



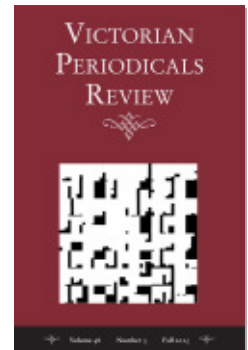
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Network: Andrew Lang and the Distributed Agencies of Literary Production

NATHAN K. HENSLEY

“Originality can be expected from nobody except a lunatic, a hermit, or a sensational novelist.”¹ That, anyway, is the opinion of Andrew Lang, the folklorist, columnist, editor, novelist, translator, and publishing impresario whose case will help organize the following pages. As Lang goes on to explain, he is being too hard on sensation novelists and lunatics; even the mad and even writers of scandalous novels, he claims, draw on prior experiences and pre-existing idioms, and so “no more than sane men, can they do anything original.”² Only an actual hermit, if one could ever be found in so extreme a state as never to have been exposed to culture at all—only such an isolated individual might instantiate originality in any absolute sense. Everyone else, Lang reasons, reworks old material into new forms, reorganizes antecedent ideas and tropes, and, out of those historical precedents, creates something that, if it is not “original,” is at least somehow new.

“Even the *Aeneid* was a pastiche, a string of plagiarisms,” he argues, but this did not keep it from being a “rather unusual piece of work.”³ Lang’s honorific usage of “unusual” here—like his unorthodox reading of Virgil—suggests that his position does not align with the cliché that nothing new exists in the world. It is rather that stock situations, plot devices, and other examples of what Lang calls literary “materials” are available as a common archive or public record, a repository of concepts available to be mixed, shaped, and re-formed by later intelligences into something that is, he insists, qualitatively different than what went into that initial aggregation.⁴ What is usual can be made unusual through an artist’s act of creative reassembly. It is precisely in bringing together, remediating, or “constellating” such old materials (the last is Walter Benjamin’s term) that Lang’s artist-curator adds qualitative novelty to the network of prior texts and

ideas that forms the condition of possibility for his own utterance.⁵ Lang's mockery of the "world's demand for the absolutely unheard of" appeared in the June 1887 issue of the *Contemporary Review* under the title "Literary Plagiarism."⁶ The piece was an occasional intervention into a minor controversy then embroiling his friend H. Rider Haggard in which Lang was trying to exonerate his friend from charges that he had stolen parts of *Jess* and *She* from other writers.⁷ But as Letitia Henville has demonstrated, open-access advocates have recently revived the essay, abstracting it from the nest of interests, allegiances, and motivations that produced it and deploying it, instead, as a proto-postmodern defense of remix culture. It is not hard to see how Lang's jab at the myth of Promethean authorship might appeal to a generation of critics raised on Barthes, Foucault, and the generalized critique of Romantic ideology. I want to keep the scene of twenty-first century criticism in mind, even as these pages focus on the late Victorian media environment over which Lang exercised his vast but largely forgotten influence.

This essay uses Lang as a test case for evaluating the contemporary critical trope of the network, assessing its promise and limitations for the analysis of Victorian culture in general and Victorian periodical culture in particular. As will become clear in the following pages, by "network" I mean not just people linked together into groups but something like Bruno Latour's notion of a chain of visible or material interactions among human and nonhuman entities: a flexible configuration of actors that itself becomes endowed with agency within a new, yet larger, system of interrelation. More material and specific than field concepts like "culture" or "capitalism" and less anthropocentric than the graphs of human association often undertaken in the analysis of "social networks," networks in this sense are both empirical and expansive: elaborate models of causes, effects, and change in which multiple genres of participants might be included. Attending these networks has the capacity to expand our conventional presumptions about creative agency and enable new configurations of literary-historical causality.

By way of testing this proposition, the following pages unfold in three sections. The first reviews just a few of the almost infinite networks Lang convened in the 1880s and 1890s. As I explain, Lang's network effect served to link together at least four kinds of what Latour (following Russian narratology) calls *actants*: (1) previously unrelated individual cultural producers or author figures, from Henry James to Marie Corelli; (2) disparate knowledge forms or proto-disciplines, from anthropology and Homeric scholarship to poetry, economics, trout fishing, and cricket; (3) distinct institutions, from publishing houses and mass-market magazines to social clubs like the Savile; and (4) perhaps most importantly for my purposes here, different moments in historical time. After the first section

retraces some of these networks as Lang convened them, the second will describe recent sociological models of networks by Latour and Pierre Bourdieu, showing how periodical studies has utilized those notions to both develop new research models and to authorize with “theory” the practices of material recuperation and historical particularization that have long been its hallmark as a subfield. A third and final section trains attention on a concrete set of examples—Lang’s fairy books—to see how such a network effect took literary-historical form. I here suggest how network thinking implies a model of reading that, because it demands attention to the particular mediating capacities of not just authors and editors but literary forms and sociological institutions, has the capacity to advance literary-historical method today.

