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Grace Moore and Michelle J. Smith, eds. *Victorian Environments. Acclimatizing to Change in British Domestic and Colonial Culture* (Los Angeles: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 317 pp.

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This edited volume emphasises the encounters Victorians had with their environments, both at home and beyond. The expansion of the British Empire brought some changes to a society that witnessed transnational movements that encouraged new exchanges and scientific breakthroughs. The search for knowledge was imbued with a desire to overcome old models, which included challenging existing notions about how the human and the non-human world were connected and interacted with each other. The alterations experienced by Great Britain during the nineteenth century meant that there was a wide array of economic and cultural stakes at play, including poverty, education, health, industrialisation, mass migration, and the spread of criminality (Heffer). These changes gave rise to transformative processes that shaped a new model in British social, political, economic, and cultural relations with other world regions, thus opening British Victorian society to a “changing consciousness of global space” (Mathieson 120) that led Britain to the present moment. We call ours a globalised world but previous globalisations have occurred and thus need be considered (Smith). The collective outlook of the metropolis regarding Victorians’ needs, dependencies, profits, and sense of opportunity for adventure and wonder (Moore and Smith 2) contributed to challenging and negotiating the new relationships between the emerging nation-state and the individual. The value of this collection also lies in that the changes witnessed by Victorian society are aptly mapped out in the division of the book into a cohesive structure of four parts that shed light on the broad Victorian approaches to travelling, animal and food transportation, pollution, literature, botanical science, cartography, and aesthetics.

In the introduction, the editors wisely start by explaining that the term “environments” refers here to the “product of evolving historical circumstances” (Moore and Mitchell, 2018: 3), developed from the French notion of “unchanging spatial surrounding” (3). The chapter is an example to provide readers with a volume enhanced by photographic reproductions, an extensive bibliography, and an index.

Within part I, entitled “Acclimatization,” we find three articles. In the first one, “The Environmentally Modified Self: Acclimatization and Identity in Early Victorian Literature,” Roslyn Jolly discusses the changes that the new scenarios of “travel, migration and empire” (19) brought in terms of fear, grievances and faux beliefs that nevertheless influenced and shaped the perceptions of identities in relation to regional climate

characteristics. Jolly refers to Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, Washington Irving, and Dr James Johnson, to then focus on Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy* and Alfred Tennyson's poems "Mariana" and "Mariana in the South". The texts negotiated ideas of identity associated to nationhood and imperialism while reflecting the exotic attraction of distant places. In "Rabbits and the Rise of Australian Nativism", Alexis Harley studies Charles Darwin's metaphors regarding migration and transportation of people and animal species. The article focuses on the tensions caused by poor land administration as part of the "obscure violence of colonization" (Westling 8). The third article, "Our Antipodes: Settler Colonial Environments in Victorian Travel Writing" by Anna Johnston, examines the production of travel writing by British travellers to Australia. Travelling made it possible for people to experiment, think and map imperial environments differently, contributing to the transmission of "cultural and geopolitical ideas" (59) while still pointing towards a notion of imperial domination over the colonised environment.

Part II, entitled "Mapping", is the longest section of the book and begins with Lesa Scholl's "Ubiquitous Theft: The Consumption of London in Mayhew's Underworld". The article delves into the broad increase in theft in imperial London as narrated by journalist Henry Mayhew and later by John Binny. Discourses about crime challenged the notions of respectability of the higher classes, with theft and prostitution being offences linked to organized groups who defied social and cultural boundaries. The next article, "'Mountains might be marked by a drop of glue:' Blindness, Touch and Tactile Maps" by Vanessa Warne, emphasises an interest in tactile maps in times that could not anticipate our present use of GPS and satellite communications. The interest in the study of geography was mainly due to the advances that allowed blind people to enjoy the experience of having contact with the physical and geographical characteristics of both local and distant places. This resulted in a means of erasing prejudices towards the aptitudes of blind people for the study of geography. Formal educational environments fostered the learning and practising of the skill, not merely the sensation, promoting an acknowledging of "a nomenclature of wonder" (Meek 394), adding value to the role of education as a social means of offering opportunities for all. In the next article, entitled "Exhuming the City: The Politics and Poetics of Graveyard Clearance", Haewon Hwang studies the impact of the controlling forces that established a politics of intervention in the realm of the burying and mourning of the dead, based on massive clearance of graveyards in London from the early decades of the 19th century. The article considers the representation of these practices (by Dickens, Emily Brontë, Wilkie Collins, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, among others) as reflected in an appropriation by the Gothic tradition and commodified into notions of urban profitability. The fourth article, "Speculative Viewing: Victorians' Encounters with Coral Reefs" by Kathleen Davidson, investigates on speculation around the oceanic environments and the survival of coral ecosystems which attracted the interest of leading naturalists, including Charles Darwin. His research led to the organisation of photographic expeditions by scientists Alexander Agassiz and William Saville-Kent to do measurements that helped define the coastal profile and refine knowledge on the expansion of reefs.

