distinguished series of monographs on Victorian literature, the Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture. The General Editor is the polymathic and apparently tireless Professor Gillian Beer, who has, so far in the last thirty years, sifted manuscripts to find amidst the dust heap 120 worth publishing. Cambridge does a good, clean job of producing these. But since it shut down its press in 2012 after nearly five centuries of continuous printing, this codex was manufactured by a firm started in London with two hand presses in 1979 and now relocated to Cornwall, using modern mechanized equipment to produce quality books. The design and execution make for legible pages; copy-editing, referencing, and indexing are well executed. For the cover, whoever discovered Walter Goodman's *The Printseller's Window* in the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester should get a gold star. It's a stunner, and so *apropos*.

Quality costs. At retail just under $100, the price does not encourage individual buyers in today's literary marketplace. But this one is worth it, for scholars, and imperative, for libraries.

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The subtitle of Adam Abraham's *Plagiarizing the Victorian Novel* immediately signals the complexity of its subject matter. *Imitation, Parody, Aftertext*: these terms complicate our understanding of "plagiarism," so often deployed as a pejorative term signaling one-dimensional mimicry. Abraham's study illuminates the multifaceted and sometimes surprising ways in which the Victorian novel inspired creative engagement, engagement that often transgressed the boundaries of mere imitation and lent these "plagiarist" texts vivid afterlives in their own right. The word *plagiarism* has a rich etymology, as Abraham points out, tracing its origins to the Latin for kidnapping. Exploring the history of the term, and its associated concepts – copyright, adaptation, and parody – Abraham aims to offer "a new kind of reception history" (19).

This research is both timeless and timely. As Abraham points out, "unoriginality is nothing new" (1), and the book begins with a survey of historical attitudes to what Gérard Genette terms "literature in the second degree," from Plato's forms to Aristotle's *mimesis,* from Romantic *creatio* to

"canonical writers who, at different times, have been accused of pilfering from others: Chaucer, Montaigne, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster, Milton, Molière, Voltaire, Sterne, Scott, Coleridge, Tennyson, Dickens, George Eliot – a veritable Norton anthology of literature" (4). He focuses on the "aftertexts" of Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer Lytton and George Eliot, a trio chosen partly because they generated unusually "intense, immediate, and sustained" engagement (21), and partly because "they originated something – namely, an array of aftertexts and authors seeking to replicate a literary brand" (185). The literary *oeuvre* as brand – identity, source of income and entity demanding legal protection – irrigates the book, offering useful implications for how we might further investigate the commercial and legal questions entwined with Victorian authorship.

Although many of the texts Abraham explores – penny weeklies, anonymous reviews, parodies and correspondence – may hitherto have been viewed as "excrescences […] peripheral to the study of literature and the arts" (19), he argues convincingly for the value of such texts: they record at least one reader's response; they "make the originals *original* in that they originated something" (20); and they often shaped the reception, and thus the careers, of individual novelists. These responses thus enrich our understanding of canonical writers: "one cannot produce a canon unless there is something that is not in it" (20).

Dickens scholars will be drawn to the first two chapters, "The Pickwick Phenomenon" and "Charles Dickens and the Pseudo-Dickens Industry." Identifying a gap in existing scholarship on Pickwickian aftertexts, Abraham observes an "infectious" quality in the plagiarism spawned by the Pickwick phenomenon, extending to "jest books, songbooks, extra illustrations, allographic sequels, adaptations, and imitations" (29). He focuses primarily on print material from the peak of the Pickwick period, 1837 to 1842 – although, as he points out, it is precisely the "non-teleological nature" of the novel that contributes to its imitable potential, even today (56). The corpus is subdivided into two categories: "club imitations," reviving the "abandoned frame" of the Pickwick Club, and "prostheses," texts that "expand *Pickwick* beyond the limitations set by Dickens's narrative" (30). The primary focus is on how these texts identify "some of the more subterranean elements of Dickens's work," offering crude representations of sexuality and racism "that seem, in a word, un-Pickwickian" (42) and, equally significantly, offering "working-class readings of a middle-class text" (48). These, Abraham argues, "uncover the *Pickwick* that they want to read or need to believe or desire" (54), and he thus encourages us to re-read *Pickwick* as "a mode, a formula, an invitation to invent" (57).

In Chapter Two, Abraham grapples with the term "Dickensian," noting that the word's first recorded usage in 1881 referred to an imitative text.