Network Practice

The work of this essay, then, is not to introduce Lang to readers no doubt already familiar with his wide-ranging and always jovial intelligence. Still, it is worth recounting the accomplishments of this late-century media impresario, if only to underline the hyper-connected or ultra-distributed nature of his productivity—his network-making methodology. Famous in his day to the point of cliché, “My Dear Andrew,” as Corelli called him in a jealous aside despite never having met him, was in her words, a “curious institution in literature.”⁸ Best known by literary scholars today for his essays on romance, which puffed Haggard and scrapped with James and William Dean Howells over the role of action in literature, Lang also wrote reviews, articles, and occasional pieces for all sectors of the periodical press; composed and translated poetry; worked to consolidate “folklore” studies; helped pioneer the discipline of cultural anthropology; all but invented the modern adventure novel; stoked controversies among classicists about Homer; and in tactical terms fairly dominated the literary division of the late Victorian culture industry from his post at *Longman’s*.

As Corelli complained, Lang’s log-rolling puff had the power to conjure into being an entire literary career. Not only Robert Louis Stevenson and H. Rider Haggard but also George Gissing, H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, and Arthur Conan Doyle all “owed their definitive break-through to a Lang puff.”⁹ Lang advised on acquisitions for multiple presses, wrote for the *Saturday Review*, the *Fortnightly Review*, *Fraser’s Magazine*, and the *Illustrated London News*, among dozens of other periodicals, and edited the British *Harper’s Weekly*, which was, for a time, more successful than its American original. He knew George Saintsbury from their days together in Edinburgh and Walter Pater from the Old Mortality Society at Oxford. He had known William Longman at Balliol, too, a publishing-family connection that opened onto yet further literary networks—including those of

Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James, and Edmund Gosse, all of whose personal and professional connections therefore became part of Lang's empire too. Lang's *Iliad*, "done into English prose," was the best-selling translation of any kind during the Victorian period. And he was rumored to have written no fewer than twenty separate laudatory reviews of *King Solomon's Mines*.¹⁰

The case of those serial reviews can stand synecdochically for Lang's dizzying social productivity more broadly—though many more examples could make the same case. They also show how uncannily he drew on old social associations to produce new ones, generating from these social encounters the apparent motor for the unreal profusion of his own written work. His work seemed somehow to flow from his relationships, and if his friendships proliferated almost endlessly, so did his writing. Lang's output has been called "incalculable," though this has not prevented empirically minded scholars from trying to calculate it.¹¹ One survey tallied "four hundred and ninety-five titles" by Lang, "embracing six hundred and fifty-eight volumes," while another, in 1949, followed this breakdown: "(1) Books wholly by Lang, 215; (2) Books written in collaboration, 14; (3) Works translated by Lang, 18; (4) Works edited or with introductions by Lang, 105; (5) Books about Lang, 11. Total 363."¹² As Max Beerbohm put it, "Lang's writings, like the hairs of our heads, are doubtless numbered—somewhere."¹³

Google whirrs in pain when asked to enumerate Lang's total output, not least since his far-flung and multiply distributed works (often included in books under other authors' names) continue to proliferate in new digital editions that further monetize these open-source texts. In fact, as will become clearer below, the twenty-first century's endlessly new packaging of Lang's own old material is but an ironic, Kindle-era replay of the "versioning" Lang oversaw in his own lifetime by which identical or nearly identical content would appear in slightly altered form, in slightly different wrapping: version 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, and onward to maximum profitability.

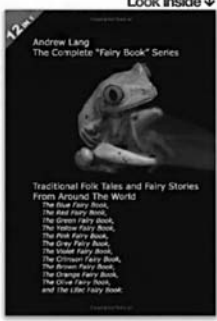
The so-called "spam book" trade in the contemporary digital marketplace is a fascinating subtopic beyond the scope of this paper, but even the most casual user of online bookstores (or instructors of such users) knows that the Internet has generated fascinating new ways to get the wrong books.¹⁴ Print-on-demand technology has joined forces with algorithmic science and Amazon's distribution network to produce, automatically, non-copyright-protected material from the nineteenth century in the form of endless and often bizarre-looking new books. I say bizarre because the cover art for such bot-generated print content or remEDIATED nineteenth-century material is produced by algorithms that use OCR technology to generate an image search intended automatically to "match" subject matter with packaging, the old wine with its new bottle. As Whit-

ney Anne Trettien explains, “The reader’s one-click electronic purchase sets in motion a print-on-demand (POD) process that will transform this digital assemblage into a gathered and glued paperback, sent directly to her stoop.”¹⁵ And just imagine your delight should the new version of Lang’s *Complete Fairy Book Series* shown in figure 1 arrive on your stoop. As one customer review asks, “What is with the tree frog on the cover?”¹⁶ Another evaluator, one Amy M. Barry, elaborates:

