

outcome, and thus the future history of the nineteenth century, would have been very different.

Clarke is once again laid under contribution to write a preface for Gillian Bickley's *Hong Kong Invaded! A '97 Nightmare* which is, essentially, an edition of an anonymous invasion story called *The Back Door*, serialised in *The China Mail* in 1897 and shortly afterwards reprinted as a pamphlet. This time, it's a nefarious consortium of French and Russian forces that assaults a scandalously under prepared target; the brave defenders are able to put up a resolute struggle, of course, for "In hand to hand fighting the under-sized Crapeuds were but a poor match for the long lean Pathans and beef-fed Britishers," but weight of numbers finally tells and the story ends with the Union Jack being hauled down. Gillian Bickley has edited this slight performance to within an inch of its pallid life, and her commentary fattens a text of about sixty pages into a book of three hundred. There's an Introduction which alleges that *The Back Door's* use of a narrative frame aligns it with *The Taming of the Shrew* and (weirdly) *Jane Eyre*; there are 765 notes on the Introduction and text, which elucidate such mysteries as "odds" ("a gambling term"), and these are followed by a further 393 notes to the nine appendices; there are newly drawn illustrations (accompanied by special notes of their own), maps, photographs, keys. One can only marvel at the editor's indefatigable industry, but one has also to question whether *The Back Door* really merits the sort of treatment generally accorded only to Shakespeare and the Bible. Still, the book will almost certainly become essential reading for everyone interested in Hong Kong's defence capability during the late 1890s.

Robert Dingley

***New Woman Poets: An Anthology*, edited and introduced by Linda Hughes. Lost Chords No 1, The Eighteen Nineties Society, London, 2001; *Michael Field and Poetic Identity with a Biography*, by Marion Thain, Occasional Series No 9, The Eighteen Nineties Society, London 2000.**

Linda Hughes is an established American scholar of distinction in the field of nineteenth-century British studies. Her recent work focussing on recovering the poetry of that intriguing figure, Rosamund Marriott Watson, who wrote under the pseudonym Graham R. Tomson in the early part of her career, later switching signatures as often as she switched husbands, has been exemplary in its combination of detailed scholarship and finely nuanced readings. This delightful anthology shows much of the same kind of quality. It is aimed at the undergraduate student, with a very clear and sensibly organised introduction and disposition of contents into thematic sections. Unfortunately, due no doubt to series restrictions and cost-cutting, there is no proper index, only a list of poets with page numbers at the end (and the page numbers are all one off the true, no doubt a result of the exigencies of the publication process). It would have been good to have a contents list of the thematic sections and an index of first lines.

However, keeping costs to the minimum is no doubt a condition of the production of volumes in this series, so I will refrain from carping at the cheap paper and skimmed finding aids. On the positive side, it is good to have photographs included of four of the major poets represented: Mathilde Blind, dark and intense; Amy Levy, plain and penetrating; Mary Coleridge, enigmatic and alluring; Edith Nesbit, strong-willed and determined. The Introduction makes clear the project of the volume is to draw critical attention to hitherto neglected work of poets who might be seen, just as much as their novelist sisters, as part of the late-century "New Woman" aesthetic. Apart from the four just mentioned, and of course Marriott Watson, the main poets represented here are Olive Custance, Nora Hopper, Dora Sigerson Shorter, Dollie Radford, Mary Robinson, Katharine Tynan, with other voices like Michael Field and Louisa Bevington, chiming in occasionally. It is not primarily an author-centred collection, and the three main thematic areas, Desire and Sexuality, Social Interventions and Reforming Literary Tradition, have their subdivisions which are then woven through with a series of subtly interlinked poems by different hands. The overall effect is to bring a whole range of different voices to life as if they are in dialogue with each other. This is not an effect to be easily won: it comes from skilful and time-consuming editorial intervention in choice and arrangement.

As one would expect from Hughes, the Introduction is knowledgeable, informative and clearly laid out. Placing the emphasis on themes rather than individuals obviates the need for biographical notes, and the fullness of the Introduction stands in for explanatory notes on the poems themselves. Most of these, from the necessity of choosing shorter rather than longer examples, are lyric poems, some more dramatic, even polemical; others more meditative or song-like. Although one sympathises with the constraints on space, it would be excellent if, in this age of increasing technological expertise, a volume like this could be issued simultaneously with an Internet version which might indeed contain some longer poems. Almost all of the most interesting Victorian women poets experimented with long poems at some time, and to link, for example, Katharine Tynan's striking lyric "In Iona" with Mathilde Blind's "Prophecy of St Oran," a long dramatic poem dealing with the same theme of the bitter misogyny of the Church Fathers, particularly Columba of Iona, would allow for some extremely interesting explorations of meaning. Many of these longer poems are now available from various Internet sites, but the student reader needs a guiding hand to locate them, and better, to link them into the kind of meaningful interaction that Hughes's book provides. She points out, quite rightly, that those works which most boldly confront orthodox Christianity in some respects represent the New Woman's boldest defiance of convention – but that "it is also shrewd political critique given religion's historical role in perpetuating female subordination" (8). She goes on to use Mary Coleridge's typically quirky and penetrating poem, "Our Lady," as an example; I am puzzled though at her literal translation of this poet's chosen Greek pen-name, "Avoδos," as "Ascent" (surely a much more Blindian concept than Coleridgean?), when we have it from the poet herself that she chose it after the name of her "favourite hero," a character in George Macdonald's *Phantastes* (1858) – not very New Woman! Coleridge is in many ways

such a fey and slippery poet that she sits uncomfortably within a particular political agenda. The far more forthright Louisa Bevington, anarchist extraordinaire, adopts the role of political radical with gusto: her "In and Out of Church," reminiscent of Clough's "The Latest Decalogue," reeks with even more splendid scorn for religious cant than did that poem. Setting Bevington alongside poets who choose an indirect means of expression serves very nicely to point both the similarities and differences in the range of voices and attitudes represented here, while highlighting the urgency of the issues that gripped their imaginations.

