

and a particular scale of engagement” (p. 179). This conclusion is a welcome analysis of seemingly sensationalist narratives that nonetheless foreground alternative ways of imagining agency, consciousness, and narrative. As Chang observes, “The narrative model that Blackwood proposes is one in which there is neither genre nor narrative direction, only a kind of wild and windy collective forest consciousness circumnavigating the globe forever” (p. 177).

In *Novel Cultivations*, Chang draws on the work of recent posthuman plant theorists like Michael Marder, Eduardo Kohn, and Jeffrey Nealon. Her book, however, is not a work of theory *per se* but of novel criticism. Chang is an astute critic—one who draws out details of novels you thought you knew intimately and makes those novels seem fresh again—and her most important contribution with this book is to the field of Victorian novel criticism. But its significance does not end there. As Chang argues, cultivated Victorian plants are fictions in themselves, and they “make the environment around them more fictional” (pp. 20–21). Plants, in other words, shape the worlds they inhabit as crucially as those worlds shape and represent them. Readers who love plants and want to study them further—people who want to think about what plants do, “how they grow, where they appear, what they mean, who represents them and why” (p. 21)—should thus be as interested in this book as specialized Victorianists who love nineteenth-century novels because, in Chang’s expert hands, both plants and novels speak to “the complicated multiplicities of selfhood” (p. 21) that mark modernity.

LYNN VOSKUIL  
*University of Houston*

PENNY FIELDING and ANDREW TAYLOR, eds.,  
*Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1880s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 249. \$99.99.

For anyone interested in learning more about this decade, *Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1880s* will prove both indispensable and frustrating. The indispensability is thanks to the unexpected and thought-provoking subjects of study offered by some of the most distinguished Victorianists today—critics such as Linda K. Hughes and John Stokes, among others—while the frustration is due to the shocking omissions of key genres and figures. This survey of the period makes no reference to categories such as

children's literature, although the 1880s saw the publication of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and numerous books by Kate Greenaway. Also missing is any discussion of theater, despite this being the decade of some of the greatest stage successes of Henry Arthur Jones, to say nothing of Gilbert and Sullivan. There is not a single word about George Meredith, who was enormously influential in the 1880s as a poet, as a novelist (especially with *Diana of the Crossways* in 1885), and as paid reader for Chapman and Hall. (It was he, after all, who recommended accepting the manuscript of Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, arguably the first New Woman novel.) Women writers of popular fiction such as Ouida, Eliza Lynn Linton, Margaret Oliphant, Lucy Craik, and Rhoda Broughton are absent. So, too, are generators of new social and aesthetic perspectives, such as Vernon Lee and J. A. Symonds, even as major controversies involving Jews in fiction, as raised by the novels of Amy Levy and Julia Frankau, have been overlooked. And how is it possible to map this literary period accurately when the sole work by Thomas Hardy considered here is *Jude the Obscure*, which did not arrive until the following decade, or when Rudyard Kipling is present only in a list of writers who benefited from the logrolling of Andrew Lang, with no examination of his role in shaping the form of the modern short story in the late 1880s?

I confess that, in my case, the sense of frustration is magnified by my own stake in the topic of this volume. In the editors' "Introduction: 'Knowledge Made for Cutting,'" Penny Fielding and Andrew Taylor mention in passing the "curators of an exhibition of 1880s art and literature at the University of Virginia Library in 1985" (p. 5). A footnote identifies those unnamed curators as "Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Lasner" (in fact, that was Mark *Samuels* Lasner, whose name also appears in the Acknowledgments, where it is misspelled as "Mark Lassner" [p. xi]), and it adds the title of the published catalog of the exhibition that followed in 1989, *England in the 1880s: Old Guard and Avant-Garde* (p. 14). Yes, I was co-creator of something designed specifically to highlight the range and diversity of that decade, with sections devoted to "Irish Voices," "Women and the Woman Question," "The Theater," "Aesthetes," "The New Fiction," "The Impact of Empire," etc. It is, therefore, personally painful to see this new volume exclude so many of the authors whom we had included: "Michael Field," Katharine Tynan, William Allingham, Hall Caine, Mary Haweis, Jerome K. Jerome, Isabella Bird, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and others, as all of them contributed greatly to the literary character of the British 1880s. Why, moreover, Walter Pater does not

even merit a place in the Index of *Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1880s*, let alone deserve at least part of a chapter if only for his *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), is beyond my imagining.