The publishing of this is truly dreadful. There is no complete table of contents, no clear divisions between stories, and the cover stock is very shabby. The stories run into one another, the different “fairy books” run into each other, and everything is in a two column layout with a small font. A basic rule of desktop publishing is to use similar graphic images throughout a piece. The cover and spine of this book look like stock clip art and a stock photo. Why a tree frog? And then clip-art of the wolf in Granny’s nightclothes? Dreadful. . . . So, buy this book if you want all of the Andrew Lang fairy stories in one volume—but expect the cover to become ruined in the first reading, the spine to break, and your eyes to strain.¹⁷

The point is that these digital-era repackagings only reiterate, via the circuits and idiom of today’s late-capitalist information economy, the recombinatory practices Lang himself helped pioneer. This has conceptual consequences because in “redrawing the boundaries between books, facsimiles, electronic files and databases,” modern profiteering remediations like *12 Books in 1* also, in Trettien’s words, “reconfigur[e] relationships between readers, authors and editors, both living and dead.”¹⁸ They convene actants into new associations. To be sure, “reconfiguring relationships” and “selling old material in new versions” would be apt headlines for Lang’s own network-making labor. A methodological corollary to this fact is that any effort to quantify Lang’s work empirically—by counting his output—can only ever fail since it will inevitably turn on the question of just what it means for something to be “Lang’s work” or “his” output.

That question is irresolvable in any definitive way since as Trettien’s comment suggests, answering it depends on freezing into fixity the necessarily relational processes of intellectual production and dissemination, pressing the dense interactive agencies of such networks into the implicitly individualistic or vestigially romantic notion of ownership implied by a possessive like “Lang’s work.” But if the question of what constitutes “Lang’s work” is an impossible one to answer, Lang himself seems almost to delight in driving us to ask it. He often went to elaborate lengths to downplay his authorship of texts even while insisting that they appear under his imprimatur, and he devised elaborate vocabularies for the creative work of others that appeared under his name—all of which only



Look inside ↴

Andrew Lang
The Complete "Fairy Book" Series

Traditional Folk Tales and Fairy Stories
From Around The World

- The Blue Fairy Book,
- The Red Fairy Book,
- The Green Fairy Book,
- The Yellow Fairy Book,
- The Pink Fairy Book,
- The Violet Fairy Book,
- The Brown Fairy Book,
- The Orange Fairy Book,
- The Olive Fairy Book,
- The Lilac Fairy Book,
- The Grey Fairy Book,
- The Crimson Fairy Book,
- The Purple Fairy Book,
- The Gold Fairy Book,
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12 Books in 1: Andrew Lang's Complete "Fairy Book" Series. The Blue, Red, Green, Yellow, Pink, Grey, Violet, Crimson, Brown, Orange, Olive, and Lilac ... and Fairy Stories From Around The World. Paperback – Unabridged, June 1, 2006
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\$26.64 ↘Prime

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Fairy tales are the oldest stories in the world. They were first made by adults who were childlike for their own amusement, and so they amuse children still, and also grown-up people who have not forgotten how they once were children. The stories in these books are borrowed from many countries; some are French, some German, some Russian, some Italian, some Scottish, some English, one Chinese. However much these nations differ about trifles, they all agree in liking fairy tales. The reason,

Figure 1. Cover art for Andrew Lang's complete "fairy book" series, as repackaged by a twenty-first-century republishing bot.

further testifies to his mastery of what has been called the "particularly yeasty" cultural marketplace of the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹ Thus, Lang's *Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (1897) lists him as author but in its preface refers not to his *writing* of the volume but to his "prepar[ation]" of it. Lang then names five assistants, each of whom, he says, had a hand in compiling, adapting, translating, and "ma[king] other researches" on the ancient stories adapted in the book.²⁰ His co-authored books are another case in point. Despite the anxious efforts of later scholars to de-link him from the networks that made him tick, Lang's individual contributions to books like *The World's Desire* (1890) are impossible to parse from those of his collaborators (in this case, Haggard). This seemingly original but co-written novel was anyway but a baroque retelling of *The Odyssey*, a poem Lang had also translated, in collaboration of course, in 1879.

As this and countless other examples suggest, Lang is best seen not as a heroic figure or super-empowered actor but as a densely connected point in a thicket of always-developing relations, a convener of what Latour calls subject-objects: hybridized, networked actants that do not simply receive or solely perform action but instead exist within and alter the networks from which they are inseparable. Lang's network-effect draws together people, texts, and institutions in ways that make him impossible to abstract from those relations and (for that reason) endlessly productive of what we might call new objects—even when those new objects are comprised of but freshly rearranged old ones.

