts laterally to embrace the breadth of the Victorian intellectual culture in which they participate. If Beer diminishes our myth of Carroll's originality, the price is well paid for realizing in return the richness of his moment.

Beer's approach recalls Martin Gardner's *The Annotated Alice* (New York: Bramhall House, 1960) and its subsequent expansions, including Mark Burstein's recent *150th Anniversary Deluxe Edition* of Gardner's work (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015). Gardner's irreplaceable resource also glosses episodes like Alice's fall into Wonderland with previous debates about the properties of falling bodies and reproduces the originals of the poems that Carroll parodies. Though the *Alice* books disrupt, modern scholarship must preserve so that

twenty-first-century readers can grasp the disruption. Because, according to Beer, “the full raucous delight of Victorian children hearing the proprieties topple and the morals give way in these sanguine parodies” is lost to us (p. 78), we need this contextual recovery in order to get Carroll’s jokes and to appreciate the allusions that we cannot recognize ourselves. But while Gardner’s footnotes prop up *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, reinforcing their primacy, and thus hierarchize their subjects, Beer’s side-by-side nestling of nineteenth-century texts equalizes. If, as she says, “the enjoyment” of reading the *Alice* books “is in seeing hierarchies upended” (p. 73), then the very form that her scholarship takes skillfully enacts one of Carroll’s pleasure principles. Her reader moves—much like Alice in her dreams—associatively through a series of passages and passageways with no canonical ranking and no strict argumentative telos. The conversations that Beer stages among Carroll, Mill, Huxley, Tennyson, and Byron, among others, capture the spirit of the *Alice* books’ whimsical badinage in an enchanting feat of literary criticism.

Just as exciting is Beer’s rewriting of the origin story that many scholars have taken for granted. In most studies of the author behind the *Alice* books, the creation of *Wonderland* is predestined; all roads out of Dodgson invariably lead to Carroll. Carroll’s celebrated biographer, Morton N. Cohen, sums up this inevitability: “It had to happen. Charles’s stern self-discipline, his determination to control thought and action, his deep commitment to the child, his friendship with the Liddell sisters, his suppressed emotional life, and his fount of endless energy joined forces to produce a creative burst. . . . And out it poured, the story of Alice down the rabbit hole” (Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* [New York: A. A. Knopf, 1995], p. 123). In contrast, Beer’s account frees the *Alice* books from this deterministic plot. Her investigations of the Victorian fascination with watches, gravity, chess, flowers, and dreams show instead that the musings of Carroll and his contemporaries roamed liberally, even haphazardly, and suggest that *Wonderland*’s and *Looking-Glass*’s sampling of particular permutations that these puzzles and problems could take should not be confused for the forms they *had* to take. Beer maintains that the *Alice* books engender “an egalitarian zone in which everything becomes possible and nothing is unlikely because all forms of being have presence and can argue: doors, time, eggs, queens, caterpillars, cats and hatters, oysters, gnats, and little girls—all have their say” (p. 4). *Alice in Space* explores this omnipresence of imaginative experimentation across Victorian culture, offering—as Beer says that Carroll so ingeniously does—“several parallel possibilities” within a shared field of play (p. 77).

In 1939, Virginia Woolf summed up the frustrations of any scholar who took on the task of answering how Charles Dodgson became Lewis Carroll. "We ought to be able to grasp him whole and entire," Woolf wrote; "But we fail—once more we fail. . . . The book breaks in two in our hands" (Woolf, "Lewis Carroll," in her *Collected Essays, Volume I* [New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967], p. 254). For Beer, this fracture is not the mark of failure but the herald of new interpretive prospects. In *Alice in Space, Wonderland and Looking-Glass* break into twos, fours, and sixteens, as Beer leads us down a multitude of alternate yet simultaneously possible rabbit holes. The effect is an exhilarating form of literary scholarship, but one that longtime readers of the *Alice* books will recognize as curiously and delightfully familiar. In its meticulous research, its exquisite interweaving of coincident contexts, and its embrace of the intellectual play that permeated Victorian culture and reached its highest expression in Carroll's texts, *Alice in Space* offers us an unconventional criticism worthy of its subject. Like its inspiration, Beer's latest book lets us wander through the many reflective and refractive surfaces of the agile and comprehensive mind behind the *Alice* books.

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DANIEL M. STOUT, *Corporate Romanticism: Liberalism, Justice, and the Novel*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. Pp. viii + 254. \$115 cloth; \$30 paper.

From John Stuart Mill's famous claim that "all poetry is the nature of soliloquy," to Percy Shelley's celebration of the radical power of Prometheus's single-handed defiance of the tyrant Jupiter; and from the popularity of brooding, infinitely complex Byronic heroes, to the proliferation of theories of originality and creativity that emphasize the vital power of an artist's singular imagination in the act of composition, the Romantic period can seem to be obsessed with individuals. By wrapping Romanticism into a broader history of the rise of liberal modernity, it is tempting to see the early nineteenth century as a moment in which older forms of collective life were displaced (however gradually) by a newly modern focus on individuality that is still with us today.

But, as Daniel M. Stout argues in *Corporate Romanticism: Liberalism, Justice, and the Novel*, this view of the history of liberalism is only

one part of the story—because both Romanticism in particular, and liberal modernity in general, were always complexly structured by “the impossibility of drawing a bright line between individuals and collectivities” (p. 172). This is not simply to claim that the vestiges of collectivity continue to haunt the peripheries of what was otherwise a triumphant march of liberalism. Rather, as Stout shows repeatedly throughout his thought-provoking book, there was, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “a persistent uncertainty about how to put individualism into practice” (p. 8) because the kinds of practices that would seem to define individualism—contractual agreements, owning private property, personal accountability—are themselves insufficiently sensitive to the complexities of social life. The “individualist assumptions of justice” (p. 40) cannot adequately evaluate harms that seem to have been perpetrated not by an individual but by a corporate body (crowds, nations, corporations); “the increasing density of modern life” (p. 33) made it all but impossible to freely use one’s personal property without inadvertently limiting someone else from freely using their property; and, indeed, the Romantic artists themselves (or at least the novelists) register this tension by producing works in which there is “a surprising scarcity of individuals” (p. 2). In chapters on *Mansfield Park*, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Caleb Williams*, and *Frankenstein*, Stout argues originally that the Romantic-era novel “does not act as a mouthpiece for liberal ideology” (p. 11) but rather that it reflects the same complex concerns about the possibility of justice in a world of corporate bodies and collective action that were at the heart of some of the most pressing legal and philosophical questions of the period.

Stout’s argument is structured by a formal method that is capable of grasping common structures of thought at work in the core of what might otherwise appear to be unrelated materials. In this regard, his first, and only exclusively theoretical, chapter is the most impressive. Here he argues convincingly that the history of the corporation, developments in nineteenth-century case law about the nature and reach of (individual, corporate) action, and romantic-era aesthetics and philosophies of language all fundamentally partake of, and contribute to, a “rift within liberalism” (p. 25) where it is both necessary and impossible to choose between abandoning the goals of justice and subscribing to the fiction that corporate bodies are legally equivalent to individuals. One of Stout’s well-chosen techniques, borrowed from some of the legal casework he consults, is to map the messy details of the surfaces of his examples onto schematic formulations (“what X means for Y, or what A did to B” [p. 175]) to help clarify

similarities of underlying structures. This allows him, for example, to show how “the romantic symbol, in its insistence on the identity of part and whole” (p. 41), depends on the very same logic of corporate personhood—which “rules out the possibility of being able to say that *X in particular* is responsible for *Y in particular*” (p. 49)—that, elsewhere during the nineteenth century, was posing difficulties for the administration of justice. What begins as an attempt to perceive wholes where empiricism only saw atoms ends up reproducing a logic that “does not merely leave the question of justice unanswered but actively dissolves the grounds on which we might ask it in the first place” (p. 49).

