

NINETEENTH CENTURY GENDER STUDIES

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Victorian Literature in the Age of #MeToo: An Introduction

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<1>We write this introduction from opposite sides of the country during a period when we have been ordered to “shelter in place” due to the global pandemic of COVID-19. Like many of our contributors (and colleagues), we have had to learn to work remotely while caring for and homeschooling our children, stealing fragments of time to design online courses and to read much of the feminist writing that informs this special issue. Thus, when Kellie was reading *Hood Feminism*, Mikki Kendall’s indictment of “peak white feminism” and how it has failed women of color, a particular sentence stood out (258). Urging feminists to address the “racialized misogyny” that informs the tacit normalization of sexual violence, Kendall proclaims, “Rape culture is pandemic and must be fought unanimously or we will never defeat it” (62).<1> Meanwhile, COVID-19 has made more visible the racial disparities that plague the United States. The recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery—along with the murders of countless unarmed and innocent black men and women before and since—have amplified the Black Lives Matter movement and inspired nationwide and international protests against police brutality, precipitating the dumping of monuments to slavery and emblems of the U.S. Confederacy, and initiating widespread calls for specific legal and social reforms to address systemic racism. All of this brings into sharp relief another “pandemic within the pandemic”: institutionalized racism.<2> The metaphor of “pandemic” to describe both rape culture and racism collides with the reality of an actual pandemic, insistently reminding us that rape culture is a racialized, global phenomenon, a scourge that one special journal issue—or one single hashtag—alone cannot solve. Nevertheless.

<2>The idea for this special issue germinated over two years ago when we both started thinking about the implications #MeToo would have for our scholarship and our teaching. Although we teach at very different kinds of universities—Kellie at a small liberal arts institution on the East Coast and Lana at a large master’s granting institution on the West Coast—we both increasingly noticed the language of #MeToo showing up in our classrooms and on our campuses. We started thinking more formally about #MeToo as a framework for reading the Victorians in 2018 when we proposed a panel called “Teaching Victorian Literature in the Age of #MeToo” for the annual Victorian Interdisciplinary Studies Association of the Western United States (VISAWUS) conference. It seemed clear that the #MeToo movement could provide a fruitful framework in the Victorian literature classroom for teaching students about the *longue durée* of rape culture, its subtleties and complexities, and the ways that we have all internalized its norms. One of the real temptations of the #MeToo movement is to use it as a mechanism for making Victorian literature more relatable for students, and we wanted to think about the potential benefits and drawbacks of doing so. Kellie’s paper explored the ways that Victorian fictions depict sexual harassment as a

merely unfortunate condition of women working outside the home, one that was tolerated and dismissed. If sexual harassment at work is still so common, how might we prompt students to read these Victorian instances of sexual harassment not as something outdated but as part of a larger genealogy of the rape culture they inherit? Jane J. Lee's paper explored the ways classroom practices can sometimes be complicit in the perpetuation of gender and race ideologies, particularly when it comes to questions about what, who, and how we teach. How much do structural and systemic factors such as curricula, the use of survey courses, and even the modules Victorianists create to teach the nineteenth century contribute to reductive understandings of race and gender? How might we create concrete relevancies for students between our classrooms and contemporary social movements? Lana's paper considered how so-called "cancel culture" might come to bear on the Victorian Studies classroom, and how students' experience of and response to the #MeToo movement might differ significantly from our own. How can we teach students to use terms like assault, harassment, abuse, consent, and violence in precise and meaningful ways? How do we balance accountability, in the Victorian literature classroom, with careful historical thinking and nuanced literary analysis? The panel generated a lot of interest and initiated spirited and, at times, tense discussions about the way we approach rape culture in the classroom and, by implication, in our scholarship.

<3>For decades, feminist scholars have been identifying and analyzing scenes of sexual assault and harassment in Victorian imaginative literature, but suddenly it feels like the ground has shifted. In the age of #MeToo, it is no longer tenable to simply cast troubling literary scenes and misogynistic writers as products of a different time. Instead, this special issue will suggest, we can use the momentum from #MeToo to reconceive how students and scholars might think critically about such issues in highly contextual and specific ways. In our introduction, we begin this work by reflecting on the history of #MeToo, reviewing the landscape of earlier Victorianist scholarship on sexual violence, and, finally, by suggesting how #MeToo is transforming that landscape.

