in *Romola* is not a flaw resulting from commitment to Evangelical doctrine, but an effect consistent with the novel's suspicion of coherent patterning itself, as evident in the fatal theorizing of Baldassare and Tito as in the theology of Savonarola (p. 202). It might further place this effect more accurately in the context of nineteenth-century literature by showing how *Romola*'s "breakdown of novelistic structure," rather than having "no apparent equivalent in the fiction of the times" (p. 202), belongs to the tradition of anti-coherence that Adelene Buckland identifies in *Novel Science: Fiction and the Invention of Nineteenth-Century Geology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013), and that *Romola* demonstrates to be a part of religious as well as scientific discourse.

Despite my skepticism of the larger claims of *Evangelical Gothic* and its specific approach to Eliot, I find that reading it alongside recent scholarship raises intriguing questions. Readers interested in the relationship between secularity and models of agency will find value in the account of the conflict between "personal moral agency" and systems in *Bleak House* (p. 155). Readers interested in religions beyond Evangelicalism might connect this study's elaboration of Evangelical blood imagery and vampires to related imagery surrounding Jews and Catholics in nineteenth-century literature. Combining *Evangelical Gothic*'s surprising analyses of fiction with recent work in nineteenth-century literary religious studies thus presents further avenues for exploration.

MIMI WINICK
Harvard University

NATHAN K. HENSLEY AND PHILIP STEER, eds., *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. Pp. viii + 261. $110 cloth; $35 paper.

This invaluable collection of essays, edited with a marvelous introduction by Philip Steer and Nathan K. Hensley, urges us to reconsider a diverse array of (mostly) nineteenth-century texts in light of the global environmental crisis often known as the "Anthropocene." Either implicitly or explicitly, all of the pieces in *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire* ask us to question our conventional notions of periodization in light of this designation, and they work to reveal the social, cultural, economic,

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and environmental continuities between our contemporary moment and the nineteenth century. As Steer and Hensley eloquently put it in their introduction: "The uncanny but perversely material presence of the Victorian era's coal-fired and imperial past . . . means that our new contemporary is best viewed as but a moment in a much longer unfolding, a longer *durée* over which the nineteenth century looms like the angel in Walter Benjamin's famous essay" (p. 3). As the title indicates, the emphasis here is on *form*, and all of the essays, in different ways, examine their chosen texts not so much for their overt environmental content or thematics—though such things of course come up in the course of the discussions—but for the ways in which that sense of unfolding catastrophe posed profound representational challenges and demanded new ways of organizing and representing human experience.

This focus also means, for us today, new ways of practicing scholarship. Indeed, one of the signal virtues of *Ecological Form* is the way in which both nineteenth-century text and twenty-first-century reader are put into a kind of reciprocally defining motion, where returning to the Victorian period in light of what we now know about the "Anthropocene" produces not a position of moral or epistemological superiority, but an occasion for self-reflection about our own methods, archives, procedures, and commitments. In one of the standout essays in the collection, Elizabeth Carolyn Miller describes her approach to the energy regimes in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* in terms that could apply to many of the other essays collected here: "we, as critics," she urges, "[must] shift not so much from an eco-historicism to an eco-presentism, but toward a temporally doubled methodology that inhabits the present and the past dialectically" (p. 86). The call for us to reimagine our critical position and our objects of study in tandem is echoed elsewhere in the volume and illustrated by both the diverse array of texts, genres, and forms considered as well as by the productively self-reflective approach of many of the pieces.

Ecological Form is usefully divided into four sections of three chapters each—"Method," "Form," "Scale," and "Futures"—though I imagine the editors must have had some trouble categorizing essays that all, in one way or another, speak to all of these concerns. (It seems somehow fitting for a book on nineteenth-century ecological thought that its own classificatory system has pretty porous boundaries.) Most of the chapters take as their focus a single author or even a single text, demonstrating, in Hensley and Steer's words, "how our objects of inquiry, preoccupations, and geographical horizons change in light of the new perspectives afforded by ecocritical theory, formal analysis,