Stout continues to employ this formal method, though with less centrality, in his chapters on the romantic novel. One of the best examples is his chapter on *Caleb Williams*, which avoids offering the kind of interpretation you might expect—that it is a novel about the impossibility of justice in a world of class stratification—and instead argues that it is a dystopia about a world without a theory of easement. “Easements deal with rights we have in land we don’t own . . . and to things (like the wind) that seem beyond owning” (pp. 150–51), and thus function as an *ad hoc* legal technique for negotiating between private and public ownership. This negotiation is increasingly necessary in the densely populated spaces of modernity, but, as Stout points out, “the problems of togetherness are formal—built into the structure of things—rather than historical” (p. 169). Because easement is an “equal-opportunity embarrassment to any theory of property as categorically private or constitutively public” (p. 155), it is an important formal problem for Stout’s project of restoring the importance of the collective and public to the liberal regime of individuals and private ownership. It also allows Stout to claim a space for debates about ownership in the Romantic period that does not depend on anti-property radicals fighting quixotically against the inevitable march of modernity. In ways both original and convincing, Stout shows that *Caleb Williams* presents a world of gothic horror in which “little more than the sheer fact of sharing a space with someone else is sufficient to make us plagues and monsters to each other” (p. 159). Without a theory of easement, always clunky in its practical, case-by-case application, a “general good” is but “a theoretical ideal beyond the math of any imminent actor” (p. 158).

Though the chapters on the novel are filled with many excellent moments of practical criticism, I found them, on the whole, to be less compelling than the opening theoretical chapter (and occasional set pieces in later chapters) dealing with nascent or uneven developments

in legal theory and practice. While the discussion of the novels will be of interest to anyone whose work intersects with questions of liberalism, justice, and the romantic novel, their role in the structure of *Corporate Romanticism* is mostly to serve as a *reflection* or *instantiation* of the “internal struggle” (p. 9) that Stout sees at work in liberalism and modernity. This way of incorporating literature into historical arguments is, of course, a well-worn method of literary criticism, but, as my remarks above suggest, I think the real strength of Stout’s book is in his attention to form. Had he, for example, substituted the word “form” for “the novel” in the focus of his book, it may have allowed him—as paradoxical as it may sound—to elevate the novel to a higher level of importance by thinking of it as a coequal *contributor* to the formal patterns he notices and weaves together in his more theoretical discussions. Furthermore, emphasizing “form” over “the novel” would have allowed for a wider range of literary texts to enter the discussion. Stout wants to claim “at least one source of formal consistency” for the romantic novel against the kind of commonplace assumptions about its irreducible “thematic pluralism” (p. 5) that prevent studying it as a distinct object—which is fair enough. The romantic novel as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry could certainly use a bump in esteem, and Stout’s study seems poised to play a role in bringing that future about. But I could not help but wonder whether this book could offer a fuller account of “corporate romanticism” if it were to include a poem like George Crabbe’s *The Borough* (1810), which surveys in heroic couplets the complexities of life in a borough, a social formation that Stout notes played a role in the history of the early corporation (p. 27). Lord Byron’s representation of the Siege of Ismail in Cantos 7 and 8 of *Don Juan* (1823) would have also been relevant, not only because it analyzes the ways in which individuals get absorbed by (brutal, warmongering) collectives, but also because it develops this analysis to formulate a critique of imperialism, a topic that is otherwise absent from Stout’s account.

Despite this, *Corporate Romanticism* remains an engaging and original study that turns familiar notions about the rise of liberal modernity on their head. I have attempted to do justice to the main thrust of its central arguments, but this is a book packed to the brim with striking observations and arguments that are assimilable to the main argument while not being entirely contained by it. I can only encourage readers to open the book themselves to experience its many pleasures. Among those pleasures, and in closing, let me praise Stout’s writing style, which is not only admirably clear, but also refreshingly funny. He certainly doesn’t overdo it, but one is never

far from a witty turn of phrase (“the Georgian yadda yadda yadda” [p. 87]), humorous observation (that Burkean conservatism is “a categorical imperative that, for some reason, needs its daughter to love it” [p. 65]), or genuine LOL-worthy paraphrase (“Every time you let a weird boy just up and kiss your hand while you’re in the middle of a discussion about ‘the character of Richard the Third’ . . . England gets a little worse” [p. 61]). Moments like these are disarmingly honest in their silliness—they restore, at least to this reader, a sense of the occasional absurdity and weirdness of reading literature of the nineteenth century. Stout’s humor, in other words, does not distract from the seriousness of his project but, like his other more traditional scholarly virtues, has the effect of inviting the reader to look at complex issues closely, and with patience, and to feel as if they are a part of an ongoing conversation.

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DANIEL HACK, *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. xvi + 284. \$35.

Daniel Hack’s ambitious and elegantly written *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature* joins a rich and growing body of work focused on nineteenth-century African American print culture. Building upon foundational studies by scholars such as Frances Smith Foster, Carla Peterson, and Elizabeth McHenry, recent books by Eric Gardner, Nazera Sadiq Wright, and Britt Rusert (to name just a few) have recovered and explored the vast archive of African American literature that appeared in forms besides the bound book. With chapters on essays, poems, and novels published in nineteenth-century black newspapers and magazines, Hack makes an important contribution to this field. Taking up one of the key insights of Black Print Culture Studies, Hack focuses on the intertextual nature of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American literature. Specifically, *Reaping Something New* recovers and explores the varied ways in which African American writers took up and made use of Victorian literature. Providing overwhelming evidence that “nineteenth-century British literature was woven deeply into the fabric of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American literature and print culture”

(p. 2), Hack offers an essential account of how African American writers such as Frederick Douglass, James McCune Smith, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, and W.E.B. Du Bois engaged with Victorian giants like Alfred Tennyson, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot, as well as a host of less-canonical British writers.

Throughout his study, Hack develops and employs a method he terms “close reading at a distance.” This method, he explains, “combines detailed, granular textual analysis with consideration of a work’s geographical dispersal and uptake, especially by readerships not envisioned or addressed by the work itself” (p. 3). *Reaping Something New* is filled with stunning close readings that draw out the connections between British and African American works at the level of “specific language, tropes, and narrative structures,” and I am thoroughly convinced by Hack’s argument that it “is at this level of granularity that many African Americanizations of Victorian literature take place and become legible” (p. 10). Yet Hack also makes a claim for “close reading at a distance” that his book does not fully develop. Hack contends that “the methods of close reading and formal analysis, on the one hand, and of book history and reception studies, on the other, need to be combined if we are to grasp as fully as possible *either* a text’s intrinsic features *or* its cultural impact, let alone the relationship between the two,” and he claims that “close reading at a distance” accomplishes that combination (pp. 23–24, emphasis in original). But *Reaping Something New* devotes little attention to questions of physical form, production, distribution, and circulation, all of which are central concerns of book history. Taking such issues seriously would only have enhanced Hack’s readings of works published in newspapers (like Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*) and magazines (like Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood*) and made the book’s methodological intervention even more powerful. That Hack chose not to focus on these areas does not diminish the importance of his insights regarding the interconnectedness of African American and Victorian literature, but there remains a need for work that combines close reading with the methods of book history and print culture studies.