Marion Thain is a young British scholar who has recently launched herself successfully into a number of exciting projects, including research into the voluminous writings of those two prolific collaborators, Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who wrote together as Michael Field. The unique way in which this particular collaboration challenges interpretative convention has been the subject of a number of recent studies, most notably by Yopie Prins in her brilliantly erudite 1999 book, *Victorian Sappho*. Thain cites Prins's rhetorical question of the Field collection of Sapphic poems, *Long Ago* (1889), "How shall we read these poems written by two women writing as a man writing as Sappho" and dauntlessly launches into a literal reply: "I want to answer this question by suggesting that this double mask allows Bradley and Cooper to perform the feminine in a way similar to that attributed to the dandy [. . .]. They are claiming that [. . .] femininity is just as much a charade for women as it is for the dandy" (Thain 29). Thain develops an interesting argument that the Field duo claimed a masculine posture in order to release themselves from allegiance to a false femininity, paradoxically so that they could reclaim it on their own terms, and not as part of any essential property of themselves.

Thain's book is divided into two sections, the first being a briefly outlined biographical sketch of the two poets, the second being a critical analysis of their twists and turns as collaborative poets laying claim to a single poetic identity. The biographical portion is useful for those readers without any previous knowledge of the two women's lives, but its material is not freshly researched and is taken in large part from the 1928 Mary Sturgeon biography *Michael Field*, although with some intelligent updating, especially of the rather coy and defensive attitude Sturgeon felt obliged to adopt towards the issue of the poets' incestuous lesbian relationship with each other as aunt and niece. But there are also moments where Sturgeon's sanitised account of their lives becomes misleading. For example, when discussing their friendship with art critic and collector Bernard Berenson and his wife Mary, Thain accepts Sturgeon's disingenuous claim that Berenson remained a good friend to the two women. In fact, Berenson, a well-known womaniser, caused endless trouble for the couple, first by encouraging Edith's growing infatuation with him which nearly broke up the relationship, later by belittling their poetry and mocking their ideas. This is all well-documented in the thirty-odd volumes of their journal "Works and Days" held in the British Library; unfortunately, to date no scholar has thoroughly combed this wonderful treasure-trove and given it a full index, but even Sturge Moore's set of selections published in 1933 does give a much rounder view of the Berenson episode and its long-drawn aftermath than Mary Sturgeon. Ivor Treby's *Michael Field*

Catalogue, self-published in London in 1998, is a wonderfully rich and detailed but tiresomely idiosyncratic collection of meticulously documented facts and deductions about Field's life and works drawn directly from manuscript sources; perhaps due to its small and sporadic distribution, Thain seems to have remained unaware of its existence, which is unfortunate, as she would no doubt have found it of value in pursuing her own research.

However, the biographical survey occupies less than half the volume, and the major portion which is occupied with the fascinating questions of poetic identity offers more scope for originality. Here Thain warms to her theme, and begins to show us that she is more than capable of arguing her own viewpoint and offering an enriching reading of the poetry. She argues convincingly that poetic power for women is strongly linked to their sexuality. In her thesis, Thain traces the ways in which, as she puts it, Bradley and Cooper worked together to "create their own cosmology, to outwit an ideology which holds irrevocably apart the terms 'woman' and 'poet'" (45). They are able to do this because they choose to work within a lesbian aesthetic which no longer separates a male subject from a female object, or a male poet from his female muse: in the terms of this aesthetic, these roles are interchangeable and contained within the relationship between the two women as poetic collaborators and as lesbian lovers. My own view differs from Thain here, as although the relationship between the two women enabled their construction of a joint writing identity, it is important to stress that the very insistent "oneness" of this identity in fact works (and worked) *against* a lesbian reading in the public sphere. Thain offers some bold readings of a number of the more erotic poems and argues her case persuasively, forging here the strongest section of her volume, which altogether seems to gain in confidence and authority as it proceeds.

These useful volumes are much to be welcomed, and should be snapped up by anybody interested in the 1890s in particular or the Victorian period in general, as only 350 copies of each have been printed, and no doubt, they will all too soon become unavailable.

Virginia Blain

***Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law*, by Sally Engle Merry.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.**

Writing Hawai'ian History from the Nineteenth Century

Sally Engle Merry's monograph, *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law*, presents the reader with a complex retelling of the legal history of Hawai'i in the nineteenth century. Drawing from archival material, historical and anthropological discourse, oral histories from descendants of plantation workers, and the writings of contemporary Native Hawai'ian scholars and activists such as Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa and Haunani-Kay Trask, the author traces the transformation from chiefly rule under