#MeToo in Context

<4>In October 2017, #MeToo went viral on social media. Prompted by actress Alyssa Milano—who tweeted "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet"—reposting the phrase "me too" allowed victims of sexual violence to participate in a global conversation and to make visible the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. "Me too" was quickly replaced with #MeToo, and "within the first twenty-four hours, it had been retweeted half a million times" (Tambe 197).<3> Although women are not the only victims of such crimes, posting #MeToo was quickly regarded as an act of feminist collectivity and resistance, a resounding response to decades of silence around sexual harassment and assault.

<5>Although the hashtag gained widespread visibility in 2017, the phrase Me Too was coined eleven years earlier by activist Tarana Burke, who used it on the then-popular social media platform MySpace and in workshops that she organized. Burke used the phrase to raise awareness of widespread sexual violence against women of color and to establish solidarity among victims.<4> In 2017, though, #MeToo was immediately associated with prominent white celebrities like Alyssa Milano, Ashley Judd, and Jennifer Lawrence; for many, this became yet another instance of a "white feminism" that both relies upon and elides the work of women of color.<5> While #MeToo promised alliance among women, it also presaged divisions within the

feminist collective, reinforced the need for intersectionality, and led many feminist scholars and activists to ask “is #MeToo a white women’s movement?” (Tambe 198).

<6>Further, despite the swift and far-reaching momentum of #MeToo, public response was divided. Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, the *New York Times* journalists who broke the Harvey Weinstein story, explain: “In a way, those who felt #MeToo had not gone far enough and those who protested that it was going too far were saying some of the same things. . . . The public did not fully agree on the precise meaning of words like *harassment* or *assault*, let alone how businesses or schools should investigate or punish them” (188). One of the most radical axioms of #MeToo is that the “accusers’ words [are] taken more seriously than those of the accused,” or, in other words, that we should believe women (another concept that quickly turned into a popular hashtag) (Tambe 200). As society reckoned with what it might mean to #BelieveWomen, it also debated how to define consent, assault, harassment, and predation. While traditionally accounts of sexual harassment and assault have relied upon the victim’s lengthy and detailed testimony—testimony that can compromise the victim in myriad ways—#MeToo acted as shorthand for sexual harassment and assault: a distillation of widely varied personal stories into a singular and powerful symbol of victimization and an appeal for justice. That first batch of #MeToo social media posts in 2017 most frequently only included the hashtag and excluded any details about the acts of sexual harassment and/or assault therein implied. The hashtag, then, allowed women to make their individual experiences visible without compromising their privacy, and shifted the focus from the particular to the general, from the individual to the group. This rhetorical move enabled rapid collectivity and solidarity, but it also effected the erasure of distinctive, individual stories and critical differences, and risked representing survivors as monolithic, rather than diverse. #MeToo purported to be universal—a symbol for all victims of sexual assault and harassment—and insisted upon accountability, but many survivors felt unaccounted for.<6>

<7>In the wake of the social media movement, numerous public figures were “outed” as perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault, and the collective social response was a demand for consequences and for change. Following the Harvey Weinstein story in October 2017, a number of prominent sexual violence cases made national headlines. Indeed, a year after the Weinstein case broke, the *New York Times* declared that “#MeToo Brought Down 201 Powerful Men.”<7> In some instances, men were “brought down” in formal settings, like courtrooms and congressional hearings; in others, they were tried in the court of public opinion. Some perpetrators were punished with jail time, while others were punished with loss of work, revenue, and public favor. One key question that emerged in the fallout was whether or not we should reject the work of writers, artists, and musicians accused of sexual harassment and assault, a question that has potentially serious consequences for those who teach literature and the humanities.

