Introduction

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> Those that of late have fleeted far and fast
> To touch all shores, now leaving to the skill
> Of others their old craft seaworthy still,
> Have charter'd this;
>
> Alfred Tennyson, Prefatory Sonnet to *The Nineteenth Century* (1877)

> The history of the Victorian Age will never be written: we know too much about it
>
> Lytton Strachey, Preface to *Eminent Victorians* (1918)

This book addresses a number of concerns that have emerged in recent scholarship on the nineteenth century. By exploring these concerns it aims to contribute to, and move beyond, existing dialogues that consider how the nineteenth century can be thought about and critically rethought through literature and other kinds of textual production. This kind of critical rethinking is nothing new. Intellectual and literary reflection about the nineteenth century famously began twenty-three years before it drew to a close when, in March 1877, James Knowles published the first number of his new monthly periodical, *The Nineteenth Century*. Knowles's letters record that the bold title of the periodical, the subject of some deliberation before its publication and some derision after, was first suggested by Knowles's friend, Alfred Tennyson, who also supplied a prefatory sonnet for the opening number. The sonnet, which pictures the journal's contributors as sailors 'putting forth' in their new craft 'to rove the world about', revisits Tennyson's much earlier poem, 'Ulysses'; but, whereas the shared 'will' to 'seek' is called into question in the earlier poem by the ironic rhetoric of the dramatic monologue, in this sonnet Tennyson speaks directly and sincerely, apparently forgetful of the hubris that he once associated with this kind of heroic quest. The intellectual

adventurers may set sail for 'seas of death and sunless gulfs of Doubt', but no such doubt is expressed concerning the voyage itself, which is described in good faith. The sonnet strikes the keynote for the journal; its contents pages list titles that address topics metaphysical, political, religious, scientific and literary, reflecting its ambition to capture the spirit of the age within its pages.

Knowles's liberal confidence did not long survive the century itself and by 1918 Lytton Strachey was asserting that it was exactly the kind of compendious knowledge that was the project of *The Nineteenth Century* which meant that the history of what he chose to call 'the Victorian Age' would never be written. Close to a century on, Strachey's high modernist scepticism concerning both knowledge and writing remains more recognisable than the intellectual optimism of Knowles and Tennyson. Arguably, we know even more than Strachey did. It is certainly the case that developments in information technologies in recent decades means that our access to that knowledge and the nature of our encounters with it have changed significantly. We also have to contend with our knowledge about Strachey's own century, the century that now separates us from the Victorians. To know the nineteenth century it becomes necessary first to know the twentieth century as the century that gave the Victorians to us, coloured and shaped by its own modern and post-modern preoccupations. While this collection does not claim to provide answers to questions about how and whether it is possible to know and to write about the nineteenth century at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it aims to reflect and continue debates about the nineteenth century and its literatures that are, in part, the product of this particular historical moment, debates that have been taking place within various nineteenth-century academic associations, discussion groups, journals, and book series in recent years. It draws out some of these innovative strands of enquiry, explores how the critical map of the nineteenth century is being redrawn, and suggests ways in which the critical field can be advanced. Before reflecting on the ambitions of this volume it is therefore helpful to take stock of the various academic associations and the publishing outlets that have shaped and supported the direction of research into the period.

A key area, which defines the area of nineteenth-century studies, relates to its international range and one measure by which we might gauge the global reach of period-defined scholarship is through the growth of national associations dedicated to its academic support. On that measure, the nineteenth century fares well. The two largest of these are The British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS, established in

