

The Incredible Nineteenth Century: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Fairy Tale

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About *I19*

The Incredible Nineteenth Century: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Fairy Tale (I19) seeks to publish the finest scholarship on the century that was, in many ways, the time period in which the modern genres of science fiction and fantasy began, and in which the academic study of fairy tale and folklore has its roots. *I19* interprets “the nineteenth century” broadly, using the dates of “The Long Nineteenth Century”—roughly, from the beginning of the French Revolution to the end of World War I—but even these dates are just notable historical markers as they approximately coincide with Romanticism and Modernism, respectively. Scholarship on works from the eighteenth century that anticipated or influenced writers in the nineteenth century or ways in which nineteenth-century literature influenced later authors both fall within the interests of this journal. *I19* also publishes scholarship on Neo-Victorianism, Steam Punk, or any other contemporary genres that react to the time periods contained within The Long Nineteenth Century. Genres such as horror and mystery, though not strictly within the realms of the fantastic, are also welcome, due to their close affinity with science fiction and fantasy. Scholarship on early film is also welcome. Additionally, *I19* is dedicated to maintaining a scope that is both multicultural and global, and encourages submissions on works from marginalized communities and from around the world.

In addition to literary scholarship, *I19* also publishes works on pedagogy. These pieces may be personal reflections, strategies on course design, innovative assignment sheets with commentary, or anything else that educators teaching nineteenth-century literature may find useful.

Finally, *I19* maintains a robust Book and Media Reviews section. Reviews on recent scholarship, as well as period fiction and film, are featured in every issue.

Queries and submissions may be sent to i19@mtsu.edu. We accept submissions on a rolling basis, and there are no author fees.

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From the Editor

Beginnings

It is difficult to say when, precisely, any literary genre truly begins. There are always antecedents and precursors, and intense scrutiny often reveals anything in art to be older than it seems. However, for science fiction, fantasy, and fairy tale, the nineteenth century serves as a useful time period in which to place the beginnings of these genres, at least in their modern iterations.

Several arguments have been made, for instance, that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is not actually the first sf novel, that Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666) or Johannes Kepler's *Somnium* (1634) or any number of works can lay claim to being pre-*Frankenstein* works of sf, but Shelley's novel in many ways established the genre as we know it today. Unlike many of its rivals that may be considered the first sf novel, *Frankenstein* is solely based on science and does not mix the real and the fantastic the way other works had. It was the first novel to look at humanity's advancing scientific knowledge and ask "what if?" in a way that truly questioned our relationship with science. Instead, it asked questions about humanity and what we might do given the new scientific powers we were accumulating. While *Frankenstein* and other sf novels came from Europe, sf was not entirely a European creation. Much recent scholarship has demonstrated how other regions of the world, such as India and the Middle East, were early contributors to the genre.

Fantasy, of course, did not begin in the nineteenth century. Its origins can be traced back to epic poems and stories of gods and supernatural creatures at the very beginnings of written stories, and no doubt goes back even further in oral traditions. However, like science fiction, many of the aspects of fantasy literature that we now take for granted have their beginnings in the nineteenth century, and many of the writers, such as George MacDonald or Margaret

Oliphaunt, gave rise to subgenres such as high fantasy or the ghost story that we so easily recognize today. In America, fantasy played a large role in giving rise to a new national literary tradition. Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book* (1819-20) provided a brand of American Romanticism with works such as "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Edgar Allan Poe *pioneered the short story, detective fiction, and horror with his fantastic tales and poetry, creating distinctive types of fantasy that would continue to be developed well into the twentieth century.*

Fairy tales, too, go back much further, but they gained a special relevance in the nineteenth century, thanks to academics such as the Brothers Grimm who saw these stories as something more than children's tales. In the nineteenth century, writers such as Hans Christian Andersen and Charles Kingsley created new fairy tales, and even writers such as Charles Dickens or Charlotte Brontë were influenced in their realistic fiction by the genre. The academic study of fairy tales since then has grown into a major field within literary studies, with generations of scholars discovering new layers of depth and meaning in these classic stories. Likewise, writers from one generation to the next have found the form to be a flexible vehicle for commenting on society and culture.

These literary beginnings coincided with many other changes in the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution changed economies and class structures. Colonialism brought cultures into contact and conflict. The women's suffrage movement caused people to rethink long-held beliefs. Darwinism brought religious beliefs under question and sparked new interest in scientific explanations of the world. In many ways, the fantastic literature that emerged in this milieu was a reaction to these ground-shaking changes.

It is the goal of this journal to trace the origins of science fiction, fantasy, and fairy tale and explore how they developed into the familiar genres we know today. This journal is also interested in nineteenth-century reception today, how phenomenon from the steam punk aesthetic to Disney movies are constantly re-envisioning the nineteenth century and putting our time into conversation with this previous era. In all, this journal will endeavor to explore a century and its literature that were both truly incredible.

Articles

A Veiled Inclusion: Safie as Mary Wollstonecraft in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Mathew Siegel

Over 200 years after its conception, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* not only remains one of the most influential works of all-time, but researchers are still gaining new insights into the culturally and philosophically significant lessons drawn from its pages. Shelley's masterpiece takes influences from her life and cohesively stitches them together with politics and social commentary, paying homage to those she reveres as she seeks to establish herself as both an author and the torchbearer of her parents' legacies. Expectations were high for Shelley considering her pedigree as the child of two successful authors known for their progressive ideologies, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Born Mary Godwin, Shelley's birth was marked by the untimely death of her mother, leaving her alone to navigate a social landscape that simultaneously held great expectations for her while also oppressing her because of her gender. Wollstonecraft's absence served as a painful yet substantial influence on Shelley, but it was Wollstonecraft's controversial status that contributed to Shelley's choice to shroud her mother's presence in the work. While *Frankenstein* quotes various Romantic writers and historically significant figures, such as future husband Percy Shelley and childhood influence Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Shelley's activist, progressive mother is neither directly quoted nor openly referenced (Robinson 132). Wollstonecraft's feminist ideologies and death are embedded in the characters of *Frankenstein*, and the novel's focus on the martyred feminine, such as Caroline Beaufort and Justine Moritz, is frequently recognized as a reference to Wollstonecraft. Indeed, the overarching theme of the toxic masculine resulting from the absence of the beneficial feminine can be interpreted as an allusion to Wollstonecraft's absence in Mary's life. However, examination of the novel's feminist core

features a lone female voice silenced in the midst of a male-dominated narration, that of the Christian Arab Safie, who flees oppression to be with her love interest, Felix De Lacey. While scholarship has identified Wollstonecraft's philosophies on education and slavery as depicted through Safie, there is further evidence to suggest that Safie's character is representative of Wollstonecraft herself. Through Safie, Wollstonecraft's actual experiences from her abusive upbringing, restricted education, and independent travels across Europe are depicted. Via the medium of letter-writing, Safie, like Wollstonecraft, makes the argument for women as independent, rational beings. Furthermore, the presentation of Safie's letters is stolen by the Creature, symbolically suppressing Safie's ideas just as Wollstonecraft's activism was silenced in a male-dominated society. It is through Safie's subtle inclusion that Shelley is able to disguise her mother's presence in order to safely navigate and confront the controversies surrounding her mother's life and make her a quintessential part of the *Frankenstein* lore.

Wollstonecraft's Life and Influence on Mary Shelley

Even though Wollstonecraft's death left Shelley without the direct influence of her accomplished mother, Shelley had access to all of her mother's writings and publications, which made up a large part of her informal education. Charlotte Gordon's dual biography on mother and daughter, *Romantic Outlaws*, sheds new light on Shelley's reverence for her mother and her obsession with her mother's words: "Throughout her life, Shelley read and reread her mother's books, often learning their words by heart...Shelley yearned to live according to her mother's principles, to fulfil her mother's aspirations, and to reclaim Wollstonecraft from the shadows of history" (Gordon xvi). Beyond her own lofty goals set for herself, Shelley experienced external pressure from a number of directions, including leading up to the time when she generated the idea

for *Frankenstein* in the summer of 1816. Her future husband, Percy, held high expectations for her writing, further compounded by her own goal to impress their summer host at Geneva, Lord Byron (Mellor 28, 54). As the child of two exceptional parents, Shelley faced a unique dichotomy of both an empowering pedigree and an intimidating anxiety at attaining similar levels of success. She, perhaps better than others, understood her place in the world; not only was she a woman in a patriarchal society, but she was the daughter of a revolutionary feminist who had, in so many words, abandoned her by dying shortly after her birth. She felt both outward and inward pressure to incorporate her mother's progressive ideology in her own achievements, but there remained a conflict on how to best represent her mother's ideals and legacy while also safely navigating a patriarchal society in which she was yet to make a name for herself.

Wollstonecraft, despite her literary successes, was a controversial figure turned pariah following her husband's 1798 posthumous biographical account of her life. Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* included accounts of Wollstonecraft's suicide attempts, sexual exploits, and other controversies that led to the tarnishing of her legacy with highly critical reviews, which *Frankenstein* critic Johanna M. Smith believes created more reticence in Shelley than it did inspiration (qtd. in Foertsch 708). Shelley documents her reading of Godwin's *Memoirs* in her personal journals in June of 1820, after the publication of *Frankenstein* (Feldman & Scott-Kilvert 319). However, Mary's journals only start in 1814, slightly before her seventeenth birthday, and fail to take into account her childhood reading under Godwin's care. Though Godwin attempted to shield Mary from reading *Memoirs* in her girlhood, it is hard to believe that the precocious and knowledge-hungry Mary did not find a way to subvert this order, especially considering her obsession with her mother. Mary had also found a way to drop in on conversations at pivotal moments of influence, whether as a child hearing Coleridge

recite *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in her home or listening in on the conversation between Percy and Lord Byron on galvanization during her stay in Lake Geneva (Levy 693). Mary also understood that no writing was private, so it is possible that she hid her reading of *Memoirs* while living under Godwin's roof before eloping with Percy (Feldman & Scott-Kilvert xvi). Percy also played a considerable role in editing the first edition of *Frankenstein*, and his love of literature and reverence for Mary's parents is well documented (Gordon 216-17). Mary's relationship with Percy and their conversations on writing and her pedigree provide yet another avenue through which she had access to information surrounding her mother's life. Thus, even without a recorded reading of Godwin's *Memoirs* predating *Frankenstein*, Shelley had access to it and was at the very least aware of her mother's early life, later reputation, and the dangers of association with her name (Feldman and Scott-Kilvert xv-xvi). The existence and awareness of Godwin's *Memoirs* and its reception created a dilemma on how best to honor her mother while also simultaneously building and protecting her own reputation. This, meshed with her own personal anxieties stemming from the aforementioned social pressures, likely factored into her decision on how to best represent her mother in *Frankenstein*. Charles Robinson, an author featured in the anthology *Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley: Writing Lives*, speculates on Shelley's mindset while writing *Frankenstein*, acknowledging Godwin's *Memoirs* as a focal point for why Shelley hesitated on directly naming her mother, worrying that "such naming or quoting might not benefit her mother's reputation" (Robinson 132). Robinson also considers that "Shelley felt unworthy of or unequal to her mother with respect to women's rights," making it plausible that Shelley considered including a direct reference to her mother ineffective or, even worse, potentially misconstruing her mother's message (Robinson 133). Thus, it is likely that Shelley's basis for shrouding Wollstonecraft's feminist ideologies in *Frankenstein* without directly mentioning her in the text is born out of

Shelley's awareness of her mother's legacy and further compounded by the societal pressures she faced as a budding female author.

Considering the central themes of *Frankenstein*, a novel that highlights toxic masculinity and the subjugated feminine through a deadly conception and an ensuing abandonment, it is conceivable that Shelley aimed to incorporate her mother and her ideas in a subtle rather than overt manner. Writer and translator Joyce Zonana asserts that *Frankenstein* is "conspicuously feminist in context and form, rather than unconsciously shaped by the contingencies of Mary Shelley's female existence," establishing the basis that everything Shelley did was entirely intentional rather than incidental (171). Indeed, Shelley's masterpiece is carefully crafted with a number of symbolic references to her birth, hardships, and influences on her life, giving credence to the theory that Wollstonecraft is embedded as an integral part of the text. Even *Frankenstein*'s setting of the polar north, the "masculine realm" that had been traversed and vividly described by Wollstonecraft in works such as *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), can be seen as paying homage to Wollstonecraft (Curran 588). Considering the plot, setting, and Shelley's knowledge of and connection with her mother's writings, the basis for honoring Wollstonecraft is ever present within *Frankenstein*, but the truest and strongest representation of Wollstonecraft lies in the heart and feminist core of the novel, the story and narration of the Christian Arab, Safie.

Safie's story is a forgotten part of the *Frankenstein* mythos, especially in terms of popular film representations. Even the elder, blind De Lacey is a fixture in most interpretations of the *Frankenstein* story (albeit frequently nameless), but Safie's presence, including her letters, is largely excluded. Prior research has explored Safie as influenced by Wollstonecraft's philosophy, though Robinson associates Wollstonecraft with Safie's mother, who pushed Safie to pursue

independence but died before the events of the novel. *Frankenstein* scholar Anne Mellor offers Safie as the “incarnation of Mary Wollstonecraft in the novel,” but this interpretation does not explore beyond Safie’s independent travels or refuge sought in other families (118). However, there exists further textual and historical evidence to support Safie’s presence as directly representative of Wollstonecraft herself. Safie was a late addition to *Frankenstein*, the novella form of which was completed in the summer of 1816. It was not until that December that Safie’s character was crafted and the chapters focusing on her education and letters to Felix drafted. Shelley, ever the avid reader of her mother’s works, journaled her reading of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* from December sixth through ninth, 1816 (Robinson 131, 134). The connection between Shelley’s reading of her mother’s feminist opus and the creation of Safie is incontrovertible, yet the relationship between Wollstonecraft and Safie is far richer. During her short appearance in the novel, Safie, similar to what Wollstonecraft accomplished in life, “confounds the masculine/feminine dichotomy based on gendered virtues” (Kick 303). She is an independent traveler who, like Wollstonecraft, fought against the forced domestication of women within her society and culture. Even her abusive upbringing parallels that of Wollstonecraft, and Safie further channels Wollstonecraft through the medium of letter writing, in which she looks to pioneer the same notion that women are thinking, rational beings. Safie’s placement in the core of the novel gives further weight to the idea of Wollstonecraft’s representation and Shelley’s venerated view of her mother. Safie’s name holds a double meaning, deriving from the Greek *Sofia* (meaning “wisdom”) and the Arabic word for “clean” or “pure” (Kick 303; Peterfreund 95). The significance of this furthers the connection to Wollstonecraft, with Shelley looking to both acknowledge Wollstonecraft’s wisdom and successes as a writer while also presenting her mother in a purer, uncontroversial state, potentially looking to undo the damage from Godwin’s *Memoirs*.

Safie, therefore, is not solely a mirror of Wollstonecraft but is the embodiment of Shelley's idealized vision of her mother with the added presentation of purity as a means of symbolic absolution of her mother's reputation.

Safie as Wollstonecraft: Their Shared Experience and Purpose

The extensive connections between Wollstonecraft and Safie are not limited to just a single, general comparison at a specific moment in their lives. Their shared experience begins at their respective upbringings, during which both women suffered under abusive fathers. Though Wollstonecraft was not present to educate her daughter on her abusive upbringing, Shelley, as already established, was at the very least aware of this through conversation with Percy if not via reading Godwin's *Memoirs*, which covers Wollstonecraft's abuses in her early life as well as her later activism and subsequent controversies. Edward Wollstonecraft, Mary Wollstonecraft's father, was "hot-blooded and capricious. An alcoholic who squandered his family's money [and] brutalized his wife and children" (Gordon 11). Edward's frivolous spending and domestic abuse of his wife and daughters caused both physical and psychological suffering based on patriarchal control. Similarly, these abuses are echoed in the Creature's narration of Safie's story, in which he mentions that Safie's father, a Turkish Arab wrongly charged with an unknown crime in Revolutionary France, had caused the expulsion and ruin of the De Lacey family (Shelley 110-13). Not only did he use Felix's interest in Safie to exploit their kindness and steal their money, but his intent to return to Turkey implied a physical and sexual subjugation of Safie analogous to Edward Wollstonecraft's abuses. Even though Safie's father is not directly physically abusive, by mandating his daughter's return to Turkey, which Safie describes as a "harem" culture, Safie's father is implicit in the forced religious subjugation she would experience due to her gender

(Shelley 112-14). While the particulars differ, the existence of gender-related abuse and financial exploitation served as a spark for both Safie and Wollstonecraft, helping push them towards the life-altering decisions and radical choices that shaped both their immediate futures and legacies.

Aside from Wollstonecraft and Safie's abusive fathers, the early death of their mothers helped send them on parallel paths towards advocacy of women's rights. Wollstonecraft's mother, Elizabeth, slipped into a coma and died in the Spring of 1782, when Wollstonecraft was in her early 20s. Elizabeth had generally ignored Wollstonecraft and favored her oldest brother, Ned, while also remaining critical of Wollstonecraft's zealous and rebellious nature (Gordon 47). Wollstonecraft used her family life as a means of understanding what she did not want to be, but it was not until after her mother's death that she was able to free herself from certain familial burdens. Wollstonecraft had always sought refuge in other families, but the loss of her mother opened the door for Wollstonecraft, on her friend Fanny Blood's insistence, to move in with her and her family (Gordon 47-48). Living with the Blood household was an experience that helped to shape Wollstonecraft's future, and the sanctuary and education provided to Wollstonecraft here serves as a direct parallel to Safie's journey and residence with the De Lacey's. In terms of Safie's mother, the Creature notes that she died at some point before the events of the story, and considering that Safie is of marriable age, it can be concluded that Safie was also young when she lost her mother (Shelley 112). Though Safie's mother had more of a significant role in encouraging her daughter's independence, her absence, like the death of Elizabeth Wollstonecraft, was a driving factor in freeing Safie from her father's oppression and that of her religions, resulting in Safie's travelling across Europe to live with the De Lacey's (Shelley 104). The death of their mothers provided both Wollstonecraft and Safie with opportunities to prove themselves to be independent, free-thinking individuals. Their life-changing decisions, especially considering the era, to remove

themselves from oppressive environments in order to pursue better lives highlights how importantly they viewed their goals of demonstrating female independence. Safie's flight from a "harem" culture and Wollstonecraft's continued pursuit of knowledge both blossom in the kindness and progressive ideologies of other families, shunning the despotic patriarchal control both experienced and opening the door to friendship, intimacy, and, most importantly, education.