Network Theory

To call Lang a network maker may be to cast a sheen of relevance onto a figure criticism has tended to treat, when it treats him at all, as unfashion-

able in the extreme. This is because as a critical metaphor or buzzword for method, the network trope modernizes whatever it touches. Shimmering with the glean of interdisciplinarity and contemporaneity—and freighted with associations from computer science—networks have experienced an extraordinary resurgence. As J. Stephen Murphy explains in the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* devoted to “Visualizing Periodical Networks,” “network” is “our word *du jour*” and “something of a catchphrase.”²¹ In addition to authorizing Murphy’s own efforts to use digital tools for modeling relations among modernist cultural producers, the term provided the occasion for the 2012 meeting of the North American Victorian Studies Association, gave shape to the 2009 RSVP conference (“Victorian Networks and the Periodical Press”), and organized any number of recent projects in Victorian studies and related subdisciplines. Among the most visible of these has been Carolyn Levine’s *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015), in which the network trope is hailed as one of four paradigmatic modes of arranging content, one leg of a new formalist table. As Levine notes,

Many literary and cultural critics have grown interested in networks in the past decade, using the concept to describe powerful social facts, such as transnational markets, transportation, and print culture. Most have defined networks loosely as “connectivity.” Recently, however, as network theory has emerged across disciplines, humanists . . . have begun to turn to studies of networks in mathematics, physics, and sociology to show how these connective configurations follow knowable rules and patterns.²²

While Levine notes the recent vintage in this surge of network thinking, observing that critics have “grown interested in the past decade,” her study does not ask where this new interest has come from and thus leaves open the question of whether it is analyzing an intellectual trend or participating in one.

Is the network a brave new way of making knowledge or a fetish term of post-industrial thinking? A strategy or a symptom? If in recent years the figure of the network has become unavoidable in scholarly discourse in the humanities, this ubiquity likely means that the term is best seen not only as a new tool for diagnosing culture but as a phenomenon deserving diagnosis in its own right. As Patrick Jagoda, Scott Selisker, Levine and others have noted, the network has become the twenty-first century’s handiest trope for describing complex phenomena in a wide array of disciplines; it has been used to understand the global economy, social formations (like terror networks or social networks), and more recently, ecological models of transindividual interdependency in the biosphere.²³ Systems theory,

environmental science, and the newly consolidating field of “network science,” among other fields, have of course each generated and maintained their own languages for conceiving this now-ubiquitous metaphor. Murphy observes that humanists often use the term imprecisely, invoking the network shibboleth when the “words ‘group,’ ‘market,’ or ‘circle’ would serve just as well.”²⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary* informs us that the term “network” derives from sixteenth-century usage, indicating a piece of “work” in cloth, iron, or related medium that has been formed with thin, interlacing effects so as to lend it the look of a net.²⁵ The artifactual materiality presented in this definition—a thing formed of metal or actual fibers—fits uneasily with the many virtualizing or digitizing usages of the term since the late 1990s. It was during this period, of course, that the Internet made “nets” into the reigning dead metaphor of a new era, and all connections seemed to take place outside of materiality itself, in a newly minted “virtual” world—a phenomenon well captured in Sandra Bullock’s charmingly dated 1995 computer thriller *The Net*.

The comparative success of the network trope in recent criticism is most apparent, perhaps, when held up against its rivals. Google’s Ngram generator shows the use of this new keyword peaking in 2001, while structure concepts like “field” and “discourse,” at once more specialized and general than “network,” hit their tipping points in the 1950s and 1990s, respectively (figure 2). By contrast, the gentle plain of “ideology,” sloping evenly across four decades, presents a pleasing stability against the peaks and valleys of this sociological vocabulary.²⁶ A list of most-cited authors in humanities books from 2007 puts Foucault and Bourdieu at the top and Latour at number ten.²⁷ But anecdotal evidence and the rhetoric of recent critics like Rita Felski and Heather Love suggest that Latour, along with his structure concept “network,” has unseated both in the intervening years.²⁸ One way to read this popularity is symptomatically, where the rise of network theory is but the displacement of the new information economy’s priorities into literary-critical procedure, neo-liberalism reflected back onto itself as method.