2000) and the North American Victorian Studies Association (NAVSA, established in 2002). NAVSA postdates a number of regional Victorian studies associations in America such as the Northeast Victorian Studies Association (founded in 1975) and the Midwest Victorian Studies Association (founded in 1977). Other organisations such as the Victorian Interdisciplinary Studies Association of the Western United States (VISAWUS, founded in 1995) have pursued a more narrow definition of the period with their constitution stating that 'The purpose of the organization shall be to promote in an interdisciplinary way the study of the Victorian period as defined by Britain and its empire between 1837 and 1901'.[1] Other organisations include the interdisciplinary Victorian Studies Association of Ontario (VSAO, founded in 1967) and the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada (VSWAC, founded in 1972). The Australasian Victorian Studies Association, founded in 1972, has provided a forum for scholars working in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. The presence of these longstanding regional associations, and comparatively more recent national associations, indicates just how much worldwide interest there is in the period. The fact that a number of shared conference themes have been developed across these national associations indicates just how critically reflexive the field has become as it responds to contemporary issues and seeks to demonstrate how relevant the Victorians are to our own social, economic, and environmental concerns.

The growth and diversity in Victorian studies is also indicated by the academic journals dedicated to research on the period. *Victorian Studies* was first published in 1956 and has been, beyond its historical remit, a pioneering journal of interdisciplinary research into the humanities. The four issues published each year do not just carry articles, but also provide important review forums as well as copious book reviews.[2] The journal is linked to NAVSA and one issue a year is devoted to the annual conference, which ensures that the conference theme is fed into the wider research culture. *The Journal of Victorian Culture* has been published since 1996 and also produces four copies a year under the Taylor & Francis imprint. The aims of the journal are to publish research centred on 'the long nineteenth century, its legacies, and echoes in the present day, the journal encourages articles which interrogate periodisation, historiography and critical traditions' and it is explicitly inter- and multi-disciplinary. An important feature of the journal is the round-table discussions that bring together a number of key critical voices to debate the pressing topics of the time. The journal also carries lengthy book reviews (up to 2,000

words). *The Victorian Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Victorian Studies* has been published since 1972 and is international in its range of scholarship and also features a regular forum for debate. *The Victorian Institute Journal* has been published since 1972 and is closely affiliated to the Victorian Institute that brings together scholars working in the mid-Atlantic region of the USA. Other Victorian associations such as Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies and The Australasian Victorian Studies Association also publish journals. The Wiley supported online venture, *Literature Compass* also includes an innovative Victorian section (from 2004), which because of the flexible nature of online delivery easily permits occasional features such as 'cluster' discussion groups.[3] This is, of course, to mention but just a few publications but again it is to acknowledge that as Victorian scholars we have been notably well served by the activities of academic associations and their often related journal publications.

The support of research into the period has also been augmented by resources that have supported the teaching of the Victorians. The first of these is The Victorian Web, established by Brown University in 1988 to support access to contextual materials for students studying modules on the Victorians.[4] The web provides a rich overview of a number of contexts which serve as a useful guide to students as well as incorporating links to other important sources. More recently, the Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-Century Scholarship (NINES) has been developed as a peer-reviewed platform to support the digitisation of nineteenth-century archival materials and scholarship.[5]

Research into the nineteenth century has also been supported by a number of book series including those published by university presses such as Cambridge, Chicago, Virginia, Ohio State and the State University of New York. Other notable series include those published by Palgrave Macmillan and Ashgate. This current volume takes its place within a new series, also titled 'Interventions: Rethinking the Nineteenth Century', published by Manchester University Press. This series (also edited by us) aims to provide a space in which scholars can reflect on the nature, scope, and direction of nineteenth-century studies. Whilst wishing to support ongoing research into the period it also aims to foster unorthodox approaches to the nineteenth century which challenge and problematise conventional models of the Victorians and to that end it engages with a notion of the long nineteenth century which extends from 1780–1914, and supports research which is interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary, and international in its focus. In other words it is a series

that reflects the concerns about temporality, globalisation and forms of political history, which have become a feature of both recent significant conferences and journal publications. This book also takes its place within this remit and aims to outline a number of areas of critical enquiry that provide spaces in which we can start to rethink how we approach the nineteenth century.