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and critical studies of the Anthropocene" (pp. 9–10). In a wonderfully moving and incisive essay on species loss in Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, for example, Jesse Oak Taylor argues that the poem's "familiar obsession" with extinction, death, and geological time cannot help but be transformed by our awareness of our own complicity in bringing about the "Sixth Extinction" (p. 42). Like Miller, Taylor is an acute and sensitive close reader who deftly manages to bring present-day concerns to bear on his text while keeping in close touch with the historical and cultural realities of the nineteenth century—no easy feat. In "'Form Against Force': Sustainability and Organicism in the Work of John Ruskin," Deanna K. Kreisel brilliantly demonstrates how John Ruskin's writing on economics and natural science reveals the paradoxes at the heart of "sustainability" discourse and the unresolved tensions that continue to structure the way humans conceptualize the "value" of the natural world. Benjamin Morgan writes on the utopic imaginaries of William Morris and Samuel Butler, demonstrating how their novels *News from Nowhere* and *Erewhon* translate "into an aesthetic idiom modes of systems-thinking" that help to make thinkable the manifold interactions of human and nonhumans across and among and between a variety of scales (p. 141). This is an essay that has stuck with me and helped me reimagine texts I thought I knew well.

Two other essays stand out to me in addition to the ones already mentioned. The first is "Signatures of the Carboniferous: The Literary Forms of Coal," which is by the editors, Hensley and Steer. This essay takes a slightly wider focus than most, at least as far as text selection is concerned. It plots a mini-genealogy of texts defined (implicitly or explicitly) by the dynamics of rapacious resource extraction, from Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853) and *North and South* (1855), to J. R. Seeley's *The Expansion of England* (1883), to Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904). Hensley and Steer's purpose is to show how coal operates in the cultural imaginary as, in Louis Althusser's words, a "defined excluded": something that produces everyday life while remaining all but inaccessible to everyday forms of perception and representation. The essay wonderfully and provocatively posits a state of tension between conventionally ordered, regionally circumscribed, and progressive modes of narrative organization and the reckless, destabilizing, ever-expanding energy regime that undoes any such efforts at containment. The other is the Afterword by Karen Pinkus: "They Would Have Ended by Burning Their Own Globe." This short essay takes as its ostensible subject Jules Verne's 1877 mining novel *The Black Indies* (*Les indes noires*), but in a sense it is really about the

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affective situation of twenty-first-century readers who can see in nineteenth-century texts so many of the warning signs of the catastrophe to come: “I can follow the narrative, but I know something about coal that Verne . . . doesn’t. I can’t un-know what I know as much as I dream of going back and of forgetting. I can’t read unless I forget, but if I forget I am reading in bad faith” (p. 244). Like so many of the pieces in this outstanding volume, Pinkus’s essay makes us ask *why* we continue to read the nineteenth century—to escape? to learn? to judge?—and how confronting such questions might help us better understand the perils, possibilities, and shape of the crisis at hand.

ALLEN MACDUFFIE
The University of Texas at Austin

RICHARD MENKE, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies, 1880–1900: Many Inventions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. x + 259. $99.99.

Brimming with discovery, wit, and intelligence, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies, 1880–1900: Many Inventions* is a scholar’s feast. Treating fiction of the period as vernacular media theory, Richard Menke unfolds a captivating set of stories about the first media age. You can teach this book to upper-level university students—piecemeal if necessary, as the chapters have considerable standalone value. At the same time, experts in Victorian studies and neighboring fields will find sophistication and nuance to spare. I am less sure that media studies proper will give due attention to a book with literature as the first word of the title—and, oddly enough, I am not sure that the title is accurate, given the equivocal status of literature in the argument. I like Menke’s work so much that I find myself wishing for two alternative versions of this book, one with more literary analysis, and one with none at all—though especially the one with more. But I will continue to review the hybrid before me, and begin by suggesting that a better title might have been *Media Fantasy 1880–1900*, since this is what Menke discusses so skillfully on every page.

Differentiating itself from studies that pay “more attention to writers’ responses to particular media than to how print literature becomes part of a media-rich world” (p. 11), *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies, 1880–1900* treats media technologies not

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