Education for women in the eighteenth century was commonly sparse and inadequate as compared to the education of men, so Wollstonecraft often found herself struggling to find the means to learn despite her strong desire to do so. Wollstonecraft, along with her siblings, had learned to read at home, but her formal education at the Beverly Grammar School, which she attended upon turning eleven, was lacking, limited to basic addition and needlework while her brothers learned multiple subjects and languages (Gordon 18). Despite this less-than-ideal experience, Wollstonecraft made a valuable friend in school, Jane Arden, whose father took to educating Wollstonecraft. She was allowed to explore with microscopes and telescopes, and she was encouraged to "read thick, difficult volumes" from authors such as John Dryden and Oliver Goldsmith, opportunities which she did not squander (Gordon 20). Upon moving to Hoxton at age fifteen, Wollstonecraft found her education with the Ardens interrupted. However, her new neighbor, the dissenting liberal Reverend Henry Clare, granted Wollstonecraft access to his study. Here, Wollstonecraft was introduced to John Locke's philosophies, which gave her "an ethical foundation" for her feelings on equality and freedom (Gordon 36-38). Locke's significance to Wollstonecraft cannot be understated, with the introduction to his philosophies equipping her with a basis for her beliefs on equality which she, in turn, compounded and turned into a career. Wollstonecraft's education not only helps establish the basis for her feminist ideals, but it also serves as a means of debunking potential misconceptions about her connection to Safie.

As mentioned before, prior scholarship and multiple interpretations of Safie express the belief that she is the embodiment of Wollstonecraft's ideals. However, Wollstonecraft's position on education greatly differs from how Safie is educated throughout her life; in fact, Safie's private education through another welcoming household more mirrors what Wollstonecraft experienced herself rather than her dogmas. A large portion of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is dedicated to fighting for equal education of the sexes rather than the private, incomplete education that she received. The goal of her opus was to argue for the dangerous consequences that lie in the various forms of unequal education, thereby "enable[ing] the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent" (Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 229). To avoid misinterpretation, Wollstonecraft addresses this directly rather than implicitly:

To prevent any misconstruction, I must add, that I do not believe that a private education can work the wonders which some sanguine writers have attributed to it. Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in...till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education. (Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 230)

Here, Wollstonecraft confronts critics and her own upbringing by addressing the weakness of private education and her fervent belief in equal education of the genders. She further deems private education as inherently flawed in preventing deeper analysis and limiting learning to only surface-level fragments rather than granting women the ability to "pursue any one branch with that persevering ardour necessary to give vigour to the faculties, and clearness to the judgment" (Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 230). While Wollstonecraft was undeniably appreciative of the education she received from Mr. Arden and Reverend Clare, she also gained important insight through her readings and contextualized her situation with the social climate. With equality at the

forefront of the French Revolution and injustice not only in her own life but ubiquitous throughout the world, Wollstonecraft grasped what society and equality were and what they could, and should, be. Shelley was wholly her mother's daughter in this regard, and her passion for maintaining her mother's legacy not only spurred her career in writing but was directly responsible for the creation of Safie's character.

Safie is a standout character in *Frankenstein*, a lone female narrator in a novel on the toxic masculine resulting from the absence of the beneficial feminine. At its core, *Frankenstein* is “a novel about the dangerous consequences of education and the pursuit of knowledge,” which is very much what *Vindication* expresses when it comes to the restrictions that women face in terms of education (Robinson 133). Safie is the only female character shown to have any true independence, demonstrated in her decision to abandon her father and flee oppression in Turkey. Safie's independence stems from her mother's influence, which the Creature addresses in his narrative:

She instructed her daughter in the tenets of her [Christian] religion and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit, forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad. This lady died; but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem. (Shelley 112)

Nothing else is known about Safie's early education beyond the guidance her mother provides her with and its basis as a means for Safie to pursue independence and intellectual freedom, filling her with "grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue" and an adoration for the "prospect of...remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society" (Shelley 112). Upon entering the De Lacey cottage, Safie is greeted with love and compassion, treated as an equal

and granted the same rights of every other member, regardless of her gender or the cultural and language differences. Her education begins almost immediately, with Felix choosing Volney's *Ruins of Empire* as her foundation. This selection echoes the heavy volumes that Mr. Arden offered to a young Wollstonecraft, but it holds further significance because of its historical context; not only was this the book Napoleon read to prepare for his 1798 invasion of Egypt, but Volney provides an "imitation of Eastern authors" and offers a perspective of the Arab world (Shelley 107). Safie's first lesson ends with her and the Creature separately weeping over the fate of the indigenous people of the Americas, a subtle inclusion that resonates with Safie's ultimate purpose in the novel. Syrian-American poet and professor Mojha Kahf, in her dissertation on Muslim women in Romantic literature, argues that Felix, in choosing this volume and its histories of oppression and ruin, "teaches Safie the history of the World, and by implication, her place in it" (304). Like Wollstonecraft, Safie is an eager, young learner struggling to adapt to the unfairness in the world. Her actual education, conducted in a private household with another family and through the usage of texts well above her level, closely mirrors Wollstonecraft's actual experience more than it reflects Wollstonecraft's philosophies on education. The pursuit of education is the fundamental basis for their independence, and through learning of subjugated people, Wollstonecraft through Locke and Safie through Volney, both women gain insight into their own strength and potential. Thus, the right to education is the means to attaining a voice, an idea further communicated through the medium of letter writing, which both Wollstonecraft and Safie use as the primary mode through which to convey their ideals.

Though both Safie and Wollstonecraft learn of the unfairness of the world in their studies, they were both able to channel letter writing as a means of representing their hope for the future. While Reverend Clare undoubtedly holds significance in introducing Wollstonecraft to Locke,

who served as the basis for her future work on equal rights, his wife, Mrs. Clare, arguably plays an even more important role in Wollstonecraft's life. Upon Wollstonecraft's arrival in Hoxton, Mrs. Clare introduced her to the Bloods, a family much like the De Laceys in that they offered a stark contrast to almost every other familial experience through which Wollstonecraft had suffered. Wollstonecraft became immediately infatuated with Fanny Blood, the eldest sister, who is noted as being Wollstonecraft's "first true example of the power of female resourcefulness" considering she supported her family through her art (Gordon 39). Upon beginning a correspondence, Wollstonecraft was quick to identify a clear discrepancy between her own writing and that of Blood's superior style and intellect. Wollstonecraft requested that Blood teach her how to write as well as she did, to which Blood agreed (Gordon 39). Not only did Wollstonecraft gain a strong friend and influence, but she eventually learned how to formulate her arguments for equality through letter writing, which ultimately turned into her most successful work during her lifetime, *Letters from Sweden*. In this, Wollstonecraft transforms letter writing into a medium through which she is able to convey her beliefs and ideals, just as Safie does in *Frankenstein*. *Letters from Sweden* serves as a contemplative travel diary with a unique purpose in furthering the progressive nature of the world through the presentation of an independent woman, Wollstonecraft, as a rational being with a soul. This notion, echoed in Safie's letters to Felix and her own independent travel, utilizes the sublime in order to present Wollstonecraft's progressive philosophy. In this case, the sublime lies in the reflections in nature and the presentation of the sheer notion of equal rights and confrontation of inherent biases, something Wollstonecraft made into a career and that Shelley addresses on multiple levels of gender, religion, and appearance throughout *Frankenstein*.

Letters from Sweden is based on Wollstonecraft's travels across Scandinavia while representing Gilbert Imlay on business. Interestingly, he refers to her as his wife even though they

were not married, which Felix also does with Safie (Ingpen xxii; Shelley 127). On the trip, Wollstonecraft journaled her travels and edited her entries into a reflective, introspective dialogue demonstrating the idea of woman as an independent, rational being. Her letters became so much more than a simple travel journal and looked to penetrate the very soul of the reader, with her primary message being that “The most essential service...that authors could render to society, would be to promote inquiry and discussion” (Wollstonecraft, *Letters* 261). The reflective component of her writing, in addition to her melancholic yet resilient tone, intermingles with the Romantic tenet of power in nature to create a work that captured the attention of many, including future husband William Godwin: “If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book. She speaks of her sorrows, in a way that fills us with melancholy, and dissolves us in tenderness, at the same time that she displays a genius which commands all our admiration” (qtd. in Mellor 24). Godwin goes on to remark on the “gentleness of her spirit” and how her trials and misfortunes had given her heart “a softness almost more than human” (qtd. in Gordon 365-66). Wollstonecraft is painted in a rather unique image following *Letters from Sweden*, that of a somber yet empowered woman subtly making an argument for equality and independence. It is in these descriptors and goals that Wollstonecraft’s most successful work is echoed in Safie’s character.

Wollstonecraft’s era was a time when women frequently communicated with one another via letters, but that does not make it a feminine medium. In fact, the travel narrative in the eighteenth century was dominated by the journeys of Captain Cook, and even Walton utilizes the travel narrative as the frame which both opens and concludes *Frankenstein*. Safie’s narrative comes in the form of letters, the only female narrator in a male-dominated work, akin to how Wollstonecraft seized this male-dominated genre and turned it into a powerful female treatise. The

fact that Safie utilizes letters is not merely coincidental and holds a significant purpose in the novel and in Shelley's life. In fact, Shelley's next novel immediately following *Frankenstein, History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), is modelled entirely after her mother's *Letters from Sweden*. Safie, like Wollstonecraft, writes a travel narrative that helps Felix (and, perhaps, too, the Creature) fall in love with her, all while embodying the same tenderness and melancholy that Wollstonecraft expresses and is described as having in *Letters from Sweden*. While Safie's presence "diffused happiness among" the De Lacey's and the Creature's narration describes her as "always gay and happy," her voice is compared to that of a nightingale, a trope in Middle Eastern poetry and symbol of melancholy stemming from the legend of Philomela and Procne (Shelley 106). While Safie's "voice" here is presented in the literal sense, this could also theoretically represent her perspective. Safie is a victim of both of her parents' religions, her father's oppression, and patriarchal society, dangerously embarking on a self-reflective quest to find a place where she belongs, akin to Wollstonecraft's *Letters*. Her melancholy is further echoed in her response to learning of the fate of the indigenous people in America, exemplifying her ability to form her own opinions and experiences, again echoing Wollstonecraft's ideals from *Letters from Sweden* (Shelley 107). Beyond the similar purposes in these letters is their effect of garnering affection. In the same way that Wollstonecraft's letters drew the attention of Godwin, so, too, do Safie's letters pique the interest of the Creature: "Safie's letters are, accordingly, the Creature's earliest formative written intellectual-emotional ballast, emphasizing communication, forthrightness, and reciprocal love, given that Safie's letters carry on a dialogue with those of Felix" (Kick 301). The Creature is able to reconcile his understanding of human interaction and equal affection in his characterization of Safie through her letters, just as Wollstonecraft's travelogue appeals for self-reflection and equality to its readers. Shelley, like Wollstonecraft, uses letter writing as a means of facilitating logical

thought to promote a simple truth: that women are free-thinking beings with their own rational minds (Sleigh 8). Through their letters, both Safie and Wollstonecraft present a rich duality of character in which they embody a feminine tenderness while usurping a masculine domain of travelogue and exploration, transforming it into an avenue for promoting rational thought through the sublime. Both Safie and Wollstonecraft champion this message, with Zonana further identifying Safie as “an exemplar of a woman claiming her rights as a rational being” (174). This is the clear embodiment of the ideas Wollstonecraft developed throughout her life, first appearing at the forefront in *Vindication* and later blossoming into her thought-provoking *Letters from Sweden*.

Despite her successes as a writer, Wollstonecraft often struggled to garner respect and attention as a woman. Her first in-person meeting with radical London publisher Joseph Johnson in 1786 proved fortuitous. Not only was he an immediate fan of her, but he also worked to find her a new home and introduce her to a more educated, aristocratic crop of people with whom she could associate and learn, including future husband William Godwin (Gordon 112-17). Even with the established message of *Letters from Sweden* and its role in guiding Godwin, and his progressive mindset, to Wollstonecraft, she often found herself subjugated to a more domestic role in their marriage. Godwin, even considering his radical politics, “believed that women stood in need of male protection” and “valued ‘the softness of their natures [and] the delicacy of their sentiments’” (Gordon 365). Wollstonecraft was appreciative of the fact that Godwin helped relieve her of financial burdens, with which she often struggled, but it never truly sat well with her that she, one of the main voices of women’s rights, was reliant on the support of a man (Gordon 396). Furthermore, Godwin encouraged Wollstonecraft’s writing, but he never made good on his promise to “shoulder some of the household responsibilities so that [she] could write,” which left

Wollstonecraft with the domestic burden of maintaining the home (Gordon 396, 425). Wollstonecraft was the owner of a powerful voice, not only a published woman but one who was, in many influential circles, held in a high regard. However, this did not change the fact that she was an outlier in society and generally struggled in many facets, including finances and social acceptance. Even in a more idealized marriage and a progressive household such as that of Godwin's, Wollstonecraft continued to struggle and found herself in a more subjugated role. Though this was undoubtedly an improvement from her earlier situation, Gordon notes that "she looked sadly vulnerable" in this relationship, echoing the melancholy and openness that made *Letters from Sweden* so successful in defining Wollstonecraft's character and drawing the attention of Godwin (365). Wollstonecraft's life echoes the sad reality for women in this era and reiterates that even in the best of circumstances, the most successful of women still struggled with rampant inequality and suppression. Safie also finds herself in a comparable situation with the De Laceys, a family representing the Egalitarian philosophy of social equality. Despite this situation being an improvement on her prior life, Safie, too, becomes domesticated and her voice silenced.

Safie's arrival at the De Lacey cottage is marked with happiness and joy, yet while her position in the household seems to be of some equality, in truth she is domesticated just like Wollstonecraft. Safie is already inherently silenced by the existing language barrier, but her relationship with Felix both objectifies and exoticizes her. Safie's entrance into the cottage is marked by her immediate kneeling at the elder De Lacey's feet, and though he openly embraces her, Safie's naturally oppressed state is ever-present. Next, Felix refers to her as "*my* sweet Arabian," a possessive term that diminishes Safie's value as an independent woman by both exoticizing her as a foreigner and claiming ownership of her (Shelley 105, emphasis added). This, Kahf contends, demonstrates that Safie becomes "*his* domesticated exotic property" (306,

emphasis added). Kahf's usage of "exotic" not only holds an important connotation of presenting Safie as something different or unusual, emphasizing a disconnect between the entity and the 'normal' society, but it also resonates with language Wollstonecraft uses in *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft expresses that if women are not given complete freedom, then "they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature" (Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* 241-42). Safie's journey is marked by complete freedom and independence, but her arrival is marked by submission. Thus, Safie's independence and education, much like Wollstonecraft's freedom to continue her writing career under her marriage to Godwin, come at a great cost. Safie is, for all intents and purposes, domesticated in the De Lacey home, even though she is given more rights and freedom than women in other families. The ultimate insight gained here is that Safie, like Wollstonecraft, is an outlier in society and will always struggle as such, even in an accepting household.

Safie's letters are simultaneously the greatest and most troubling indication of her independence as a woman. Not only was her voice silenced, but her story is stolen and told through the Creature's narration, in which he went so far as to transcribe her words rather than using the original letters he had stolen from the De Lacey cottage. Thus, Safie's letters are kept open, never fully voiced by Safie but rather digested and reiterated by the Creature (Zonana 171). Her story becomes a means of furthering the Creature's life and proving his tale. Zonana argues that Shelley's decision not to print the letters was deliberate in order "to keep them inviolate, unpenetrated by the consciousness of the reader" (Zonana 181). Rather than outrightly expressing right or wrong through the content of the letters, Safie's narration is available not only through the perspective of the Creature but also that of the reader, replicating how Godwin retold Wollstonecraft's life through his voice and perspective in *Memoirs*. Much like her mother,

Shelley's goal was to get readers to reflect on inequality and their own inherent biases, especially fresh off the end of the Napoleonic tyranny that spawned from the French Revolution. Gordon comments on Wollstonecraft's goal for her audience:

If she could show her readers what it felt like to be powerless, what it was like to be a woman without legal recourse, poor, abused, and at the mercy of others, if she could reveal the root causes of human suffering and misogyny, then perhaps she could *galvanize* her readers and save others from the same miseries. (Gordon 516, emphasis added)

This galvanization of the reader was Shelley's goal as well and one of the key reasons behind adding her mother into the heart of the novel. Through Safie, thoughtful reflection occurs not only in the Creature but in the reader as well, and by silencing Safie through her stolen letters, Shelley is both preserving the purity of her mother's legacy while simultaneously inserting Godwin's damning *Memoirs* into *Frankenstein*.

Wollstonecraft died shortly after giving birth to Shelley, but Godwin continued her story with the posthumous publication of *Memoirs*, which destroyed her reputation partly due to her child born out of wedlock, something associated with promiscuity in this era. "In his hands, then, Mary [Wollstonecraft] becomes a tragic heroine; a woman defined in relation to men, not an independent individual, making her own choices and way in the world" (Gordon 491). Safie, similarly, can be considered immoral according to her culture in disobeying her father, casting off her religions, and eloping with her French lover. Thanks to Godwin's *Memoirs* and the untimely end to her life, Wollstonecraft was unable to truly accomplish what she set out to and it was not until centuries later that she became recognized for her achievements. Likewise, Safie's story ends abruptly before she could accomplish anything, with her fleeing upon seeing the creature in the De Lacey cottage (Shelley 123). Ultimately, Safie neither achieves her full independence nor finalizes

her message of proving women as independent, rational beings, “redeem[ing] neither the monster nor the text” and leaving the feminist core of the novel vague and unsettled (Robinson 136). Safie’s inclusion is not only an homage to Wollstonecraft’s successes but also her shortcomings, adding to the mystique and mythos that make *Frankenstein* such an historically significant work.

Future Considerations

Before arriving at the De Lacey cottage, Safie’s attendant falls ill and dies despite Safie’s “most devoted affection,” leaving Safie alone to navigate an unfamiliar world (Shelley 114). Similarly, Wollstonecraft was at a loss following the death of Fanny Blood in 1785, unsure of her next step or if she had the ability to proceed forward with life (Gordon 73). Though the contexts and relationships differ, these similar losses and sense of uncertainty provide yet another layer to the connection between Safie and Wollstonecraft. Shelley’s creation of Safie has one final comparison to Wollstonecraft in that they were both relegated to the annals of history and literary significance, or at least Wollstonecraft was until feminist criticism emerged in the 1960s and renewed interest in her works. Statues of Wollstonecraft are only now being commissioned, but Safie is yet to truly be featured in any significant way, including being completely cut from Kenneth Branagh’s titular 1994 film, “Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.” More consideration is needed not only on why *Frankenstein*’s feminist core is so often excluded from discussion and interpretation, but more importantly, further research is needed in order to better understand why Shelley designed and incorporated Safie as she did. Godwin’s role upon disowning Shelley following her elopement with Percy, too, must be examined. A study of Wollstonecraft’s appearance in conjunction with Safie’s description could yield further comparisons beyond their emotional states, and a timeline of both Safie and Wollstonecraft’s journeys across Europe can

potentially provide further overlap in their similarities. Future research should also aim at a deeper delving into Wollstonecraft's readings of Locke, the education gained from Joseph Johnson's social circle, and Percy's influence on Shelley. It is important to consider that Shelley's characters are deliberate combinations of people, philosophies, and events, and it is necessary to research and synthesize this information in order to create a better, fuller understanding of Wollstonecraft's influence on Shelley's creation of Safie.