<8>The #MeToo “take downs” were not limited to men living in our own time. In February 2019, John Bowen discovered a trove of letters proving that the celebrated Victorian novelist Charles Dickens had tried to dispose of his wife by having her institutionalized, and Dickens, for many, came to be regarded as yet another powerful male figure with a problematic private life that they could no longer ignore.<8> It is, of course, worth noting that Dickens’s marital troubles were no secret in his lifetime; as with so many powerful men in our own time, the disreputable aspects of Dickens’s private life were, in the nineteenth century, often overlooked on account of

his talent. If Dickens's marital cruelty could "go viral" in the nineteenth century^{<9>}, is teaching his work now the equivalent of encouraging our students to watch *The Cosby Show*? As instructors requiring students to read particular works (and thereby appearing to defend what has been canonized), what is our ethical responsibility to students in regards to sexual violence accusations against an author?^{<10>} And how do we respond when students are resistant to studying the work of an accused abuser? Bowen's discovery prompted a lengthy—and at times heated—public discussion around such questions on the VICTORIA listserv; the conversation made it clear that scholars have yet to establish consensus on such matters. The language and dynamics of #MeToo are clearly not confined to social media, newspapers, and the entertainment industry; they imbue the operation of our universities and our classrooms and, therefore, it is imperative that we critically engage with them.

Victorian Rape Culture?

^{<9>}The #MeToo movement has given voice to a spectrum of issues, including sexual harassment in public places, sexual assault, the culture of rape that enables such behaviors to persist and go unpunished, the meaning and possibility of consent, naming and shaming perpetrators, believing victims' stories, justice, accountability, and even reparations. In particular, #MeToo has re-initiated a conversation about the norms of rape culture, leading us, as Victorian scholars and teachers, to ask: was there such a thing as Victorian rape culture? And, if so, what connections might we draw between past and present? In *Shrill*, Lindy West offers a comprehensive definition of a culture of rape:

We live in a culture that actively strives to shrink the definition of sexual assault; that casts stalking behaviors as romance; blames victims for wearing the wrong clothes, walking through the wrong neighborhood, or flirting with the wrong person; bends over backwards to excuse boys-will-be-boys misogyny; makes the emotional and social costs of reporting a rape prohibitively high; pretends that false accusations are a more dire problem than actual assaults; elects officials who tell rape victims that their sexual violation was 'god's plan'; and convicts in less than 5 percent of cases that go to trial. (172)

We can easily map examples from Victorian literature and culture onto this definition. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, the titular character is stalked by her wealthy suitor Harry Carson. In *North and South*, Margaret Hale is subject to street harassment when walking home: men "comment[] on her looks" in an "open fearless manner" and she is forced to painfully "endure undisguised admiration from . . . outspoken men" (72). In *Ruth*, the figure of patriarchal authority and her employer, Mr. Bradshaw, victim-blames Ruth when he discovers that she was seduced by the powerful Bellingham. The misogynistic, gendered violence of Charlotte Brontë's Edward Rochester and Emily Brontë's Heathcliff is excused as boys-will-be-boys romance (and the characters themselves are elevated as romantic ideals far too often by readers). Further, while Rochester threatens Jane Eyre with violence, he enacts it on his West Indian wife, Bertha, who he imprisons and violently demeans. Thomas Hardy's Tess experiences the deep costs of reporting a rape when she is deserted and left destitute on her wedding night. George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver is shamed and ostracized after an ill-conceived boat ride with her cousin's suitor who, despite publicly taking the blame for the incident, is left comparatively unscathed. And, in a particularly powerful example, the rape of the working-class Marian in *Aurora Leigh* is arranged in order to maintain class hierarchies thought to be "God's plan."

<10>It is certainly not new for feminist literary scholars to identify scenes of gendered and sexual violence in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. Among other examples<11>, over forty years ago, Carol Senf interpreted as a gang rape the scene in *Dracula* in which Arthur Holmwood drives a stake through the heart of his beloved Lucy while Van Helsing, Dr. Steward, and Quincey Morris watch.<12> More recently, Patricia Murphy locates a “virtual rape” in the scene in H. Rider Haggard’s *Mr. Meeson’s Will* in which a man tattoos a will on the heroine’s back, and Doreen Thierauf identifies a sublimated marital rape plot in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*. Scholars have not only analyzed scenes in individual novels but also fostered larger arguments about how sexual violence is embedded in the structure of English literature. Frances Ferguson’s influential 1987 essay “Rape and the Rise of the Novel,” for instance, suggests that the psychological novel evolved out of the rape story.

