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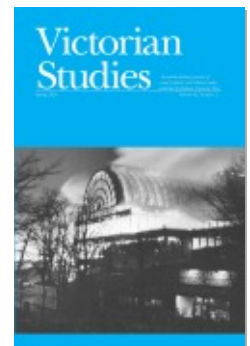
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*The Plot Thickens: Illustrated Victorian Serial Fiction from Dickens to Du Maurier* by Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge (review)

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something beyond vivacity since even the situation model (as Auyoung defines it) relies on a referential correspondence to the phenomenal world. Thus, ontological issues do indeed matter to the aims and effects of novelistic realism. In this context, although Auyoung brackets historicist and metonymic approaches to understanding realism, this critical tradition presents arguments that would repay a more forceful engagement and enrich the cognitive dimensions that she cogently describes.

We ought to be grateful, however, for what Auyoung does accomplish. Her attentiveness throughout to the stylistic features of her literary examples goes a long way to dispelling the reservations that scholars may have regarding cognitive approaches to literature as either being overly reductive or mechanical. Instead, they will find a compelling model for how cognitive studies might enhance their understanding of literature's aesthetic effects on readers.

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**The Plot Thickens: Illustrated Victorian Serial Fiction from Dickens to Du Maurier**, by Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa SurrIDGE; pp. xvi + 331. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019, \$85.00.

Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa SurrIDGE's *The Plot Thickens: Illustrated Victorian Serial Fiction from Dickens to Du Maurier* is an important book, in part because of the spread of its material over the whole of Queen Victoria's reign. This it achieves by suitable sampling of titles of serial novels, including some issued in parts and some run in periodicals. There is equally good spread in the creators of the words and images of target works. No other single work has attempted this, and Leighton and SurrIDGE are signally successful in this regard. They promote the analysis of illustrated novels in terms of both their words and their images, bringing the visual and the verbal into play together in critical treatment of each chosen work. This is less original than first-time readers may assume, for earlier efforts in this direction are to be found in widely dispersed articles, chapters, and conference papers, a good number of which are not consulted in this book. But, as we might imagine a Victorian reviewer saying on the book publication of one of the serial novels under scrutiny, "It is gratifying to see that which we have enjoyed in monthly doses, now gathered together between boards." (Victorians had no reason to doubt the longevity of the hardback book, and recent experience suggests that it may be safer to rely on ink on paper than corruptible digital text.) In the present work, the introductory matter dealing with the history of the illustrated book and illustrated periodical is very necessary for the reader new to the serious study of illustrated literature, and broadly speaking it does its job. Occasional looseness, such as the dating of the dominance of the three-volume novel, may be the result of pressure of space or time, but it is regrettable in a work almost certainly destined to be a key source for university study. Anthony Trollope did not assert John Everett Millais to be the best illustrator of fiction ever with reference to all the artist's work on all his novels, but specifically with reference to *Orley Farm* (1861–62).

Other approximations are mainly a matter of compression, but the failure to give dimensions of each image reproduced is a serious defect.

The model of the stage set in early Victorian illustration is underplayed, and the example of the myriad illustrated French novels of the eighteenth century is unjustly neglected. Leighton and Surridge stop short of regarding their material as bimedral, that is to say as text which consists of words and images inextricably linked, and which jointly produce meanings. Their use of narratology is very welcome, but its originality overstated. The ambition is three decades old and is central to the approach based on understanding illustrated texts as bimedral works. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra (*The Artist as Critic: Bimodality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books* [1995]), Paola Spinozzi (*Sopra il reale: Osmosi interartistiche nel Preraffaellitismo e nel Simbolismo inglese* [2005]) and the late Jahn Holljen Thon (*Talende Linjer: lærde illustrerte bøker 1625–1775* [2012]) show a steadily growing acceptance of the need for analysis which unites the verbal and visual reader responses. The term paratext should be used more cautiously than it often is here, since in many contexts it implies a secondary characteristic of an illustrated work, and its several meanings must be understood in a French context. Ideally, indeed, an account of Victorian book illustration should be composed in awareness of the history of French literary illustration. There is no equivalent in English of the work of Rémi Blachon, Philippe Kaenel, or Nathalie Ferrand, for example.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the volume under review, being aimed at those embarking on the study of illustrated literature for the first time, is undamaged by these considerations, and the book is a very worthy addition to the secondary literature. No reader, even one well versed in the study of illustration, will fail to be impressed by the wealth of examples and the universally good standard of the analysis. Only those who have worked in the field know the many obstacles encountered and, in this case, successfully overcome. Years of exploratory research must have gone into selecting the target texts, and countless hours into finding reliable copies. There are few reliable guides to the visual artists involved, and many a fine art reference work devalues mass-produced illustration as an activity, not finding it on the paragon of the arts. Forrest Reid's deliberate exclusion of women artists from the record casts a long and influential shadow too. It is good to see Mary Ellen Edwards recognized, and to recall that a full history of illustration of fiction would note that Trollope promoted her as early as December 1865, when he had Hablot K. Brown dismissed as artist for *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864–65) for not measuring up to the new standards of truth-to-life that Trollope championed, and for not drawing horses accurately.