Yet the popularity and apparent usefulness of the term “network” cannot be reduced to simple shifts in our preferences for jargon since it points to what is in fact a significant methodological distinction. Where field concepts like “discourse” (Foucault), “cultural field” (Bourdieu), and even “ideology” (Althusser et al.) propose a de-particularized miasma of ideation, a kind of un-specifiable, unlocatable conceptual ether, network analysis promises something more concrete. In its Latourian guises at least, network analysis aims to parse the specific interactions among actors at multiple, interrelated scales, accounting for the individual nodes and specific edges drawn into relational arrangements. This emphasis on the specific and locatable means that, as the work of Latour makes explicit, the

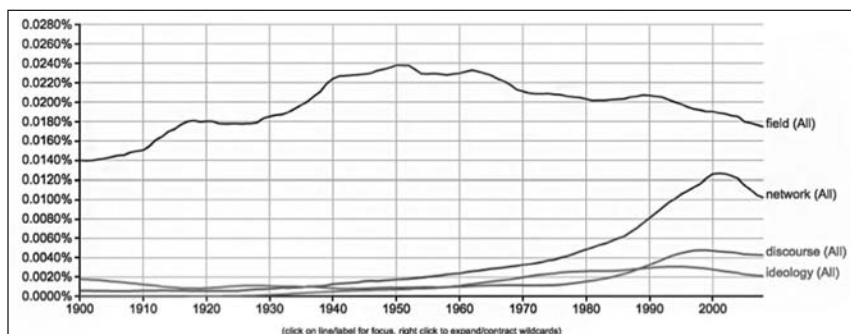


Figure 2. Google Ngram Search of “field,” “network,” “discourse,” and “ideology,” February 27, 2015.

analysis of networks is a fundamentally empiricist operation, a matter of observing slowly and with painstaking care the artifacts produced by the associations among different scales and types of singular actors within a web. As Heather Love puts it in a glib periodizing gesture from 2013, “If the legend of the 1970s and 1980s was Jacques Derrida’s claim that ‘il n’y a pas de hors-texte’ (there is nothing outside the text), we might take as representative of a more recent past Bruno Latour’s call to go ‘from metaphysics to ontology’ in order to ‘show what the real world is really like.’”²⁹

As I will suggest below, this sometimes triumphalist emphasis on the countable, provable, and physically traceable perhaps accounts for the appeal of network metaphors to primarily historicist fields like Victorian studies and periodical studies, which despite important exceptions, have tended in recent years toward the non-speculative. Rita Felski’s observation that the “most lively fields in literary criticism” are “all premised on intertwinement and co-dependence of human and nonhuman actors” would thus be good news to periodical studies, since one strain of that subfield’s procedure has long been focused on describing intimately, even positivistically, such micro-scaled arrangements among linked actants.³⁰ We might think here of more traditional work on the role printing presses played, say, in the periodical price wars of the late century or modern work that uses vast digital corpuses (like the *Wellesley Index*) or other archives to map relations among authors, editors, and advertisers, or (in Murphy’s example) to show who slept with whom in the Bloomsbury Group.³¹ These are exercises in documenting empirically observable relations that seek to show us (in Latour’s words) what the real Victorian world really was like. Another way of putting this is that for critics studying an era of booming print culture, generally expanding material comfort, and a consequent explosion of sheer material objects, the temptation has long been to associate the term “history” with empirical details, observable entities,

or provable facts. For periodical studies and network analysis alike this temptation has been particularly acute, and it is little surprise that immaterial explanatory concepts like *Geists*, “tempers,” or spirits of the age have generally been more at home in Romanticist scholarship than in the Victorianist kind.

Indeed, if the network has given rise to a certain common-sensical notion that we live in an increasingly virtual or immaterial world, it is materiality itself, advocates say, that network thinking has helped bring back to the field of literary criticism.³² Network-tracing methods in literary criticism have expanded alongside, and are compatible with, the anti-speculative trend away from synthetic theory and towards “more empirical study, and more use of statistics or other data” that Jeffrey Williams refers to as the “new modesty in literary criticism.”³³ Given this drive toward the observable, it makes sense that the discipline whose vision of the network has arguably most influenced recent literary criticism is sociology. Literary sociology is a broad and always expanding field, and part of its work has been to focus on precisely the question of what constitutes a “field.” Where the method of someone like Franco Moretti, along with other advocates of digital analysis and “distant reading,” has been guided by a range of methodological progenitors, including network computing, information theory, and Latour’s own actor network theory, it was the work of Pierre Bourdieu that helped organize major statements in the field of literary sociology before or adjacent to the digital turn.