<11>These examples from fiction and literary criticism are corroborated by historical research. Although the Victorians would not have labeled it as rape culture, the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in the period has been widely documented. Historians have exposed the nineteenth century as a period when gendered and sexual violence was ideologically systematized and legitimized by law. Anna Clark’s 1987 book *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845*, describes how sexual danger was used to control and limit women’s movement. More recent work by Kim Stevenson suggests that the Victorian press’s “utilization of [] anodyne and neutralized language” to describe rape “gave the appearance of respectability and sexual purity, but at the same time it underlined and reinforced the prevailing sexual hypocrisy and masculine values” (232). Stevenson powerfully demonstrates how women’s testimony was often muted because they did not have an effective language to describe what had happened to them; and for those women who did, their testimony was undermined by the very language they used, which could be construed as “evidence” of sexual knowledge and promiscuity. The problem intensified along lines of race, class, and ethnicity, where hierarchies of power often nullified the category of sexual violence altogether; the lasting dominance of wealthy, white, colonizing voices in the canon and in our textbooks makes the sexual assault of poor women and women of color particularly difficult to locate in the period.

<12>The institutionalization of violence against women is visible in common law doctrines governing married women’s property, which rendered rape of a married woman a property crime rather than a tort crime. Marital rape was not deemed a crime in Victorian England since, as Thierauf reminds us, a wife “was understood to have granted lifelong sexual consent upon marriage” (249). Institutionalization of sexual violence is also evident in the Contagious Diseases Acts, which legally enshrined the sexual double standard. Demands to repeal the Acts were buttressed by medical evidence that referred to the forced vaginal examination of prostitutes as “indiscriminate steel rape of unfortunate women.”<13> Additional evidence is found in the Offenses Against the Person Act of 1861, which failed to articulate a statutory definition for rape and “left [it] to the judges to develop the common law principles as regards what could vitiate consent” (Stevenson 235). According to Carolyn Conley, “The legal definition of the crime [of rape] was vague enough to allow judges and juries to select their own definitions. Conviction rates had more to do with popular male attitudes than with legal codes” (536). These popular male attitudes included a normalization of irrepressible male sexuality, a contention that “respectable” men were incapable of sexual assault, and an assertion that female victims of sexual assault were somehow to blame—attitudes that resonate painfully with contemporary accounts of sexual assault in the press and the courtroom. As in our own time, for

the Victorians, “[r]ape presented particular difficulties for the criminal justice system” because of “ambiguity about the nature of the offense” (Conley 520).

<13>Victorian discourses about rape extended to concerns about women entering the public sphere for work. Clark explains: “sexual danger became the focus of intensified attention on the place of women in public space. Magistrates, judges, and journalists dealing with rape cases began to introduce the idea that rape imperiled women’s safety in evening streets” (3). Such thinking bolstered the separate spheres ideology, which (at least ideologically) ensconced women in the private sphere, away from the temptations and criminality of the public sphere. And yet for many women, the public and the private were always inextricable. Victorian women were not protected from, or immune to, experiencing the public sphere as a site of sexual harassment both on the street and in the workplace. A #MeToo framework urges us to rethink the logic of the separate spheres ideology and to re-read depictions of working women anew for the real dangers presented by simply being in public. According to Helena Michie, work made Victorian women’s bodies visible: “Women who earned their bread . . . inevitably made their bodies, as well as their work, public. The angel who left her house was, on some metaphorical level, seen by the more conservative elements of Victorian culture as a streetwalker” (31). Women clerical workers exemplified this ideological conflict. In the late-nineteenth-century white-collar workplace, women typists were viewed (and frequently depicted in typewriter advertisements) as sexually available; at the same time, in imaginative literature, they were represented as sexually vulnerable and subject to harassment on the job.<14>

