England," in *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity, and Cultural History*, ed. Bill Schwarz (London: Routledge, 1996): 1–9.

3. See, among others, Regenia Gagnier, "Introduction: Victorian studies, world literatures, and globalization," *Critical Quarterly*, 55, no.1 (2013): 1–8, Sharon Marcus, "Same Difference? Transnationalism, Comparative Literature, and Victorian Studies," *Victorian Studies*, 45, no. 4 (2003): 677–86; Pablo Mukherjee, "Introduction: Victorian World Literatures," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 41, no. 2 (2011): 1–19.
4. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), 55.
5. Here, I depart from Flint's formulation of the relation between "Victorian" and modernity ("Why 'Victorian'?: A Response," 233).

Uchronia

AARON WORTH

IN 1857, the French philosopher Charles Renouvier imagined that the Roman Empire had never become Christian, in a work titled *Uchronie*, a term Renouvier invented to designate "[une] utopie des temps passés"—a utopia of past time.[1] While his tale (as this phrase suggests) was set in the historical past, literary scholars today tend to employ "uchronia" in a more expansive sense, as an umbrella category comprising alternate history stories, parallel worlds stories, and tales involving "future uchronias"; as Amy Ransom notes, "Just as the *ou-topos*, the no-where of utopia, may be either good (eutopian) or bad (dystopian), so may the *ou-chronos* rewrite the past, explore the future or lie parallel to the reader's present."[2] In our own time, of course, uchronian narratives have never been more popular—at the time of this writing, two of the most-discussed television programs on air are adaptations of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*—while the tendency to think of reality in terms of a branching of multiple "forking paths" (in Borges's phrase) has entered into our cognitive habitus. Until recently, the emergence of uchronian themes in fiction has been largely discussed in connection with the

early twentieth century, in particular with the American "scientifiction" pulps of the 1930s and 1940s (Murray Leinster's "Sideways in Time," published in 1934 in *Astounding Stories*, is an often-cited milestone). The same period is often associated with the appearance of counterfactual historiography: Sir J. C. Squire's pioneering anthology "If It Had Happened Otherwise," for instance, appeared in 1931.

Far less attention, by contrast, has been given to what might be called the prehistory of these uchronias, in the nineteenth century (even though the contemporary genre of steampunk, with its proliferation of alternate Victorian realities, constitutes one of the more popular genres of its kind). Yet, as scholars are beginning to demonstrate, many writers of the period were fascinated, or troubled, by thoughts of alternate realities and multiple worlds. A little over a century before Squire assembled his collection of historical "What Ifs?", for instance, Isaac D'Israeli proposed the writing of precisely such a work, to be titled "Of a History of Events Which Have not Happened" (in an 1824 essay of the same name), adducing scattered digressions in Livy and elsewhere as exemplary, if fragmentary, cases of counterfactual history *avant la lettre*. As both Catherine Gallagher and Ben Carver have recently shown, one imaginative exercise of particular fascination was the elaboration of "Napoleonic counterfactual[s]",[3] the nineteenth-century equivalent of later What-If? scenarios, in fiction and historiography, involving the American Civil War and WWII. Carver, whose excellent new book also considers topics ranging from evolutionary theory to the prospect of life on other planets, views nineteenth-century alternate histories as "a means to reflect on how scientific, cultural, and historical discoveries altered the understanding of the past."[4]

Future work in Victorian studies will no doubt explore traces of the uchronian imagination in a wide variety of modes and genres. The scientific romance, certainly: Genie Babb, for instance, has classified H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, *The Sleeper Awakes*, and *In the Days of the Comet* (along with William Morris's *News from Nowhere*) as "future uchronias," while describing *A Modern Utopia*, with its conceit of a parallel Earth, as a blend of the "alternate history" and "parallel worlds" tropes.[5] Closer to home (as it were), perhaps the most beloved fictional setting in all Victorian fiction might fruitfully be examined as an exercise in collective counterfactual blending: as Thomas Hardy would write in a later preface to *Far from the Madding Crowd*, "The press and the public were kind enough to welcome the fanciful plan, and willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under

Queen Victoria;—a modern Wessex of railways, the penny post, mowing and reaping machines, union workhouses, lucifer matches, labourers who could read and write, and National school children." In the realm of the Gothic, fin-de-siècle writer Arthur Machen—an important influence on Borges, and a reader of Edwin Abbott's multidimensional fantasy *Flatland*—conceptualized late-Victorian London as a disconcertingly multiple space containing discrete, co-existing realities, as in his 1890 tale "The Lost Club."[6] Perhaps one day figurations of the alternate and the counterfactual, of parallel and multiple worlds, will be studied and taught alongside such better-known cultural phenomena as the discovery of deep time and the emergence of evolutionary thought, as a source of fascination, wonder, and unease in the Victorian world.

Notes

1. Paul K. Alkon, *Origins of Futuristic Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 305.
2. Amy Ransom, "Warping Time: Alternate History, Historical Fantasy, and the Postmodern *uchronie québécoise*," *Extrapolation* 51, no. 2 (2010): 258–80, 259.
3. Catherine Gallagher, "What Would Napoleon Do?: Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters," *New Literary History* 42, no. 2 (2011), 331. See also Gallagher, *Telling It Like It Wasn't: The Counterfactual Imagination in History and Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).
4. Ben Carver, *Alternate Histories and Nineteenth-Century Literature: Untimely Meditations in Britain, France, and America* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 1.
5. Genie Babb, "Quivers of Idiosyncrasy: Modern Statistics in *A Modern Utopia*," in *Utopias and Dystopias in the Fiction of H. G. Wells and William Morris: Landscape and Space,* ed. Emelyne Godfrey (London: Palgrave, 2016), 58–59.
6. Aaron Worth, Introduction to *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories*, by Arthur Machen, ed. Aaron Worth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), xxvii–xxx.