A question raised by the names of these various associations, publications and resources is one of nomenclature: how, and should we, differentiate between the Victorian period and a more broadly, although perhaps more vaguely, defined version of the long nineteenth century? The 2015 BAVS conference, held at Leeds Trinity University on the theme of 'Victorian Age(s)' explicitly addressed these issues of periodicity by emphasising the importance of examining how the Victorians could be related to the Romantics, the Edwardians, and Modernists. This attempt to discuss and conceptualise what we mean by the long nineteenth century illustrates just how difficult it can be to contain the Victorians within any simplified model based on the reign of a monarch. Likewise, the 2016 conference, at Cardiff, included a series of panels devoted to the topic of 'Victorian afterlives', a phrase that reminds us of the period's tendency to outstrip itself, encroaching into the early twentieth and, by way of neo-Victorian literature and culture, the twenty-first centuries. At the same time, individual paper titles such as 'The past as news: Seeing and hearing Vesuvius in London 1820–1845' and 'Performing tourism in 1850s London: Albert Smith's *Ascent of Mont Blanc*' reflect a countervailing critical inclination to do away with the idea of a monolithic Victorian-ness and to better understand it decade by decade. Reflecting these different trends and the fact that both 'nineteenth century' and 'Victorian' are still current within and vital to debates about the definition of the period, the essays within this volume employ both terms. The title of this volume, and the series of which it is a part, follows Knowles and Tennyson rather than Strachey in order to create a broad and diverse field of enquiry both in terms of history and of geography.

The disciplinary, or pre-disciplinary, range of Knowles's journal illustrates a second and perhaps more methodologically significant challenge for scholars of the nineteenth century working within and between the disciplinary boundaries that were just emerging by the century's end. *The Nineteenth Century* was one of the first journals to recognise literary criticism, and especially writing on the novel, as a topic of discussion that could sit alongside political and scientific debate. The programmes for recent BAVS and NAVSA conferences attest to the multi- and

inter-disciplinary vibrancy of the field and to the fact that the disciplinary scope of nineteenth-century studies continues to expand. The history of art and science, the study of anthropology and folklore, as well as music and archaeology are now well-established areas of interest. This collection and the series differ slightly from the work of nineteenth-century studies associations in that, largely as a result of the disciplinary specialism of its editors, it takes literary scholarship and criticism as its starting point. Nevertheless, 'literary' is understood in the broadest terms to include all kinds and aspects of textual production and dissemination, from the close formal analysis of individual works to the cultural and material economics of book production and circulation to the visual and performed texts of theatre and cinema. Although we share Strachey's scepticism regarding the possibility of writing the history of the Victorian period, that scepticism is, perhaps, tempered by a Tennysonian doubtful faith in the ability of the writing of the nineteenth century, be that literary, scientific, anthropological, historical or political, to reveal something of its history.

The book is structured into three sections. The first section on 'Critical reflections' explores a number of ways in which an engagement with recent scholastic developments in English can be applied to the nineteenth century. A critical reflection suggests the importance of creating a space where we can look at the period in a new, self-reflexive, way. Each of the four chapters in the section adopts a particular stance towards how we can read the nineteenth century and advance critical claims that enable us to rethink issues such as temporality, science, the Gothic, and the relationship between poetics and philosophy.

John Schad in 'On measuring the nineteenth century' offers a theoretical consideration of the concept of the nineteenth century, paying particular attention to how it might be measured (if it is not to be defined in simple calendrical terms). The essay takes as its primary text Walter Benjamin's famous work *The Arcades Project* (1927–40), with its myriad insights into the nineteenth century, not least its claim that Paris is 'the capital of the nineteenth century'. Particularly important both to Benjamin and to the essay are the voices of such major nineteenth-century thinkers as Baudelaire, Proudhon, Bakunin, Michelet, Marx and Nietzsche. Schad sets these continental figures alongside various contemporaneous British figures, such as Arnold, Carlyle and Wilde to explore a number of defining themes of the century – in particular: revolution, democracy, realism, bureaucracy, the university, the death of God, the arcade, the exhibition and the

fear of hell. The chapter concludes by bringing together a number of these themes in an exploration of Poe's seminal story, 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840), which, following Benjamin, is read as an allegory of the nineteenth century, seeing in its central figure not only what Baudelaire calls 'the man of the century' but also its very face.