<14>For some of us, then, researching, writing about, and teaching nineteenth-century literature and culture in the age of #MeToo simply means pointing out what has been present in the text, and in history, all along. And yet, numerous scholars have discussed the difficulty of locating a reliable archive of sexual violence in the period, given the fact that many crimes were never reported and laws on obscenity, alongside social mores, discouraged Victorians from writing explicitly about sex and sexual assault in imaginative literature. Writers in the periodical press wrung their hands about the possibility of false conviction<15>; and historians have suggested that cases of sexual assault were woefully underreported and conviction rates were tied closely to class status.<16> This raises concerns about the ethics of a reading practice that asks students, or more particularly, non-experts, to look for what is not actually present in the text. Several of the essays in this special issue address this subject. Given the problematic nature of “evidence” when discussing sexual assault, how might we reframe our treatment of rape in literature classes that rely upon the production of “textual evidence”? What are we reading for when we are reading the gaps and omissions in a text, or when we ask students to read those gaps and omissions? What values and assumptions do we bring with us when we read this way? What are the ethics of that reading practice? What can such a reading practice produce and what are its pitfalls? And given the predominance of white women in Victorian literature, how do we teach students to read gender and sexual assault through an intersectional lens?

Reading for Sexual Violence

<15>Since the resurgence of #MeToo, feminist scholarship has registered a dramatic shift in the stakes of identifying and analyzing sexual violence in nineteenth-century texts. Some feminist scholars are looking to the nineteenth century to understand today’s cultural crisis of sexual violence and harassment, and they are using today’s cultural vocabulary, cautiously and

intentionally testing the promises and limits of strategic presentism^{<17>} to re-interpret fictional and historical narratives from the past. Jill Ehnenn recently referred to this as looking “backward in order to look forward” (53). Ehnenn’s essay prompts us to “consider how thinking about the present impacts our and our students’ thinking about the past” (35). Among other compelling examples of such work, Erin Spampinato and Doreen Thierauf organized a panel for the annual Modern Language Association meeting in January 2019 entitled “Theorizing the New Rape Studies.” The papers collectively suggested “that ‘the new rape studies’ favor intersectional approaches to sexual violence, de-prioritize the usual mode of evidence-gathering, and instead privilege women’s own accounts of their experiences” (Spampinato). Writing for *The Conversation* in 2019, LeeAnne Richardson likens Jeffrey Epstein’s predations to those exposed by W. T. Stead in his scandalous *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*. On a panel entitled “Historicizing #MeToo,” at the Modern Language Association convention in January 2020, Courtney Chatellier described American suffragist Victoria Woodhull’s attempts to expose the sexual abuses of powerful New York men (Flaherty). The NAVSA convention in November 2019 included multiple #MeToo panels. And in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sara Maurer compares the exhausting and invisible labor of Victorian housewives to that of women attempting to evade sexual harassment in the modern workplace. Such work has energized nineteenth-century-studies feminist scholarship and provided the groundwork for this special issue.

^{<16>}The essays included in this collection continue this work of anachronizing the present;^{<18>} they cover the long nineteenth century—beginning with Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* in 1817 and ending with the *fin-de-siècle* fiction of Mona Caird and Richard Marsh—and span multiple genres, including the realist novel, slave narratives, and urban mysteries. We have arranged the essays to follow shared themes and threads of interest. The first three essays by Doreen Thierauf, Anna Feuerstein, and Douglas Murray all exhibit concern with the dispersal of sexual violence across our culture, the issue of the community’s complicity in the misogyny and racism that enable rape culture, and the need for a communal, not individual(ist) response to sexual violence. Essays by Murray and by Ellen Stockstill and Jessica Mele showcase the pedagogical opportunities in reading old texts with new frames, contemporary vocabularies, and tools largely derived from feminist activism and victim advocacy, by which we understand sexual violence now. While Stockstill and Mele’s essay, as well as other contributors’ essays, undertake the project of reading into the “silences” in mainstream realist nineteenth-century texts, essays by Sara Hackenberg and Shuhita Bhattacharjee unpack the explicit violence directly addressed in academically marginalized subgenres such as the popular urban mysteries series and *fin-de-siècle* imperial gothic novels. Essays by Bhattacharjee, Kimberly Cox, and Rebecca Richardson explore the limits of our contemporary discourse about consent in contexts of sexual violence permeated by hierarchies of power, and Richardson clarifies the stakes of re-viewing old stories by focusing on neo-Victorian adaptation. Miranda Wojciechowski’s essay asks us to think carefully about how we read women’s testimonies and to consider the possibilities of heterosocial connection in a violently heterosexualized world. Marlene Tromp’s conclusion powerfully performs the risks of connecting the personal and the political and prompts us to think carefully about the tension between the Humanities’ dismissal of personal experience as scholarly “evidence” and the feminist tenet that the personal is political. Movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo accentuate and exploit the apparent incongruence between individual experience and collective solutions to social injustices.