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Pre-Industrial Dream*Robert Rich*

In his 1871 hollow-earth novel, *The Coming Race*, Edward Bulwer-Lytton created a society in which nobody lives in want, has to toil endlessly to earn a living, or is wealthy enough to incite envy in others. The people are strong, healthy, attractive and long-living. Their widespread prosperity does not require the abolition of private property nor does their good health depend upon Erewhonian eugenics. Neither do they lack outlets for their impressive creative and intellectual energies. For all of this, very few critics in the century-and-a-half since its publication have attempted to take the utopian character of this society literally, opting instead to read it as satirical, dystopian, or anti-utopian. One critic even considers it the father of the anti-utopian novels (Seeber 39). I argue, however, that *The Coming Race* should be read not as an anti-utopian “Condemnation of Advanced Ideas” but as a counter-industrial utopia evoking pre-industrial-era cultural norms and values in a way that casts those of the Victorian era as inferior (Campbell 125). Bulwer’s novel performs this move primarily by undoing the industrial era’s ascendancy of labor over workmanship and contemplation, an ascendancy described in detail by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958). Insofar as the novel “reject[s] utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream” and places significant emphasis on the “conflict between the originary world and the utopian society” as well as the imperfections within the utopian society itself, the novel is best understood as a precursor to the “critical utopia” of the twentieth century (Moylan 10).

A far cry from the bustle of Victorian England, these people enjoy a “serenity of mind undisturbed by anxious occupations and eager passions” (67). Bulwer’s fictional civilization reverses what Arendt describes as the industrial era’s elevation of labor and the triumph of *Animal Laborans* in several important ways. It features, among other things, a true and steadfast belief in immortality, an idea of science not subjugated to utility, a conception of property not synonymous with wealth accumulation, and a proper

esteem for both workmanship and contemplation. By applying Arendt's understanding of modernity I will explain how each of these facets of the novel undoes a crucial transformation occurring during Bulwer's lifetime.

By showing that the novel advances these pre-industrial cultural values and that Bulwer was strongly invested in them, I argue that the ideals of the world presented in the novel are paradoxically both more backward looking than has often been acknowledged and more radical in their challenge to Victorian society and culture in the way that they undermine the glorification of labor at the heart of the industrial era. This reading complicates the critical tendency to view the novel as a reactionary author's attack on feminism, socialism, and utopianism. Such readings are often premised on biographical oversimplifications and overlook important characteristics of the society Bulwer creates.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple. While exploring a friend's mines, the unnamed narrator falls into an underground civilization inhabited by tall, winged creatures, who have attained mastery over their environment through the discovery of an essentially telekinetic fluid called the "vril." All have learned to control it, but the females (the Gy), who are the more powerful gender in this society, have more adept control over it than the males (the Ana). The narrator gradually learns about this society from Tae and Zee, the son and daughter of his host. His time among them goes relatively smoothly until Zee develops a strong affection for him, and because they consider it "no crime to slay those who threaten the good of the community," they decide to sentence him to death to prevent such potentially dangerous interbreeding (125). He is saved from this fate by this very same Zee who, out of love for him, transgresses her civilization's laws by bringing him back to the surface.

The tendency to read *The Coming Race* as a dystopian or anti-utopian novel, while not unanimous, constitutes a relatively pervasive trend in the critical history of the work. This tradition of anti-utopian readings of the novel is part of the basis for Gerardo Rodriguez Salas's assumption that the seemingly

advanced view of women presented in the novel is an illusion and that Bulwer intended it as a parody of the New Woman (88). The text has frequently been read as hostile to various forms of equality and even “heavy handedly” anti-feminist (Wolff 324, 327). Its author, some have argued, “urges us to remain content with our present condition” (Campbell 127). In his 1965 essay on the novel, Geoffrey Wagner takes it as a given that because Bulwer was an “upper class dandy” he was also necessarily an upholder of order and must have hated immodest women (383). Hans Seeber similarly bases his anti-utopian interpretation upon Bulwer’s identity as a “champion of the existing order of things” (39). More recent readings of the novel have interpreted it as epitomizing the author’s fears about the influence of the increasingly powerful United States and about what the masses could do with new media (Nayder 213, 215; Brantlinger 202). Even those willing to classify the text as a utopia sometimes read it as reflecting the “rather explicit anti-democratic and anti-feminist sentiments” of its author (Komsta 163).

A closer look at the text reveals some problems with these readings. For example, as B. G. Knepper as observed, for all the discomfoting facts about the Vril-ya, the narrator’s world is decidedly not at any point depicted as superior. Moreover, given his regrets later in life that he did not insist upon staying with Zee after she rescued him, he clearly does not remember her as a “dystopian monster” (Knepper 23). Marta Komsta likewise acknowledges the apparent superior qualities of the Vril-ya but ultimately views the narrator’s manuscript “a token of solidarity with human fallibility against utopia’s terrible perfection” (171). As Jennifer Judge explains, the side of humanity Bulwer critiques in the Vril-ya is “not the clearly grotesque Yahoo-side, but rather the seemly and rational Houyhnhnm-side. . . Yet the Vril-yans, like Swift’s republic of horses are disagreeable from a human vantage point” (140). As in the case of Swift’s Houyhnhnms, an attempt to understand the Vril-yans should engage the question of what seems rational and desirable about them, as well as the question of what about them makes them unsettling in spite of these desirable traits.

Bulwer's own descriptions of the society he created often sound far more utopian than dystopian. In his correspondence with John Forster, prior to the novel's publication, he notes how unlike any known civilization, the Vril-ya manage to successfully combine "the blessings and consolations of a religion without any of the evils and calamities which are engendered by strife between one religion and another" (Lytton 464). They also managed to resolve, "hitherto insoluble above ground," working class problems and related class antagonisms by simply removing such class distinctions. Additionally, "The vices that rot our cities" are completely absent and "All that our female philosophers above ground contend for as to rights of women, is conceded as a matter of course in this happy common-wealth" (463). He would emphasize that "this race, being in many respects better and milder than we are, ought not to be represented terrible, except through the impossibility of our tolerating them or they tolerating us" (264). He would later write to his son that a society like that of the Vril-ya "would be deadly to us, not from its vices but its virtues" (268). Bulwer's point is not so much that the way the Vril-ya do things is wrong, in fact he seems to consider many of their outcomes quite enviable. Rather it is that Victorians are somehow not quite equipped to be happy in such a society. I argue that the habits of mind and elements of Victorian culture that create this incompatibility are what the text subtly critiques.

The critical tendency to view the novel as primarily critiquing the Vril-ya rather than the Victorians is frequently bolstered by a particular understanding of the author's ideological convictions. Notions regarding Bulwer's reactionary politics are not entirely without foundation, but they are only part of the story. Bulwer was self-consciously something of an outsider in Victorian society, so it is not surprising "that he should start life as a Radical, be flirtatious with the Whigs for a decade or two, and end it as a Tory. None of these mainstream options in British politics quite suited" (Mitchell 169). Moreover, from the beginning of his career, there was something anachronistic about his inclinations:

As recently as the late eighteenth century it had been thought entirely appropriate for leading politicians to weep in the House of Commons. It suggested heightened sensibilities. The same men dressed extravagantly, perfumed and rouged themselves, and operated extravagant manners. . . In trying to eliminate sensibility from the model of manliness the Victorians were fashioning a creature that was too monochrome for Lytton's taste. . . Lytton never fitted comfortably into Victorian society. He was never part of its establishment. (95)

The fact that Bulwer began his political and literary career as a philosophical radical and a cultural outcast suggests that he was just the person to write a utopian novel based around pre-Victorian social, political, and cultural ideals.

Dystopian interpretations of the novel frequently read the females presented in it as a kind of anti-feminist caricature. Like those of many male Victorian writers, Bulwer's views on gender can be confusing and contradictory, but there are reasons to question the popular reading of the Gy as a satire on the New Woman. Mitchell remarks how, "At his best, Lytton would admit that his difficulties with women were not the fault of the whole gender. Rather, the conventions of English society forced them to be 'artificial.' He preferred the company of frank, confident American women" (50). At other times he was known to admire the intellectual inclinations of German and French women and consider them superior to those in England for this reason (24).¹ These preferences and convictions on his part complicate the assumption that the physical and intellectual capabilities and social confidence of the Gy were intended to be read as absurd or nightmarish. They seem to have more in common than not with the women of Bulwer's time whose company he most appreciated and whose personalities he most admired. In this way, like so much else in the novel, the gender roles among the Vril-ya are not so much a parody of the newest philosophical and social trends as they are an implicit critique of mainstream English society.

I The Vrilya Condition: Obviating the Need to Labor

In order to understand the relationship between *The Coming Race* and the fundamental transitions occurring in Bulwer's lifetime, a brief overview of some of Arendt's key concepts will be necessary. In proposing a new way of thinking about our daily activities, Arendt asks her readers to look beyond such contemporary categories as "skilled," "unskilled," "intellectual," and "manual" labor. These categories are, historically speaking, a recent creation, and a lot can be learned from observing the older and more fundamental distinction between "work" and "labor;" "Work adds new objects to human artifice. Labor produces things only incidentally" (88). Labor's products, unlike work's products, "do not stay in the world long enough to become a part of it" (118). Work's objects may eventually be used up, but this usage is distinct from the destruction of objects made by labor and destined for consumption (137). The significance of the industrial revolution, for Arendt, is that it "replaced all workmanship with labor," leading to the production of "labor products whose natural fate is to be consumed, instead of work products which are there to be used" (124). Consumption and labor are linked in this model due to the fact that consumption is what makes something a product of labor rather than work; to say that we live in a "consumers' society" is "only another way of saying that we live in a society of laborers" (126).

Not only did the industrial revolution replace work with labor, but it also elevated labor's status. Most relevant to Bulwer's novel is Arendt's argument that "The modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labor and has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole of society into a laboring society" (4). Arendt discusses how labor went from something done in order to make time for contemplation to something valued for its own sake. Post-industrial revolution society no longer follows Aristotle's maxim that activity takes place for the sake of contemplation in the same way that "war takes place for the sake of peace" (15). Among other reasons why this glorification of labor is problematic is the fact that, "While dire necessity made labor indispensable to sustain life, excellence would have been

the last thing to expect from it” (48). The spare time of the *Animal Laborans* will be devoted to an increasingly ravenous consumption as the economy becomes a “waste economy” (133-134). Eventually a laboring society reaches its final form, what Arendt calls a “society of jobholders” (322). The values and assumptions of the modern “society of jobholders” are precisely what *The Coming Race* transgresses.

Bulwer had firsthand experience with the detrimental effects of the Nineteenth Century’s elevation of labor over workmanship and contemplation. With respect to his literary production, the author’s son once recalled how “his father had to work at such a fast pace that the novels were too often ‘crudely constructed’ and ‘the emanations of a mind which is reduced to manufacture from the want of leisure to create’” (Mitchell 35). An 1831 article in *Fraser’s Magazine*, lamenting that booksellers, and by extension authors, were forced to focus on quantity rather than quality of novels, noted that “Even our venerated Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer himself boasts of bringing out some two or three novels in the same year” (9). If the industrial revolution promoted labor over workmanship and contemplation, many literary authors were among those who suffered, seeing their creative work reduced to a mode of manufacture along with other types of production, and those closest to Bulwer could testify to the extent to which it frustrated his creative capacities and workmanship. In early 1870, a period during which he was working on *The Coming Race*, he would write in a letter that “all literary exertion is repugnant to me, so none of my irons in the fire are a bit hotter” (Lytton 460). As someone who “believed that the artist had to be a man of action as well as a contemplative,” he could not have been fully content with the way that labor’s glorification impacted the work of him and his fellow novelists (Mitchell 169).

The genuinely, if critically, utopian side of Bulwer’s novel depicts a civilization in which these fundamental reversals in humanity’s relationship to labor, workmanship, and contemplation are undone. By creating vril-powered automata that can fulfill the function slaves once fulfilled in antiquity, Bulwer reestablishes the old hierarchy of values; repose, contemplation and creative pursuits are the ends to which

labor is a means. The ability of the Vril-ya to obviate the need for labor by utilizing automata exposes labor's value as derived solely from its necessity. In this way, Bulwer sanctions the pre-industrial revolution conception of labor as a means to an end and thereby critiques its modern glorification. While this reevaluation of labor, work, and contemplation is the centerpiece, *The Coming Race* advances several other alternative sets of cultural norms that contrast with modern ones, each of which is directly connected to this reevaluation. The ideas of the Vril-ya on property, for example, resemble those of a time before property came to be associated with the accumulation of wealth and capital. Their relationship to science is representative of humankind's relationship to it before it came to be perceived as a pragmatic endeavor requiring utilitarian justification, and their idea of individuality is untainted by the concepts of fame or renown and the strife that accompanies them. Given how radically the Vril-ya transgress some of these aspects of Victorian cultural and society, it is not surprising that dystopian interpretations of their civilization would come easily to many readers.²

The novel begins to defy the glorification of labor even before the Vril-ya make their appearance. Bulwer does not give his protagonist an extensive backstory, but one thing that is clear is that, unlike the ambitious and mercenary narrator of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), he values a life of contemplation. An outlier among the *Animal Laborans*, he sees nothing wrong with devoting himself to intellectual and physical exploration of the world when labor is no longer necessary for his survival. Said protagonist is the son of a father who, after a failed stint at politics, "lived much in his library." The son then went to Liverpool to train as a merchant, but when he found himself financially well off, he "resigned for a time all pursuit of the almighty dollar, and became a desultory wanderer over the face of the earth" (3). The opening pages thus reveal that the narrator values labor neither for its own sake nor purely for the riches it can bring, but as a way to create time for contemplation. In this way, Bulwer promotes the values of a contemplative life even before he introduces his alternative civilization. If there is any question whether

the author really endorses this decidedly unproductive search for truth, the fact that it leads to such a fascinating discovery as the Vril-ya is a point in its favor. This exemplary narrator primes Bulwer's reader for the upcoming exemplar of a society running according to similar values.

When the Vril-ya make their first appearance in the novel, "labor of [the] body," to use Arendt's term, seems conspicuously absent (Arendt 79). Transportation, for example, does not require bodily exertion; the creature's wings "seemed to bear him steadily aloft without effort of his own" (*The Coming Race* 13). Language acquisition likewise comes without intensive mental effort. At one point Zee puts the narrator to sleep by touching his forehead, and when he awakens he finds that he "had made still greater advance in the language in the country and could converse with comparative ease and fluency" (24). She had asked him not long before this whether he was aware that languages and other types of knowledge could be acquired in this way (23). One of the next things he learns from them is that what ended the age of hate, envy, passion, social strife, and war was "the gradual discovery of the latent powers stored in the all-permeating fluid which they denominate vril" (27). Essentially, they attained their state of Utopia, with its peace, prosperity, and social tranquility, by discovering a substance that would eliminate the need for labor.

More significantly, this elimination of labor affords them time for quiet contemplation: "The Ana of the community are, on the whole, an indolent set of beings after the active age of childhood. Whether by temperament or philosophy, they rank repose among the chief blessings of life" (51). Significantly, the term "indolent" here does not seem to have any aspersion attached to it. This passage brings labor down in the hierarchy of human activities and, by removing its necessity, reveals that its value is strictly dependent upon that necessity. This change in conditions allows Bulwer to recast indolence as something that would not be inherently bad if "making a living" were not necessary (Arendt 128). He therefore both illuminates and subtly critiques the tendency of moderns to value labor apart from its necessity, suggesting

the need for a method of evaluating activities that does not subject their value to their earning potential. The fact that Bulwer had once written that, “In the high-wrought state of civilization at which we are arrived, few complaints are more common than that of a brain overworked” reveals just how starkly the habits of the Vril-ya differ from those of the Victorians. That he would follow this statement by explaining how it is not always possible to obtain the repose that the doctor recommends and that even when it is possible to get away one is still pursued by “thought” and “care” suggests how difficult it would be for a Victorian to assimilate into Vril-ya society in this respect (*Caxtoniana* 103). Calling attention to labor’s overbearing dominance over modern society does not make it an easy problem to solve, but *The Coming Race* provides a vision of what such an escape would look like.³

If their mastery over the vril makes it easy for them to restore contemplation to its rightful place above labor, it also allows them to elevate the status of workmanship. Part of the way in which Arendt defines *Animal Laborans* is against *Homo Faber*, “the creator of human artifice” (139). While there is little evidence of labor among the Vril-ya, there is much evidence of great workmanship. When the main character observes their civilization for the first time, he notes how, “Deep below to the left lay a vast valley which presented to my astonished eye the unmistakable evidences of art and culture” (7). That the first thing he sees upon entering this society is artifice, not industry, is an early indication of the kind of civilization he has entered. One of the first things he notices about the first building he sees is that “it had been made by hands” (8). While first noting the similarity to Egyptian architecture, on closer observation he decides that it is “more ornamental and more fantastically graceful than Egyptian architecture allows” (8). It would appear that the lack of need for labor has allowed them to hone their ability to create. Workmanship, like contemplation, is more highly prioritized in this world than it is in Bulwer’s England.

Their role as artificers and makers is further reflected in their relationship to their natural environment. Another observation the narrator makes about the first building he sees is that it had been

“hollowed partly out of a great rock” (8). This description suggests the presence of *Homo Faber*, “a destroyer of nature,” in contrast to *Animal Laborans* whose role is nature’s “servant” (Arendt 139).⁴ The vril, as Bulwer’s narrator soon learns, “is capable of being raised and disciplined into the mightiest agency over all forms of matter, animate or inanimate. It can destroy like the flash of lightning, yet differently applied, it can replenish or invigorate life, heal, and preserve” (27). Their domination over the natural world is most apparent in their connection to the underground wildlife. They radically alter their environment by killing massive numbers of animals for the sake of their own survival but do not eat the meat. Their hunting, therefore, is what Arendt would call the “work of [their] hands,” which destroys nature, rather than labor of the body, which serves nature and creates products for consumption (Arendt 79, *The Coming Race* 32). They are molders of and masters over their natural environment.

