Pip's account of his sister, illustrating the novel's critique of the constraints of gender upon women's needs and place in society.

The final chapter on *Our Mutual Friend* continues to illuminate Dickens's reappraisal of female stereotypes and his development of earlier concerns with social stability and progress. In a sensitive account of Bradley Headstone's tortuous position in between classes, Newey rightly remarks the way in which "Dickens treats Headstone seriously and with respect": "In giving him this stature and in giving him his say, Dickens repays a debt to the maligned Heep and demonized Orlick – though without yielding an inch on the question of the social climber's demands for recognized status and positive valuation" (255). He details the lineaments of Eugene Wrayburn's "two-sided, enigmatic character" (267), remarking its advance on precursors like Steerforth and Harthouse. In these readings, as throughout, a fine critical intelligence is at work. There are moments when the evidence is stretched – I am one of those readers who, as Newey anticipates, will disagree with his (only half-joking) suggestion that Pip the younger is really the son of Biddy and Pip (228). But these do not detract from the overall pleasure of reading a deeply sensitive account of the rich and complex humanism of Dickens's secular scriptures.

Works Cited

Collins, Philip. Ed. *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1971.

Catherine Waters

***Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*, by Patrick Brantlinger. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003. x + 248. ISBN 0-8014-8876-1. $49.95 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).**

Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness* (Cornell UP, 1990) was one of a handful of texts that remained steadily on top of my desk for easy and frequent reference while I was in graduate school. It was, especially for a young graduate student, a wonderful compendium of information about imperialism and literature throughout the nineteenth century. I remember using it as I selected the individual texts I wanted to read for my oral exams. I was not alone; *Rule of Darkness* is a book that influenced a range of young scholars and spawned many in depth studies of literature and imperialism.

Victorian studies generally and the study of imperialism in particular have grown and changed since 1990. And, no doubt, my view of *Dark Vanishings*, Brantlinger's latest book, is also influenced by my changed position: I am no longer an eager, young graduate student. As ever, Brantlinger is, in *Dark Vanishings*,

working in a rich and evocative field with a range of interesting material; but *Dark Vanishings*, I think, will be a less influential and important text than *Rule of Darkness* was.

In *Dark Vanishings*, Brantlinger examines what he calls the discourse of extinction, with its roots in the early 1800s and a reach into the 1930s and beyond. Examining art, literature, journalism, science and governmental rhetoric, he considers the "assumptions and theories that arose to explain [. . .] the tragic histories of [the] decimations [. . .] of indigenous peoples around the world" (1). Brantlinger centres his study on sites within the British empire and North America, while reminding readers that "extinction discourse has been influential in the contexts of other modern empires and nation-states" (5). Basically, Brantlinger argues that this discourse arose "to be consolatory or to absolve [the English] from guilt about the liquidation of, say, the Australian aboriginals" (29) and the ravages of "war and empire" (28): the "extermination of one human race by another" is frequently paralleled to the so-called natural "extermination of one animal or plant species by another" (28). The English also don't need to worry about the atrocities they are committing, according to Brantlinger's argument, because the extinction of these primitives races is inevitable: the inferior races are often seen as "declining under the rigors of natural selection long before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons" (162) because of their savagery, practices of cannibalism and infanticide, and overall lack of civilisation.

In his first main chapter, Brantlinger examines what he sees as the three types of scientific discourse that shaped extinction discourse: "natural history, political economy, and early ethnology or race-science" (13). The next chapters take on "the vanishing Indian"; British debates about slavery and South Africa; Ireland and the Irish Famine of 1845-50; the Tasmanian genocide in Australia; the Maori of New Zealand and other Pacific Island peoples; social Darwinism and the necessity for "unfit creatures and species to make room for new, supposedly fitter ones" (15), and what Brantlinger sees as one ironic end point of extinction discourse – "widespread anxiety about the degeneration or even extinction of the white race" (15).

As with any book that attempts this kind of sweeping narrative, specialists in particular areas may quibble with the broad generalisations of Brantlinger's narrative. For example, for me, chapter 4, "Humanitarian Causes: Antislavery and Saving Aboriginals," was an unsatisfying chapter. Of this twenty-five page chapter, only about five pages are concerned with antislavery. Brantlinger very briefly rehearses some of the basic arguments of the antislavery and proslavery movement as they relate to extinction discourse: Malthus's idea that the slave trade offered a beneficial "check" to Africa's population forestalling worse checks like famine and Adam Smith's and Harriet Martineau's argument that slavery was a waste of labour and capital. Ultimately, however, Brantlinger's discussion of antislavery leads not to a connection with extinction discourse but to some fairly basic platitudes about British antislavery: "humanitarians could be both abolitionists and racists" and,

citing Robin Blackburn's 1988 *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, "the slave trade [was] a popular reform cause that expressed 'patriotic conceptions of English liberty [. . .] that did not necessarily entail application of similar ideals at home'" (72).

Beyond these narrow concerns, however, my broader complaint about this text is that it offers so very little in the way of literary criticism. Instead, in each chapter, Brantlinger singles out one or two literary texts that exemplify the specific region and historical moment of his discussion; these texts receive a cursory, glancing discussion that does not begin to approach a reading. Indeed, Brantlinger lays out more about his take on Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* in the introductory chapter to the book than in the chapter in which this text is actually discussed. Perhaps this is the trend now; but I haven't ceased looking to find new and wonderful texts to teach in my literature surveys as well as new ways to think about the standards.

Instead, Brantlinger's book covers mainly well-trod territory about predictable literary texts. In chapter three, "Vanishing Americans," for example, the interesting discussion of "proleptic elegy [. . .] the attempt to turn the Indians and their destiny [death, extinction] into poetry" (59) is cut short by a more obvious and less interesting discussion of *The Last of the Mohicans* focusing on the by now well-known argument about Cooper and his sentimentalising racism. By the end of the text, the discussion of the range of non-literary texts comes to feel as familiar as the scanty discussion of literary ones does. *Dark Vanishings* does not offer much in the way of textual complexity or surprises for established scholars nor offer many provocative nooks and crannies for new scholars to engage and explore.

Audrey A. Fisch

***Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*, by Ann C. Colley. London: Ashgate, 2004. 228. ISBN 0 7546 3506 6. £45 (hardback).**

It seems to me that Professor Colley has a substantial point when she writes "The value of engaging the later part of Stevenson's biography is that it forces the careful reader to struggle with the tensions of actually living within the site of Empire and, therefore, to deal with its contradictions." And there is even more to be said for her contention that "To impose a concept like 'imperialism' on Stevenson's work tends to exclude, and, consequently, to exile or discard what does not fit into its space." A good dose of the empirical is a healthy corrective to some of the rarefied theorising which has a tendency to leave us with the bridle and the bit but not a sign of the bloody horse.

That said, it is important to acknowledge the place and function of theory (Stevenson explicitly did) not just as a means of identifying and clarifying these