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Victorian Journalism: Exotic and Domestic. Essays in Honour of P. D. Edwards, edited by Barbara Garlick and Margaret Harris. St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1998.

The potential subject matter of *Victorian Journalism: Exotic and Domestic* is as Barbara Garlick notes in her Preface “voluminous and various” so it is not surprising that this volume makes no real attempt to fulfil the all-encompassing promise of its title—“exotic” usually means “Australian” and the thirteen essays are individually often quite narrow in focus, more frequently concerned with journalists than journals. Cumulatively, however, these highly specialised studies build to an unexpectedly broad overview of the developing professionalisation and significance of British journalism in the nineteenth century. The volume has been published to honour Peter Edwards, Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Queensland. While it is fashionable to sneer at festschrifts (an “institution,” according to J.C. in the *Times Literary Supplement*, “in which cronies line up to pay tribute to some national treasure who, just the other day, was a Young Turk” [2 April 1999: 16]), in this case the essay writers have produced not only a fitting tribute to their friend and colleague but also a significant contribution to the rapidly growing field of nineteenth-century journalism studies.

With collections of essays, as with periodicals, most people don't begin at the beginning but select and zigzag according to particular interests, an approach which the diversity of content in this volume encourages ranging as it does over more than a hundred years and several countries. My own immediate concerns took me first to the end to read about “Journalism and Victorian Fiction” and then back to alternate between studies of more or less familiar women writers and digressions into the (to me) tantalising unknown—what was the *Tomahawk*? should I know who Benjamin Kidd was? what mystery would John Sutherland probe this time?—before the memory that I was reviewer and not a casual reader prompted me to more ordered attention. Yet my first impressions of an accessibility and readability that diverted as well as informed me were a good general indication of the volume's character and its main strength. The essays in this collection reflecting the biographical expertise of many of the writers tend to tell stories: as well as being academic, carefully researched, cogently argued, alert to historical contexts and theoretical implications, they have a predominant emphasis on narrative and a human focus which give them a unity (though not a uniformity) of purpose and strengthen their more obvious thematic links.

For those who do begin at the beginning those links are pithily summarised in the Preface where Garlick lists the recurrent themes which structure the “heterogeneity” of the essays' content:

readership; . . . the gradual professionalisation of the journalist and the lingering attractions of amateurism; . . . the continuing debate about anonymity; the status of journalism in a hierarchy of literary forms, and the conflicting demands of higher journalism and the popular press; the negotiations that women journalists had to make across the public/private domain; nationalism, imperialism and colonialism. (vii)

To some extent these are as much an index of late twentieth-century preoccupations as of nineteenth-century ones. Women writers feature in five of the thirteen essays and in four of the nine which focus on the British scene, despite comprising as Lloyd Davis reminds us a bare “thirteen per cent of writers in journals” (201), and this disproportionate weighting is reinforced by the editors’ decision, in itself entirely justifiable, to arrange the essays in chronological order according to content. First place thus goes to Caroline Bowles Southey probably the least familiar of the five women. Virginia Blain’s dissection of what she terms the “discourse of amateurism” in Bowles’s correspondence with *Blackwood’s* between 1820 and 1847 sets a high standard. An excellent introduction to Bowles’s literary career, its analysis of her increasing deployment of “ladylike conventions of politeness” as a strategy for getting exactly what she wanted from her publisher (“milk[ing] the udder of amateurism” [14], in Blain’s memorable metaphor) is a model for elucidating the transformation of potential cultural disability into power.

Anna Jameson, the next in order, is now reasonably well known in part thanks to Judy Johnston whose extensive knowledge of the life and context is evident here in her intricately detailed account of Jameson’s credentials as art critic for the not notably woman-friendly *Monthly Chronicle* in 1838 and 1839 (as well as her subsequent influence). Harriet Martineau and Margaret Oliphant are accorded fourth and seventh places respectively in essays which in different ways promote the claims of their journalism to historical and critical significance. Barbara Garlick makes a convincing case for reading the obituaries Martineau wrote for the *Daily News* as an important contribution to the developing practice of biography. Joanne Shattock’s argument that Oliphant saw journalism as equal to fiction as an art form is slightly less persuasive (the evidence seems to suggest ambivalence at best), but the essay itself, an authoritative survey of Oliphant’s periodical writing, very usefully supplements recent works by Elisabeth Jay and others.