But to concentrate entirely on the holes in this collection would be a disservice to the existing fabric—new material that often shimmers with brilliance. The chapters by the two scholars already mentioned make excellent starting points for appreciation, as each demonstrates how to take what looks like a limited topic and open it outward. Indeed, Linda K. Hughes's work here is explicitly about the tension between limitations and outward movement, starting with its title, "Enclosing Forms, Opening Spaces: The 1880s Fixed-Verse Revival." This is no predictable examination of ballades and villanelles crossing the English Channel on their way to popularity with British writers such as Austin Dobson and Andrew Lang, for it offers happy surprises at every turn. Hughes asserts convincingly that "the fixed-form revival was not only Anglo-French but also Anglo-American" (p. 44) and points to Gleeson White, among others, having claimed at the time that the inspiration came just as powerfully from across the Atlantic. This leads Hughes to speculate more broadly about the 1880s as a period when literary trends arose from "the transatlantic literary market and its circulating periodicals," which acted as the "motor to distribute" poetry and "short critical articles quickly and efficiently" (pp. 47–48), bringing in the wider issue of how print culture itself drove change. Hughes also shows that fixed forms, though promoted in Britain by men such as Edmund Gosse, were just as important to a range of women poets from A. Mary F. Robinson to May Probyn, May Kendall, and Amy Levy.

John Stokes's "Men, Women and Horses: Public Spectacle in 1887" is another lovely example of an essay that ranges farther afield than its title would suggest. Readers will, of course, expect a discussion here of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, but Stokes looks at much more than that single event, weaving together many others through the shared centrality of horsemanship. Not only official occasions, but also commercial shows, such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West extravaganza and the Parisian circus, come under his scrutiny as evidence of a burgeoning "industry" that "catered for a public that, when it came to spectacle, had increasingly high standards" (p. 214). Stokes's essay takes an even more fascinating turn, however, by shifting from the "mesmerising power" of equestrian entertainments to political protests in the streets of London. Even William Morris, who certainly deserves to be part of any survey of 1880s literature, enters the scholarly conversation through Stokes's account of the 1887 "Bloody

Sunday” confrontation between socialists and mounted police in Trafalgar Square.

As Fielding and Taylor state in their Introduction, they have come to view the 1880s as “a time of waiting and experimenting rather than of ending” and, in response, are determined to “promote proliferation” instead of “coherence” in this volume (p. 5). Nonetheless, as in the examples I have cited above, the individual chapters do cohere internally around important concepts, topics, and figures. There are marvelously informative, original studies by Cannon Schmitt of non-Darwinian notions of evolution in Olive Schreiner’s and Samuel Butler’s work; by Barbara Leckie of how obsessions with “healthy” and “unhealthy” houses and fiction alike impacted the reception of George Moore’s and Émile Zola’s novels; by Andrew Taylor of Henry James’s efforts to push himself forward as “the future of a genuinely transatlantic literary project” (p. 173); by Sara Lodge of the performative and even “camp” aspects of gender-playful essays by Oscar Wilde and parodies by Andrew Lang; by Nathan K. Hensley of Andrew Lang’s role, too, as a crucial “agent of connection” within the networks that defined British culture in a time of change (p. 120); by William Greenslade of how secular impulses, skepticism about old pieties, and tensions between art and politics affected authors such as George Gissing; by Penny Fielding of the difficulty not only of defining the character of W. E. Henley’s shape-shifting poetry, but also of aligning it with the very idea of a poetic tradition; by Angela Dunstan of the differences in purpose and praxis of new literary societies honoring William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley, as well as a living poet, Robert Browning; and by Clare Pettitt of the links among such seemingly disparate phenomena as the laying of underwater telegraphic cables, A. C. Swinburne’s roundels, and the appearance of mermaid-like figures in paintings by Edward Burne-Jones and Evelyn De Morgan. All serve to make *Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1880s*, as I suggested at the outset, indispensable reading for those who care about the late-Victorian period. And yet, it is hard to celebrate this publication unreservedly, when so much has been left out. Should someone try to persuade Penny Fielding and Andrew Taylor to issue a Volume Two?

MARGARET D. STETZ  
*University of Delaware*