

- seeks to emphasize that Darwin responds to Galton by noting that “men did not differ much in intellect” (George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], 182).
10. Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337, 319.
  11. Diane Paul notes that “few professional historians believe either that Darwin’s theory leads directly to these doctrines or that they are entirely unrelated” (Diane B. Paul, “Darwin, Social Darwinism and Eugenics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 214).
  12. Nihad Farooq, *Undisciplined: Science, Ethnography, and Personhood in the Americas, 1830–1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 44. Cannon Schmitt highlights that “Victorian science and empire are inextricable” at the same time as the theories that evolutionary scientists developed also could “disallow . . . the solidity necessary for easily held conviction as to their difference, superiority or right to rule” (Cannon Schmitt, *Darwin and the Memory of the Human: Evolution, Savages, and South America* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 11).
  13. Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 225.



## Feminism

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**I**S there a scholar who does not dream of shaping public discourse, of changing the history of a discipline, and more, of society? As we deplore the marginalization of the humanities and the silencing of public intellectuals, it might help to take a longer view of predecessors who had that coveted impact over time. I’m certainly not saying, “Recover the worthies.” We can see the blind spots of reform movements 1830s–1920s, and again in the 1970s–90s. But in the #MeToo moment, we should hit the refresh button. In this brief contribution, I want to remind Victorian

studies not to take feminism, gender, and sexuality for granted. Recent overviews of the field have charged Victorianists with neglecting theory and critique, and I would add feminism. I propose that we think back through Victorianist and feminist arrival in English departments, and rethink the structures of period, nationality, and genre. Doing so would allow us to focus more clearly on nineteenth-century women's advocacy through writing, lecturing, and the literary, learned, and philanthropic clubs that were often segregated by race as well as sex and class. It is not a history of straightforward progress or inheritance. The archeology of disciplines does not keep earlier layers intact, but let's try to be aware of how we necessarily select and discard from the collections and assessments earlier experts leave behind.

What is the state of Victorian studies, and why does it need to appreciate a history of women who publish and lecture on social causes? The judges of the 2016 annual book prize of the North American Victorian Studies Association, Catherine Gallagher and Herbert Tucker, pointed out a prevalent theme among finalists—science—when they presented the award at the NAVSA conference in Banff in November 2017. Gallagher, prominent in the materialist New Historicism that prevailed near the end of the twentieth century, surveyed the spirit of the year's rigorous studies and found it ideologically quiescent. Gallagher remembers, without nostalgia, when studies of nineteenth-century disciplines would *punish* more, would exert more suspicion. Today's interdisciplinary studies undertake work needful in our time, the Darwinian Anthropocene in which man is no longer the center. But Theory, evidently, is only a backup toolkit. Gallagher seemed bemused that so much had been taken for granted. A few years ago, the V21 Collective was more exasperated than bemused at the current state of the field. The first thesis of their manifesto claims that "Victorian Studies has fallen prey to *positivist historicism* . . . that aims to do little more than exhaustively describe, preserve, and display the past." In other theses, the collective authors call for both "formalist interpretations that are politically astute and intellectually supple," and "presentism."<sup>1</sup> While Gallagher and V21 are open to varied methodologies, they rightly perceive choices and costs in the turn to histories of cultural forms and knowledge systems. But, both narratives omit an approach that has been simultaneously formalist, historical, theoretical, and politically aimed at the present: feminist Victorian studies. This paradigm has not been idle, though it does not fit into the either/or of description v. theory, and it is not getting headlines. Does it go without saying that

the winner of the prize, Talia Schaffer's *Romance's Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, is kissing cousins with 1990s feminist studies?<sup>2</sup> Literature and academic fields have their kinship structures too. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote in a letter to Henry Chorley on 7 January 1845: "I look everywhere for Grandmothers and see none. It is not in the filial spirit I am deficient," she assures Chorley.<sup>3</sup> Feminist critics could look everywhere for daughters and granddaughters, and find some like Schaffer who keep up the family ties (as in the conference she co-organized in 2017, *The Woman Card*).<sup>4</sup> But, descendants of feminist Victorian studies do not show a great deal of filial spirit. Thinking back through our mothers, as Virginia Woolf so well illustrated, can both inspire and stifle.

