

DANIEL HACK. *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. 284. \$35.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.220

One of the many inventive aspects of *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature* is the way Daniel Hack enacts his central premises on the levels of structure and syntax. At its core, the book is about reversals and inversions—transformations of two cultures wrought by unexpected crossings of nation and race and time and space. In Hack's careful account, these crossings do not efface historical and cultural borders (African American literature and Victorian literature remain distinct traditions with particular histories and ideologies, articulated in different ways by different practitioners), but they do connect and bind the parties together in mutually illuminating networks of literary borrowings, citations, and “repurposings” (21). Hack unfolds a traffic in the material of literary culture that he calls the “African Americanizing” of Victorian literature, and this traffic clearly goes both ways. “Victorian literature’s role as an important archive for the production of African American literature and print culture,” as Hack puts it, “makes African American literature and print culture an important archive for the study of Victorian literature” (2).

The chiasmus that Hack shapes in this sentence reflects his historical and interpretive method and guides the organization of the six chapters that form the body of the book. The first three chapters examine the “afterlives” or uses that African American editors and writers find for the works of three major Victorian authors—Charles Dickens, Alfred Tennyson, and George Eliot. These afterlives extend from mid-nineteenth-century reprints to extensive borrowings, appropriations, and citations that appear in works by African Americans through the turn of the twentieth century. In the second half of the book Hack reverses this structure to focus on three major African American writers, Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, and W. E. B. Du Bois, and the varied uses they make of a range of Victorian literature over the course of their careers.

This inverted, diachronic structure combined with the thoughtful methodology Hack calls “close reading at a distance” helps *Reaping Something New* show the pressing relevance of apparently simple questions: Why do *Bleak House* (1853), “Locksley Hall” (1869), “The Charge of the Light Brigade” (1854), “The Spanish Gypsy” (1868), and other Victorian works, with apparently little to do with the issues and struggles engaging African Americans in the nineteenth century, occupy such prominent places in *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, Hannah Crafts’s novel, *The Bondswoman’s Daughter* (2002), the later novels of Chesnutt and Hopkins, and the famous epigraphs of W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)? Similarly, why have scholars (in both fields) failed to recognize and account for this enduring preoccupation, which, Hack demonstrates, amounts to a coherent—and formative—tradition in African American literature and print culture? What, moreover, can attention to this tradition teach practitioners in the several fields upon which Hack’s work builds: the history of the book, reception studies, and cultural and literary studies, as well as comparative and transatlantic studies interested in the mobility of literary and cultural forms?

While Hack is a conscientious explicator of his own purposes and practices, answering many of these questions in his introduction, perhaps the most valuable answers come in the aggregate, as he meticulously assembles a new and revelatory archive of citations and “meta-citations.” Some of Hack’s examples have been overlooked in plain sight; others are brought to light for the first time, but no one has ever put together the rich history of editorial and compositional practices *Reaping Something New* presents. And few literary and cultural studies match the scrupulous attention Hack gives to each case he brings forward, whether it be the illustrative epigraph Anna Julia Cooper borrows and repurposes from Tennyson (a source omitted or occluded in Henry Louis Gates’s canon-making discussion of Cooper) or Hannah Crafts’s iteration of the famous opening paragraph of *Bleak House*, a text whose

“race-based localism” (38) she transforms, as Hack shows, into an engagement with anti-slavery politics; or James McCune Smith’s provocative charge that Tennyson plagiarized “The Charge of the Light Brigade” from an African battle song that inspired the Haitian revolutionaries.

What becomes clear when encountering this new kind of archive is the long backstory that precedes it. Hack draws on decades of work in several fields to make visible the literary and editorial practices (and their transatlantic circulations) that he considers. Poststructural concepts of intertextuality and paratext, New Historicist emphases on context and ideological import, and systematic analyses of reception studies and book history make it possible for Hack to treat his materials as aspects of an intentional strategy of cultural invention and reinvention. What might once have been dismissed as ephemera (such as the citational allegory in a late lecture of Du Bois), samples of editorial piracy (the serial republication of *Bleak House* in *Douglass’s Paper*), or simply clumsy plagiarisms become, in Hack’s deft account, mutually illuminating transformations of one culture by another. Moreover, his primary tool for articulating this transformation, “close reading at a distance,” takes on current critical orthodoxies that demand a stark methodological choice: either perform a (more or less outmoded) close formal reading of the text, or create an historically informed description of a context that reframes the cultural and ideological import of the text. In *Reaping Something New*, Hack will have it both ways.

“Close reading at a distance” allows Hack to “risk” (7) (as he puts it) the kind of patient, sensitive attention to the text that can yield startling insights—as with Hack’s reading of how Pauline Hopkins’s insertion of one word, “hope,” changes entirely the political valence of a passage from Tennyson she puts to new purpose in her first novel, *Contending Forces* (1900). Conversely, the “distance” of Hack’s close reading—a distance that implies both the historical and transatlantic scope of his archive and the reception-oriented historicism that informs his work—generates some of the most significant contributions Hack makes in *Reaping Something New*, including a new account of Chesnutt’s career-long engagement with Victorian literature; a trenchant analysis of Pauline Hopkins’s dialogue with and relation to Chesnutt articulated by way of the “meta-citations” of Tennyson that they both used; and a convincing revision of long-standing accounts of W. E. B. Dubois’s “dual epigraphs” and what they reveal about the relation of culture and politics in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Along with Hack’s new readings of *Bleak House*, of Tennyson, and of George Eliot’s tales of “unwitting passing and voluntary affiliation” (17), *Reaping Something New* makes good on its promise that attention to the African Americanizing of Victorian literature will illuminate the articulation (or disarticulation) of race in both cultures. Its most lasting contribution, though, may be the way it shows us how distance can bring us closer to the objects of our attention, and, conversely, how such closeness can help ensure that distance does not flatten or diminish our view.

Charles Baraw
Southern Connecticut State University
barawc1@southernct.edu

JAMES HEARTFIELD. *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1838–1956: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 486. \$65.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.221

In 1838, British anti-slavery stood at a crossroads. Having succeeded in bringing slavery in the British West Indies to an end, British activists might have been forgiven for disbanding. Instead, they set out on a new venture, this time aimed at internationalizing abolition, or