

biological analogies that allow the Irish to be "simianized," Michie is much less historically precise than she is elsewhere in her study, often citing sources published more than twenty years after the Brontes' deaths in order to show how the Irish were stigmatized as racially other by being described, for example by Charles Kingsley, as "human chimpanzees." A more alert editor might also have suggested references to more sophisticated recent scholarship on nineteenth-century evolutionary theory, colonial discourse, and Orientalism as background for this chapter.

Michie's reading of Eliot's *Middlemarch* is much more carefully contextualized than her analysis of the Brontes' novels. However, her argument that Dorothea's apprehension of the "stupendous fragmentariness" of Roman culture in Chapter 20 of *Middlemarch* adequately summarizes Eliot's view of high culture seems too reductive, as does her claim that the menstruating woman fully embodies

the significant biological debilities that Victorian science located in women.

Nonetheless, it might seem unreasonable to expect Michie to cite much more criticism than she already includes, for indeed, one of the most attractive features of *Outside the Pale* is her generosity in acknowledging the scholarship that underlies her study, recognition so often sadly lacking in what is often considered trendier criticism. Because Michie's well-written study synthesizes so much important feminist and Marxist criticism, *Outside the Pale* is a work that will be read with pleasure not only by Victorian specialists but by more general readers as well. Because it is a model of clear writing and responsible scholarship, it may be recommended for both undergraduate and graduate students.

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Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart by Angela Leighton. Charlottesville: Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Harvester Wheatsheaf (UK) and UP of Virginia, 1992. Pp. xiii and 321. ISBN: 0-8139-1427-2. \$45.00 (cloth), \$14.95 (paper).

Rather surprisingly, given the flood of feminist writing on women's writing in the past twenty years, this is one of the first studies to include lesser names alongside Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti, who generally stand for their sex in critical studies of Victorian poetry, together with Emily Bronte (accorded only a brief mention here). It thus maps some of the territory left blank by Ellen Moers, Gilbert and Gubar and others who have seen the nineteenth-century woman writer primarily as novelist, and differently charted by Kathleen Hickox's *Representations of Women* (1894). An important concern is the principle of segregation: in fact Felicia Hemans was the first poet read by Tennyson and Browning, and Browning was himself the model for Augusta Webster and "Michael Field," the aunt and her niece, who preferred not to write under a female name. Poetic cross-referencing (and dressing) surely undermines the idea of separate spheres.

One of Angela Leighton's achievements is to pull together the strands that bind women poets into a self-conscious tradition of "silver song"—for example, the chain that links Hemans's "Parting Song" with Letitia Landon's "Night at Sea," Barrett Browning's "LEL's Last Question" and Rossetti's "LEL," linking Rossetti, Alice Meynell and Charlotte Mew. In part her book is a mission, retrieving and appraising those who have fallen into the pit of oblivion. (Rick's *New Oxford Book of Victorian Verses*, 1987, includes nothing by Webster and only two Imagist lyrics by Michael Field.) For this and the intertextuality alone, the volume is valuable. Leighton does not stray outside the ring-fence and consider how her poets related to Keats, say, or Shelley, or Wordsworth. Byron is the only such influence she allows in, remarking *en passant* how "Byronism offered many women writers not so much the cheap fantasy of a handsome husband, but the prospect of transvestite emancipation." More often, as she shows, they made do with the chiton and lyre (and emancipating death) of Sappho and de Stael's Corinne.

Leighton's argument is that the silver stream of women's verse, taken over from the cult of sensibility, created a river of effusive emotion, heartfelt,