In 'Literature and science' David Amigoni focuses on a 'long nineteenth-century viewpoint' delivered from an unusual source: the novelist Arnold Bennett in an essay entitled 'The Rising Storm of Life' written for the popular magazine *T.P's Weekly* in 1907. While there has emerged a canon of Victorian literature and science writers, shaped substantially by the work of Gillian Beer and George Levine and their focus on Darwin (in which Eliot and Hardy figure strongly), a focus on Bennett's essay permits a concentration on the retrospective and prospective moods that structured the self-conscious end-of-century transition. Bennett's essay enables a reconsideration of science's contribution to the experience of modernity through technological development and the harnessing of energy sciences (the work of Crosbie Smith on 'North British' science is also considered). The relative impacts of evolutionary thinkers is also explored, and Bennett's sense of the importance of Herbert Spencer's evolutionism provides an opportunity to discuss some of the revisionist work that has appeared on Spencer (from Thomas Dixon and Chris Renwick), to balance against the dominance of Darwin. Finally, Bennett's use of the popular essay/popular magazine format provides an opportunity to review some of the most important developments in the 'history of the book', and contributions to Victorian literature and science studies, from the work of James Secord to the work of Gowan Dawson.

Anna Barton in 'Locke in pentameters: Victorian poetry after (or before) posthumousness' reassesses the critical commonplace that Victorian poetry can be considered a belated form that is defined by its post-Romantic concerns. Whilst valuing the work of Isobel Armstrong in her seminal *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, Politics* (1994), where Armstrong asserted a post-Kantian context for a reading of Victorian poetics, Barton revisits the idea that Victorian poetry's cultivation of aesthetic factors should be confined to the post-Kantian. The essay argues that the philosophical engagements of poetry from the period do not reflect an easy transition from British empiricism to German idealism. Rather the British empiricist tradition plays an important role in shaping nineteenth-century poetry and this is clear from an examination of how John Locke's account of metaphysics retains a defining presence within the nineteenth century. To that end Victorian poetry is not a belated or

posthumous form, but rather one that is indebted to an older British philosophical tradition. Such an approach indicates how reading poetry through philosophical contexts generates a new way of rethinking the construction of poetics during the period.

In 'Reading the Gothic and Gothic readers', Andrew Smith outlines how recent developments in Gothic studies have provided new ways of critically reflecting upon the nineteenth century. Smith then proceeds to explore how readers and reading, as images of self-reflection, are represented in the fin de siècle Gothic. The self-reflexive nature of the late nineteenth-century Gothic demonstrates a level of political and cultural scepticism at work in the period which, Smith argues, can be applied to recent developments in animal studies as a hitherto largely overlooked critical paradigm that can be applied to the Gothic. To that end this chapter examines representations of reading, readers and implied readers in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), focusing on how these representations explore the relationship between the human and the non-human. An extended account of *Dracula* identifies ways in which these images of self-reflection relate to the presence of the inner animal and, more widely, the chapter argues for a way of rethinking the period within the context of animal studies via these ostensibly Gothic constructions of human and animal identities.

The second section of the book focuses on 'Rethinking national contexts and exchanges'. As the above overview of conference activity has noted, there has been considerable recent interest in exploring the nineteenth century within a global context. It is by examining these links and exchanges that a much broader picture of the period emerges and the chapters in this section explore how various national contexts, including China, America, India, and mainland Europe support different versions of the relationships that were central to the long nineteenth century.