Hack divides *Reaping Something New* into two parts. The first section contains three chapters, each of which focuses on the ways in which a range of African American writers engaged with the works of a single Victorian author. Chapter 1 traces African American engagements with Charles Dickens in general, and his novel *Bleak House* in particular. Focusing on the serialization of Dickens’s novel in *Frederick Douglass’s Paper* and its “rewriting” by Hannah Crafts in her *Bondswoman’s Narrative* (p. 16), Hack reveals how antebellum African

American editors and writers creatively enlisted Dickens and *Bleak House* in the antislavery cause (p. 33). Chapter 2 largely remains in the 1850s and 1860s, as Hack looks closely at deployments of Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" in African American print. Again reading the pages of *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, Hack devotes most of this chapter to unpacking a radical reading of Tennyson's poem by the African American writer, doctor, and activist James McCune Smith. In a letter to Douglass's paper, Smith charges the British poet laureate with stealing the sense and rhythm of his immediately famous poem from an African war chant that helped spark the Haitian Revolution. Performing a superlative reading of Smith's reading, Hack explores the relevance of Tennyson's poetry to issues such as artistic originality and imitativeness, topics that continue to occupy a central place in African American literary studies. Chapter 3 turns to the later decades of the nineteenth century and explores the importance of George Eliot's lengthy poem *The Spanish Gypsy* to African American literature broadly, and especially to the novels of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. Pointing to the parallels between plots of "unwitting passing and voluntary racial affiliation" in Eliot's poem and two of Harper's novels (*Minnie's Sacrifice* and *Iola Leroy*), as well as to convincing examples of Harper borrowing and adapting Eliot's language and phrasing in her own work, Hack explores the transatlantic routes of the passing novel (p. 80).

The second section of *Reaping Something New* flips the organizational logic of the first, with each of the book's final three chapters focusing on how a single African American author employed a range of Victorian works. Chapter 4 looks closely at the writings of Charles Chesnutt, with specific attention paid to his short story "The Wife of His Youth" and novels *The House Behind the Cedars* and *The Quarry* (posthumously published in 1999). In these works, Hack traces Chesnutt's engagements with Tennyson, Dickens, and Eliot, as well as with the novels of Thomas Hardy and Charlotte Brontë. Chesnutt "homes in with remarkable precision on texts that invoke not black but rather mixed-race identities," and in doing so "helps construct and make visible a transatlantic, interracial lineage in which the novelistic treatment of scandals of fallenness and mixed-race ancestry (interracial lineage) are mutually informed and illuminating" (pp. 118, 126). Chapter 5 moves to Chesnutt's contemporary Pauline Hopkins, whose novels *Contending Forces* and *Of One Blood* borrowed from and engaged with the works of Tennyson, Eliot, and the British novelist Edward Bulwer Lytton. Teasing out these connections, Hack argues that "Hopkins uses Victorian literature in ways that amplify the

counternormative, even transgressive currents of her work, with regard to her treatment of gender and sexuality as well as race" (p. 139). The book's final chapter turns to W.E.B. Du Bois, and the epigraphs of poetry that begin each chapter of his *Souls of Black Folks*. Hack looks closely at Du Bois's use of nineteenth-century British poets such as Byron, Tennyson, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but also explores the importance of Du Bois's use of contemporary British writers. *Souls of Black Folks* thus marks a shift, Hack concludes, in African American engagements with British literature: "when later African American writers engage with Victorian literature, they will not be engaging with it as contemporary, and when they engage with contemporary literature, they will not be engaging with Victorian literature" (p. 177).

In his book's first section, Hack spends most of his energy teasing out the lessons that African American engagements with Victorian literature can teach us about three canonical nineteenth-century British writers. We "find that the African Americanization of *Bleak House* makes newly visible and meaningful certain aspects of the novel," realize that "Smith's reframing of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' sheds new light on the poem's place in Tennyson's oeuvre," and see how "the ways in which African American writers took up *The Spanish Gypsy* illuminate and potentially recuperate aspects of Eliot's work many critics have found troubling" (pp. 24, 64, 93). In these chapters, nineteenth-century African American *writers* emerge as critical *readers* of Victorian literature, and Hack powerfully shows how their insights not only supplement but also challenge much of the field's current work.

The second section of *Reaping Something New* flips this lens and focuses instead on what engagements with Victorian literature can teach us about three of the most taught and studied nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American writers. Chesnutt's *House Behind the Cedars*, Hack contends, is "in dialogue with a series of Victorian novels, and it is through this dialogue that the novel's literary-historical intervention emerges most fully" (p. 120). Hopkins's substantial engagement with Victorian literature not only "informs those aspects of her work critics have deemed central to her achievement," but also illuminates the relationship between two of the most important authors of the African American literary canon, since the British writers she uses most frequently "matter to Hopkins in part . . . because they matter to Chesnutt, and her engagement with them is at the same time and thereby an engagement with Chesnutt as well" (p. 139). And finally, not only do Du Bois's epigraphs in *Souls of*

Black Folks “contribute to and intervene in a tradition of African American citation and intertextuality,” but paying close attention to the particular writers that Du Bois selected for citation also “leads us to reconsider a seemingly settled question in the scholarship on *Souls*: the role Du Bois assigns culture in the fight for racial equality” (p. 177). By revealing the deep entanglement between two literary traditions that are often treated in isolation, and linking his superb readings to key concerns of African American and Victorian literary studies, Daniel Hack has written the rare book sure to make a lasting impression across multiple fields.

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KATHERINE MULLIN, *Working Girls: Fiction, Sexuality, and Modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 262. \$90.

Katherine Mullin’s *Working Girls: Fiction, Sexuality, and Modernity* is as smart and savvy as her titular heroines. Tracing the history of the working girl as a “key sexual persona” from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, Mullin attends to three categories or types of working girls, in descending class order: typists and telegraphists, shop-girls, and barmaids. Each category occupies a section of her book, and within each section Mullin devotes one chapter to the broad cultural frame within which each type emerges and develops and one chapter to this same type within the literary fiction of its day. Mullin recognizes that this division of her material risks “‘quarantin[ing] culture from literature, and canonical from popular fiction” (p. 9), but she opts for this organization in order to “assist readability” as she reconstructs the “intricate dialogue” between the music hall and Mudie’s lending library, popular journalism and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and, in the process, unsettles what Andreas Huyssen famously termed the “great divide” between mass culture and high art.

Mullin achieves this goal—and more—as she seamlessly and compellingly mirrors the fluidity she argues for between different forms of cultural production in her own analysis. Each section touches on an impressive range of sources and materials including popular songs, dances, and comic skits; advertisements, postcards, and throwaway journalism; the debates among canonical writers such

as George Moore, Thomas Hardy, et al. about censorship, circulating libraries, and the status of authorship in an age of increasingly mechanical production; and popular and canonical fiction. This method entails what Mullin terms an “archaeology of reading,” which aims to recover “the now-forgotten narratives about gender, sexuality, and agency that would have inhabited the air around the writers and first readers of the canonical fiction” she analyzes (p. 10)—an apt formulation that nicely captures the work being done in *Working Girls*. The quality of this “air,” for Mullin, is distinguished by two key aspects: first, the “vernacular emancipation” (p. 8) that *Working Girls* embodied in contrast to the New Woman; and second, the ways in which the “mass media sensation” of the Working Girl “energized” fiction now considered canonical during the period from the 1870s to the 1920s. Across the range of her representations, the Working Girl is seen ultimately as “a key signifier of nothing less than modernity itself: labile, enigmatic, resistant to conclusive categorization” (p. 12).

Typists and telegraphists form the first section of *Working Girls*; as transmitters of words, they highlight the intimate connections between the trope of the working girl and issues of authorship. They are the most genteel workers that Mullin considers, but significantly they are neither as genteel as the New Woman nor as tempered in their sexuality as previous scholars have argued. Entering an ongoing conversation about the “typewriter girl,” Mullin is keen to illustrate that not only is the typist, and her older sister, the telegraphist, more dangerous as a sexual identity than has been acknowledged in scholarship to date, but also that they need to be thought of as distinctive sexual personae rather than diluted versions of the New Woman. Mullin turns productively to music hall depictions of these working girls, as well as advertisements—including an illustrative example by the Remington Typewriter Company, captioned “‘Give me the Remington,’ says the experienced operator” (p. 28)—to establish her claim that typists (and telegraphists) were constructed within popular culture as at once competent and confident and full of “pluck,” thereby embodying “a popular form of women’s emancipation” (p. 24). As with the shop-girl and the barmaid, Mullin argues for “a continuum between professional and sexual competencies” (p. 42) that is emancipatory for women and at the heart of their perceived threat. They sit astride contemporary discourses about women as prey or predator, victims or vixens, in control of their sexuality or at risk of being taken advantage of in their male-dominated workplaces.