II The Vril-ya and the Vril: Undoing Modernity

The Vril-ya protect the creative aspects of their pursuits partly by avoiding the dangers of what happens, according to Arendt, when large numbers crowd together, namely the “almost irresistible inclination toward despotism, be this the despotism of a person or of majority rule” and the resulting tendency toward conformity. If the Ancient Greeks understood that the polis “could only survive if the number of citizens remained restricted,” the Vril-ya seem to view their communities in a similar light (Arendt 43). Part of the way in which the people of Bulwer’s subterranean society maintain harmony is by keeping towns very small in population, and keeping the relations more or less familial: “Each community sets its own limit according to circumstances, taking care that there shall never arise any class of poor by the pressure of population upon productive powers of the domain; and that no state shall be too large for a government resembling that of a single well-ordered family” (76). It is not difficult to see how this arrangement would have appealed to Bulwer. Between his twenty-eighth and forty-eighth birthday,

the percentage of England's population living in urban areas went from about a quarter to about one half. This period also witnessed "the rapid urbanization of national culture" and the social problems exacerbated or illuminated by this transformation would attract significant attention from Victorian writers (Hewitt 408). The enforced smallness of Vril-ya communities is presented as a way in which they are able to avoid such problems. It is, in their view, not only the best way to prevent the growth of the kind of impoverished underclass that became such a feature of urban life in Victorian England but the arrangement most conducive to combining "the greatest degree of happiness with the highest degree of intellectual achievement" (76).

The lack of severe social and economic stratification in these communities is among their most conspicuous features. While the novel has traditionally been interpreted as a satire of extreme democratic leveling, their notions of property are not ultimately that extreme. Their sense of property is more ancient than modern and, from Arendt's perspective, would constitute a more sustainable conception. While all pre-modern civilizations viewed property as sacred, to have property did not mean to have wealth so much as to have "one's location in a particular part of the world and therefore to belong to the body politic" (Arendt 61). Under such systems, the head of the family, regardless of wealth or poverty, had his "location" and citizenship in the world (62). The distinction is important because by this older standard most moderns who defend property do not defend "property as such" but "the unhampered pursuit of more property or of appropriation" (110). While the wealth of the Vril-ya is neither common nor equal, "each pursues his own inclinations without creating envy or vying" (*The Coming Race* 29). Even more importantly, there are among them no "hazardous speculations" or "emulators striving for superior wealth or rank" (30). This is not to say they do not possess private property in the modern sense as well as the pre-modern sense, but the older idea of property is not fully displaced by the "unhampered pursuit of more property or of appropriation" as it is among the above-ground moderns (Arendt 110). The fact that nobody

complains about their high taxation reinforces the sense that their conception of property revolves more around dignity than accumulation (*The Coming Race* 82).

The lack of envy and contempt among the Vril-ya is partly a result of their relative lack of economic stratification, but the comparative absence of fame and renown in their culture is also a contributing factor. The narrator recalls how he described to Zee “our great men—poets, philosophers, orators, generals—and defied the Vril-ya to produce their equals” only for her to remain unimpressed. She responds by contending that “this predominance of the few over the many is the surest and most fatal sign of a race incorrigibly savage” (54). They are aware, even if the narrator might not be, that true action cannot take place in isolation, and that even supposedly great men cannot do what they do without help (Arendt 188, 197). Zee’s sentiment on this subject is one which Bulwer seems to have strongly supported, having argued once that “the true object of a State is less to produce a few elevated men than to diffuse a respect for all principles that serve to elevate” (*England and the English* 326).

Like their relative lack of economic and social inequality, the relationship of the Vril-ya to science and technology has often been interpreted as either dystopian or satirical. The college of sages, where “those studies which are deemed the least use in practical life are the more diligently cultivated,” reminds some critics of the scientific pursuits of Swift’s Laputians (*The Coming Race* 30, Knepper 28). However, the strict independence of their pursuit of knowledge from questions of practical application or utility suggests a scientific ethos that many of Bulwer’s contemporaries, and Bulwer himself, took rather seriously. In 1831 William Whewell would lament that those “engaged in remote and abstruse researches” sometimes felt the need to defend their work on the grounds “that no one can foresee the possible results of discovery, and that the most recondite and abstract speculations have often come, by some strange and circuitous route, to have a bearing on the uses of daily life.” While not denying that such serendipity occurs, Whewell maintains that the true value of such knowledge “is that which every lover of it feels in

his own heart;—that it is valuable for its own sake” (404). Thomas Malthus once suggested that, paradoxically, much knowledge and many great inventions would never have come about “if a rational curiosity and a mere love of information had not generally been allowed to be a sufficient motive for the search after truth!” (13). According to Arendt, it is a matter of “historical record” that modern technology was not a product of “a pragmatic desire to improve conditions and better human life on earth.” Rather, the motivation of early scientists lay “exclusively in an altogether non-practical search for useless knowledge” (289). Not only is the philosophy of the college of sages one which, during Bulwer’s lifetime, still had serious and eloquent advocates, it is consistent with the approach that guided such pursuits for most of human history.

Bulwer expounded upon this view of science as a lofty, non-pragmatic endeavor in his own writings. He would argue in *England and the English* (1833) that the “part of science which addresses itself to immediate utility is not the highest” (328). The discovery and comprehension of primary and general principles requires “habits of mind and modes of inquiry only obtained by long years of profound thought and abstract meditation” (329). He believed that continental European countries compared favorably to England when it came to their esteem for such higher scientific pursuit (335). Understood in this way, the college of sages looks less like a satire and more like a restoration of the pursuit of scientific truth to the status that it held before it was compromised by utilitarian considerations. Moreover, the words of the Vril-ya themselves on this subject do not seem intended to paint them in a ridiculous light. As the narrator’s host tells him, “The motive of science is the love of truth.” Their inventor “enjoys an occupation congenial to his tastes.” Science is for man to exercise his mind (72). Alongside the lack of flagrantly ridiculous depictions of their studies as one finds in Swift’s and Butler’s depictions of the Laputians and Erewonians, these testimonies regarding the non-utilitarian benefits of science are a manifesto for returning such pursuits to their original status and function.

If the way that science is understood and practiced among the Vril-ya would appear to evoke pre-modern ideals, their religious practices also seem designed to recapture part of what was lost in the process of industrialism. Arendt argues that the “victory of the *Animal Laborans* would never have been complete had not the process of secularization. . . deprived individual life of its immortality” (Arendt 320). In a letter regarding an early draft of *The Coming Race* that Bulwer had sent to John Forster, he suggested that “Perhaps, too, it would be safe to omit all reference to the power of communicating with the dead” (467). Given what did make it into the published version of the novel, it is not surprising that he had at one point considered giving the Vril-ya such a power. Their religion consists of “the worship of one divine Creator and Sustainer of the universe” and their belief in the afterlife is so wholehearted that they do not regard death with fear or sorrow (44). Their funerals are conducted in a cheerful spirit (101). Instead of “birth” and “death” dates, their coffin lids contain the dates on which the individual in question was “lent to us” and “recalled from us” (102). The sincerity of their belief in life after death is most clearly demonstrated when Taeë considers deliberately dying in order to accompany the narrator to another world upon the latter’s impending execution, as if it were merely one more form of emigration (126). Many of their thoughts on God and the afterlife are thoughts which the Victorians would claim to share, yet Taeë interrogates such claims when he inquires, “None of the Vril-ya fear death: do you?” (124). This inquiry calls the sincerity of upper-world religion into question. The narrator, as a representative of a world in which this deprivation of immortality has taken place, is confronted here with a society that has maintained its religious integrity where the Victorians lost it in their movement toward secularization.

Conclusion

In the years following the publication of Bulwer’s novel, hucksters and visionaries alike would become enormously invested in trying to market or discover the real life equivalent of the vril (Sweet vii-

viii). But the wish for such a power, in our present state, is a “self-defeating” one; a society that glorifies labor will never truly be freed from it (Arendt 5). Only when labor is valued strictly on account of its necessity will freedom from that necessity be liberating. *The Coming Race* brings into focus this barrier to liberation. This sense of the unfitness for utopia of even the best and wisest Victorians is part of what prevents the novel from being naively nostalgic, even though in many ways it does look backward in history for its ideals. Like the critical utopia, Bulwer’s novel seems like more of a “dream” of a better society than a “blueprint” for one, but by illuminating the limitations that make us unfit for utopia, Bulwer makes it possible to question them. He also anticipates the critical utopia genre by revealing the imperfections of the utopian society as well as those of the visitor’s society (Moylan 10). As Komsta has argued, the solidarity among the Vril-ya is in many ways “systemic” rather than “reflective,” but Zee’s decision to rescue the narrator at the end can be read as a “transgressive gesture of reflective solidarity toward the Other” (165, 169). The ways of the Vril-ya are not above reproach, and the Vril-ya at their best are capable of questioning them. By making the incompatibility of the Victorians and the Vril-ya attributable to the imperfections of both, Bulwer gives us all the more reason to view both critically.

While critics have acknowledged the importance and influence of *The Coming Race*, viewing it as “a pioneer” in occult fiction and in alternative history, the kind of radical questioning to which it opens the door has often been overlooked (Campbell 127, Suvin 158). In fact, some have even gone as far as to suggest that “Bulwer urges us to remain content with our present condition and not strive for what we are unfit by nature to achieve, sustain, or enjoy” (Campbell 127). Yet, as this essay has shown, the way that Bulwer discusses many of the ideals of the Vril-ya elsewhere in his writings does not suggest that he saw these ideals as altogether impossible or unnatural. Nor did he view his present historical moment as the pinnacle of social or political advancement. In an essay titled, “On the Spirit in which New Theories Should Be Received,” he argues that a thriving society requires both an “inert and resisting” impulse as

well as an “active and encroaching” one (*Caxtoniana* 138). While he considers a balance between these forces important, he spends a considerable portion of the essay emphasizing the need for open-mindedness toward new ideas, noting that every important truth “was once a novelty” and that “if a philosopher is to pronounce for himself what is possible and what is not, there would soon be no philosophy” (139, 140). Such arguments make it difficult to read *The Coming Race* as advocating for unqualified contentment with the status quo.

As long as the world of the Vril-ya still strikes readers as unpleasant or dystopian, the question of why it leaves this impression will continue to be worth asking. Those members of *Animal Laborans* who read the novel are prompted to reassess the place of labor in their own world. Those who would view the right to property as implying unchecked accumulation of capital and wealth and disdain for high taxation are confronted with a view of property that sharply contradicts their own. When presented with the prospect of a society freed from the need to labor, the “society of jobholders” can hardly be expected to see the prospect as utopian. As Arendt, explaining the cause of the modern distinction between intellectual and manual labor, writes:

Since under modern conditions every occupation had to prove its “usefulness” for society at large, and since the usefulness of intellectual occupations had become more than doubtful because of the modern glorification of labor, it was only natural that intellectuals, too should desire to be counted among the working population. (92)

In other words, intellectuals have grown into the habit of justifying their work by classifying it as labor. Readings of *The Coming Race* that insist on designating it a dystopia may owe something to the tendency of even those among *Animal Laborans* who do what we would call “intellectual” and “skilled” professions to conceptualize their occupations as labor rather than workmanship. This tendency makes it difficult to

envision a society with an alternate means of evaluating activities than their conduciveness to “earning a living.” Bulwer, if nothing else, gives us a glimpse of how such a society might look.

Notes

1. A section from a poem Bulwer wrote in *The New Monthly* reads:

“In short, if any nobler lore,
Your hearers could suspect you knew,
Then, if a man, you’re dubbed a bore
But if a woman damn’d a blue” (qtd. In Mitchell 167).

2. On the surface it may appear that what the Vril-ya achieve by means of the vril is exactly the thing that moderns seek as they continually employ science and technology to reduce the need for labor. But there is one very important difference; what moderns strive to reduce and eliminate is what they call “manual” and “unskilled” labor. But as Arendt argues, there is a more meaningful distinction to be made that has more to do with the purpose and mentality of the tasks than the concrete properties of them (92). All serious activity, including skilled occupations in modernity are done “as labor” not as workmanship (127-28, 141). Even intellectual work can be done *as* labor. The objective of the “society of jobholders” is to “earn a living,” or in other words, to earn money to purchase food to sustain oneself to come back and work another day (127-28). The Vril-ya eliminate “labor” in the true sense of the word. Their time goes into contemplation, pursuit of truth, and workmanship that creates objects of permanence.

3. When discussing the belief of the Vril-ya that animals and even plants partake in the afterlife as well as humans, the narrator approvingly quotes the nineteenth century zoologist Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz’s

argument that it would be a “lamentable loss” if the afterlife did not allow for “the contemplation of the harmonies of an organic world” (qtd. in *The Coming Race* 48). That time and space for contemplation can be found following one’s death would perhaps be some consolation to those who saw the ways of the Vrilya as impossible to realize in this life.

4. When discussing Artifice and workmanship, it would be mistaken to interpret Arendt as championing *Homo Faber*. In fact, Patchen Markell in trying to provide a synopsis of what *The Human Condition* is about suggests her aim is in part “to summon us to defend the possibility of action against the threats imposed by the dominance, and invasiveness, of *Animal Laborans* and *Homo Faber*” (20). Her critical stance toward what she calls *Homo Faber* is apparent in the text, yet for the purpose of discussing the relationship of Bulwer’s novel to its time period, it is most relevant to discuss how the term relates to the contrast she draws between labor and work(manship) and the elevation of one over the other, the replacement of work products to be used with labor products to be consumed.

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Book Reviews

Koehler, Julie L. J., Shandi Lynne Wagner, Anne E. Duggan, and Adrion Dula, editors.

Women Writing Wonder: An Anthology of Subversive Nineteenth-Century British, French, and German Fairy Tales. Wayne State UP, 2021.

<https://www.wsupress.wayne.edu/books/detail/women-writing-wonder>

Popular understanding of the history of the European fairy tale begins with canonical authors like Charles Perrault (late seventeenth to early eighteenth century) and the Brothers Grimm (early nineteenth century), then proceeds to the twentieth-century Walt Disney films, and ends with feminist revisionist fairy tales written by women authors in the past fifty years. Even in fairy-tale scholarship, it has been hard to shake the narrative that male authors established the conservative fairy-tale canon and then female authors beginning in the late twentieth century subverted that canon with revisions that sought to expose and remedy the sexism of classic fairy tales. This narrative has been complicated by robust scholarship on the role of the *conteuses*—French women writers who were Perrault’s contemporaries and just as important as he in establishing the literary fairy tale. As a result, discussions of the role of women in the production of fairy tales have ended up jumping from the seventeenth/eighteenth-century *conteuses* to late-twentieth-century writers like Angela Carter, without much in between. Were women writing fairy tales during the intervening years? *Women Writing Wonder* answers this question with a resounding “yes.”

Women Writing Wonder: An Anthology of Subversive Nineteenth-Century British, French, and German Fairy Tales provides exactly what its title and subtitle indicate. Following an informative general introduction, the book is organized into three sections, each focused on a different country. Each section itself features an introduction providing the nineteenth-century

historical, cultural, and political context for the country at hand, and each of the anthology's twenty-one fairy tales is preceded by a brief (one- to two-page) biographical note on its author. Occasional footnotes explain linguistic nuances and supply additional context. The editors and translators clearly have sought to make the collection accessible to undergraduates, and they have succeeded admirably; the editorial apparatus is jargon-free and does not assume a specialist's knowledge of literary history. At the same time, because many of the tales themselves are not widely known even among fairy-tale scholars, the collection is valuable for specialists as well.

Anne E. Duggan and Adrion Dula, in the introduction Part I, situate nineteenth-century French women's writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution, explaining that women arguably had less freedom to write as the salon culture of the *conteuses* faded and the nineteenth-century idea of "separate spheres" for men and women took hold. But write they did, and the result is a rich variety of tales of fairies and enchanters, cottagers and royals, rapacious ogres and mysterious clouds. Even the biographical introductions are fascinating; I learned that Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis held a prominent position in the household of the duc d'Orléans and that Louise Michel, a prominent socialist, took advantage of her exile in New Caledonia to collect local folklore. In Part I, we find stories including Genlis's "Pamrose, or The Palace and the Cottage" (1801), reminiscent of the *conteuses*' tales in its length, complexity, and focus on the steadfast goodness of its heroine in the face of adversity. Julie Delafaye-Bréhier's "The Story of Little Clotilde" (1817) encourages the child reader to emulate the honesty and generosity of the titular heroine rather than the duplicitousness of her sisters. Félicité de Choiseul-Meuse's "Rose and Black" (1818) features a heroine who, rather like Sleeping Beauty, gets caught in the middle of a conflict between a good fairy and an evil enchanter and is consequently born with a variety of desirable and undesirable "gifts": among others, her skin alternates each day between black and

white. The story presents blackness as ugly, but it also condemns the prince who falls in love with the girl in her white form but rejects her when she turns black.

Julie L. J. Koehler's introduction to Part II observes that fairy tales by nineteenth-century German women served a range of functions: "as Romantic literature, as children's stories, as letters to friends and family, and as subversive social and political commentary" (145). Much scholarly ink has been spilled on the tales of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and on the *Kunstmärchen* (literary fairy tales) written in German by men; several tales collected here were written by women close to these men. As Koehler rightly points out, so far feminist scholars have "written on the gender roles of female characters in the Grimms' stories" and examined the women who supplied the Grimms with many of their tales, but little work has been done on stories actually written and published by women (147). Some of the ones included here (such as Sophie Tieck Bernhardi von Knorring's 1801 "The Deer" and Caroline de la Motte Fouqué's 1806 "The Tears") resemble male-authored *Kunstmärchen* from the Romantic period, marked by a meandering style and highly symbolic renderings of love, nature, and magic. Karoline Stahl's "Princess Elmina" (1818) eschews the typical romance plot; the happiness of the ending lies in the heroine's reunion with her long-lost mother and restoration to royal status. "The Forest Fairy Tale" (1844) by Adele Schopenhauer (a lesbian and the sister of the famous philosopher) explicitly addresses the differing statuses of male and female fairy-tale tellers in a sly frame story. But my favorite selection is Gisela von Arnim's "Of Rabbits," actually a letter she wrote in the 1850s to cheer up an ailing nephew; it is a charming one-page narrative of a child's visit to a rabbit family, complete with simple but evocative drawings.

In the introduction to the British tales included in Part III, Shandi Lynne Wagner aptly points to both the ubiquity of fairy tales in Victorian culture and the urgency in the period of the

“woman question,” an umbrella term for debates around women’s role in the family, in the public sphere, and in the eyes of the law. These two facts together indicate the usefulness of the fairy tale as a genre to be taken up by Victorian women writers. Part III includes several texts that are not widely discussed in scholarship despite the fame of their authors (Elizabeth Gaskell, Christina Rossetti, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley). New to me was George Egerton’s “Virgin Soil” (1894), a furious and sad realist tale about a girl pushed by her mother into marriage with a bad man. Two of the selections in Part III are poems, including a variation on “Sleeping Beauty” by Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1837). LEL’s poem exemplifies the subtle subversion of patriarchy and happily-ever-after marriage endings that the editors of this anthology wish to foreground. After five fairly traditional stanzas lavishly depicting Sleeping Beauty awaiting her prince, in the final stanza LEL introduces the prince, foreshadows the marriage, and concludes the poem with the lines “Ah, the heart which it [Love] must waken / Soon will mourn its rest forsaken!” (285). Indeed!