I don't want to echo Madeleine Albright's misfired jest in Hillary Clinton's campaign about a special place in hell for women who don't help other women. Newer scholars need to find new ways, but awareness of past struggles can help prepare for emerging ones. Remember how marginalized Victorian history, art, and literature once were. Before and after 1957, when *Victorian Studies* was launched as a journal and formalism was in the ascendant, English departments expressed little warmth toward Victorian literature, and American literature as well. Both Victorian studies and American studies had to concede to Romanticists and Renaissance scholars the brilliance of their (male) poets, dramatists, and the theorists and critics who cut their teeth on them. Influential midcentury critics, looking for authenticity and desire as well as iconic texts, regarded the nineteenth century as an overstuffed nest of didacticism, kitsch narrative poetry and painting, sentiment and melodrama, and cloaked piano legs. To claim the validity that founds academic careers, Victorian studies turned to intellectual, political, and publishing history as well as writings of all kinds, not just belles lettres (for example, works by Walter Houghton, Raymond Williams, and Richard Altick);<sup>5</sup> detecting that Victorians had sex also helped (for example, *The Other Victorians*).<sup>6</sup> (Most of these foundational books are reissued in more recent editions.) But what really opened a reliable pipeline of students into the field was feminist criticism and theory. This looks easy now, as no one had forgotten George Eliot or Charlotte Brontë or Emily Dickinson. But remember the plausibility of Ann Douglass's *The Feminization of the American Mind*,<sup>7</sup> hostile to the female world of love and ritual that Sharon Marcus and Schaffer can now reassess.<sup>8</sup> The first counter-move to the denigration of scribbling women was to use the master's tools, the training in formalist

comparative literature and psychoanalytic theory, to advocate a few great women writers, not a class action suit for all nineteenth-century women. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar offered close yet suspicious reading of *Jane Eyre* or Jane Austen to compete with Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*.<sup>9</sup> The ground-breaking literary histories by Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter and others were quickly embroiled in French feminist theory and challenges from lesbians, Marxists, and women of color.<sup>10</sup> The goal quickly moved beyond terms of equality for an elite, and the search for women of the past who were prophetically aware of our principles soon gave way to more complicated and diverse portraits.

If Victorian studies was bolstered by feminist studies of women writers, it was because women had gained access to higher education. Recall how much it cost in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to gain such access for women and people of color—a history that others have detailed. Women were accepted as novelists generations before they could speak in public and longer still before they could vote or earn degrees from the preeminent universities. The current feminization of the humanities profession (it has not happened in STEM) came after a period of decline from the 1930s–60s in the number of female academics. A significant cohort of current female leaders in higher education earned tenure in English departments with work in feminist studies. These gains for a few may be precarious. But there are signs in the common parlance of journalists and activists today that feminist research since the 1980s (not just in literature) has rippling if unattributed influence. Before women had a foothold in academia, there were some public orators, reformers, and international authorities who commanded attention in Europe and North America.

These predecessors would not have been tenured professors, though some were gaining access to education or careers as librarians, nurses, or social workers, or were on the international scene as philanthropists. Since the 1830s, abolitionist and women's rights movements spanned the Atlantic in correspondence, print, conventions, and lecture tours.<sup>11</sup> We can look for grandmothers without revering simplified biographical icons, as the History Months might do. Here, I leaf through well-documented figures (printed short biographies are linked in my database, Collective Biographies of Women) who are usually kept apart in Victorian, American, or African American studies.<sup>12</sup> Consider Margaret Fuller's seminars, lectures, and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* and influential assessments of the U. S. and slavery; Anna Jameson's popularization of Italian art history

and famous lectures on women's social mission; and Harriet Beecher Stowe's star turn in Britain after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was only the beginning of Julia Ward Howe's career as magazine editor, lecturer, and co-founder of the American Woman Suffrage Association and many other clubs. It is impossible to overstate the international reach at the turn of the century of very different celebrities, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Frances Willard, misguided as they were in their nationalism, eugenics, and temperance. These white women intersected with a remarkable African American roster of eloquent leaders, with notable friction at the largely white-supremacist World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.<sup>13</sup> By 1893, there were three published collective biographies representing the lives of dozens of "race women," invariably including Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and the elocutionist Hallie Quinn Brown, and many others who wrote or spoke authoritatively, sometimes mirroring separatist racial and gender theories. By 1933, *Lifting as They Climb* compiled short biographies, portraits, and reports from many branches of women's clubs, featuring eighty African American female activists, including the novelist Jessie Fauset and the author of the book herself, club founder and historian Elizabeth Lindsay Davis (1855–1944).<sup>14</sup> Segregation did not entirely limit club members to the colored lecture circuit. Such figures as Ida B. Wells gave lecture tours abroad, and Mary McLeod Bethune was a member of Franklin Roosevelt's cabinet.