John Guillory’s *Cultural Capital* and Jim English’s *The Economy of Prestige*, for example, drew on insights from Bourdieu to expose the relations of envy, filiation, and aspiration across wide swaths of cultural production, noting how webs of social exchange distribute prestige unevenly in either the global market for literary value or the contemporary English department.³⁴ Matthew Philpotts has particularized these findings for Victorian periodical studies using Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus to argue persuasively for the role of editors like Andre Gide and Ford Madox Ford “as highly influential agents in the literary field”—a characterization that would also, of course, fit Lang.³⁵ Mark McGurl’s work is less explicitly in debt to Bourdieu but remains attentive to the power of institutional relations to shape seemingly immaterial categories like literary value or writerly “craft.”³⁶ These are but a few examples of what can result when fields of numinous, allegedly transcendent value, such as “beauty,” “literature,” or “the aesthetic,” are subjected to the particularizing gaze of network thinking and when those abstractions are viewed in terms of the human and social relationships that produce and sustain them. Yet Bourdieusian models that track such relations across a “field of cultural production,” however intelligent and careful in their own right, necessarily presume that

such “fields,” understood as ideational, conceptual, or properly immaterial formations abstracted into stasis and given causal agency, exist.

Latour’s actor network theory, by contrast, does not believe in “fields” but instead seeks to reorient analysis away from abstract causal agents and toward the materially observable instance. His *Reassembling the Social* holds that categories like “capitalism,” “discourse,” or “the social,”—and we might add “field”—work as alibis for skipping the close analysis of actual causality. These abstract field concepts, Latour explains, are problematically granted causal status as actors at grammatical and analytical levels alike. Thus can criticism without blinking grant agency to “social factors” or “culture” without further definition of those terms. Such abstractions—and we can think of others, like “Victorian racism,” “bourgeois ideology,” or “imperialism”—name the point at which close analysis of causality stops. Latour’s method aims to detonate such explanations by exposing them as insufficiently careful, too fast in their explanatory motion. “There is an Ariadne’s thread,” he writes, “that would allow us to pass with continuity from the local to the global, from the human to the nonhuman. It is the thread of networks of practices and instruments, of documents and translations. . . . In following it step by step, one never crosses the mysterious *lines* that should divide the local from the global.”³⁷ What Latour is attempting to explain here is the distinction between an empirical, network-tracing method and those traditional analyses that would move from particulars to general categories too quickly. A traditional criticism, for instance, might produce a sentence like “Andrew Lang was a leader of the masculine literary establishment of the late Victorian literary field.” This would be true in its way—similar sentences appear in many books—but Latour’s method would break down such abstractions as “masculine literary establishment” and “late Victorian literary field” into their constituent parts, a process of disassembly that might push us to see in a finer grain. Latour insists that we *delay* the upward movement by which we attribute agency to abstractions and identify actors at maximum scale. Instead, we should take more time, see from a lower angle: rather than discovering vast causal agents like “masculine literary culture,” this micro-scaled procedure would uncover material artifacts and concrete relations among minutely differentiated participants.³⁸

The result of all this micro-description and empirical notation would be to create a “change in tempo” whereby the movement to abstraction is delayed and small scales of agency are revealed.³⁹ From such painstakingly slow empirical observation, new actors emerge, often hybrid or non-human agents. We might think of Lang-Haggard as one Latourian actant hard at work on *The World’s Desire* in ways now impossible to prise into individual contributions. Another might be Lang-Leaf, laboring

away on Homeric translation, or Lang-*Longman's*, an entity far different in temperament and output than *Longman's-sans-Lang*. Constellations of such hybrid actors might expand yet further to include the typesetters, illustrators, subeditors, and clerks who worked on the editorial finalization and physical production of Lang's books; the paper makers, the binding sewers, the board dyers, and those who created the materials for them; and (since actors for Latour are often nonhuman ones) the trees, sheep, or cotton plants whose fibers went into the creation of any given iteration of a Lang book-object. Telescoping to these infinitely small scales and beyond, Latour's method—like Marx's before him—helps uncover enormous casts of human and nonhuman actors crystallized in a single artifact, a whole network of agencies convened in one thing.

The point is that Latourian network analysis is already being done, often by scholars with no knowledge of Latour, in many of the subareas that comprise Victorian studies and Victorian periodical studies. The minute attention to relations among authors, publishers, and their various intermediaries, combined with the nuanced attention to material historical details of book history and the history of publishing institutions that has long been among the field's strengths, means that Victorian periodical studies has, in a twist on one of Latour's own titles, always been Latourian.