The anthology’s subtitle promises “subversive” tales. “Subversion” has long been a keyword in fairy-tale studies, always with a positive connotation: much fairy-tale scholarship approvingly highlights ways in which contemporary fairy tales subvert problematically conservative features of classic fairy tales. In response, some scholars (myself included) have striven to demonstrate that not all fairy tales written before the twentieth century are more conservative than those written later. *Women Writing Wonder*’s specification that it provides *subversive* nineteenth-century fairy tales by women is clearly aimed at scholars aware of this ongoing discussion. And I share the desire to emphasize that writers have attempted to subvert gender roles and other societal and generic norms throughout history. Still, our field’s tendency to privilege subversion can itself be limiting. Many stories and poems written by women in the

nineteenth century simply were not particularly subversive; that does not mean, however, that they are uninteresting. This anthology's biographical introductions to individual tales occasionally strain to locate the subversive elements. The heroine of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's "The Invisible Girl" (1833), for example, seems to me to conform quite well to nineteenth-century standards of femininity. It's true, as the editor states, that after banishment from her home, the heroine "surviv[es] in the Welsh countryside on her own," and arguably that she "saves the life of her prince" (266). But in the actual story, the heroine only spends three months on her own, and she seems to have no plans beyond waiting in a tower for her lover to rescue her: "Her only hope was that Henry would return ... she feared that, as her strength was failing and her form wasting to a skeleton, she might die and never see her own Henry more" (280). To call her "a strong and resourceful female heroine" is a stretch (266). I understand the urge to characterize stories as protofeminist but wish that weren't the only surefire way to promote women's writing. "The Invisible Girl" is well worth reading; it's a relatively little-known story by a prominent author, and it combines Gothic tropes with references to "Cinderella" and "Rapunzel" in interesting ways. It shouldn't have to be subversive as well.

Undoubtedly, *Women Writing Wonder* is a welcome addition to fairy-tale scholarship. Well curated, engagingly written, and carefully edited, it is sure to find a ready audience of students and specialists.

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Tschachler, Heinz. *Washington Irving and the Fantasy of Masculinity: Escaping the Woman Within*. McFarland, 2022.

<https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/washington-irving-and-the-fantasy-of-masculinity/>

“Like other men who were becoming frustrated by efforts to keep up with the relentless pressure to modernize,” Heinz Tschachler contends in this study’s prologue,

Irving was obsessed with being a man, and, suffering from his perceived femininity, throughout his career was questing for the self-image of a man whose masculinity seemed secure. He finally found it in George Washington, whose image allowed him to come to terms with his own purportedly ‘female’ defects, especially his shyness and uncertainty. (10-11)

From this central idea Tschachler sets out to explore the intersection of Washington Irving’s life and his works through a psychoanalytic examination of masculinity as it appears across the author’s career, from the “troubled masculinities” of earlier texts like *A History of New York* author’s own struggles with his “anima consciousness”—the “woman within” of the book’s subtitle and Tschachler’s Jung-inspired term for the “feminized masculinity” (8) that plagued Irving with self-doubt and insecurity much of his life. Thoroughly researched and solid as an introduction to many of the broader scholarly conversations involving Irving, Tschachler’s scholarship here offers in-depth analysis of the “jostling of ideologies of manhood in a highly conflicted emotional drama about the successful life,” both as Irving lived it and as he explored it through his writings (10-11).

Tschachler’s examination begins with a clarifying of terms in his prologue and opening chapter, where he sets up the struggle between Irving’s more feminine internal self and the images of masculinity projected onto him by social and familial forces. Presenting this turmoil in Jungian

terms of *anima* and *animus*, respectively, Tschachler suggests that while “the traumatic conflict between inner self and socially sanctioned self would have a paralyzing effect on most people,” Irving used his writing to both process and transform his Jungian “shadows”: “the line-up of male figures in his writings—his masculine archetypal imagines—served ... to transform a sense of his own precarious form of male self-hood, his imperfectly realized masculinity, together with his purportedly female defects” (8). The next set of chapters explores this act of transformation: Chapter Two delineates “residual” masculinities tied to sentimentalism and the traditions of English gentility, Chapter Three explores the “troubled masculinities” of characters like Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane as they navigate the changing sociocultural landscape of the United States, and Chapter Four presents the “exemplary manhood of Columbus” and the other archetypal masculinities of Irving’s Spanish writings as “a kind of halfway point in the arc that eventually led Irving back to George Washington” (106).

From this halfway point Chapter Five returns to the United States and its history, where Irving attempted to temper the “rugged individualism and egotistical ruthlessness that characterized the cult of masculinity at the time” with “the sentimental capacities of the affections” in works like *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), *Astoria* (1836), and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) (140). Finding these frontier heroes “unsuitable as archetypes of achieved masculinity,” however, Irving “set his sights on George Washington” as the true exemplar of America (166). Tschachler’s final chapter explores Irving’s vision of Washington as “uphold[ing] the old Federalist hope of civilized urbanity and ‘statesmanship of the highest order’ in the midst of democratic leveling and vulgarity,” a combination and “amplification of the archetypes” that finally becomes “a benefactor, a father who benevolently rules over his family, both of kin and of the nation” (167). As Tschachler concludes in his epilogue, “In Washington, Irving transformed the figure of his own desires into

an avatar of masculine perfection,” the complementary animus image to Irving’s own anima consciousness (197).

Tschachler’s psychoanalytic approach in this study is at its best when it engages with Irving and his works not just in isolation but as a product of the times, the historical moments of U. S. sociocultural history where the nature of manhood itself was shifting. Tschachler helpfully connects these changes to the continuing development of capitalism in the United States, where the emphasis goes from the community-minded, land- and standing-based ideals of manhood of the older, English and European genteel tradition, to the self-made, rugged individualist masculinity of American entrepreneurs and speculators. As Tschachler frames it,

The old paradigm of ‘communal manhood’ was rooted in the life of the community and qualities of a man’s character; in contrast, the new paradigm of ‘self-made manhood’ came to be based on individual achievement, direct action, entrepreneurial competition and, on the downside, profound anxieties. (62)

These are the very characteristics that find expression in Irving’s gallery of masculine archetypes over the course of his career, from the sentimental, pseudonymous figures of Jonathan Oldstyle and Diedrich Knickerbocker, the character of the Squire in *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), and the Dutch burghers of various tales to the integrated masculine perfection of George Washington, where

Irving reconciled the two mutually excluding ideals of aristocracy and republican simplicity, of Englishness and American exceptionalism, by emphasizing that Washington actually worked, felicitously combining ‘industry and temperance’ with ‘riches,’ without producing ‘luxury’ and, consequently, ‘effeminacy, intoxication, extravagance, vice and folly.’ (139)

Given Tschachler's previous publications on currency and the monetary history of the United States, which he mentions in the prologue "meant that a book project on Irving had to be shelved" (1), it is not surprising that this historical situating is a strength of the current text. Indeed, by framing Irving's writings in this way, Tschachler places them in a useful broader context, helping to ground the biographical and psychoanalytic approaches in ways that make them more generally applicable for readers not otherwise be interested in these types of criticisms. Additionally, Tschachler's copious notes and frequent presentation and synthesis of previous scholarship provide helpful background in almost all areas of discussion, giving readers less familiar with Irving and his texts plenty of foundation for the current analysis.

Surprisingly, the Jungian apparatus of the text is its weakest point, primarily because it is mostly unnecessary for Tschachler's argument, grounded as it is both biographically and historically. Tschachler does a fine job of presenting Irving's own "imperfectly realized masculinity" and the ways it finds representation and compensation in his works without much need for Jungian terminology; in fact, the extra explanation and clarification that comes with the Jung-inflected aspects sometimes serves to cloud the flow of ideas, making what might otherwise be a tighter and more coherent thread less so. After the first chapter, where it is discussed most directly, the text's Jungian apparatus feels almost like an afterthought, its terms appearing infrequently and often in ways that do not seem to add much to the argument as it is currently developing.

For example, Tschachler recounts Irving's commitment to literary art thus:

Irving decided to become a writer in order to achieve a 'socially sanctioned identity.' The decision would allow him both to eschew male subject formation in terms of business and to imaginatively delineate all kinds of alternative masculinities, all in the project of

integrating his own imperfectly realized masculinity. (74)

This clearly captures Tschachler's larger argument without any reference to Jung, anima consciousness, or the archetypal masculine images Tschachler references in laying out his Jungian framework. The majority of the analysis and argument built on it functions well with terms grounded in general descriptions and explanations of the sociocultural masculine and feminine of a given time and their expressions in both historical and fictional figures as archetypes in a non-technical sense; in contrast, the more technical Jungian terms often feel vague or redundant when they appear. Overall, while the Jungian ideas Tschachler employs are by no means harmful, they contribute less than they probably should to an otherwise thorough exploration.

For the general reader, Tschachler's study serves as a good introduction to Irving's life and the role of his writings both privately and as part of the growing cultural life of the United States, especially in connection with entrepreneurial capitalism and its effects on ideas of manliness and success. Those with more background in Irving scholarship may find it less useful overall given how much of Tschachler's work here is grounded in previous biography and analysis, but there should still be plenty of interest. For readers of *II9* specifically, the text may not offer much: the fantasy of the title is that of psychology rather than of genre, giving it little overlap with the journal's usual focus, especially in later chapters. Tschachler's third chapter, with discussions of *Rip Van Winkle* (1819) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), is the most likely place for the readership of *II9* to find new insights or connections to the folk and fairy tale traditions of this journal's purview. Overall, Tschachler provides an interesting analysis of one of nineteenth-century America's most recognizable authors via the intersection of biography, psychology, and the shifting definitions of masculinity in the early United States.

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Cowlshaw, Brian, editor. *The Rail, the Body and the Pen: Essays on Travel, Medicine and Technology in 19th Century British Literature*. McFarland, 2021.

<https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/the-rail-the-body-and-the-pen/>

Brian Cowlshaw's recent collection on science and technology in nineteenth-century literature directs the essays contained within to a readership of "non-specialists", those who might resemble their nineteenth-century counterparts, "intellectually curious non-experts, ordinary readers who wanted to keep up with the latest developments" in "scientific writing" (2). *The Rail, the Body and the Pen* seeks to expand the reach of critical, scholarly writing and make exciting developments in literary research open to all who are interested. This is a noteworthy purpose, and one that reflects, I think, wider discussions throughout academia on the cultural chasm between academic and public discourse, the intellectual elitism that has excluded wider reading audiences from research writing and perpetuated the idea of the 'ivory tower'. In order to do so, Cowlshaw promises an exploration of "how nineteenth-century technologies speak through the literature of the time and change the ambient culture" without the reader having to "trudge through field-specific or academic jargon" (1, 2). It is an ambitious aim, and one that this collection does not quite achieve. At a time when incredible advances in science and technology – including artificial intelligence, vaccinations, and space exploration – are a regular topic in everyday, popular discourse, significant connections between interested readers of contemporary developments, nineteenth century readers, and the collection's own readership could have been made. As the editor sets up his purpose for the book, this comparison between readership and the continuing trends in popular scientific writing could demonstrate the relevance this type of literary research has for everyone, not just academics.

The volume approaches a broad topic – technologies in nineteenth-century literature – in a slightly unbalanced way. An angle that has been a persistently popular choice for researchers, Cowlshaw attempts to nuance the focus to two, somewhat permeable, branches: railways and medicine. These two halves of the volume have some interesting overlap and, of course, their own important distinctions. But in a collection that names the “rail” and the “body” as two equal focal points, the concentration of essays in ‘Part 2: Medicine and the Body’ is jarring. Nonetheless, as Cowlshaw mentions in his introduction, the discussions had within and between the essays in each section, and between the two Parts, offers some stimulating links. From thinking through the ways in which rail travel facilitated early psychological theories in Richard Leahy’s chapter, to the understanding of telepathy and other disembodied forms of brain activity in O.R. Teregulova’s, and the implications new technologies in travel, detection, and diagnosis had for Victorian women in Chandrama Basu, Zoë Perot, and Elizabeth Hornsey’s chapters, this collection provides readers with a broad introduction to some of the ways scientific and technological discourses overlapped and implicated other areas of science in the nineteenth-century imagination.

‘Part 1: Trains and Travel’ does well to cover, in a small number of chapters, the breadth of discussions that were being had around mechanized transport and expanding networks. The first chapter thinks through how railways encouraged the development of some areas of psychoanalysis, most interestingly through the psychological pressures travellers faced when trying to navigate devitalized railway timetables, as well as the uncanny nature of railway travelling: the body remaining stationary while travelling at increasingly faster speeds. Leahy reads railways and railway travelling in two sensation novels as a clearly fatiguing experience of industrial modernity. This is followed by a chapter that traces a narrative of imperial Western exceptionalism in science fiction through wider technological developments, and also sees these narratives persisting in

contemporary science-fiction print and film. The final two chapters in this first section look back to railways and railway travelling, and explore some of the novel ways women could engage with industrialized transport. Reading female detectives, in Basu's chapter, simultaneously provides a remedy or distraction from the fear of railway travelling, and a further cultural anxiety as female detectives eroded and transgressed various social boundaries. Basu ultimately reads railways and female detectives as concurrent shocks of modernity. Distinctively, the final chapter reads women and railways in three canonical Victorian novels, *Middlemarch* (1871), *North and South* (1854), and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and posits that women in these texts find themselves "in a place of tension between the old, rural order and the new, modern world of technology which the railway physically imposes on their lives" (81).

'Part 2: Medicine and the Body,' almost twice the length of the first section, further explores some of the ways psychology and medicine developed alongside technological developments in the nineteenth century. With essays revisiting ideas of devitalized, industrial time, telepathy, diagnostic medicinal tools, and photography, the second section provides an exciting overview of how a wide range of medical and technological developments entered the public and literary imagination. Notable chapters in this section include Susan Johnston's 'Factory Time: Mechanization and Monotony in the Victorian Imagination', where she emphasizes the importance of recognizing the nuanced distinction between the changing experiences of time in the nineteenth century after the industrial revolution. She understands, alongside others, that it is anachronistic to label pre-industrial time 'time-less', as it was under the strict timings of seasons, days, nights, the church-bell and so on. As such, the unease felt around industrial, abstract time in the nineteenth century was thus "a contest over the control of time rather than over regulation itself" (95). In other words, as workers moved to factories away from smaller domestic workshops, their time was no

longer their own to control, sold as it had been with their labor. Elizabeth Hornsey's chapter also offers a fascinating discussion on the development of speculums, alongside other medical tools, that provided physicians with visual access to women's reproductive organs, and draws connections to the female vampire in *Carmilla* (1872) and the supposedly incomprehensibility of the female body (171).

Throughout all of the essays, however, and I think in part because of the collection's promise to avoid academic jargon, nuance is lost. In trying to engage an "intellectually curious" non-specialist audience with specialist academic topics, the writers include vast, and sometimes shallow, literature reviews that require closer engagement with in order to fully appreciate their significance for this research. The breadth of these reviews is understandable, wanting to give the reader the best possible overview of the leading ideas in these areas. But by essentially listing various points made throughout academic debates, the author's own argument is left searching for firm theoretical or methodological ground to take root in.

A more serious concern lies with the collection's lack of engagement with imperialism and the impact this had on scientific and technological developments throughout the nineteenth century. While Sobia Kiran's chapter explicitly addresses the presentation of imperialism in science fiction, other chapters should contextualize some of their findings within the wider, imperial British world of the nineteenth century. For example, in Leahy's discussion of the development of psychology alongside the intensification of rail travel, he references Social Darwinism and Herbert Spencer, without making note of the influence he had on scientific racism and the racist applications his notion of survival of the fittest engendered. In another instance, Perot defines Victoria's reign through the railway, but only in Britain. Victoria's reign was not limited to Britain in the nineteenth century, and neither were the railways, which expanded into all

corners of the globe (and Empire) and actively contributed to British hegemony. Daniel Headrick has thoroughly demonstrated that the development of much science and technology in the nineteenth century was demanded by, facilitated by, and influenced by imperial developments, and while many critics since have questioned the reality of these developments being ‘one-way’, imperialism’s role in British science and technology cannot be overlooked.

Overall, this collection provides readers with a broad, though sometimes lacking, wider reading list, and a taste of the many varied ways in which technological and medical developments encroached on the public mind through literature in the nineteenth century. While there are significant limits and occasional errors in the collection, it makes an important effort to engage a wider reading public in academic work, something that we may be seeing more of in the future.

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Neill, Anna. *Human Evolution and Fantastic Victorian Fiction*. Routledge, 2021.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003154181/human-evolution-fantastic-victorian-fiction-anna-neill>

Situating itself amidst a legacy of titles that have made significant contributions to the field of Darwinism in literature, spanning across classics like Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots* (1983) as well as Stephen Jay Gould's *Ever Since Darwin* (1977) and *The Panda's Thumb* (1980), Anna Neill's latest publication explores the intersectionalities between nineteenth-century British sf and the racist temporalities of Victorian evolutionary anthropology. In her interpretations of "fantastic" Victorian and Edwardian fictions, Neill analyzes anthropological ideas about race, culture, and species difference through her reading of a variety of literary forms: utopia, dystopia, nonsense, Gothic horror, and the peculiar hybrid forms of the modern fairy tale or children's fable. Strange twists of plot in such tales determine evolutionary fortunes or imaginatively manipulate deep antiquity as well as the distant future.

Neill successfully charts the collision of temporalities through her analysis to establish an imaginative circuitry between geological antiquity and human-caused urban environmental and institutional degradation. She begins with three child fantasy fictions: Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), Lewis Carroll's *Alice* stories (1865-1871), and Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories for Little Children* (1902). In each case, she notes, a young protagonist navigates a marvelous evolutionary landscape and in the process appears to undergo moral growth. The next two chapters shift the focus to evolutionary depictions of human and non-human relations. Chapter 5 looks at the island laboratory of H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) and Chapter 6 concentrates on the Machinate Literary Mammal of Samuel Butler's "strange stories." The final chapters explore depictions of imagined human futures, particularly as responses to evolutionist

social engineering. Chapter 6 reads Edwin A. Abbott's *Flatland* (1884) and the book ends with a discussion of three socialist utopian stories: Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), and Wells's *A Modern Utopia* (1905).

