

*Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*. Edited by Thaïs E. Morgan. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991. 320 pp. ISBN 0-8135-1600-5; \$35 (cloth); ISBN 0-8135-1601-3; \$15 (paper).

Since its publication in 1953, John Holloway's *The Victorian Sage*, a study of Carlyle, Disraeli, Eliot, Newman, Arnold, and Hardy, has assumed the status of a classic in Victorian studies. Holloway's analysis of the rhetoric of persuasion of these five men and one woman revealed the manner in which cultural agendas were constructed through language and assertion as much as through demonstration and proof. The examination of sage discourse was subsequently advanced by David De Laura in his *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England* (1969), a discussion of Newman, Pater, and Arnold, and by George Landow in *Elegant Jeremiahs* (1986), which broadened the tradition be-

yond the nineteenth century. For the 1990s, it is not insignificant that these three previous studies were by males.

Thaïs Morgan, the editor of *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse*, challenges this predominantly male field, as the subtitle to this collection indicates. Not only is she "renegotiating gender and power," but she is also reconstructing sage writing as a discourse not limited to nonfiction and not exclusively male. Thus, the subjects of the thirteen essays in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse* include Harriet Martineau, Charlotte Brontë, Florence Nightingale, Christina Rossetti, and Jane Austen, as well as Ruskin, Eliot, and Wilde.

In her deft and incisive introductory essay, "Victorian Sage Discourse and the Feminine," Morgan outlines the challenge sage discourse presented to female writers, who were constricted by a patriarchal construction of woman as the Angel in the House. The