There is less insistence on the significance of the “male” subjects in the earlier part of the volume. The lingering “afterlife” of *Punch’s*, or rather Jerrold’s, hugely popular Mrs Caudle is the basis for Michael Slater’s succinct investigation of changing attitudes to class, gender and humour. John Sutherland unravels conflicting accounts of Trollope’s writing of *The Warden* to illuminate ways in which the Crimean war muted the novel’s attack on the *Times*. Christopher Kent and Paul Crook, the only historians among the contributors, enlighten my ignorance of the *Tomahawk* and Benjamin Kidd by revealing that the first was a periodical now largely forgotten but flourishing between 1867 and 1870 when its brash and anxious young writers tried simultaneously to police the boundaries of gentility and to rival *Punch*, and the second was a social prophet of great renown at the turn of the century who has since also vanished almost without trace from canonical histories.

In the later essays a kind of over-arching narrative begins to emerge uniting these disparate topics into an echo of the development (in the Victorian sense) of the period. The gender proportions are now reversed, with women apparently “edged out” as the subject matter shifts from British journals to foreign newspapers and the anonymous amateurs’ tentative steps towards confident named professionalism give way to a triumphant exploitation of fame. Judy McKenzie’s “paper heroes,” Archibald Forbes, George Augustus Sala and Henry Morton Stanley, travel to Australia to proselytise in the cause of English jingoism and their own pockets. The colonials themselves, as Chris Tiffin shows, were meanwhile trying to recreate some of the functions of “quality” journals in weekly newspapers such as the *Queenslander* which provided a valuable forum for local writers as well as a sampling of English ones. Meg Tasker likewise stresses the importance of journalism in the cultural and literary life of Australia at this time through her account of Francis Adams, a poor and ill English-boy-made-good (only he died three years later) by his sortie to the colony. And yet there is an undertone of fin-de-siècle gloom about this transfer and democratisation of culture: even those who don’t (as “serious” writers such as Gissing did) lament the crassness that accompanied commercialism still seem to regret that they aren’t writing somewhere else. Journalism remains a staging post on the way to a better form of literary immortality.

The final two essays at first glance stand somewhat apart from the rest. Sue Thomas’s subject Jean Rhys is a twentieth-century novelist not a Victorian journalist, and Dominican not British or Australian. Thomas shows, however, by meticulously linking the tropes which feature in Rhys’s fiction with nineteenth-century debates about Dominican character how crucially journalistic texts from the past are implicated in the work. Lloyd Davis’s “Journalism and Victorian Fiction,” where my reading began, differs in its scope ranging across the period and in many ways summarising the major themes of the other essays as it examines the battle for cultural authority between journalism and fiction throughout the Victorian period and traces the representation of journalism in novels such as *David Copperfield*, *Middlemarch* and *New Grub Street*.

As all this suggests this volume is not really directed at the reader seeking information about major periodicals, about facts and figures and publication trends, or direct comment on the theoretical and methodological problems in this area of study. On the other hand, and leaving aside the obvious appeal of individual essays for specialists, for readers whose main interest is the more personal face of nineteenth-century journalism it offers a great deal, and they may find that they have incidentally absorbed much of the theory and history as well.

I have written throughout this review of thirteen essays. There is of course a fourteenth in which Margaret Harris, co-editor of the volume with Barbara Garlick, outlines the career of Peter Edwards and the many reasons why Victorianists are indebted to him. Not least among these is his founding (with Margaret herself as Peter would hasten to mention though she does not) of the Australasian Victorian Studies Association which means that he is also indirectly responsible for the existence of this journal as he has been more directly for furthering the interests and the careers of many who write in it. He qualifies indeed as a “national treasure.”

Helen Debenham