The title's unique contribution to an established field of studies may be located in the author's handling of the concept of time in Victorian and Edwardian realist fiction. Neill in her complex and varied ways engages with the notion of human agency at a crossroads with evolutionary gradualism as well as a profoundly non-human temporality. She not only dexterously merges the deep past and the lived present in her interpretation of the Victorian realism, but she also contemporizes human exceptionalism and evolutionary progress by foregrounding her research on an understanding of forms of temporal representation that the modern realist novel banishes, thereby severing ties with the possibilities to narrate the Anthropocene. Neill also recalls contemporary cognoscentes such as Amitav Ghosh in criticizing the temporal havoc these narratives create in challenging ideas about gradual and progressive human social development that justified colonial violence from the past. Neill has a clear vision in spotting the trend that wherever humanity enjoys an evolutionarily exceptional status in fantastic fiction, the long climb from primitive to complex organism, like the rise of "savage" to "civilized" nation, appears as simultaneously gradual and progressive. However, Neill uses the term "fantastic fiction" rather than "scientific romance" to describe these texts because in each case they narrate the heroic adventure ironically. Neill elucidates the ways their protagonists are often involuntary adventurers who frequently struggle to navigate the fantastic worlds they have stumbled into. As fantastic narratives, all the stories in one way or another disorder the version of deep time within which evolutionary anthropology measures human achievement. Consequently, a number of them sever

the analogy between individual development and the supposed ascent from animal or savage to civilized human, or, as Neill suggests, between evolutionary biology and social theory.

In Chapter 2, “Phylogeny Recapitulates Ontogeny,” Neill interestingly weaves in issues of race and class in her textual exposition of Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies*. She radically exposes the evolutionary logic behind the disturbing depictions of race and class difference in this novel. Neill painstakingly illustrates the novelist’s disturbing juxtaposition of protagonist Tom’s moral growth with depictions of the degenerate condition of “less-than-fully human racial others,” which includes enslaved Africans, the starving native Irish, and the ignorant English underclasses—all categories of what Kingsley elsewhere disturbingly denotes as “human chimpanzees.” At this point, the child’s reform is no longer imagined as the effect of transformative immersion in an interspecies world, but instead as an allegory of evolutionary progress where the highest pinnacle of human success is the self-made Victorian gentlemen. Interestingly, the most noteworthy formulation on the idea of such “degeneration” had not been constructed until 1857 when Benedict Augustin Morel, a French psychiatrist born in Vienna, published his *Treatise on Degeneration of the Human Species* wherein he views degeneration as an irreversible physical and mental deterioration from a higher to a lower form. During the second half of the nineteenth century, such theories of degeneracy were to be worked into ideas about ethnology, race, and gender. From fictional representations of degeneracy explored in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), and Robert Louis Stevenson’s, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), the notion of abhuman, i.e. something that is only vestigially human, found itself implemented in the critical discourses of the modern genres of sf and fantasy with no delay at all.

To sum up, Neill has been successful in achieving her goal of laying bare the gradualist conception of development from child-animal-primitive to fully human adult which obscures expressions of human and non-human interaction and agency in shaping cognitive descent within much smaller units of time. She excels further in identifying the possibility of liberation in forms of storytelling that resist such gradualist chronology. However, it would perhaps be nice to have an extended conclusion as a befitting culmination of her argument. Though her detailed methodology leaves hardly any stone unturned in tracking the circuitous path that texts offer in illustrating modes of engagement with the human past and future, the relevance of the fantastic and the unknowable may have been further accomplished but for the dearth of a befitting finale! However, the lucidity of language and the clarity of vision that Neill brings to the table makes the book a pleasurable read.

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Brittany, Michelle, and Nicholas Diak, editors. *Horror Literature from Gothic to Postmodern: Critical Essays*. McFarland, 2020.

<https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/horror-literature-from-gothic-to-post-modern/>

Horror Literature from Gothic to Postmodern is a collection of essays which began as conference papers from the 2017 and 2018 meetings of the Anne Radcliffe Academic Conference. The editors, Brittany Michelle and Nicholas Diak, are both creative writers and editors for McFarland who co-host the conference. The book includes essays on horror literature ranging from early British Gothic to contemporary postmodern horror. As Lisa Morton's foreword makes clear, the book is meant to answer questions such as what horror literature's ancestral line is and which major works of Gothic led to horror (1). This is all framed as an attempt to justify the academic study of horror. Morton ties horror to genre studies more broadly, citing Daniel Chandler's argument that genre studies reveal cultural values when examined in their contexts—a commonplace argument in Gothic and horror studies since at least Teresa A. Goddu's 1997 book *Gothic America*. It is a bit odd that this book takes such a broad focus, especially considering that horror studies is already a well-established field.

Horror Literature from Gothic to Postmodern comes up short in answering the questions Morton poses in the foreword. It does not narrativize the development of Gothic to horror literature or map the major works in those genres. Instead, the book is divided into four sections and an afterword. The sections loosely group essays pertaining to "Horror Writers Who Forged New Ground," "Spotlighting Horror Writers," "Exploring Literary Theory in Horror," and "Disease, Virus and Death in Horror" with an afterword by librarian Becky Spratford about housing horror literature in libraries during a time in which book bans are commonplace. While the sections "Horror Writers Who Forged New Ground" and "Spotlighting Horror Writers" make sense for a

book that attempts to track Gothic literature from its roots to contemporary horror, the “Exploring Literary Theory in Horror” and “Disease, Virus and Death in Horror” sections make less sense—especially considering that these sections take up half the book. Literary theory shows up in most of the essays, not just in the “Exploring Literary Theory in Horror” section, and many of the major developments in Gothic and horror studies are overlooked in the theory section without mention or justification. The “Disease, Virus and Death in Horror” section stands on its own. It never becomes clear how this section relates to the others.

The quality of the essays varies greatly. Some are well researched and argued while others are poorly executed. The book starts well with Elizabeth Bobbitt’s chapter. Bobbitt defines early British Gothic and introduces the reader to the first mentions of horror within Gothic literature—Radcliffe’s famous essay on “horror” and “terror.” Bobbitt argues that Radcliffe’s *Gaston de Blondville* (1826) was the first Gothic work to take the supernatural seriously instead of explaining it away, as writers such as Matthew Gregory Lewis and even Radcliffe herself had done before. Bobbitt joins the contemporary conversation surrounding the cultural context of early British Gothic works, effectively asserting that Radcliffe made the supernatural real in order to confront British readers with the injustices of their medieval past and its haunting of their contemporary narratives—a reality customarily paved over with negative portrayals of Normans wherein British characters are the victims, not perpetrators, of violence. It is a bit baffling why the editors chose to open a book about tracking the influence and progression of Gothic to horror literature with an essay that examines one of Radcliffe’s least-read novels, but Bobbitt does a good job providing enough historical background to give the reader a sense of Gothic’s and horror’s origins.

The remainder of the first section is quite weak, thus acting as a microcosm of the book's overall range of quality. The subject of the second chapter, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), makes sense as a touchstone for Gothic and horror studies as its effects are clearly felt to this day. However, the inclusion of Max Brooks' *World War Z* (2006) as the third and final entry in a section about writers who "forged new ground" in Gothic and horror literature is questionable at best. The argument that *World War Z* forged new ground in horror literature is weak, as discussed below. Furthermore, no explanation is ever provided for why these writers and not other influential authors, such as Stephen King, are highlighted in this section.

In the second chapter, Erica McCrystal summarizes Stevenson's narrative and its adaptation and references throughout time but never proposes an argument. McCrystal does not back up any assertions about the influence of Stevenson's story on Western society with citations from other scholars. She spends most of the chapter noting adaptations of *Jekyll and Hyde* and references to it in contemporary popular culture without asserting a purpose for tracking them. McCrystal does point out that many people continue to read the duality of Jekyll and Hyde into their lives—a potentially interesting and fruitful observation. However, she does not go on to assess the values coded into the "Jekyll and Hyde" metaphor or consider how these values may connect to larger systems of meaning. For instance, many scholars have examined the savage/civilized binary coded into the narrative and how it connects to Stevenson's cultural context. It would be interesting to see McCrystal consider how this savage/civilized binary changed over time as uses of the "Jekyll and Hyde" metaphor adapted to new contexts.

The third and final chapter of the first section is about one of the newest works of horror literature addressed in the book—which is exciting—but is poorly researched and executed. J.

Rocky Colavito examines class upheaval in *World War Z*, arguing that social categories and the binaries that hold them up are disrupted after the novel's zombie apocalypse. In the novel, the rich and previously powerful characters become nearly useless in the face of a world where skilled physical labor is needed in order to rebuild. Colavito argues that this world collapses class binaries of upper and lower as it "undermines, overturns, and redefines social class" (41). However, according to Colavito's summary of the novel, it seems more like these binaries are simply flipped, not deconstructed or overturned as concepts. For example, Colavito claims that *World War Z* is of specific value for collapsing the binary between human and savage in zombie narratives. Colavito examines how "savage" is generally a code for the reemergence of the "buried past" in horror (50). While this is true—and considered common knowledge in horror studies—Colavito's argument neither deconstructs nor undermines notions of "savage" and "civilized" but reinscribes them. Instead of questioning these concepts by placing them in their white supremacist historical context, Colavito's argument makes it sound as if all the characters become savage when civilization collapses. And this theme has, in fact, been explored at least since George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1967), which makes it difficult to see how *World War Z* contributes anything groundbreaking to horror.

Furthermore, *Horror Literature from Gothic to Postmodern* largely overlooks queerness and race in Gothic and horror, two well-established and important subjects. That the book concerns itself with Western—largely British and American—Gothic and horror is taken for granted, something that Naomi Simone Borwein's excellent chapter on Aboriginal Australian horror brings into stark focus. Borwein crafts an intriguing argument about Aboriginal Australian subjectivity in horror narratives. She posits that Western "anthropological readings of monstrosity" in Aboriginal Australian horror have long limited any serious study of the cultural differences

between Aboriginal Australian horror and Western horror theory (141). Borwein theorizes a “synchronic horror” in Aboriginal Australian narratives that depends on a non-linear understanding of time that defies Western, linear conceptions of time and undermines the Western horror tendency to portray the racial Other as a monster (155). Borwein joins an exciting, emerging critical conversation around Indigenous peoples, monstrosity, and genre fiction. It is a shame to see a potentially groundbreaking essay such as Borwein’s hidden near the back of a book that may drive many readers away early on with its inconsistencies.

Horror Literature from Gothic to Postmodern is a mixed bag containing important works of scholarship pertaining to Gothic and horror literature alongside poorly researched and argued chapters. I was surprised to find multiple misplaced commas and a run-on sentence early in the book, the highs and lows in quality making for a jarring reading experience. While this volume may not be worth your time overall, it would be well worthwhile for Gothic and horror scholars to read the chapters by Elizabeth Bobbitt, Bridget E. Keown, Naomi Simone Borwein, Kevin J. Wentmore, Jr., and Johnny Murray. These chapters are all well-argued and novel, contributing important advancements to their fields. While the inclusion of creative writers in the book is refreshing—Lisa Morton’s foreword being thoughtful and Danny Rhodes’ chapter possibly being of great use to creative writers looking for instruction on atmospheric writing—the book feels disjointed and falsely advertised as a guide to the history of Gothic and horror fiction.

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American literature forthcoming in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* and *Studies in the Fantastic*, respectively.

Banerjee, Suparno. *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity*. U of Wales P, 2020.

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/I/bo86586770.html>

In *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity (ISF)*, Suparno Banerjee highlights the hybridity of Indian sf by evaluating its creation at the intersection of Indian and Western cultures and proceeds to develop this theme along with other patterns more elaborately. Banerjee is an associate professor of English and an established scholar on Indian sf with many scholarly publications to his credit, including his dissertation, *Other Tomorrows: Postcoloniality, Science Fiction and India* (2010), which studies Indian sf from a postcolonial perspective, arguing that it “intervenes in the history-oriented discourse of postcolonial Anglophone Indian literature and refocuses attention on the nation’s future” by negotiating “the stigma of colonialism to a nation emerging as a new world power” (1).

Banerjee proposes to “provide a coherent and sustained analysis, and a wider picture of Indian sf, tasks which are not possible within the confines of an article, the multiple voices of an anthology or a journal issue” (1). *ISF*, using a combination of “a community of practice and cultural history approach” (8), also shows that Indian sf with its “imagination of alterity” has always resisted “fantasies of imperialism resulting from progress and modernity” (7). Taking inspiration from Sami Ahmad Khan’s *Star Warriors of the Modern Raj: A Critical Study of Science Fiction in Indian English* (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, 2016) on Indian English sf, Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay’s *Bangla Kalpavigyan: Science Fiction in a Transcultural Context* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2013) on Bangla sf, and Ajay Singh’s (*Hindi Sahitya me Vigyan Katha* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2002) on Hindi sf, which take a comprehensive view of single language traditions,

ISF examines “larger patterns and cultural cross-pollination at the national level” including science fiction produced in several Indian languages (19).

ISF, the much-awaited history of Indian sf “from a national tradition” (1), has been overdue considering that the *Indian Journal of Science Fiction Studies* started its journey in 1998 with the establishment of the *Indian Association for Science Fiction Studies*. Banerjee takes this opportunity to offer an insider perspective on the definition and genealogy of Indian sf along with “major thematic patterns across multiple languages” (2). He opens the book with a chronology of Indian sf starting from Kylas Chunder Dutt’s “A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945” (1835) to *The Gollancz Book of South Asian Science Fiction* (2019) edited by Tarun Saint. Banerjee also enlists the Indian sf works that won the prestigious international sf awards like Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K. Dick as well as the national awards to highlight the quality of Indian sf and its potential to attract the global market.

Banerjee redefines sf using an Indian cultural lens, and draws on the insights of both Western scholars like Darko Suvin and Carl Freedman and Indian scholars like Adrish Bardhan and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay to establish a definition of it as literature with “a cognition effect” (8), reflecting a combination of taxonomic and historical approaches. *ISF* also tries to loosely define “Indian,” including both the works produced during British colonialism and after partition in 1947. Banerjee, taking India as a “state-nation” (10) (because of its openness to diversity and heterogeneity) and “culture as multilocal” (12), adopts a more inclusive approach by including not only the works produced within India (in many languages, especially English, Hindi, Bangla, Marathi, and Tamil) but also its diasporic community in his story of Indian sf.

Banerjee distinguishes Indian sf as “a genre of alterity” with chapter names such as “Other Times,” “Other Spaces,” “Other Tomorrows,” and “The Others,” focusing on four elements: “time

of action, space of action, characters that perform such action, and the epistemic base determining the nature of these narrative elements” (13). The first chapter, “Genealogies,” narrates the story of Indian sf chronologically by dividing its evolution into four distinct stages from colonial through postcolonial to the present times. It depicts the indebtedness of Indian sf to the British educational system, the gradual “consolidation of sf as a genre in Popular culture” by attracting writers of various local languages still under Western influence, the emergence of a nationalistic element in the 1940s, the experience of the golden age of indigenous sf from 1947-95, the sharing of boundaries with other popular fiction genres and myths, the development of Indian sf film in 1960s, and the rise of Indian sf in English in the 1990s with nationalistic concerns and “global ambitions” (14-15).

The second chapter, “Cognition and Estrangements,” focuses on the diversity of epistemologies working together in world-building in Indian sf. Competing epistemologies like Vedic science, myth, and Western techno-science contribute to the hybridity of Indian sf. This chapter offers a detailed analysis of the works by J. C. Bose, Narlikar, Satyajit Ray, and several short stories. The third chapter, “Other Times: Imagining the Future” offers an examination of how Indian sf imagines the past in three different ways: 1) stories written from a nationalistic perspective imagine a glorious precolonial past valuing subaltern knowledge, 2) stories that subvert colonial authority without privileging nationalistic perspective, and 3) stories that challenge “the monolithic narrative of a Hindu past” (17). The chapter also examines alternative histories like Premendra Mitra’s *Ghanada* stories (1945-88) and Vandana Singh’s *Tetrahedron* (2008). Both chapters offer a detailed overview of Indian sf comparing and contrasting them with Western sf to illustrate similarities as well as points of disjunction.

The fourth chapter, “Other Spaces: Utopian Discourses and Non-expansionist Journeys,” draws on the insights of Fredric Jameson, Tom Moylan, and Scott Bukatman and examines both utopian and dystopian elements in Indian sf to argue that they reimagine India “as a space on which forces of patriarchy, corruption, identity politics and imperialism have wreaked and are still wreaking havoc” (17). The chapter also analyzes the non-expansionist nature of Indian interplanetary sf in contrast to Western sf, which can be read as a colonial fantasy. The fifth chapter, “The Others: Aliens, Robots, Cyborgs and Other Others,” using works by Stuart Hall, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Donna Haraway as the theoretical framework, argues that “Indian SF often presents a view from this ‘other side’, i.e., through the eyes of the ‘aliens’, or other ‘Others’, such as clones, cyborgs, AIs, mutants and creatures” (18). This chapter critically examines the works by Satyajit Ray, Vandana Singh, and Samit Basu to posit that these marginalized “others” represent an experience of alienation both within Indian society as well as the Indian diaspora, “who are aliens both at home and abroad” (18). However, some “others,” in the selected works by Laxman Londhe and Chitramani Deshmukh for example, are presented as intruders, invaders, or benefactors. Both chapters present an in-depth analysis of the subversion of sf by Indian writers to address local issues.

The conclusion, “Close Encounters,” reiterates the hybrid nature of Indian sf as a product of intersectionality with various local and Western cultures. Banerjee observes that, at both national and international levels, English Indian sf draws greater critical attention than “bhasha literature” or sf produced in local languages (191). This undermining or underappreciation of the works in local languages is a common practice in postcolonial countries. Though recently critical works on local Indian sf have been produced by Sami Khan, Ajay Singh, and Hans Harder—thus

making Indian sf an important part of global sf studies—these works do not offer a detailed history and genealogy of Indian sf.

Thus, *ISF* breaks new ground by presenting “the larger tradition of Indian sf and its overarching patterns and evolution” (19). As a detailed literary history of Indian sf, *ISF* makes a seminal contribution to sf studies and has been rightly welcomed by sf scholars like John Rieder, Joan Gordon, and Vandana Singh. It will serve as a milestone for students and academic scholars on Indian and South Asian sf.

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Young, Simon. *The Boggart: Folklore, History, Place-names and Dialect*. U of Exeter P, 2022.