These tensions are dramatized in fictions about telegraphists and typists, from Anthony Trollope’s “The Telegraph Girl” (1877) to

Hardy's *The Laodiceans*, Henry James's *In the Cage*, George Gissing's *The Odd Women*, and three turn-of-the-century works, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles*, and finally Joyce's *Ulysses*. In different ways, these techno-romances explore the specific nature of telegraphy and typing as modern technologies that are by turns "etheric," vacillating, inconstant, and threatening forms of mediation that provide their heroines with a "suspect expertise" (as Mullin's characterizes Mina Harker's clerical talents in *Dracula*) that is also a marker of "sexual dissidence" (p. 70). Trollope's pairing of heroines in "The Telegraph Girl," with its contrast between "steady Lucys and daring Sophys," is exemplary as a means of managing the fears and desires coalescing around these female workers and their relationship to sexuality and technology; in short, sexual and mechanical reproduction merge in these figures and offer ripe material for staging anxieties around authorship at a time when larger discussions about literary value, commercial fiction, authenticity, and authorial control are coming to the fore.

The shop-girl proves an ideal proxy for the continuation of these debates, both as a figure of commerce—selling commodities and becoming a commodity herself—and "shorthand for degraded reading practices" (p. 128), given shop-girls' penchant for mass-market fiction. Mullin situates shop-girls within various discourses of social reform that work to characterize the shop-girl as a modern-day damsel in distress, more threatened than a threat, and in need of protection and surveillance. Mullin counters this narrative, asserting instead that such characterizations are "nervously retrograde" and neglect how shop-girls were, in fact, "energetic participants in an evolving urban sexual culture" (pp. 119, 124). Autonomous independent entrepreneurs, they handily managed their own sexual appeal and embraced the freedoms that came with urban modernity. Likewise, the fiction centered around them "helped to negotiate a new sexual politics running alongside more explicitly politicized suffragist campaigns" (p. 125). Mullin covers some well-trod ground here around the figure of the shop-girl; she also amends and extends the critical terrain in her insistence on the liberatory potential of shop-girls "taking charge through capitalizing, sensibly, upon their own desirability" (p. 110).

The assertiveness of the shop-girl frames Mullin's readings not only of a variety of late-nineteenth century novels such as Zola's *The Ladies Paradise*, Gissing's *The Odd Women*, and Henry James's *Princess Casamassima*, but of naturalism more generally. Equating the construction of types by male naturalist authors as an attempt at absolute control over their characters, Mullin positions shop-girls as resistant

and able to slip their authors' control, primarily through their inscrutability. Zola's Denise Baudu is shown to outwit both Mouret and Zola; Monica Madden's "strong will" in *The Odd Women* triumphs, leaving her "a figure of retributive potency" and "destructive force" (p. 142); and Millicent Henning in *The Princess Casamassima* steals the show, functioning as a far more revolutionary figure than Hyacinth Robinson and, by extension, "a wry rebellion against naturalism's limitations" (p. 139).

Later incarnations of the shop-girl equally produce her as enigmatic, mysterious, and adept in withholding secrets. Inscrutable to their authors and readers alike, characters such as Joyce's Eveline, Katherine Mansfield's Rosabel in "The Tiredness of Rosabel," and Joseph Conrad's Winnie Verloc in *The Secret Agent* become a "means to metafictional meditation" (p. 144) in which novelists reflect on the connections between reading and rebellion, writing and commerce, and the commodification of goods and people. Disputes around the "New Censorship" controversy, as Mullin shows, highlight the kinship between writers and shop-girls, an affiliation captured in the comparison of novels to "boots or biscuits" (p. 158). As the century ends, the shop-girl as proxy for these concerns wanes, thanks in part to the advent of new publishing opportunities (small presses, little magazines, and the like), all of which lessen the pressures to "make writing pay." Ezra Pound's "Shop Girl" (1915) marks this shift not only in its form of publication but also in its image of the shop-girl "at the point of fading out of literary culture, dwindling into insubstantiality, quivering on the brink of Woolf's 'infinitely obscure'" (p. 163).

Like the telegraphist and typist, and the shop-girl before her, the barmaid is, for Mullin, a fully modern figure ready for sexual adventure, as the music halls portrayed her, and at the center of debates around female agency and social, economic, and sexual self-determination. Like these earlier figures, the barmaid also becomes the subject of concern for philanthropists and reformers worried about issues ranging from work conditions to the morality or lack thereof of an occupation that brought women into pubs and hence into close "proximity to men and drink" (p. 184). As Mullin notes, the so-called barmaid problem ultimately "became a dispute over whether innocence or experience was the defining quality of a modern mode of femininity" (p. 189). Barmaids also become the subjects of fiction, with some of the same enigmatic qualities of shop-girls—qualities visualized in Manet's *Bar at the Folies Bergère*, with its image of the barmaid as unreadable riddle. Where barmaids differ from their predecessors is in their specific utility in the debates around censorship and the

protection of the "Young Person," the iconic figure for young female readers in danger of being corrupted by immoral books, which, after the Education Act of 1870, included not only bourgeois women but women of the lower classes as well. In a compelling reading of *Ulysses*, Mullin shows how Joyce's barmaids Miss Douce and Mina Kennedy speak simultaneously to the "barmaid problem" and censorship: Lenehan, "the most abject of all the problem drinkers in *Ulysses*," becomes "the mouthpiece for the ideological assumptions of *Ulysses*'s persecutors," thus parodying those censoring Joyce's own work; against social reformers' attempts to liken the Young Person and the barmaid as equally in need of protection, Joyce understands that "if the Young Person was a hangover from the past, then the barmaid was her antidote, a heroine of modernity" (p. 237).

Over the course of *Working Girls*, one can certainly quibble with particular readings of individual novels. By choosing to cover so much ground, Mullin's readings are necessarily brief at times, and, given her emphasis on working girls as counters to other figures of female empowerment (namely the New Woman and the suffragettes), she tends to highlight the potency and "destructive force" of these women at the expense of some of their more equivocal characteristics. For example, the ending of *The Odd Women*, and Monica Madden's fate in particular, seems somewhat less triumphant than Mullin's reading allows; Arabella Donn in *Jude the Obscure* is not quite the quasi-feminist heroine she is made out to be, and Sue Bridehead not as uninteresting as she becomes in contrast to Arabella; and Denise Baudu in *The Ladies Paradise* is complex in ways that Mullin's analysis of her successful rebellion does not quite account for—especially in terms of her identification with capitalism. (Zola writes of her: "She was secretly for the big shops, with her instinctive love of logic and life.") Likewise, with Zola, the quick equation between naturalist types and the desire for authorial control too easily discounts naturalism's experimentation with a new kind of character that is not an absence of character, as Mullin assumes, so much as an attempt to think character—and the crowd, itself central to modernity—in non-individualistic terms.

The larger frame for Mullin's analysis, which comes into view in her "Afterword," goes some ways toward explaining these interpretive choices and their equation of the feisty and the flirty with a neglected feminist politics. Turning to our own contemporary postfeminism, Mullin suggests: "The Working Girl is nothing less than a resonant manifestation of what I shall call proto-postfeminism" (p. 239). Hardly new, postfeminism carries forward the "emancipated heterosexiness" (p. 240) of Mullin's typists, shop-girls, and barmaids and

represents a particular vision of the (post) feminist heroine defined by “the disciplined, regulated self, in control of a sexuality holding men in thrall” (p. 241). Perhaps then part of what is at stake finally in Mullin’s investigation of working girls are contending views and visions of and an ongoing debate about the relationship between female agency, sexuality, commodification, and capitalism, and what a contemporary postfeminism might look like—a conversation to which Mullin offers provocative new fodder in her rich account of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century working girls, those “avatars of the new” who upended gender and genre alike.