Victorian studies of animals, environment, technology and communication, cognition and affect, and sciences from astronomy to geology now join resurgent poetics and poetry studies, stylistics and digital textual studies, and book history—the trends are stimulating. Digital research has expanded access to the spectrum of women's activism, and it has at the same time obscured materials that are in copyright but pre-Internet. Periodization and national boundaries as well as the bias toward belles lettres still tend to obscure the public humanities before there were tenured feminists. At nearly a half century of feminist Victorian studies, perhaps we can write an intersectional history beyond institutional (job list) categories. The déjà-vu history of women's movements need not keep coming as a surprise. When the humanities mesh with social justice, they are strengthened by a longer and broader memory than the pseudo-scientific racism and misogyny of the neo-fascists in Europe and the United States in the present day.

## NOTES

1. V21 Collective, *V21: Victorian Studies for the Twenty-first Century*, <http://v21collective.org/manifesto-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/>.
2. Talia Schaffer, *Romance's Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
3. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Letter 1809. EBB to Henry Chorley," *The Brownings' Correspondence: An Online Edition*, Wedgestone Press, 2018, <http://www.browningscorrespondence.com/correspondence/2048/>.
4. Tanya Agathocleous, Richard Kaye, Caroline Reitz, and Talia Schaffer, Organizers, *The Woman Card: Feminism and Victorian Studies, Past, Present, and Future* (New York: A Conference at CUNY Graduate Center, 2017), <https://victorian.commonsgc.cuny.edu/2017-the-woman-card-program/>.
5. Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958); Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).
6. Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians* (New York: Basic, 1966).
7. Steve Schnur, "Pink and White Tyranny," *Commentary*, November 1, 1977; review of Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-feminization-of-american-culture-by-ann-douglas/>.
8. Sharon Marcus, *Between Women* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
9. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
10. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
11. Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
12. Alison Booth, Collective Biographies of Women Database, <http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu>.
13. On the representation of gender and race associated with the Columbian Exhibition, see Alison Booth, *How to Make It as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 214–23.



14. Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, *Lifting as They Climb* (Washington, DC: National Association of Coloured Women, 1933), [http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu/books\\_display.php?id=1555](http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu/books_display.php?id=1555).



## Fin de Siècle

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**F**IN de Siècle is a messy term, applicable to such a wide range of phenomena as to be nearly incoherent. And yet, it serves an important if underappreciated function in Victorian Studies, disrupting the hermetically sealed bell jar that any period identified with the life of a monarch can become. Defined by a sense of crisis and opposition, fin de siècle names those things that were never quite assimilated into the high-Victorian moment; openly cosmopolitan, it places that moment in a global context it often resisted.

Fin de siècle was first used in Britain in 1890, having been borrowed, accent and all, from France, where it had an earlier popular debut as the title of an 1888 play. Most obviously, it is a period term, but like so many other such terms, it also stands in for a characteristic style, set of affects, and dominant literary or artistic forms. A. O. Lovejoy famously argued that the word “romanticism” really designates at least three distinct “thought-complexes,” each an “exceedingly unstable intellectual compound.”<sup>1</sup> Fin de siècle, I would argue, in Lovejoy’s spirit, designates no less than four “compounds”: a program, a mood, and an intellectual milieu, as well as a period in cultural history. These compounds are all “unstable”: changing the composition of one changes the nature of the others.

Consider the many different period definitions in fin-de-siècle studies. In an influential essay from 1974, “Truth in Labelling: Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, Decadence, Fin de Siècle,” Ruth Z. Temple argues that the period designated by fin de siècle should properly be restricted “to the last decade of the century.”<sup>2</sup> This restriction accords with many early scholarly studies, notably Holbrook Jackson’s *The Eighteen Nineties* (1919).<sup>3</sup> But contrary to W. B. Yeats’s sardonic claim that “in 1900 everybody got down off his stilts,” the term fin de siècle tends in practice to cover a longer