Regenia Gagnier in 'The global circulation of Victorian actants and ideas: liberalism and liberalisation in the niche of nature, culture, and technology' considers the implications for Victorian Studies suggested by recent developments in the fields of world literatures and globalisation. The chapter draws attention to the global scope of Victorian literature as an actant in world affairs, as in processes of liberalisation, democratisation, and trade, but also to the specificity of each local environment and moment of transculturation, as witnessed by the example of Asia. Gagnier also makes a methodological intervention on behalf of interdisciplinary and intercultural studies by providing a framework to address

two current problems. First, how may we, in language and literature studies, best study global processes of modernisation, democratisation, and liberalisation without losing the specificity of the local? Second, how may we best study the uniqueness of distinct locales where the forces of tradition and modernisation meet? The actants discussed include Victorian geopolitical ideologies such as individualism, collectivism, nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

In 'Literary folk: writing popular culture in colonial Punjab, 1885–1905' Churnjeet Mahn explores the exchanges which took place between Indian and British cultures by exploring how writings from Punjab, which came out of complex and diverse cultural and religious contexts, were (mis)interpreted by a process of British cultural curation which erroneously formed these texts into a monolithic cannon of Punjabi folk-culture. By looking at the role played in this process by those associated with the colonial administration, Mahn illustrates how acts of colonial appropriation were, in part, driven by an inability to understand the unique cultural forms of the Punjab. This chapter thus explores the ways in which Punjabi literary culture became filtered in British writing and provides a clear example of the issue of cultural exchange in the period and the factors that scholars need to take into account when examining these relationships.

Katie McGettigan in '"Across the waters of this disputed ocean": the material production of American literature in nineteenth-century Britain' argues that attending to the fashioning of American texts by British publishers enables us to rethink the emergence of American literature as a material as well as an imaginative phenomenon, and one which was fashioned outside of, as much as within, America itself. This, in turn, produces new insights into the development of American national literary identity and transatlantic print culture, revealing a neglected history of transatlantic material exchange in the production of nineteenth-century American literature. Again, as in Mahn's chapter, it is by paying attention to the specificity of exchange that the precise dimensions of the cultural exchanges become clear. This is an issue addressed in this section's final chapter, which addresses exchanges within a European literary tradition.

In 'Gruesome models: European displays of natural history and anatomy and nineteenth-century literature' Laurence Talairach-Vielmas explores the process in which from the second half of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, medical museums opened their doors throughout Europe and anatomical models circulated between Italy, Germany, France and England, serving to educate professional

medical audiences and thrilling lay audiences keen on freaks and fairs. The chapter argues that the popularisation of anatomy and the circulation of anatomical models and modellers, exhibitions and anatomists throughout Europe was reflected in nineteenth-century literature, from Gothic novels to realistic narratives and even children's fiction. Looking at the impact of the material culture of medicine upon the literary field, Talairach-Vielmas examines the relationship between literature and the European anatomical culture by exploring nineteenth-century narratives from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) in the first decades of the nineteenth-century to Charles Dickens's fiction in the 1860s, analysing novels alongside travel guides and journal articles which demonstrate how the specific example of anatomy influenced the literary culture.

The final section of this volume explores the issue of 'Afterlives'. As we nave noted in the overview of recent conferences; papers and panels on the neo-Victorian have proved to be popular. How the Victorians are creatively re-imagined by later writers, and on film, and in the theatre, provides us with a way of accounting for the enduring popularity of the Victorians. How these texts also reconfigure late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century anxieties into Victorian narratives also indicates that to rewrite is a political as well as an aesthetic process.