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KRISTEN CASE and K. P. VAN ANGLIN, eds.,
Thoreau at Two Hundred: Essays and Reassessments. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xxii + 279. \$99.99.

This year the spring peepers’ chorus has been sounding everywhere. Their abundance makes me look backward and forward: backward, to my grandfather, who eagerly awaited their return every year and who carried me on nightly journeys to hear the first notes; forward, into an increasingly uncertain future, a future that Henry David Thoreau sensed well before the current environmental crisis.

Receiving *Thoreau at Two Hundred: Essays and Reassessments*, I thus appreciated the impetus to celebrate his work. Nevertheless, I wondered: how could these very short essays—most less than fifteen pages—do justice to Thoreau’s work? My skepticism quickly became admiration. Informed but not governed by previous Thoreau scholarship, this collection of precise, intense, and rousing essays offers readers challenging new responses and opens opportunities for future scholarship.

The editors, Kristen Case and K. P. Van Anglin, have divided the book into four sections that move from micro to macro scale: Part I explores Thoreauvian Materialism(s); Part II, The Local Context; Part III, The Global Context; and Part IV, Thoreauvian Cosmos. Each section possesses admirable analytical coherence, though the essayists do not always agree with one another. The introduction sets the volume’s tone. Energetically political, it begins by outlining specific concerns that animate the collection’s scholarship and underscores

Thoreau's continuing significance: "Thoreau's thinking about the relationship between humans and other species, about just responses to state violence, about the threat posed to human freedom by industrial capitalism, and about the essential relation between scientific 'facts' and poetic 'truths' speaks to our historical moment as clearly, perhaps more clearly, than it did to the 'restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century' into which he was born" (p. 1).

Commemorating Thoreau "invites reflection, perhaps even mourning, as well as celebration" (p. 1), for if we had heeded his warnings, perhaps the contemporary situation would differ dramatically. The introduction foregrounds Thoreau's affinity for "double-ness or paradox" (p. 2), his simultaneous appreciation of materiality and philosophy, and his intellectual and experiential breadth. Like the essays that follow, it argues that previous Thoreau criticism, which alternately represented him as the "rugged individualist," the poet, the philosopher, "the political radical," the scientist, and the environmentalist, is too fragmented; the author demands a more synthetic assessment. *Thoreau at Two Hundred* embodies this project.

Given the collection's numerous voices, a short review can only sketch the ideas that the essays investigate. "Thoreauvian Materialism(s)" encompasses Lance Newman's contribution outlining Thoreau's resonance vis-à-vis current environmental justice concerns; James S. Finley's study of how the author revises Free Soil Movement ideas "to incorporate locospecificity and Transcendentalist simplicity" (p. 38), also becoming more ecological; and Susan E. Gallagher's argument that Thoreau rejects Adam Smith's "mechanistic vision of the free market system" (p. 45).

Elise C. Lemire's essay on how Thoreau's writing illuminates Concord's troubling Black history opens "The Local Context" section. Writing in a related register, Joshua David Bellin scrutinizes Thoreau's responses to Native Americans and highlights Native Americans' readings of Thoreau. Bellin reminds us that unlike the author's outspoken advocacy for African Americans, he never wrote or spoke on behalf of his Native contemporaries. Sandra Harbert Petruionis shows how Thomas Wentworth Higginson, whose antislavery activism Thoreau admired, defended the author's character and helped construct his posthumous reputation as a wholesome natural history writer partly by deemphasizing his political ideas. Finally, Robert A. Gross enriches our concrete understanding of Thoreau's Concord, presenting it not as "a place apart from an increasingly urban, industrial age" but as one fundamentally enmeshed in the nation's rapid transformations (p. 103).

The essays in “The Global Context” section encompass both specific historical concerns and theoretical and aesthetic readings. Len Gougeon’s contribution outlines how Britain’s alliances with the South during the Civil War era shaped the New England literati’s responses, which included promoting Thoreau as “an authentic American voice, representative of the nation’s uniquely democratic values” (p. 127). Responding more abstractly, Paul Giles emphasizes how “Thoreau’s writing expands from the transnational to the cross-temporal” (p. 138). Particularly noteworthy in this essay is Giles’s emphasis on Thoreau’s “complex rhetorical calibration of the proximate and distant” (p. 138), his point-of-view reversals, and his humor. Samantha C. Harvey and Rochelle L. Johnson juxtapose Thoreau and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, showing how “both writers pursued a notion of spirit as interrelated and integrated with the self and with the natural world” (p. 154). The beautiful concluding essay for this section by Wai Chee Dimock—my favorite in the collection because it speaks in many registers and across historical moments—uses sound as a touchstone to explore the author’s genre complexity. Framing her discussion with Bernie Krause’s work in bioacoustics and focusing particularly on the spadefoot toad’s “sound camouflage” (p. 170), Dimock suggests that Thoreau draws from both elegy and fable to create work that speaks profoundly to our present environmental circumstances.

The section “Thoreauvian Cosmos,” which concludes the collection, reprises the overall emphasis on a holistic perspective in assessing Thoreau’s achievement. Returning to Part I’s focus on Thoreau’s materialism, Laura Dassow Walls counters views that regard the author as an isolated and idiosyncratic naturalist; Walls emphasizes how Thoreau valued collective scientific knowledge and presents him as “a writer of the commons.” This collective included nonprofessional observers who like him spoke “the language of the commons—weather, skies, rivers, woods, fields” (p. 195). Focusing particular attention on two ostensibly disparate texts, “Civil Disobedience” and *Walden*, Lawrence Buell stresses “the consistency within and among the literary, political, and proto-ecological sides of Thoreau during his adult lifetime” and “his commitment to an ethics of disaffiliation, ongoing spiritual growth, and symbolic action” (p. 200).

The last three essays in this section propel us into the present—and the future. Lawrence F. Rhu deepens our understanding of Thoreau as an American philosopher by examining Stanley Cavell’s evolving appreciation for his nineteenth-century predecessor. Alan D. Hodder argues that the spiritual Thoreau has attracted growing

scholarly and popular interest because he “was among the first Americans to articulate and embody in a publicly performative way” an increasingly legible and appealing way of being religious or “spiritual” (p. 232); Hodder identifies five central features of Thoreau’s religious perspective. Robert D. Richardson’s brief concluding essay extends Hodder’s discussion and highlights nine Thoreauvian beliefs that provide essential guidance for a possible better future.

Ultimately, this engaging and readable collection presents Thoreau as both “new” and renewing; *Thoreau at Two Hundred* confirms Thoreau’s enduring importance. In today’s jittery, precarious, often dangerous environments, the essays invite reflection and guarded optimism.

Perhaps it’s only my imagination, or wishful thinking, that believes the spring peepers’ sleigh-bell chorus has been louder and lasted longer this year. I’d like to think that the wetlands at the foot of my hill will stay healthy forever. If we can heed Thoreau’s resonant cautions and follow his example, such a future may still be possible.

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JOSHUA KING, *Imagined Spiritual Communities in Britain’s Age of Print*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015. Pp. xii + 338. \$86.95.

Joshua King’s ambitious book *Imagined Spiritual Communities in Britain’s Age of Print* opens with a quotation from F. D. Maurice: “If you looked down upon [London] from the top of St. Paul’s, . . . you would not have such a panoramic view of the streets and houses as you have in a large sheet of advertisements” (quoted on p. 1). Such an assertion of the power of print in Victorian Britain anticipates the essential argument of King’s accomplished work: that it was in the pages of an exploding network of printed texts that British religious identity was imagined in the nineteenth century. As case studies, King takes the best and brightest—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Maurice, Matthew Arnold, John Keble, Alfred Tennyson, and Christina Rossetti—and shows the manner in which they each engaged readers in imagining themselves as part of ecclesiastical, national, or international spiritual communities.