<https://www.exeterpress.co.uk/products/the-boggart>

Simon Young's *The Boggart: Folklore, History, Place-names and Dialect* is an immensely comprehensive examination of boggart-lore in a specific part of Northern England he calls "Boggartdom" throughout Victorian times and beyond. The author includes several maps of Boggartdom in each chapter, and most of these are visually effective and informative, such as one that shows where the authors were writing about boggarts (41), where landmarks include boggart in the name (54), what counties used boggart (58), a map locating parents who would use boggartsto scare their children into behaving (63), related boggart names (72), and one that tracks and quantifies boggart memories (180). However, there are a few instances where the figures are not clear. In Chapter Four, the author refers to the "account . . . drawn up here" (82), but there is no reference to a figure, and no figure on that page, only the opposing page. Then Figure 19 is referenced on page 83 but not shown until page 86, four figures later. Nevertheless, what stands out throughout the book is how extremely thorough Young is in his definitions and his research and how he treats people who believe in the supernatural with respect.

Section I mostly examines the dialect of those who use the word boggart, where they were located, what they mean, and when they use other related words. Chapter One provides exhaustive sources for all mentions of boggarts (4), which most often means "ghost," though the author ends with what he believes is the best definition, "a generic name for an apparition," a definition that comes from Elizabeth Wright (7). The author further demonstrates the general nature of the term with a diagram showing how several other supernatural names stem from boggart, including demons, devils, ghosts, shape-shifters, and household spirits (9). Young ends with the idea that to study boggarts is to study a supernatural "ecosystem" of a given time (25), an interesting phrase

that really captures how he is writing about the boggart specifically to point toward something greater about the supernatural in general. Chapter Two examines boggart origins, including the etymology of the word. While Young is again extremely thorough in his listing of sources and scholarship on boggarts, this section makes for dense reading (28). The last chapter in Section I looks at the use of boggart in the time period and explains he is the first to do so. The author has four ways to decide where the term boggart was used: landmarks and places named after boggarts, when people referenced and named specific boggarts, boggart in Wright's *Dialect Dictionary*, and boggart in the Survey of English Dialects. He effectively wraps up Section I by reexamining the common theme of dialect in the first three chapters and points toward what is coming in Section II.

Section II focuses on boggart folklore, and Chapter Four begins by investigating boggart landscapes. Boggarts were usually found on the outskirts of communities and "are sometimes found at strategic points—junctions, boundaries, bridges, and rivers" (84). The idea was that they would hide and wait to come out at night (84). Some places are then named after boggarts if they were associated with boggart sightings, like Boggart Houses, Boggart Lanes (90), or Boggart Holes (98). Chapter Five looks at the problem of figuring out how many people believed in boggarts and examines tales told within families and communities to verify belief. The author also lists examples of poetry, plays, prose, newspaper writings to demonstrate belief within a given area. Lastly in Section II, Chapter Six examines how experiencing or believing in a boggart was often a social phenomenon. Sometimes this resulted in what the author calls "boggart crowds," people coming together specifically to experience boggarts (147-48), but Young also discusses boggart hunts, which were attempts to capture boggarts (149). There were even several accounts of people pretending to be boggarts, which the author includes as part of social boggatry (151-55).

Young does not provide full closure for Section II in the same way he does for Section I; he actually ends with commentary about the last part of Chapter Six without giving a Section II conclusion or pointing toward Section III.

Lastly, Section III concerns the end and rebirth of the boggart. In Chapter Seven, Young describes a “Boggart Census” he conducted to collect memories of people who remembered parents and grandparents mentioning boggarts, and he also asked if they had never heard the term. He divides the results into three categories: boggart talkers, boggart knowers, and boggartless. Eventually, Young believes the term boggart became unnecessary as these stories lacked credibility, but the idea of a boggart has not since been replaced by a different term (189). Chapter Eight deals with the change in meaning of boggart from the nineteenth to twenty-first century. Because this is a main chapter and not an epilogue, it does seem to get away from the point of the book. Young wrote in the Preface, “I want . . . to reconstitute beliefs for one place (Boggartdom) and for one period (1838-1914) using contemporary or near-contemporary documents” (xvi), but he goes into a lot of detail beyond 1914. In this last chapter, Young compares the nineteenth-century boggart, which was more of a blanket term for supernatural creatures, to the “new boggart,” which is more “goblin-like” and “far removed from the nightmare creatures of Victorian mill towns” (193). The author notes this shift in meaning occurs because of four events: the popular boggart story by Thomas Crofton Croker about a house goblin in 1828, a children’s boggart story called “The Brownies” by Juliana Horatia Ewing in 1865, a lack of boggart tale transition from being a local to a national or international phenomenon, and lastly, the modern usage of boggart, including its use in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999) and continued references within the series and movie adaptations. Similar to Section II, Young does not provide a summation of Section III, only a closing of Chapter Eight.

Young ends his monograph with a Conclusion chapter that includes a fascinating call for a further examination of the supernatural in the nineteenth century. One of the most interesting aspects of Young's research is how he obtains these accounts of boggaty; he mentions archives, newspapers, dictionaries, published literature from this time, but he also asks people on Facebook and other less conventional means to arrive at family tales of boggarts or usages of the term. The encouraging way in which Young ends his book opens the door for others to take advantage of his same methods in order to increase overall knowledge of the supernatural during the nineteenth century. Overall, Young achieved his goal laid out in the Preface and then some; he goes a bit further than he even sets out. This book should appeal to anyone interested in nineteenth-century supernatural subjects in general or the boggart in particular.

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Frankel, Valerie Estelle. *The Villain's Journey: Descent and Return in Science Fiction and Fantasy*. McFarland, 2022.

<https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/the-villains-journey/>

Valerie Estelle Frankel's *The Villain's Journey* proposes that villains—especially those who are well-developed—often follow a "villain's journey." As one might suspect, this path cleaves to "the hero's journey" monomyth which Joseph Campbell popularized.

Campbell argued that the hero's journey typically proceeded through three acts comprised of as many as seventeen separate stages. Briefly, the protagonist in a "hero's journey" myth chooses (or is compelled) to leave their community in Act I (Departure). The hero endures a variety of trials—which are often directed (or at least facilitated) by divine agents and supernatural events—that lead the hero to develop wisdom and refine their capabilities in Act II (Initiation). Finally, the hero more or less reluctantly returns to their home community in order to integrate their wisdom into their society in Act III (Return).

In her brief introduction, Frankel outlines the core acts of "the villain's journey." The villain's journey begins with an estrangement from their community—usually an *emotional wound* which is frequently paired with a physical scar which—in Act I. Throughout a series of trials the villain generally crosses key thresholds by choosing *self* over *community*—"betrayal and cruelty instead of friendship and heroism" (Frankel 3)—at critical junctures where the villain could choose otherwise in Act II. Contra the final act of the hero's journey, a villain's journey may end either in *defeat* by a hero, *catastrophic consequences* of the villain's own choices, or even by *self-mastery*—when the villain "listens to the tiny voice [of goodness inside] and seizes redemption (Frankel 3).

The Villain's Journey is comprised of two parts—"The Journey" and "Archetypes." In her opening to Part I, Frankel contrasts the seventeen stages of the hero's journey which Campbell

outlined against the villain's journey which Frankel proposes. Admittedly few if any villain narratives pass through all seventeen stages, but Frankel's purpose here seems to be to chart general trajectories for the villain as a *type* as opposed to a specific character. Over the course of twenty-two chapters that survey a truly capacious range of pop culture villains, Frankel examines how separate characters live out their journeys and particularly emphasize a given stage. Her subjects include *X-Men's* Magneto, Marvel's Thanos, *Star Trek's* Khan, *A Christmas Carol's* Ebenezer Scrooge, *Harry Potter's* Severus Snape, and *Star Wars'* Darth Vader.

In Part II, Frankel proposes twenty-five archetypes for villains aligned with different stages of life. Once again Frankel draws on a broad range of characters to illustrate her analysis, ranging from children born evil (such as *Harry Potter's* Voldemort) to traitors turned heroes (like Edmund Pevensie from *The Chronicles of Narnia*) to chaotic madmen (such as *The Dark Knight's* version of Two-Face) to evil sages (like Emperor Palpatine/Darth Sidious from *Star Wars*).

One way to test the validity of an idea is to try and falsify it, but this task is extremely difficult with *The Villain's Journey* for two reasons. For instance, Frankel never posits that a villain *must* undergo a villain's journey. (Indeed, her introduction opens with the concession that villains are often underwritten compared to heroic counterparts.) Perhaps in keeping with some of her source scholarship, Frankel instead takes a more general approach to villains as a *type* of character and extrapolates a villain's journey from plot points in diverse character arcs.

Several components of Frankel's analysis are nonetheless persuasive. For example, Frankel plots complex villain's journeys for Magneto, Anakin/Darth Vader, Kylo Ren, *Buffy's* Spike, Ebenezer Scrooge, and Severus Snape, even as their respective chapters primarily emphasize one stage in the journey. And in each of these cases, I find Frankel's analysis plausible. Importantly, though, each of these characters undergoes a moral redemption. I wish that Frankel had spent some

more time explaining why memorable three-dimensional villains usually experience redemption—there are some moments in this book where Frankel seems close to discussing that issue, but she usually defers either to how heroes who live too long eventually turn the other direction (thereby foreclosing an analysis of *why*) or moves the character from the "villain" category over to "anti-hero."

Similarly, in Part II's index of villain archetypes—which frequently reads like proof-texting for the concept rather than using it to investigate the archetypes Frankel describes—I did learn quite a bit about Jungian archetypes and the facility with which we can use archetypes as a theoretical lens for pop culture. I was particularly interested with Frankel's use of Edmund from *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe* as an archetypical Traitor, where Frankel makes good use of the archetype to interpret how and why Edmund's family dynamics primed him to succumb to the White Witch. Further, Frankel's thoughtful engagement with the Joker as the archetypical Outcast was remarkable. Frankel persuasively synthesizes multiple depictions into one compelling argument for how social norms shape Outcasts-as-villains, and thus how Outcasts-as-villains can (like Heath Ledger's Joker in *The Dark Knight*) function as a mirror for social norms.

As a reader, I found myself quite interested in the character analyses that comprise the overwhelming majority of *The Villain's Journey*. I did not find much occasion to shift my conceptions of any characters, though, but this could be in part because I simply do not have the breadth of exposure to pop culture which Frankel clearly demonstrates. These reflections in some ways signal the general concern I had with the work: it simply tries to do too much at once, without giving adequate attention to the critical scholarship surrounding any of these cinematic, comics, or multimedia universes.

I wish that Frankel had undertaken this work as two volumes instead of one. I would be quite fascinated to see her fully conceive of the villain's journey and similarly establish its limitations as a critical concept. I would similarly read through a thicker catalogue of villain archetypes which delineates where one category ends and another begins, or how we should treat characters who fit into more than one archetype, or where archetypes seem to fail as a framework for lensing.

Given my cautions and concerns articulated above, I think it is necessary to emphasize that I genuinely enjoyed my time reading *The Villain's Journey*. It gave me a chance to explore much more pop culture, and with more critical depth, than if I tried to engage with a subreddit or fandom. At no point did Frankel make me feel stupid or silly for what I did not know, and she demonstrates excellent facility with introducing her readers to the worlds she clearly loves—and the characters who populate them. I can see myself referencing this book in a conversation with friends who are more deeply invested in a given fictional universe—and recommending they read it.

And that seems to be in line with Frankel's purpose with this book. Frankel clearly set out to reach a broad audience. In her own words, her work is "for writers, for Jungians, for philosophers, and for those who are a little bit bad" (Frankel 3). I think that she will succeed in that quest. I do not expect that Frankel will be frequently cited in peer-reviewed scholarship, but I can see this book ending up cited in far more high school and 100- or 200-level research papers than most critics will be. I can imagine *The Villain's Journey* assigned as required reading for a villain writers' workshop or college creative writing course. And I think that Frankel's analyses will provide many aspiring authors with an important challenge: can you craft a villain that makes us wonder where and why they became "the bad guy?" Frankel's work certainly demonstrates that they can, and should.

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Gonzalez, Alcala Antonio, and Carl H. Sederholm, editors. *Lovecraft in the 21st Century: Dead, But Still Dreaming*. Routledge, 2022.

<https://www.routledge.com/Lovecraft-in-the-21st-Century-Dead-But-Still-Dreaming/Gonzalez-Sederholm/p/book/9780367713041>

Lovecraft in the 21st Century: Dead, But Still Dreaming opens with the premise that Lovecraft is everywhere, inextricably bound up with popular culture. Indeed, the tendrils of Lovecraft's lore and themes spread through nearly every cultural touchstone, as the sheer breadth of subject matter covered in this work makes plain. This anthology conveys the scope of Lovecraft's influence and reach. He inspires *Magic: The Gathering* decks (Albary and Albary 103) and influences the depiction of Nightmare and Dream in *Bloodborne* (2015) (Murray 227); he becomes a fixation for Alan Moore (Lindsay 71) and influences Brazilian horror parody (Reis Filho and Schvarzman 50). He shows up in *The X-Files* (1993-2002) and he inflects *Stranger Things* (2016-present). If prevalence is relevance, and if relevance is importance, then the importance of a critical anthology on Lovecraft's enduring legacy is clear. And in an era where you can buy Cthulhu plush toys (Hudson 186) or consume a graphic novel which censors his cat's offensive name (Shapira 92), a critical treatment of his prejudices, politics, and philosophy is urgent needed too.

In their introduction, co-editors Antonio Alcala Gonzalez and Carl H. Sederholm state that the anthology's purpose is "to assess Lovecraft's place in the present moment by gathering together several critical essays that can help us understand why he is so influential across such a wide variety of media" (1). I believe this anthology achieves that end. The editors begin by surveying four major recurring concerns that weave through the anthology's twenty-one chapters, which (in aggregate) cover a staggering amount of literary, artistic, and critical territory. First, the editors

mention Lovecraft's relevance to studies of the Anthropocene—our current geological age, which is marked by humanity's ability to radically and permanently alter ecology on a truly planetary scale. Next, the editors describe the simultaneous challenges posed by adapting Lovecraft to other media. They draw particular attention to the difficulty in representing Lovecraft's conceptual horrors visually, because "his work has very little direct dialogue and frequently includes descriptions not well suited for visual media. And yet, these apparent difficulties have not prevented a host of people from drawing on Lovecraftian themes, moods, and environments to evoke fear and uncertainty in their own work" (3). A third unifying theme for much of the anthology is Lovecraft's representation in, and influence upon, video games. The editors note that several of the challenges related to adaptation to any visual media show up in video games, but further that (because of the active nature of video gaming as media consumption) "Lovecraft's preference for lone protagonists with a final emphasis on the mental effects resulting from the encounter with weird horror" creates an ostensible barrier to building games around his mythos (4). But as the anthology demonstrates, many games in many formats and genres have done remarkably well. The final theme treated in the introduction is Lovecraft's permanence: "Lovecraft has become an idea, a memory, something that we permanently have but are not sure about" (4). This theme ties the entire anthology together—Lovecraft is everywhere, and Lovecraft is here to stay.

Chapters one through four focus predominantly on Lovecraft's adaptation to theater, television, and film. Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. provides a detailed account of Lovecraft adaptation to American theater (and invaluable insight into why Lovecraft would probably hate that). Elisabete Lopes unpacks the interplay between Lovecraft's cosmic horror and HBO's 2014 miniseries *True Detective*. Lúcio Reis Filho and Sheila Schvarzman discuss Lovecraft's intermittent contribution

to Brazilian cinema, and how current filmmakers have employed Lovecraft to critique racism, classism, and homophobia. John Glover rounds out this section by proposing a corrective re-evaluation of Lovecraft's curation of his image and persona throughout his own lifetime, and how he may have indeed anticipated and *intended* that his posthumous notoriety would be much more substantial than success in his lifetime. Glover's "corrective" to scholarly approaches to Lovecraft is crucial to the work of this anthology. Glover recommends that readers neither presume "the author is dead" nor dismiss the author due to his very real prejudices and biases; instead, Glover argues that to disarm Lovecraft and nullify the threat of a memetic proliferation of his animus is to clarify the role Lovecraft played in "actively shaping his own legacy" (57), especially with respect to cultivating a "Lovecraft Circle." This chapter serves to set stakes for the volume at large, including surveying not only the traditional tools but new approaches we might bring to bear on Lovecraft (and, indeed, any other area of literary analysis).

Glover's argument also segues into chapters five through seven. Herein, various authors discuss how Lovecraft's lore *and* his public persona have both been adapted and represented in more strictly visual media, including comics and trading card games. Stuart L. Lindsay investigates how comics have distributed not only Lovecraft's lore but Lovecraft himself. Tom Shapira continues this line of inquiry by recognizing the way in which comics have laundered Lovecraft's most disturbing and difficult character traits, astutely noting that Lovecraft himself might be horrified by this transformation into someone not-himself. Finally, Suzanne and Richard Albary discuss the fundamental challenges and constraints of representing Lovecraft's monsters in trading card games—as well as the transformation from "horrifying" to "disturbing" which attends giving Cthulhu playing card "stats" (even if they are overpowered).

Chapters eight through twelve comprise the most expansive thematic section, which crucially serves as a hub wherein the concerns represented in the rest of the anthology may intersect and interact. The expanse and scope of this section make it the most difficult to summarize, but it principally attends to the ways in which Lovecraft's themes resonate with our contemporary sociopolitical and ecological anxieties. Here contributors unpack why Lovecraft remains so popular with contemporary consumers—he pens a near-perfect allegory for nuclear contamination (Fetters 123), Cthulhu serves as a powerful metaphor for capitalism's ability to both alienate the laborer from the value of their labor and simultaneously compel them to keep going (Doncel 140), his ecophobic anti-pastorals exemplify Nature's ability to frustrate our schemes of control and domination (Blanc 169), and his Deep Ones function as powerful analogs to "hyperobjects" that undermine anthropocentric presumptions (Alcala Gonzalez 181). These chapters employ both established and emergent critical approaches, including Marxist critique, ecocriticism, posthumanism, and corporeal feminism. Despite the breadth of analytical approaches, the scholarship here seeks to illuminate how Lovecraft's cosmic indifference can help us consider humanity's relationship with the material world. I was particularly impressed with Doncel's work because it brings T. S. Kuhn's theory of "paradigm shift," Mark Fisher's framing of weird fiction as crisis narrative, and Timothy Morton's concept of "hyperobjects" to bear on the Cthulhu Mythos, and further turns to articulate how the (an) nihilistic tendency of capitalism to erase and foreclose all other possibilities is a material process of alienation modeled on (and perpetuated by) the estrangement of the laborer from the value she produces.

Contrasting with the theoretical emphasis above, chapters thirteen and fourteen articulate the many challenges that Lovecraft's sexual and racial prejudices pose to contemporary consumers, creators, and critics. These two chapters discuss the strategies that historically minoritized and

marginalized authors have employed to complicate Lovecraft's themes to both contribute to the Cthulhu Mythos (Hudson 199) and to finding redemptive readings within it (Barbour 210).