The recent surge in publication organized around the term "networks" thus in some ways only confirms the field's long-standing tendency toward the empirical elaboration of material relations among actors. We could think of the recent special issue of *VPR* entitled "Victorian Networks and the Periodical Press," edited by Alexis Easley and derived from the 2009 RSVP conference mentioned above, or John Fagg, Matthew Pethers, and Robin Vandome's special issue of *American Periodicals* entitled "Networks and the Nineteenth-Century Periodical." The long-standing sensitivity among scholars of periodicals to connectivity as an operative intellectual category, and to collaboration as a mode of intellectual production, has made scholars of Victorian print culture arguably better prepared than anyone to analyze creatively the new conditions of our digital culture. Work in digital humanities and media studies by Patrick Leary, Paul Fyfe, Richard Menke, Jim Mussell, and many others has shown that one strength of the field is its capacity to see movements between the Victorian age of information and our own.⁴⁰ As Fagg, Pethers, and Vandome explain in their introduction to "Networks and the Nineteenth-Century Periodical," the nineteenth century can be seen as a historical analogue to the diffused and multifaceted literary production characteristic of the twenty-first century's online culture. It is possible that positioning Victorian periodical culture as a "precursor" to our own digital age risks too forcibly molding the past into the shape of the present.⁴¹ Still, as Alan Liu has noted, this potentially presentist approach models possibilities for "project[ing] the

model of social networking backwards over historical networks of authors and works.”⁴²

What is clear is that attention to networks as aggregated entities of production vexes the models of single authorship and Romantic genius that continue to survive, albeit in ghostly form, in literary studies; it also gives historical form to the often merely theoretical obituaries for the “death of the author” extolled by poststructuralist critics like Barthes and Foucault. Filtered through the Latourian particularism discussed above, this attention to networked production helps reorient historical analysis and reshape many of our most cherished old chestnuts of historical causality. In his field-defining essay “Charting the Golden Stream: Thoughts on a Directory of Victorian Periodicals,” published eight years before Latour’s first book, Michael Wolff unfolds a powerful call for particularization in the study of Victorian culture. Sounding much like Latour, Wolff exhorts literary historians to attend to what he calls the “internal quality of historical events.”⁴³ Rather than treating historical events like the “publication of a novel, a bank failure, or the passing of an Act of Parliament” as free-standing abstractions, we should pay attention to the micro-scaled operations that went into that larger event.⁴⁴ In the more famous words of George Eliot, our histories should attend to unhistoric acts, too. Explaining that the ideologies of “egalitarianism” and “utilitarianism” in the Victorian period are only abstract names for aggregated individual phenomena, Wolff notes that we must train attention on the “anonymous crowds which comprise the Victorian public—or rather publics—and which help generate the various Victorian atmospheres which the ambitious historian now wishes to analyze.”⁴⁵ In other words, his call, like Latour’s, is to dispense with structure concepts and abstractions (“atmospheres”) in favor of the particular actors who “generate” them. Wolff’s intervention thus shows how the injunction to scale down and particularize has organized Victorian periodical studies since its inception.⁴⁶

This legacy is well in evidence in more recent work on networks. Laurel Brake’s “Time’s Turbulence,” for example, part of the “Victorian Networks and the Periodical Press” special issue of *VPR*, describes how reading Victorian periodicals opens up “vistas of affiliation . . . prompting curiosity about a ghostly dynamic of interlocking structures, referenced but otherwise invisible.”⁴⁷ Brake cites as a methodological spur the work not of Latour but of Friedrich Kittler—which is useful for its “materialist and historically specific analysis”—but she describes her research program in terms that also evoke the Latourian matrices described above: “I became interested in exploring alternatives to an individual, biographical route to networks partly in response to the opportunities that the digitization of archives might offer but also in support of my conviction that working from individual cases ‘outward’ in the face of so many instances would

proceed too slowly to be productive of the matrix I was envisaging.”⁴⁸ What Brake here notes is the difficulty of squaring Latour’s injunction to always particularize with the newly expansive capacities of digital modeling. Her solution is to focus on particular locations of interconnection or networking, such as publishers, printers, and proprietor families like the Clowes family or the Blackwoods.⁴⁹

Brake’s sense is that a network approach might have the capacity to join what Latour calls varying types and scales of actors, such that the “rich matrix of affiliations of persons implied in lengthy and meticulous research on a single [periodical] title . . . is usefully augmented by Kittler’s emphasis on ‘the technics of the industry—of wood-cut illustration, printing processes and machines, paper, distribution, and the magnet of London, which drew would-be proprietors, journalists, printers, and graphic artists to work in Clerkenwell and the City.’”⁵⁰ Citing Kittler rather than Latour, Brake’s effort nevertheless follows the network-tracing injunction to catalog painstakingly and with particularizing care the interactivity between human, technic, and machinic agencies.