The first section of the book suggests that characterizing Coleridge, Maurice, and Arnold in the language of “Broad Church” is less

illuminating than their similar view of a unified print network that could transform and unify Britain's divided religious classes. This argument is most convincing when King connects it, as he does in Maurice's case, with an inability to "correlate popular national consciousness with any single existing religious institution" (p. 95). One senses through all of King's creative readings that it was this tension and confusion within the religious identities of the period that created such a contested and vibrant print culture.

The first chapter demonstrates Coleridge rejecting the mindless and base nature of endless "Reviews, Magazines, . . . Newspapers & Novels" (quoted on p. 21) and seeking to imbue it with *Reflection*, as his *Aids to Reflection* suggests. Coleridge addresses a personified figure of youth and longing, rather than the ambiguous and mindless masses, and seeks to lead him to embody the Logos of Christ. In so doing, Coleridge "provides the potential for spiritually reformed debate and exchange within the virtual space of the republic of letters" (p. 37).

King's argument becomes more original in chapter 2, "F. D. Maurice's Universal Society," in which he explores the fractures inflicted on any notion of a united Anglican Church by the print wars between Tractarians and Evangelicals in the 1830s and 1840s. These are powerful examples to support King's point that the battle lines of religious identity in this period—whether High Church or Low—were to be won or lost in the nation's bursting pages. Even Maurice's cry for unity and critique of a divisive print culture took shape in his attempt at a cheap weekly paper, *Politics for the People* (1848).

This chapter is also where some of King's most interesting readings come alive. He suggests that Maurice's series of features called "Dialogues in the Penny Boats"—in which members of all classes came together to discuss issues of the day—became "an analogy for the kind of virtual communicative space, or public sphere," in which religious communities coalesced (p. 78). King is at his best when he shows a text participating in its own textual culture, such as in Maurice's novella *Recollections and Confessions of William Milward*, in which the protagonists read of a friend's stillborn child in a newspaper, which becomes "a mass-distributed daily reminder of the collective in which each Briton exists" (p. 84).

Chapter 3, on Matthew Arnold's "Poetic National Church," suggests that Arnold harnessed poetic language's ability to produce active piety. Arnold "comes to see himself as a latter-day Isaiah," whose mission is to rescue the fragmented religion of his age (pp. 107–8). King's original focus on Arnold's writings on the book

of Isaiah persuasively demonstrates Arnold not championing secular poetry as a replacement for religious practice, but placing “greater faith in the subconscious, disciplining force of the Authorized Version” (p. 113). In this way, King illuminates Arnold’s creativity in engaging biblical texts to serve the modern nation.

At this stage, it would be good to see King connect Arnold’s vision of collective Bible reading to a wider climate of biblical inflection in the same period. The argument would be deepened by association with other research in this area, such as recent works by Norman Vance and Timothy Larsen. When King briefly delves into a comparison of Keble’s typological interpretations of the Bible with Carlyle’s and Ruskin’s, the effect is to strengthen his own interpretation of Keble’s typology. One also wonders if King could make more of the textual traditions in Christian history: not only biblical exegesis, but the epistolary genre dating back to St. Paul, which comprised appeals for faithfulness and the formation of religious community identity through the written word.

The second part of the book, “Virtual Congregations and Printed Poetic Cycles,” suggests that Keble’s *The Christian Year* is best understood as a translation of private poetry reading into the disciplined liturgy of public worship. Here King hints at the manner in which Keble, Tennyson, and Rossetti worked within a biblical tradition, and how this strengthened their awareness of their own textual missions. He posits that Keble “draws on the New Testament story of two individuals, praying alone and unknown to each other, yet coordinated in their meditation by the providence of God” (p. 153). The effect is to convincingly ground Keble’s work—and nineteenth-century print culture—in a history of religious readership.

The real force of King’s argument comes when he couples this history of spiritual reading and writing with the pressing perception of a secular public sphere. His description of Keble’s *The Christian Year* as speaking to a nation that was at once “secularly timed by clocks and periodicals” but also “united by basic piety and a generally Christian typological code for interpreting national and daily life” gets to the beating heart of a Victorian public ideology at a moment of increased cardiac pressure (p. 158).

This is similar to the argument sustained of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* in the fifth and sixth chapters. Where Keble forged a relationship between secular clocks and the Christian calendar, Tennyson presents interior faith as “ideologically quarantined from the world observed by natural science” (p. 175). King aptly places Tennyson on a historical spectrum that saw “the incremental ‘exarnation’ of

Christianity and Christian practice,” or “the idea that ‘spirit’ was ‘radically other than and potentially contrary to the body’” (p. 180).

As is the case with several of King’s most original interpretations, this discussion can feel disconnected from the book’s central focus on imagined spiritual communities. But King’s forays into more theological or poetic arguments nonetheless contribute to a creative understanding of his subjects’ roles in the religious redefinition of the period, as is the case when he argues that Tennyson “drains time and space of inherited typological meaning, identifies his spirit as the sensitive refuge for faith in God’s providential love, and then rereads the secular world through the divine love his spirit has learned to feel” (pp. 211–12).

And King closes *Imagined Spiritual Communities in Britain’s Age of Print* with a return to the focus; he argues that Christina Rossetti’s *Verses* encouraged readers to place themselves in a distinctly international and ecumenical Christian community. Particularly interesting in this chapter is the way that religious vitality interacted with literary market forces; Rossetti forges an ecumenical call to religious identity by effectively anthologizing her poems—a nice symbol of her mission—at the time when new volumes of poetry were increasingly marginalized. And she used the notoriety of her sonnets to gain readership in a market that undervalued devotional poetry. King grounds Rossetti in the Christian literary canon by pointing out that it was through the communion of saints that she interrogated contemporary nationalism and imperialism: to what extent did the fellowship of saints exclude other communities? Similar questions applied to the literary market; as Rossetti’s poems were “extracted, reinterpreted, and repackaged” after their publication, they almost performed the very climate of religious pluralism that they sought to explore.

Rossetti’s consideration of this dissolution leads nicely into the author’s conclusion, in which King reflects on the continuity between spiritual communities in Britain’s age of print and today’s online religious communities, in which a growing number of “synchronous global services” allow participants to believe that they are part of an international Christian communion (p. 295). King suggests that the same anxiety about the fickleness of virtual rather than real-world community characterizes both media. Indeed, this impressive book tells an important history in the age of Internet-fueled “post-fact” reality: King reminds us of the power and importance of words and texts in shaping modern ideologies.

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VIVIAN R. POLLAK, *Our Emily Dickinsons: American Women Poets and the Intimacies of Difference*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. x + 355. \$55.

Vivian R. Pollak's *Our Emily Dickinsons: American Women Poets and the Intimacies of Difference* is, at its core, an attempt to "clarif[y] Dickinson's legacy for women poets" (p. 265) by focusing on the different ways, over one hundred years, Dickinson's poems and letters and situation as a woman writer have been read and responded to. The central, or as Pollak would say, "provoking," problem of Dickinson's legacy is that, in its "hesitations" and "strangeness" and "difference," her work seems, on the one hand, to pull back from readers into "isolation" and "self-enclosure" and "autonomy," while, on the other, in its power and deep sense of cultural critique, "resisting official logics of belief, [and] . . . affirming the individual" (pp. 66–67), it seems to touch a deeply shared place in women writers. Dickinson's work and life, Pollak argues, both "invite and repel intimacy" (p. 3), and rather than continue the work of "unsettl[ing] the claims about Dickinsonian physical, mental, and emotion isolation" (p. 21) that most criticism since Susan Howe's brilliant *My Emily Dickinson* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1985) has been engaged in, Pollak seeks to bring us back to the provocative strangeness of Dickinson's isolation. Perhaps not surprisingly, Pollak discovers that "in writing about Dickinson," women writers often found themselves "writing about themselves" (p. 265). More ambitiously, she also wants to claim that her individual portraits can be woven together into a sort of "experimental, collective psychobiography, organized around the themes of shame, envy, love, fame, and death" (p. 9).