The book is highly interesting throughout. The aim of the authors to make writing on illustration as well grounded and rigorous as criticism of literature is most welcome, and entails an unwavering awareness that the works in question have been read for over a century in at least two or even four ways, as illustrated works or unillustrated works, and as serial works or volumes without division into episodes (as radio and television have accustomed us to say). This entails, of course, a shift from the analysis of meaning production solely in the creation of works of art to an equally searching attention to meaning production in the multiple contexts of consumption. The authors are admirably successful in their project to recover certain earlier "reading practices, in so far as we can recapture them by inference from the form of the illustrated serials themselves" (277). That they should have been so successful in little over 300 pages is an

achievement indeed. If they succeed in gaining broad recognition for illustrated studies, we can expect scholars of book history and of the period's book reviews to add their own specialist expertise to this project. Future work can also draw on such extensive resources as the proof-books of the Dalziel Brothers in the British Museum, now admirably available online as *The Dalziel Archive*, thanks to the heroic efforts of Bethan Stevens. I hope that this volume represents an effective fillip to the systematic study of literary illustrations, which has been for some decades struggling to survive in a hostile environment. It may be more effective in promoting teaching and research in the Victorian illustrated novel than works with a tighter scholarly focus on particular writers, artists, media, or periodicals.

It only remains to record the sheer breadth of the field surveyed, from Charles Dickens, William Harrison Ainsworth, and William Makepeace Thackeray through Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, Dinah Craik, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Reade to Thomas Hardy, Charles Warren Adams, and Daphne Du Maurier. If that list does not give the Victorianist a pleasant jolt, Victorian studies is in a parlous state indeed.

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**George Eliot's Moral Aesthetic: Compelling Contradictions**, by Constance Fulmer; pp. xii + 192. New York and London: Routledge, 2019, \$155.00, £120.00.

Solidarity and continuity: these are the two concepts, Constance Fulmer writes in *George Eliot's Moral Aesthetic: Compelling Contradictions*, that guided Eliot's moral aesthetic, and they are the terms that operate with equal prominence in this new study of Eliot's writings. Fulmer's command of these works—including fiction, poetry, notebooks, letters, and even juvenilia—is mighty, and the equality of attention she confers to works major and minor is admirable. Above all, though, it is this book's philosophical motive, its view of Eliot as a powerful and lifelong thinker on moral subjects, that comes through in the range of texts called upon by Fulmer to illustrate the endurance of Eliot's two abiding principles. While hardly the first monograph devoted to Eliot's morality, Fulmer's differs sharply from earlier works such as Bernard Paris's *Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values* (1965) or Suzanne Graver's *George Eliot and Community: A Study in Social Theory and Fictional Form* (1984). What distinguishes Fulmer's project is her sense of what she calls the "compelling contradiction" between Eliot's high moral commitments (not only as expressed in her characters, but also in her own life) and her creativity as an artist. Ultimately, Fulmer's Eliot is a novelist for whom the determining moral principles of her fiction—solidarity and continuity—are borne out of the experience of vocation she herself felt as a young woman: a vocation not simply to create but also to produce art of high importance and transformative potential in her culture. Responding herself to the call of continuity—an inheritance of undeniable artistic ability, human insight, and otherness—Eliot and her works, according to Fulmer, take as their imperative