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Interventions: Rethinking the nineteenth century ed. by
Andrew Smith and Anna Barton (review)

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throughout the British Empire. And Ngata, a Māori “reformer and modernizer” (210), addressed both Indigenous and colonial readerships with his poem “A Scene from the Past” (1894), using the English language to structure “a traditional Māori welcome, a powhiri” (207).

One of the governing projects behind Stafford’s work is a more generous reading of Indigenous authors writing within colonized and colonizing media. Stafford explicitly pushes back against critics who disparage Indigenous writing for its complicity with the colonial apparatus, finding instead texts that “are demonstrably more variable, ambiguous, and open to modification” than has generally been imagined for colonized writers (223). In their self-consciousness and performativity, Stafford locates “flexibility and eclecticism, and openness to the multiplicity of influences which the literary empire—and the social and political empire—brings to bear on its production and articulation” (223). In this she resonates with Hessel’s view that colonial translations represent neither mimicry nor mockery, and Chander’s insistence that “Brown Romantics were no less authentic than their canonical counterparts. They were simply less ‘English’” (92). All three authors thus insist that scholarship on colonial writers abandon the language of inauthenticity that for too long has been used to disparage and discount writers such as those featured in these studies.

Set alongside important recent work in Victorian studies that includes Tricia Lootens’s *The Political Poetess: Victorian Femininity, Race, and the Legacy of Separate Spheres* (2016) and Elleke Boehmer’s *Indian Arrivals 1870–1915: Networks of British Empire* (2015), the work of Chander, Hessel, and Stafford proposes innovative ways for the field to imagine anew the dynamic world of nineteenth-century colonial literatures. All three insist that we read literary form alongside history and culture, with persuasive results. Their attention to the Indigenous and the local is especially significant, offering methodological prototypes for future scholarship.

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Interventions: Rethinking the nineteenth century, edited by Andrew Smith and Anna Barton; pp. xii + 230. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017, £80.00, £20.00 paper, \$120.00, \$35.00 paper.

The cover of Andrew Smith and Anna Barton’s edited collection, *Interventions: Rethinking the nineteenth century*, features a 1907 photograph of a female tattoo artist whose shoulders and décolletage beneath her Edwardian hairstyle are unexpectedly bare except for exotic tattoos. The image invites reflection on the nature of our engagement with the nineteenth century today. Its loose, period feel suggests the porous nature of the nineteenth century in the contemporary imagination; the revision in recent decades of the conventional image of a sexually conservative century; and the way scholars increasingly situate Britain within global contexts. The image thus invokes the key questions taken up by the volume: what are the boundaries, temporal and geographic, of what we call the nineteenth

century? How is the nineteenth-century past revealed through its textual production? How is this past best understood, and for what purposes today?

Interventions introduces a new series by Manchester University Press, which shares its title and avoids the nomenclature “Victorian,” or designating a national focus, signaling a professed desire to open up the British nineteenth century to global contexts. Nonetheless, “Victorian” is used synonymously with “nineteenth century” throughout, suggesting an underlying assumption that this was a particularly British century, dominated by the global reach of that nation’s empire. The collected essays focus on British literature, the circulation of British texts elsewhere, or on British reception of other national literatures. This represents an opening up to the global circulation and exchange of ideas, but the essays retain a British focus and are largely written from a British authorial position.

The introduction suggests both volume and series aim “to create a broad and diverse field of inquiry in terms of history and geography” (5). The objects of study are similarly diverse, seeking to uncover the nineteenth century through its textual production, with “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,” tempering skepticism “regarding the possibility of writing the history of the Victorian period” (6). The volume opens with John Schad’s use of Walter Benjamin’s clerk in a fashion house, who “measures the century by the yard” as a means to reflect on the multiple ways centuries, periods, and indeed time itself are measured, and for what purposes (Benjamin qtd. in Smith and Barton 15). Noting events with which the nineteenth century has been said to end, Schad interrogates the very desire to measure the century, finding it the dream of scholars to make time appear orderly, rather than embrace “the disorderly, un-administered, and out-of-office realm of lived, or experienced time” (25).

The “rethinking” of the volume’s title does not refer to an overarching intervention that unites the essays, and the first section, while offering fresh critical perspectives, is perhaps least successful at linking essays together. Individual essays offer critical rereadings, enter a range of contemporary debates, and suggest productive further lines of inquiry. Focusing on Arnold Bennett’s 1907 essay “The Rising Storm of Life,” published in a radical penny magazine, David Amigoni calls for future work that moves beyond evolutionary science and considers energy science and the politics of reading practices that informed the dissemination of science. Other essays, such as Anna Barton’s, challenge the belatedness of Victorian poetry by situating its tradition in relation to Lockean metaphysics or, in the case of Andrew Smith’s essay, use recent insights from animal studies to reread the late-Victorian transformation of the gothic. All offer fresh approaches and readings, but the section does not address itself to a particular theme, intervention, or question as do parts 2 and 3.