Pollak's analysis of the different ways in which Dickinson's legacy both invites and repels is quite convincing. She begins with commercially successful poet and writer Helen Hunt Jackson, who knew Dickinson as a child although they were not close friends. Jackson moved away from Amherst at age thirteen but visited occasionally, dining once with Dickinson's family. Thomas Wentworth Higginson showed Jackson some of Dickinson's poems, and, in an 1876 letter, Jackson writes of having made "a little manuscript volume with a few of your verses in—and I read them very often" (p. 45). She pushed Dickinson to publish and, in Pollak's words, "took it upon herself to chastise Dickinson for her difference" (p. 45). For the most part, Dickinson resisted Jackson's attempts to act as her unofficial editor, and Pollak suggests that Jackson's successful negotiations of "the demands of the literary marketplace" give us a way to read "the competing logic

of Dickinson's hesitations" (p. 15), an investigation of doubt and despair that "evidently demanded a different kind of self-confidence" (p. 68) in order to make its solitary way.

Mabel Loomis Todd never met Dickinson, but her name has been intimately entwined with the poet's. At Dickinson's death, her sister Vinnie first turned to Susan, their brother Austin's wife, and then to Mabel, Austin's lover, for help in editing the poems. Todd transcribed the poems and eventually read a selection of them to Higginson, a performance that played a crucial role in their early publication. In a series of prefaces and other acts of advocacy, Todd promoted a "startlingly original" poet, "hampered and annoyed" by society's hollow forms (quoted on p. 100). Confined by the social world she found herself in, Todd's Dickinson pioneered "a new style of American women's poetry," "terse, compressed, audacious, vigorous, powerfully engaged with the very mysteries of life and death and offering glimpses of experiences 'too intense to be more plainly intimated'" (p. 104). As Pollak suggests, Todd constructed a Dickinson with whom she could identify, engaged not only in editorial work but in "self-fashioning" (p. 117).

The great modern poet Marianne Moore knew Dickinson mainly through the volumes that Todd and others edited. Pollak shows that Moore was often associated with Dickinson in reviews and critical commentary and carefully tracked her growing reputation during the course of Moore's career. The centerpiece of the Moore chapter is a review she wrote of the 1931 *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Todd. Pollak locates in Moore a tension between "self-expression and self-repression" (p. 127) and shows that, in the Dickinson review, in "coming to terms with an ampler version of Dickinson than she had known before," Moore thought hard about her own "expressionary need" (pp. 140-41). Pushing against readings of Dickinson as a "recluse," Moore argued for "the wholesomeness of the life" (quoted on p. 141) as revealed in the letters, "normalizing" Dickinson by pointing out that while her life choices were "not usual," they were chosen out of a desire to protect her work. For Moore, the Dickinson of the letters was "a wholly non-notorious personality" (p. 150), to be defended against a "philistine interest in [which] what is fine [was] injudiciously taxed" (quoted on p. 150). The echoes of Moore's own poetry running through the review—Dickinson's "daring associations of the prismatically true" (p. 148), echoing Moore's "In the Days of Prismatic Color," for example—allow Pollak to make a convincing case that, in the review, "Moore was defending not only the wholesomeness of Dickinson's life but also choices she herself had made," seeking "to

lay to rest questions about gender identity and erotic normality that were also raised about her, as she must have known" (p. 151).

Sylvia Plath's responses to Dickinson also evolved as more of the poet's work became visible. Pollak looks at three early poems, modeled after Dickinson, that Plath sent to her mother in 1953, arguing that Plath's early version of Dickinson demonstrates an "uneasy bond" between them (p. 205), with Plath adopting a sense of "antagonism" (p. 197) toward the "cultural constraints on female voice" apparent to her in Dickinson, "even as she found her precursor's insights into the gendered psychology of victimhood inspiring" (p. 205). In 1960, Plath's husband Ted Hughes wrote that he and Plath had both, "with a great shock," "discovered Emily Dickinson" in the new Johnson edition of her poems (quoted on p. 199). In 1963, after Plath's suicide, reviewing Charles R. Anderson's *Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway of Surprise* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), Hughes put forward a new view of Dickinson that Pollak suggests he and Plath would have shared—a Dickinson driven by "ecstatic vision," drawn toward an overwhelming force outside of herself (quoted on p. 199). Dickinson's great strength, according to Hughes and by implication Plath, was her obsessive investigation of what separates us from that force, imagining herself as "a person piercing the façade with the act of death" (quoted on p. 201). Pollak argues that "Hughes surely was influenced by Plath in writing about Dickinson," understanding them both as "mystics of the highest order" (p. 204), but also critiquing a Plath he had in some senses created who "extended Dickinson's project too far, literalizing the death wish Dickinson was able to control" (p. 205).

Pollak looks at different "identificatory anxieties" in Elizabeth Bishop (p. 253), suggesting that in her responses Bishop highlighted a sense of danger that creativity exposed one to. Bishop's 1951 review of Dickinson's letters to Elizabeth Holland, for example, in stressing the "emotional neediness" (p. 219) of Dickinson's "almost childishly daring . . . self-revelations" (p. 238) to her friend, identifies a certain risk—what Bishop calls "a narrowing of perspective" (p. 231) only rescued by an admirable "sketchiness" of style, like a "waterspider, tenaciously holding to its upstream position by means of the faintest ripples, while making one aware of the current of death and the darkness below" (quoted on pp. 231–32). One hears the same response to an overly rigid explanatory scheme in Bishop's review of Rebecca Patterson's *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951) and its insistence on identifying the core of Dickinson's work as her relationship with a single lesbian lover, thereby

“limit[ing] the human personality’s capacity for growth and redirection to the point of mutilation” (quoted on p. 235). Perhaps the strongest link between the writers is found in two Dickinson poems, “If you were coming in the Fall” and “Now I knew I lost her,” marked in Bishop’s copy of the 1960 Johnson edition that deeply resonate with Bishop’s late poem “One Art,” all three of them intricate, indirect studies of the dangers of love’s “Idolatry.”

The strength of *Our Emily Dickinsons*—the quite revealing struggles with Dickinson’s isolation that Pollak unfolds from writer to writer—is related to what seems to me to be a weakness: a layer of complexity that often seems to draw the reader away from Dickinson and down any number of side trails. It is as if the book itself enacts or responds to the central provocation it studies. Dickinson seems to have pulled herself so far back from readers that an attempt to trace their responses tends to produce a literary history, Pollak writes, organized as a set of “discontinuous, or ‘spasmodic’” encounters (p. 3). And yet, Dickinson’s work has clearly drawn readers together in wrestling with a common set of problems. Pollak attempts to bring across this sense of unlooked-for unity by weaving a set of not-obviously-Dickinson-related connections across her text: Bishop’s attempt to review Plath, her memoir of Moore; Moore’s changing views of Plath, Plath’s of Moore and Bishop; Moore’s mother, Plath’s mother, Bishop’s missing mother; various “erotic sisterhood[s]” (p. 230). In all of these, Dickinson functions as an unspoken presence, glancingly alluded to. This may in fact be one way literary influence works, as a sort of social pressure or presence, there even when it is not there explicitly. If so, Pollak has devised an interesting, speculatively charged way of bringing that complexity out.

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JOSEPH JOHNSON, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*.
Edited by John Bugg. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. lxxxvi + 186. \$110.