This chapter develops our understanding of the term through reading "Dickensian" aftertexts – particularly Bos's *Nickelas Nickelbery* (1838–39) – before exploring how Dickens himself responded to such imitative onslaughts by altering his own narrative practices. Abraham is meticulous in listing the ways in which *Nickelas Nickelbery* diverges from Dickens's original, sometimes at the expense of his overall argument. However, the chapter regains interest through its reading of the oft-discussed 1844 Chancery Case in a new light, identifying its legacy in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44) and that novel's concern with "originality, unoriginality, and spurious creation" (88).

If many Dickensian aftertexts are driven by a "sense of joy, a compulsive need to prolong the entertainment" (91), then Chapter Three, "Parody; or, The Art of Writing Edward Bulwer Lytton," explores the more damaging side of targeted imitation. Few have connected Dickens's famous redrafting of *Great Expectations* following Bulwer Lytton's comments in 1861 with Bulwer Lytton's rewriting of his own prose, Abraham argues. Exploring the ways in which his contemporaries imitated, interrogated and parodied Bulwer Lytton's work, Abraham notes that such commentators "frequently imitated the style they professed to disdain" (97), which prompted Bulwer Lytton to respond to such negative criticism in his own work in a fragmented and inconsistent manner. Substantially shorter than the two chapters on Dickens, this chapter feels comparatively lacking in development, but perhaps that is in order to leave space for the connected discussion of Chapter Four, "Thackeray versus Bulwer versus Bulwer: Parody and Appropriation." This explores how two novelists – William Makepeace Thackeray and Rosina Bulwer Lytton – developed their narrative techniques by parodying Bulwer Lytton's style, in a way that signaled resentment rather than affectionate imitation. "It is as if Thackeray were exorcising a part of himself – the bad novelist that he feared he might be or could become" (116), Abraham observes, analyzing Thackeray's writings for *Fraser's* and *Punch* and raising the provocative suggestion that "parody is more 'original' than its source" (118). The literary career of Bulwer Lytton's estranged and persecuted wife, Rosina, has been largely overlooked; yet, in her memoirs, she refers to herself as a "born mimic" (122), deploying this tendency to challenge the literary reputation of her husband, excelling at "bloated Bulwerian description" in her novels *Cheveley* (1839) and *The Budget of the Bubble Family* (1840). Abraham identifies the relationship between Rosina and her husband as reminiscent of that between Frankenstein and his monster: "he was her *bête noire* and her inspiration, an inalienable part of her existence" (126). These two chapters engage more substantively with the motives – emotional and creative, as well as merely financial – behind incidents of imitation and parody.

Chapter Five – "Being George Eliot: Imitation, Imposture, and Identity" – investigates the "Other Eliots" whose pretensions bookended Eliot's literary

career: Joseph Liggins, a fraudulent claimant to Eliot's novelistic identity, and Edith Simcox, a woman infatuated with Eliot, whose imitative novels read "like a George Eliot book if George Eliot had no talent" (175). Abraham traces the fascinating trajectory of Liggins's imposture of Eliot and his curious career as "passive author," engaged in a kind of inactive plagiarism that deepens our awareness of the complexity of Victorian intertexts and the agencies at stake in such productions. After examining several other unauthorized sequels to Eliot's work, Abraham concludes by narrating the strange case of Simcox, whose unrequited love for Eliot inspired her to publish three novels in which we can trace "the stimulating and vexed relationship" between the two women (176). This chapter offers interesting insight into a plagiarism that extends beyond the page, considering the consequences of attempting to merge one's very identity with that of another author.

Plagiarising the Victorian Novel makes a useful contribution to the ongoing conversation surrounding forms of textual afterlife, recognizing the productive overlap between issues of plagiarism and those of identity, fraud, agency and intent – alongside the more obvious questions of commerce and law. It illustrates the rewards to be found in traversing what Abraham terms "the byways of literature – the neglected, the obscure, the unoriginal, and the insipid" (179). The book concludes with glimpses of how this conversation might continue if applied to neo-Victorian texts and adaptations across media platforms, from Showtime's *Penny Dreadful* (2014–16) to fanfiction, and how it might enrich understanding of our twenty-first-century culture of "sequels and reboots, of remixes and online parodies" (185). Abraham's conclusion – that originality and unoriginality "exist in a continuity or continuum" – is, of course, not original in itself, but that seems to be precisely the point (184). Rather, his work showcases how "aftertexts change the ontology of their sources," enriching our experience of canonical works and allowing "the memory of some great authors [to] burn a little brighter" (185).

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