Part 2, “Rethinking national contexts and exchanges,” explores global relationships central to the period. Laurence Talairach-Vielmas situates *Frankenstein* (1818) in relation to Mary Shelley’s touring of Continental anatomical collections, arguing that shifts in attitudes toward these museums are mirrored in their representation in British literature across the century. While the focus here is European influences on British fiction, Churnjeet Mahn examines British influence on the perception of Punjabi literary culture, arguing that this regional literature was “(mis)understood” as a result of

late-Victorian colonial administrators curating a series of performed texts, in written translations, as Punjabi “folklore” (111). This label “delegitimised the diversity of prose and verse in Punjabi with origins in religious, spiritual and genres of the epic derived from Persian” (111–12). Continuing the theme of British curation of other national literatures, Katie McGettigan examines how the material production of American literature in nineteenth-century Britain shaped America’s national and transnational identity. Turning to the exportation of British ideas, Regenia Gagnier’s essay examines the global circulation of Victorian geopolitical ideologies. Focusing on Asia, Gagnier identifies “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” (92). Her essay models the ways in which global, intercultural studies can understand processes of globalization with attention to local cultures as well as how comparative studies of “specific niches such as ... the literature of the village in Bengal and in the south-west of England; the literature of the mines in Sichuan and Wales; the literature of the plantation in Haiti, the southern USA, and the manor house in Yorkshire” would expand knowledge of the relationship between the global and the local (104).

Part 3, “Afterlives,” focuses on neo-Victorianism. Marie-Luise Kohlke borrows the term “adaptive reuse” from urban planning to characterize neo-Victorianism’s “reutilisation of old sites and structures for purposes and functions other than those for which they were originally intended, constructed, and used in the past” (169). This is a fresh approach to the genre’s use of history and shares affinities with Gagnier’s analysis of the transcultural function of Victorian ideas that, when transplanted temporally or culturally, are repurposed and shape the new climate distinctively. Kohlke is pessimistic about this refashioning, arguing that neo-Victorianism distorts history for contemporary purposes and is more interested in “how the period might be reimagined than in what it actually was” (177). This problem has dogged historical fiction since at least the eighteenth century, only quieted, not eradicated, by the postmodern revaluation of whether we can ever know the past as it “actually was.” Suggesting a more positive role for fiction, Benjamin Poore analyzes theatricalizations of the so-called Elephant Man, Joseph Merrick, finding that such fictionalization raises ethical questions while also playing a role in the continuous revision of the past and in the capacity to “rethink the nineteenth century in *reaction to* current representations of and attitudes toward the period” (208). Focusing on adaptations of fiction, not history, Richard J. Hand embraces the deliberate distortion of nineteenth-century texts in films like *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), in which “Jane Austen’s fiction has been uncoupled from its specific historical context to speak to the social and sexual mores of our own time, including in visions of our globalised era in a defiant celebration of multiculturalism” (204). This section thus offers several perspectives on the question of whether neo-Victorian adaptation of the past and its texts can offer up the nineteenth century to us today.

As the editors acknowledge in their introduction, critically rethinking the nineteenth century is “nothing new,” beginning before the century even ended (1). By addressing current and emergent debates from within and outside the field, however, and by extending the temporal and geographic forms of inquiry, the volume provides an exciting survey of what we know of the period and its literature. If the series continues

in this vein, it should provide an avenue for fresh re-visioning of the nineteenth century, and for examining our ongoing compulsion to do so.

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Julia Margaret Cameron's 'fancy subjects': Photographic allegories of Victorian identity and empire, by Jeff Rosen; pp. xiv + 318. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016, £80.00, £20.00 paper, \$120.00, \$34.95 paper.

Drawing the title of his excellent study, *Julia Margaret Cameron's 'fancy subjects': Photographic allegories of Victorian identity and empire*, from Cameron's self-characterization of her photographs as "fancy subjects," Jeff Rosen argues convincingly that Cameron carefully and systematically "created allegories in photography as part of a sustained effort to represent the country's national heritage and cultural identity" (1). While Cameron's passionate identification with the heroic and chivalric legends of medieval England is not new, Rosen's focus on Cameron's innovative use of allegory brings a fresh perspective to the ways in which we engage with her extraordinary images. As Rosen contends, Cameron was among the earliest to bring allegory to photography, but the model of the "fancy picture" derived from eighteenth-century painting, from the work of Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, and Thomas Gainsborough (2). The characterization fancy subjects indicated sentimental and theatrical narrative content, drawing on everyday scenes as well as, or in combination with, historical, mythological, religious, and literary content. Eroticism and nostalgia were integral to this style, which by the mid-nineteenth century became synonymous with solitary idealized figures, suspended in time and in a state of reverie or heightened emotion.

Rosen builds from this context, carefully constructing an archivally grounded analysis of Cameron's allegorical approach. Rereading familiar primary sources, including Virginia Woolf's playfully ironic description of her aunt "Mrs. C's" seemingly chaotic marshalling of her models to compose a photographic reenactment of *A Dream of the Past: Sir Isumbras at the Ford* (1857), Rosen teases out the nuances of Woolf's detailing of her aunt's methods, pointing to an underlying recognition of Cameron's very deliberate choice to embody nationalistic themes in her medieval subjects (7). Woolf's playful rendering of her aunt as a Victorian anachronism thus becomes of a piece with Cameron and her circle's assertion of the aesthetic legitimacy of her fancy subjects and the ultimate critical acceptance of them by the late 1860s, by Coventry Patmore, William Michael Rossetti, and others. Rosen constructs these continuities convincingly, aligning the trajectory of this critical consecration with Cameron's sustained artistic ambition, rather than as a happy outcome of her amateurish eccentricities. Whether one accepts the 1868 judgment of the *Art-Journal* that Cameron's fancy subjects compare to "Caravaggio, Tintoretto, Giorgione, Velasquez, and other princes of their Art" is of less interest than what this ultimate consecration reveals about Cameron's "strong will," as Rosen puts it, to define her subjects (15).