Joseph Johnson has attained something of heroic status among romanticists. And why not? He published Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Maria Edgeworth, William Godwin, Thomas Malthus, Charlotte Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft, and William Wordsworth (before the *Lyrical Ballads*); he employed William Blake as an

engraver, also printing what may be proof sheets of his poem *The French Revolution*, and displaying copies of the illuminated books in his shop window at 72 St. Paul's Churchyard. Many of these authors he entertained at his famous dinners above the shop, encouraging their works and dispensing sensible advice, with plain fare (boiled cod and rice pudding), served incongruously beneath his close friend Henry Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare*. In 1798, Johnson was arrested for selling Gilbert Wakefield's *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's Address to the People of Great Britain* (1798). After awaiting trial in prison for three months, he was sentenced to a further six months in the King's Bench, but survived and continued his business until his death in 1809.

Back in 1994, Claire Tomalin wrote an essay for the *Times Literary Supplement* announcing the recent discovery of the Joseph Johnson business "letterbook" covering outgoing correspondence from the period from September 1795 to his death (Tomalin, "Publisher in Prison: Joseph Johnson and the Book Trade," *TLS*, 2 December 1994, pp. 15-16). Tomalin's piece has a whiff of disappointment at the lack of any "startling" evidence, especially with regard to Mary Wollstonecraft. Of course, having published a major biography of Wollstonecraft in 1974, Tomalin would have been understandably eager to see if anything new could be added to her sources, but she did also understand the value of a window into the day-to-day work of an important London publisher. Soon after Tomalin's essay, Johnson's letterbook was purchased for the Pforzheimer Collection in the New York Public Library. Now it has been edited, supplemented with the few other extant Johnson letters, and intelligently annotated and introduced by John Bugg. Since Tomalin wrote her essay on the letterbook, the rise of the *History of the Book* has made the discovery of a publisher's business letterbook seem a much more intrinsically interesting event now than it did in the mid-1990s. Plenty of scholars share Richard B. Sher's opinion that "the conditions of publication and distribution can help us to recover the contemporary meaning of published books" (Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and America* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006], p. 34).

Bugg's fine edition of *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook* provides multiple reasons to affirm Sher's view. As a rising star of historical criticism in the period, Bugg has all the skills necessary to tease out the implications of Johnson's correspondence for late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century literary culture. His impressive introduction is equally strong on the book and publishing history aspects of the

letters. In terms of the structure of publishing in the period, Bugg presents Johnson as “a gateway figure in the slow transition from patronage to marketplace” (p. xx). To Elizabeth Hamilton in 1807, Johnson offered a terse definition of the role of the bookseller as publisher: “Authors have nothing to do but to send their manuscript in a legible state to the bookseller; furnishing paper, employing a printer and corrector of the press, advertising, vending, in short, everything else will be his business” (p. 139). Bugg is good on Johnson’s firm but fair business acumen. Johnson regularly warned prospective authors against employing “country printers.” He understood, he told the physician Jonathan Stokes in 1800, “how agreeable it must be to a writer to have his press on the spot,” but counseled him that “Printing in the Country has generally turned out unsatisfactory” (p. 74). In London, he told his authors, one could be surer of the quality of the paper and the printing, and of saving on transport costs. One obvious exception represented in this correspondence was the Warrington printer William Eyres, whom Johnson seems to have trusted from his earliest years in the business right up until his death. Skepticism about William Hayley’s desire to have his *Life and Posthumous Writings of Cowper* printed by the local Joseph Seagrave in Chichester may have added to Blake’s distrust of his former employer. A previously unpublished letter to Hayley, expressing his reluctance to use Seagrave, begins with Johnson insisting: “Ever since I have had a connection with Mr. Blake I have wished to serve him & on every occasion endeavoured to do so.” Although the price suggested for Blake’s services seemed high to Johnson, he desired to “settle” in order “to prevent any altercation hereafter” (p. 82). He knew, it seems, what Blake could be like.

In several letters, Johnson patiently explains to authors the risks involved for publishers, and often writes to other booksellers sharply in defense of his copyright. The many letters written to call in overdue debts illustrate just how much the business relied on credit, financial and personal—the latter underwritten by the ties of kinship, friendship, and religious networks. Johnson was at the heart of the networks of rational dissent, involved with the foundation of the Unitarian chapel in Essex Street in 1774, and publisher of its minister Theophilus Lindsey’s various works. Lindsey’s correspondence, full of references to Johnson, recently edited by G. M. Ditchfield in two bulky tomes, makes a useful companion for Bugg’s slimmer volume.

Bugg provides a useful overview not just of Johnson’s influence on his stable of individual authors, but also of his importance on a national and international level within particular subject areas, most

obviously medicine, science (especially chemistry), education, religion, and politics. Johnson asserted power in these areas partly through the *Analytical Review*, the periodical he launched in 1788. Bugg is clear-eyed about its value for Johnson. The *Analytical Review* both guaranteed a forum for works he published and also “afforded him leverage against other publishers” (p. xxxvi). This “leverage” extended across the Atlantic, and the letterbook is particularly illuminating on the extent and complexity of Johnson’s American trade. Often uncertain and risky, not least because of the two different copyright regimes and the dangers and uncertainties of shipping, Johnson was very alive to the opportunities presented by the American market, but also committed to the idea of the new republic. He had published pamphlets in favor of the colonists in the 1770s, but his ties intensified after some of his key authors went into exile there in the 1790s. The geography of publishing for Johnson was not simply a question of dissemination from the metropolis to the margins. Regional English Dissent provided him with a robust network of authors and readers, many of whom had strong links with America through trade. Although Johnson was among the most important and respected London booksellers, his religious and geographical origins gave him very strong links to the transpennine enlightenment of the emergent industrial revolution, especially the Dissenters of Liverpool and Manchester, but extending across the Pennines to Leeds, and south to the midlands and Birmingham. Early in Johnson’s career, the hub for these links was the intellectual powerhouse of the Warrington Academy, but it persisted beyond its demise in 1783 in his relationship with, for instance, the literary physicians Thomas Percival and John Aikin and the unusual trust Johnson placed in Eyres as a “country printer.”

No one more fully embodied these networks than Joseph Priestley, whose career eventually took him from Warrington, to Leeds, and later to Birmingham, where his laboratory was destroyed in the notorious “Church and King” riots of the summer of 1791. When Priestley went into exile after 1794, both Johnson and Lindsey kept their correspondents up to date about his welfare. In September 1795, Johnson told Priestley that his letters from America were “the greatest treats I receive” (p. 12). Other exiles with links to Johnson included Priestley’s son, and Manchester exile, Thomas Cooper, Percival’s friend from the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. This group’s medical and scientific interests fed into the interest in materialism of one sort or another that was a controversial aspect of Johnson’s list, perhaps most famously in Erasmus Darwin’s speculations

about all life deriving from some “similar living filament,” as he put it in *Zoonomia* (1794), another Johnson publication, from an author almost as important to him as Priestley and Wollstonecraft.

Debates over such medico-literary issues formed an important part of Johnson’s list, including attacks on irreligion as well as various classics of enlightenment skepticism. The diversity included Thomas Malthus’s *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), itself an exercise in a darker kind of materialism. In his introduction, Bugg makes a valid point about the dangers of trying to map Johnson’s personal beliefs too directly onto this list, especially because his intellectual formation put a special value on “the collision of opinion” (p. liii). Malthus had, in fact, been among the last generation of students at Warrington, and his ideas gained from the developing interest in statistical demography important to Percival and his Manchester circle, even if they were generally averse to his conclusions. When Johnson was arrested, John Aikin was only one of several friends who saw it as the end result of a long-incubated plan on behalf of William Pitt’s government to crack down on this font of controversy. Several of the letters here show Johnson using his time in prison to bring his business correspondence up to date, but not without a wry and self-deprecating sense of humor about his situation, typically dusting the mundane with the sparkle of seeing things otherwise, including his letter to Richard Lovell Edgeworth on dining on duck in the King’s Bench. Possibly the letterbooks from earlier periods may still be out there somewhere. Certainly Johnson’s correspondence for the turbulent years of the American War up to the Revolution controversy would make tremendous reading.

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