Part III, "Environmental Aesthetics", offers two articles. The first one is Kirby-Jane Hallum's "The Nature of Sensation Fiction: Botanical Textuality in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864) and Rhoda Broughton's *Red as a Rose Is She* (1870)". Similarly to maps, plants fascinate many of us because they embody opportunities for communication. Hallum discusses that the language of flowers encoded female desire and a variety of emotional states that fostered agency as well as individual and social identities. The texts show how vegetable life challenged the notion of a woman's fate as circumscribed to an imposed social order against ungoverned passion. The next article is "Craft and the Colonial Environment: Natural Fancywork in the Australian Album" by Molly Duggins. It focuses on the craftwork made by women in the Victorian colonial context of New South Wales. Handicraft practices by women reached the status of "mass decorative enterprise" (190) and contributed to locating them in the private sphere. Duggins argues that these practices aimed at drawing notions of community in unknown, undomesticated environments, and made it possible for women settlers to establish connections among their peers, to negotiate their identities as inhabitants of a new land, and "to cultivat[ing] civility in a foreign land" (193).

The book concludes with Part IV, "Food, Hunger, and Contamination". Hayley Rudkin centres on the trauma of hunger and its connection with industrialisation and destitution in "Inorganic Bodies, Longing to Become Organic: Hunger and Environment in Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution*". The article argues that the presence of food metaphors in Carlyle's text facilitates the understanding of "the role of hunger in driving the French Revolution" (219). In *The French Revolution* hunger pervades the environment, to the point of being associated as a continuous presence that probates the crowd, as "a unified whole" (220), to take revolutionary action. In "Yet Was It Human?" Bankim, Hunter and the Victorian Famine Ideology of *Anandamath*", Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee studies Bankimchandra Chatterji's *Anandamath*, published in 1881. The novel enjoyed great popularity during the 19th century with its depiction of the inflections among class, trade, gender, and nationalism in colonial India, framed by the trauma caused by the famine disaster suffered by Bengal population in the late decades of the 18th century. The text is examined in dialogue with its inter-text (238) *The Annals of Rural Bengal* by W. W. Hunter, published in 1868, as examples of "the Victorian famine ideology" (238). According to Mukherjee, Hunter's novel acknowledges the privations of the population running parallel to the insurgent nationalistic movements, although later in the novel Hunter leads the reader to the idea that catastrophes have historical and environmental causes. Finally, Tim Dolin's article, "Adulteration and the Late-Victorian Culture of Risk in *Jude the Obscure*", focuses on the discourses of corruption of values in Thomas Hardy's novel. Dolin points out that this transitional age in which Hardy lived brought a feeling of disintegration of an array of known beliefs. This added a melancholy view of the world for Hardy, that, as the article informs, dragged the characters to an "individualization [that makes them] responsible for their own life" (274), with the only one certainty ahead that all things known for long will be swallowed by time.

To conclude, I believe that this collection was inspired by a passion for deciphering and then transferring key aspects of Victorian society and its environments alongside the

Empire, how extensive they were and the purposes and ends they served. The editors and contributors' expertise suffuse the whole book, rich with insightful discussions, overarched by references and thought-provoking conclusions that will be useful for scholars, students and non-specialist readers.

## Works Cited

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