As an avid gamer, chapters fifteen through seventeen piqued my curiosity as they explore the difficulties inherent to adapting Lovecraftian lore to video games. Each chapter examines how game designers use virtual "space" to provide players with an uncanny experience. Corstorphine and Crofts explore how developers use space to invoke a sense of the "weird" and undermine the player's sense of control (223), while Murray focuses on how the impossible topographies themselves often represent shattered psyches (227). As a complement to the tension above, Simmons explains how developers have successfully subverted an entire genre of gaming (the walking simulator). While walking simulators typically provide players with a sense of mastery by mapping and navigating a physical environment, walking simulators that tap into Lovecraftian lore instead constantly unnerve and disorient the player (250).

Chapters eighteen and nineteen examine the queering of Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos by using its metaphors, monsters, and motifs to express intimacy and affection that defy normative binaries, rupture closed-minded structures of thought, and overtly challenge the systemic mechanisms of oppression and policing that imperil so many people today. Taken together with chapters thirteen and fourteen, this section explores why and how historically marginalized and minoritized communities—who often do not appear (or, worse, only appear in dehumanizing caricatures) within Lovecraft's fiction—have found a visual and metaphorical vocabulary for solace, refuge, and self-expression within the corpus. Non-Euclidean geometries, for instance, may only seem "wrong" and feel "oppressive" to a white heteronormative patriarch demanding a Euclidean worldview (Marshall 262). And while Lovecraft's cosmic horror might have fundamentally been "a literature of hatred for life" (Houellebecq, quoted in Johnson 279), a series

of m/m slash fiction can leverage that same "weirdness" to create "a structure of inclusivity in which the values of love, affirmation, and community transcend the real horrors of alienation, melancholy, and shame" (Johnson 279).

Finally, chapters twenty and twenty-one turn to the eschatological and epistemic crises that Lovecraft's writing employs as a trope, and how Lovecraft provides a vocabulary for expressing both end-of-the-world anxieties and demarcating thought constrained by—and possible ways of thinking beyond—the cognitive horizons that our current paradigms impose. A hauntological reading of Lovecraft reveals that his mythos might help us at least articulate "the knowledge of the possibility of our annihilation" (Cerliano 293) and equip us to experience the "unintelligible but real" (Harman quoted in Sederholm 304); perhaps we might even begin to glimpse and articulate "something new, something real and purposeful, but also something outside of human understanding" (Sederholm 204).

Lovecraft in the 21st Century clearly meets its stated goals. Like Lovecraft's cosmic monsters and unthinkable time scales, this anthology's work is so complex and interrelated that it defies brevity. Because of Lovecraft's resonance and relevance, and considering the breadth and variety of work undertaken herein, this anthology will be important for a wide cross-section of scholars. Beyond the audiences suggested above, scholars working within posthumanism/transhumanism, ecocriticism, and post-Marxism will find several chapters that reward their attention. Even further afield, though, this anthology offers a contribution that caught me entirely unaware: it is, I believe, a missive of hope in an epoch of disaster.

Throughout my reading of the individual chapters, I was deeply impressed by the promise that these critics—and the communities and creators on whose behalf they speak—find inside of the eerie and weird lore of Lovecraft. Lovecraft's Real broke minds and shattered psyches; and his

racialism, cultural imperialism, and homophobia cannot be ignored. But this anthology suggests that maybe the minds that broke and the psyches that shattered were beholden to the wrong Real. Maybe we can enjoy the Real, if we can shrive ourselves of the narratives of control and domination to which Lovecraft was so profoundly beholden. Perhaps that weird Real is not so terrible and abhorrent; maybe it is a true communion, and maybe that is why it horrifies so many.

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Elzembely, Hosam A. Ibrahim, and Emad El-Din Aysha. *Arab and Muslim Science Fiction: Critical Essays*. McFarland, 2022.

<https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/arab-and-muslim-science-fiction/>

In the preface to *Arab and Muslim Science Fiction: Critical Essays*, edited by Hosam A. Ibrahim Elzembely and Emad El-Din Aysha, the former writes, “This is a book dedicated to filling in the gap once and for all in the production and dissemination of knowledge about Arabic and Muslim science fiction” (1). What is most important is the perspective from which the volume operates. As Ibrahim Elzembely observes, much of the scholarship on Arabic and Muslim sf, prior to the publication of this book, has been done “from the singular perspective of a foreign expert” (1)—that is to say, the work already done in this space has mostly been done by those “not intimately acquainted with [Arab] cultural perspective and values or the exact nature of the problems they all face” (1). As such, this volume operates as a corrective to what the editors see as glaring omission in the study of global literature; as Lyn Qualey observes a few pages later in the introduction, “Most of the critical and academic attention given to science fiction has been to the literature produced in North America and Europe” (4). Against the claim that there is “there is no such thing as Arabic science fiction at all” (4), the editors and writers included in *Arab and Muslim Science Fiction* add to the conversation “the rich landscape of science fiction in other languages” by exploring not just that fiction itself but also “the ways in which it fuses with other literary and cultural traditions” (4).

There are two more points to be made here. The first is, implicit in a collection like this one, the argument that sf is a form of “serious literature” (4), a claim that situates this book in a growing number of scholars willing to take the genre seriously. James E. Gunn, in the first article in the collection, lays out the theoretical underpinning of this claim by reflecting on the tension

between “[m]ainstream fiction’s preoccupation with the present,” which he examines as a “desire to freeze reality in its current state” and sf’s “belief that the most important aspect of existence is a search for humanity’s origins, its purpose, and its ultimate fate” (8). The second point, which Gunn introduces both with his emphasis on the genre’s focus on the “human species” (5) and with his claim that sf is part of a broader process in which Arab and Muslim authors are “making sense of the changing world around them and the prospects it opens up for them and the laws that ultimately govern” those changes (9), is that this literature is global in nature through its engagement in a genre that is often seen, as mentioned above, through the limited lens of Westernization. This might be considered the thesis of the book, not made explicitly but rather by its very production: Arab and Muslim literature has a place in the growing scholarship of sf.

To these ends, Section II of the book, titled “Local Voices: Essays and Interviews,” is broken up into subsections according to region—North Africa; The Levant; Gulf; Europe, Russia, and Central Asia; South Asia; Africa; and the Far East—and presents forty articles ranging from, as the title of the section indicates, interviews with writers (both creative and academic) and scholarly articles. The range of topics these entries to the anthology touch upon varies greatly: the historicization of the genre in specific contexts; the relationship between sf and the political struggles of nations; the futurist and utopian projects of Arab and Muslim sf; examinations of the politics of publishing in the genre; analysis of the forms the genre takes in the Arab and Muslim context; inclusions of related genres like comic books. Given the scope of scholarship, it is difficult to summarize and generalize the work this anthology does in the critical conversation around sf. There are, however, a few standouts. It should be noted that I choose these articles not at the exclusion of the others but because they exemplify the goals laid out in the editors’ introduction. We might take the first article in Section II, “The Continuum: Four Waves of Egyptian Sci-Fi” by

Hosam A. Ibrahim Elzembely, as being emblematic of one of those goals. Ibrahim Elzembely deftly brings several important themes to the forefront with this article: first, Ibrahim Elzembely makes it clear that the ability of sf authors in Egypt to write is indelibly tied to the political and social situations of the state and its citizens: “The atmosphere in Egypt is very stifling for creativity” (11), and “[t]he fear of dictatorship is present deep inside our psyche (residents of the developing world)” (12). This relates to a second observation: that the sf this volume treats is necessarily an international dialogue happening at the levels of story and genre and that of personal experience. Ibrahim Elzembely writes, “My own story with science fiction began with my tender years, as a teenager in the United Kingdom, when the Star Wars series came out” (10). We see this emphasis on internationalism throughout the volume in mentions of non-Arab and Muslim sf authors—sometimes in line with those authors and sometimes in reaction to them—and, especially, in an emphasis on how international issues like the war on terror inform the genre in this context.

Many of the authors also emphasize a kind of cosmopolitanism: in “Interview with Jeremy Szal: Global and Local Imperatives in Lebanese Science Fiction,” Szal is asked, “Do you consider yourself a ‘citizen of the world’?” and he responds, “Absolutely. I’ve lived in both Thailand and Austria, speak two languages, visited five continents, have cultural backgrounds with over half a dozen nations, and my family speaks eight languages between them. I’m Australian, first and foremost, but I’m less interested in drawing lines at borders than I am in investing in what the whole world has to offer” (87). This dynamic—the ways in which personal experiences of immigration and cultural diversity inform the generation of texts—threads through many of the articles in the volume. Another important point the volume makes, then, is the long history of Arab and Muslim sf. Ibrahim Elzembely, to return to his article already mentioned above, traces the first

wave of Egyptian sf back to the 1950s and connects it to “the space race between the superpowers and the prospect of landing on the moon” (13). Kawthar Ayed, in “Mapping the Maghreb: The History and Prospects of SF in the Arab West,” traces the early influences of Arab and Muslim sf still farther back, referencing *Prairies of Gold and Mines of Jewels* from the ninth century, by Al-Mass’udi’s, and *1001 Nights* as “proto-science fiction” (22). Furthermore, they point towards “the subspecies of Utopian literature in contemporary Arabic history” in the mid-nineteenth century and to “Syrian author Michelle Al-Saqal (1824–1885) with a novel set on Venus and the Moon” (22). Ayed sums up the point succinctly: “The Arabic history of science fiction, then, is older than we think” (22).

Section III, “A Literature in Appraisal,” takes a step back from the regional lens Section II emphasizes and attempts to end the collection with a broader take on Arab and Muslim sf by placing it more squarely in the political and academic world, focusing on the project of amplifying this literature. This section points towards increasing acceptance in academia of both sf generally and Arab and Muslim fictions specifically. As Rebecca Hankins observes in “Archiving the Future: A Conversation with Rebecca Hankins on the Fictional Frontiers of Muslim and African SF,” “there is less resistance now than in the past, where now this work is finding wider audiences” (350). This section also introduces an interesting question in the overall project this book embodies, especially given the international emphasis of much of the work in the volume: translation. In “Between Two Traditions: A Testimonial on Translating Arabic Science Fiction Stories,” Areeg Ibrahīm begins by stating, flatly, “Science Fiction (SF) is challenging to translate” (367). For Ibrahīm, the difficulty hinges on the tensions “between two traditions of SF writing (Western and Eastern) and the two different cultures of the Arabic source text (ST) and the English target text (TT)” (350). Resolving this tension, then, requires “a mix of foreignization and

domestication” in which Ibrahīm “mediate[d]” between the two traditions and cultures (371 and 372).

The issue of translation, then, speaks to the broader project in which *Arab and Muslim Science Fiction* is engaged. Ibrahim Elzembely in the conclusion asks an important question: “[W]here do we go from this point on” (373)? They note translation from English into multiple other languages as being the first step, and they also put forth several other possibilities: “an anthology translated into English of young, aspiring Arab authors;” “a study text replete with questions and answers and open-ended exercises;” “discussions with like-minded individuals and groups over the book;” “a newer, larger organization that will pull together all those who participated in the birthing of our book to the benefit of the global audience;” “a series of specialized studies on such unexplored topics as Sufism in Arabic and Muslim science fiction or artificial intelligence in Arab-Muslim sci-fi;” “or comparative studies with other bodies of SF produced in the Global South” (374). One thing, then, is quite clear: this excellent and necessary book is just the beginning of an exciting and growing body of scholarship on a too-long neglected history in the importance of sf.

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Panek, LeRoy Lad. *Nineteenth Century Detective Fiction: An Analytical History*. McFarland, 2021.

<https://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/nineteenth-century-detective-fiction/>

In *Nineteenth Century Detective Fiction: An Analytical History*, LeRoy Lad Panek examines an archive of transatlantic periodical detective fiction alongside canonical nineteenth-century authors to trace the rich variety of forms, themes, and characters that emerged across detective fiction during the nineteenth century. Situating these works within the context of book, periodical, and legal history, Panek demonstrates how the range of detective fiction that flourished in the periodical press during the nineteenth century adds to, and complicates, typical critical understandings of the genre as based on a few canonical authors—primarily Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Allan Poe, and Wilkie Collins. In fact, one of the most striking points of Panek’s argument is that our understanding of detective fiction as it was read, circulated, and received during the nineteenth century is not only incomplete but inaccurate, given the breadth of material that has been omitted or lost entirely. In overlooking the variety of media where detective fiction could be found—such as magazines, story papers, and newspapers—we miss key moves in the genre’s development as well as how wide-ranging detective fiction’s readership was in terms of age, gender, class, and education.

Panek’s first two chapters outline the historical and cultural contexts he brings to his analysis of the rise of detective fiction. Situated within periodical history, chapter one provides an overview of detective fiction’s movement across the boundaries of form and media, geography, class and readership, and copyright. Since American protections did not extend to foreign copyrights, Panek argues that the development of U.S. detective fiction can be attributed at least in part to American publishers’ pirating and recirculating of British texts. Nineteenth-century

detective fiction has a well-established tradition of borrowing and referentiality—with the most infamous example being Conan Doyle's debt to Poe's Auguste Dupin for the character of Sherlock Holmes. This chapter adds to our understanding of this tradition as Panek shows how publishers frequently modified pirated stories to avoid copyright law and to fit the tastes of their readers, so that the same stories appeared with slight alterations throughout the Anglophone world.

Chapter two turns to legal history to demonstrate how detective fiction's emphasis on circumstantial evidence developed in tandem with evolving court systems. Panek begins with the eighteenth-century judicial reforms that led to legal representation for accused individuals, the use of cross-examination, and stringent debate over the legal value of eyewitness versus circumstantial evidence. He then shows how literary depictions of lawyers and the dangers of circumstantial evidence set the stage for detective fiction by introducing a figure who could methodically examine the evidence at hand in pursuit of justice.

As Panek shows, circumstantial evidence played a central role in detective fiction, with plots commonly revolving around problems of wrongful accusation created through misinterpretation of circumstantial evidence. Over the course of the book, Panek traces how detective fiction reformulated this problem: while early works focused on the pathos of wrongful accusations and resolved them through a miraculous intervention of providence, later works introduced detective-like figures—first the lawyer, then the police officer—who were able to properly interpret the evidence, accompanied by a shift away from pathos towards involving readers through the puzzle-like structures of the narrative.

One of the most interesting aspects of Panek's focus on circumstantial evidence emerges in his discussion of Conan Doyle's contribution at the end of the century. As he argues, Conan Doyle shifts the emphasis away from the dangers of circumstantial evidence towards the process

of analysis: it is not circumstantial evidence itself that is faulty, but rather, the untrained eye of everyone other than the detective. While Panek highlights this as Conan Doyle's contribution, however, it is not entirely clear how this differs from the earlier stories he discusses, which similarly center on problems of misinterpretation. It is, nevertheless, an intriguing way to frame the questions of objectivity and reliability that underlie both the legal developments and literary shifts Panek outlines.

In expanding beyond the canon, one of Panek's main premises is how many varieties of detective fiction there could be without "detectives"—a term which emerged in the 1830s to describe investigative police work (6). Framed within the context of the development—and subsequent debates about—police forces in the United States and Britain, chapter four examines how many police detective stories of the period functioned as propaganda, depicting police officers as intelligent and middle class, and focusing attention on the mundane details of police work in addition to the more exciting tales of apprehending criminals. Chapter five focuses first on several recurring detective characters before shifting to a discussion of the two distinct camps of detective fiction that emerged: hunt and chase stories and stories of deduction.

Panek develops his argument in these two chapters through focusing on fiction he unearthed from periodical archives. Given Panek's emphasis on the importance of moving beyond the canon, these chapters are most interesting for the amount and range of texts Panek presents for inclusion in our understanding of the genre. This comprehensiveness also works against him, however, as he is only able to devote at most a few pages and sometimes only a few paragraphs to each text. While this leaves fruitful ground for future critics to explore, it often makes it difficult to understand the significance of the works included, particularly as Panek states that many of

them do not display the features of later detective fiction, do not have bearing on the development of detective fiction as a whole, or are not worth reading.

In chapter six, Panek traces the use of detectives and detective-fiction-like plots throughout the works of novelists such as Charles Dickens, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Ellen Wood, and a host of lesser-known authors. His primary focus is on sensation novels, which frequently included “detectives” and plot points similar to those found in shorter detective fiction. Most interesting in this chapter is Panek’s formal argument about the limitations of detective fiction’s plot structures. Developed for periodical publication, detective fiction featured pared-down, problem-solution plot structures designed for the formatting and restrictions of magazines, story papers, and newspapers. Thus, for the majority of the century, Panek argues, detective plots included in novels were ancillary by necessity, as they were not formally capacious enough to stretch over the course of the lengthy novel form.

Panek examines some of these changes to detective fiction plots in chapters seven and eight when he turns to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In addition to discussing Conan Doyle’s debt to Poe and the evolution of circumstantial evidence described above, Panek focuses on how Conan Doyle merges previously-distinct forms of detective fiction plots. Panek describes how Conan Doyle sets up Sherlock Holmes’s character as a series of contradictions: Holmes is both analytical automaton and fallible human, both relentlessly energetic pursuer and lethargic addict. These bifurcations, Panek argues, are held together by Conan Doyle’s synthesis of the problem-solving and hunt-and-chase narratives, allowing him to strike the balance between cold rationality and Romanticism that has made Sherlock Holmes such an enduring character. While this is interesting, it was disappointing to see two chapters devoted to Conan Doyle in a work that asserts the value of moving beyond the canon, particularly as much of Panek’s discussion of Conan Doyle stays within

familiar critical terrain and considers aspects of Conan Doyle's work—such as the role of laughter in the depiction of Holmes as a character—that are difficult to connect to the work's larger argument.

Over the course of *Nineteenth Century Detective Fiction*, Panek traces a history of detective fiction that begins much earlier and is far richer than we tend to imagine when our reference points are limited to those authors that are now well-known members of the canon. However, the strength of Panek's work in terms of introducing new archival material, also ends up being its primary drawback, as the number of texts he discusses and the span of historical and national contexts he covers limits how deeply he is able to engage with any one particular text or theme. Much of Panek's work with his archival material takes the shape of lengthy lists of titles and block quotes with limited commentary, standing in contrast to the detailed chapters he dedicates to Poe and Doyle. Lastly, Panek passes over opportunities to engage with criticism from the many fields he brings together, offering only generalized references to critical consensus. For instance, the information that he presents on copyright is well documented in book and periodical studies and much of what he says about Poe and Conan Doyle has long been established within criticism on the authors, yet his works cited contains few secondary sources, most of which are websites. While this work is interesting for its turn to the archive and the periodical fiction it introduces, it ultimately attempts to be too comprehensive at the expense of engagement with its primary texts and the critical context.

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the formal “failures” of genre fiction—and some realist fiction—create spaces for authors to engage creatively with phenomenological questions.