<17>While the essays here address a broad range of issues related to #MeToo, the classroom, and our scholarship, there are some evident gaps in the collection’s coverage. Key voices and stories from nineteenth-century rape culture are missing from this special issue. There are formal holes: poetry, drama, nonfiction prose, and many fictional subgenres such as sensation or science fiction go unrepresented. More problematic, however: absent is any mention of women across the empire, or acknowledgement of the ways that colonial and transatlantic contexts produce new concerns, new styles of predation, and new modes of victimization for both Englishwomen and colonized subjects. There’s a lack of gender diversity here as well: missing are the voices of trans* or gender nonconforming persons.<19> There is little discussion of other factors that contribute to the complexities of rape culture, such as disability and age. Such stories exist, but they remain largely unaccounted for within feminist work in this field. This archival silence is due, in part, to historical forces of canonization and unequal access to sources and resources, making it difficult for many scholars to locate marginalized narratives. It is also possible, though, that we are simply not yet effectively attending to the voices we have uncovered or recovered. Mikki Kendall reminds us that in the global pandemic that is rape culture, not all victims are treated equally: “gender-based violence is . . . a place where race and class have not only divided resources and media, but a range of *-isms* divide the responses to those at risk. Whether it is transphobia, anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, or xenophobia, there isn’t anything approaching a unified effective response to gender-based violence that is inclusive of all” (156). Her words remind us of the need, again, for increasingly robust intersectional approaches to the archives, to all the cultural forms of the past.

<18>As the essays in this special issue demonstrate, new theoretical frameworks and critical vocabularies may help us to view narratives in a new light. Thus, we include the recovery of the stories of silenced rape culture survivors from the past as among the tasks challenging feminist scholars, students, and readers today, even as we heed warnings about the ethics of reading into silences. Another challenge is to meaningfully bring intersectional frameworks into the nineteenth-century-studies classroom and our scholarship,<20> resisting, for example, the tendency to treat Victorian women as an oppressed monolith, and reckoning with the complex and varied ways that race, class, ability, age, religion, and sexuality create vectors of oppression and complicate narratives of sexual violence.<21> The terms of the conversation around #MeToo and sexual assault are constantly evolving, and so must our scholarship and teaching. We are grateful to the many scholars who submitted essays for our consideration—surely an indication that there are many rich veins of conversation occurring and promising work on the horizon. We hope this special issue contributes to these conversations and stimulates the growth of new ones.

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Notes

(1) Likewise, in *Rage Becomes Her*, Soraya Chemaly writes, “Rape continues to be pandemic globally and victims still have good cause to be skeptical of institutional commitment to justice” (137).

(2) See Stolberg. Poet Caroline Randall Williams's *New York Times* op-ed "You Want a Confederate Monument? My Body is a Confederate Monument" is a powerful statement on the ways in which sexual violence is inherent to systemic racism, beginning with its haunting first sentence: "I have rape-colored skin."

(3) The mutation of "me too" to #MeToo on social media is significant. Hashtags entered the scene in 2007 when, according to linguist Gretchen McCulloch, "Twitter users started casting about for a way of grouping together related tweets" and looking for a "practical way of finding and grouping social media conversations about a similar topic" (128-129). According to McCulloch, hashtags developed into a more formal way of "directing a tweet...towards a large group of people" and, as such, are different from other frequently used social media symbols like @, which is meant to initiate a more intimate conversation (if any conversation on social media can be called "intimate") between two parties (56). Thus, we can interpret the shift from posting "me too" to posting #MeToo as a shift from the personal to the public, from sharing an individual experience to contributing to a collective reckoning.