The online *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* has been published since 2008 and is edited by Marie-Luise Kohlke who with Christian Gutleben edits the neo-Victorian book series for Rodopi.[6] Her chapter on 'Adaptive/appropriate reuse in neo-Victorian fiction: having one's cake and eating it too' opens this section and argues that historical fiction writers' persistent fascination with the long nineteenth century enacts a simultaneous drawing near to and distancing from the period, the lives of its inhabitants and its cultural icons, aesthetic discourses and canonical works. Always constituting, at least in part, as a fantasy construction of 'the Victorian' for present-day purposes, the process of re-imagining involves not just a quasi resurrection (of nineteenth-century historical persons, fictional characters, traumas, aesthetics, values and ideologies) but also a relational *transformation* – a change in nature, a conversion into something other, namely what we *want* 'the Victorian' to signify rather than what it was. Hence adaptive practice in the neo-Victorian novel, applied both to Victorian literary precursors and the period more generally, may be better described as adaptive reuse (to borrow a term from urban planning's approach to historic conservation) or, perhaps, *appropriative reuse*. Drawing on a range of neo-Victorian novels Kohlke explores the prevalent perspectival frames and generic forms employed in

neo-Victorian appropriative reuse and their divergent effects on present-day conceptions of Victorian culture.

Richard J. Hand in 'Populism and ideology: nineteenth-century fiction and the cinema' explores the adaptation of nineteenth-century fiction into film. The focus of the chapter is on the cinematic adaptation of four extremely different yet continuingly popular texts at opposite ends of the nineteenth century: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1816), Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). After outlining the legacy of the selected examples of fiction on film, Hand explores the critical issues and the ideological ramifications that surface through these adaptive processes. The dramatisation of each text brings out diverse issues relating to popularisation and ideology. This is particularly pertinent with the processes of both inter-cultural adoption and inter-generic transposition, such as the relocating of Austen within a contemporary Indian context, the redeployment of Conrad's narrative within the Vietnam War and the appropriation of Shelley and James into the populist contexts of the horror genre.

In 'True histories of the Elephant Man: storytelling and theatricality in adaptations of the life of Joseph Merrick' Benjamin Poore takes the example of 'The Elephant Man' as a test case for how Victorian narratives have been developed in a neo-Victorian theatrical context. After outlining the way that a neo-Victorian stage culture has been developed Poore argues that Bernard Pomerance's play *The Elephant Man* (1977) and David Lynch's 1980 film *The Elephant Man* can be regarded as twin foundational texts in the modern-day repurposing of the story of Joseph Merrick. The film, originally adapted in part from the surgeon Frederick Treves's *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (1923) was subsequently adapted back into a film novelisation by Christine Sparks. Since the early 1980s, Merrick's story in its various iterations has become a popular way to view nineteenth-century mores and to speculate on how far 'we' have come. However, Poore argues that there is a series of tensions between the lip-service paid to the condemnation of Victorian freak shows and the increasingly diverse uses, from comedy sketches to comic books, to which Merrick's image and story are put. This chapter then considers the wider implications of the case of Merrick for nineteenth-century studies and the neo-Victorian.

This volume thus seeks to demonstrate a number of ways in which we can rethink the nineteenth century, both in terms of the categories which structure this book, and through the specific examples which

are elaborated within each section. This volume proposes a number of ways in which we might begin a critical conversation that is mapped in the diversity of contexts and approaches that are developed here and in some ways it suggests a range of approaches which are not that dissimilar from Strachey's suggestion that in order to fathom the Victorians we need to rethink our approaches because, as he puts in his outmoded gendered idiom:

> It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous narration that the explorer of the past can hope to depict that singular epoch. If he is wise, he will adopt a subtler strategy. He will attack his subject in unexpected places; he will fall upon the flank, or the rear; he will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hither-to undivined. (Strachey, 1918)

This is a process of critical rethinking to which this book, and its connected series are dedicated.

Notes

1 Please see the Association's website at www.visawus.org/.
2 For an example of a recent book review forum see the discussion of Frederic Jameson in *Victorian Studies* Vol. 57, Issue 1 Autumn 2014, pp. 89–112.
3 The website can be found here: http://literature-compass.com/victorian/.
4 The website can be found here: www.victorianweb.org/index.html.
5 The website can be found here: www.nines.org/.
6 The website for *Neo-Victorian Studies* is www.neovictorianstudies.com/.

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