(4) In an interview in *The Nation*, Burke said she "created #MeToo to draw attention to sexual violence against women of color": see Burke.

(5) See Garcia.

(6) See Hubbard.

(7) See Carlsen, et al.

(8) See Bowen.

(9) See O'Leary 305.

(10) See Goldberg.

(11) Gendered violence has long been a subject of Victorianist scholarship; for monographs on domestic violence see Tromp, Lawson and Shakinovsky, SurrIDGE, and Rintoul. Similarly, scholars have examined sexual abuse; see D'Cruz and Jackson. This literature review is intended to be representative, rather than exhaustive. We hope readers of this special issue will avail themselves of the bibliographies in the issue's essays for more examples of this valuable work.

(12) Incidentally, the publication of Senf's essay in the fall of 1979 coincided with that of Catherine MacKinnon's groundbreaking *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* in which she famously analyzed sexual harassment as a social institution arising from women's economic inequality. MacKinnon's work refocused the problem as a legal one, and laws changed as a result, but they have not been as effective as envisioned in stopping the problem. In a 2018 *New York Times* op-ed MacKinnon suggested that "#MeToo Has Done What the Law Could Not": because of #MeToo, "Structural misogyny, along with sexualized racism and class

inequalities, is being publicly and pervasively challenged by women's voices. The difference is, power is paying attention."

(13) See Wilkinson 14.

(14) For more on the sexual objectification of women typists and harassment in the white-collar workplace, see Holzer (forthcoming).

(15) Kim Stevenson cites examples of this, including an 1864 essay from *The Spectator*, where the author worries that "The temptation to turn mere broad joke into a criminal charge needs to be very carefully watched. For a man to put his arms around a woman's waist without her consent may be an assault, even an indelicate assault, but it is not exactly what the law means to be the technical phrase. The social penalty in such cases so enormously aggravates the penalty fixed by law that there is a risk, a crime becomes common because its punishment is too severe for the common instinct of ordinary man" (quoted in Stevenson 242). Likewise, as #MeToo prompted a sharp increase in the reporting of sexual harassment and assault, it simultaneously ushered in concern about false allegations.

(16) Looking specifically at cases in Kent County between 1859 and 1880, Carolyn Conley found that "[v]ery few men of any status were convicted of rape. The judicial bias against women was more compelling than any consideration of status. . . . Every case involving a victim identified as a lady went to trial and in 87 percent of the cases the accused was convicted of either indecent assault or rape. When the victim was a domestic, the conviction rate dropped to 43 percent" (530). The overall conviction rate in rape trials in Kent "was only 40 percent—for all other felonies it was 85 percent" (521).

(17) See the V21 Forum on Strategic Presentism.

(18) See Ehnenn 56.

(19) In *Victorian Review's* special issue on Trans Victorians, guest editor Ardel Haefele-Thomas urges us to look for "understandings of gender beyond the binary in the nineteenth century" (35). The special issue's essays expose various types of violence done to so-called "female husbands," cross dressers, and gender fluid historical and literary figures.

(20) Ehnenn helpfully explains what an intentional application of an intersectional approach means to her: "When I use the term 'intersectionality,' I'm suggesting that our scholarship contain multiaxial awareness of identity-based oppression, that when we study and teach sexual desire, relational affiliation, gender presentation, and/or gender roles, we don't erase the experiences of Victorian persons of color, Victorians uprooted due to colonial enterprise, and disabled Victorians" (55).

(21) We enthusiastically hear, and echo, the recent call in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* to undisciplinarian Victorian Studies by, among other things, centering the racial logics that undergird the institutional field as a means to avoid reinforcing whiteness as the universal. Always already

racialized, rape culture is another “past that is not past” (Sharpe, qtd. in Chatterjee, Christoff, Wong).

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