Machinic agencies take center stage in Murphy’s special issue on modernist periodical networks, which aims to visualize relations among early twentieth-century literary producers in ways only possible with modern digital technology. According to Murphy, the “new methodologies” that network visualization both demands and makes possible reveal the “power of magazines to link *writers* together” and help show how “periodicals . . . shaped the interpretation of *individual texts* and *writers* by linking them to other *works* and *authors*.”⁵¹ Works, texts, writers, and authors: the actants named in this list are the customary agents of traditional literary criticism. However novel this methodology might seem, its categories of analysis have not yet been subjected to the downscaling gaze of Latourian description, which would ask what *other* and *smaller* actors came together to make modernist production possible. Still, the emphasis on human agency and interactivity often left unquestioned in digital models of social networks helps underscore another aspect of network thinking, namely, its emphasis on collaboration. Lang would have appreciated the fact that one of the field’s pre-eminent scholars of the historical networks of Victorian periodical culture, Patrick Leary, is also the convener of one of its most important *new* networks today. In 1996, Leary founded one of the earliest digital humanities projects in nineteenth-century studies, the Victoria Research Web, and also inaugurated the related VICTORIA Listserv, which links scholars from around the world into shared and often strange new inquiries. As a few recent Listserv topics—tickling in Victorian fiction, Victorian rock music, and “What is a Cad?”—suggest, this online forum generates fresh connections and a countless number of new projects. This proves what Lang’s case also shows—that networks are productive in

the strictly conceptual sense that they produce more than the sum of their inputs.⁵²

Connecting Wolff's 1967 article with Leary, Murphy, and Brake's twenty-first-century interventions is a set of metaphors—mapping, tracing, reconstructing—that emphasizes another, more controversial point about the network methodology in Victorian studies. These and other figures describe a critical procedure that is not in fact critical since it purports to identify more closely or accurately what already exists. Such historicizing, particularizing procedures can only ever be non-normative, that is, in the philosophical sense that they are concerned not with what ought to be but what already is, a disposition toward the given clearly demonstrated in digital modeling and visualization projects, which literally recode or (in Latour's term) redescribe an extant archive in new form. The empiricist bias of Latourian network thinking means that its goal is to identify rather than judge, count rather than critique. To be sure, acts of naming and identification can have critical effectivity, and efforts to "see relationships among data that would be otherwise obscured" have the power to discover relations of influence and mechanisms of oppression that powerful interests would rather obscure.⁵³ But the empiricist bias of network methodologies means that they more typically tend toward the descriptive rather than the investigative, a bias against normative political approaches that is made all but explicit in Felski's efforts to mobilize Latour as the exemplary "post-critical" thinker.⁵⁴ Latour asserts all of this straightforwardly in articles such as "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?" As is true of Victorian studies more broadly, the study of Victorian periodical networks will inevitably confront the challenge of squaring the empiricist, even positivistic practices of network reconstruction with more openly normative modes like feminism, post-colonialism, and queer studies, to name just a few.⁵⁵ Where a decelerated, network-tracing method evinces care for the particularity of its objects and relations, what remains to be shown is how the thoroughgoing particularism of this method might comport with projects of critique that, however historically attuned in their own right, are generated out of normative principles that can only ever be external to empirical facts. Can network thinking be political?

Network Form

I want to move toward a conclusion by showing how Lang's own network-making procedure is manifested in the form of his texts and suggesting what possibilities this recombinatory aesthetic might hold for twenty-first-century critical method. Lang's desultory column "At the Sign of the Ship," which ran in *Longman's* from January 1886 to October 1905, performed the work of creative remediation in structural terms, as it jumped with

ease—and often without attribution—between seemingly original ideas, new and older verse, cited text, parodies of contemporary culture, and citations of news stories. In keeping with his ongoing critique of originality, Lang's most original ideas often originated elsewhere. But that was fair enough within the terms of the enterprise, since as Lang wrote in the column's first installment, in January 1886, the purpose of this new space was to act as a kind of ensemble-building machine. Rather than "space," "engine," or "machine," though, the metaphor Lang uses is the second-hand bookstall. "We gather all," reads the column's auto-referential opening poem, "we all enfold / in *this* our Stall of Bric-a-Brac."⁵⁶

The bric-à-brac hybridity of Lang's textual objects is nowhere more apparent than in his hugely popular series of colored fairy books (1889–1910), each edition named after a new tone. So successful was this series of illustrated folktales that it ran from *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889) to *The Lilac Fairy Book* (1910), at which point one senses Lang began to run out of colors, having already used "Olive" (1907), "Crimson" (1903), and "Grey" (1900). Timed always to coincide with the Christmas rush, these hybrid productions were networked objects in Latour's sense since they brought together long-extant folktales and myths, added illustrations, and aimed their sights at children no less than at "grown-up people who have not forgotten how they once were children."⁵⁷ While these texts seem to be just one more facet of Lang's media-mogul populism, they also developed from his ongoing work in Tylorian cultural anthropology. In works like *Custom and Myth* (1884), for example, itself a compilation of essays written years before and in wildly different contexts, Lang elaborated the idea that the world's development from savagery to civilization mirrored a human being's progress from childhood to adulthood. Lang shared this belief that phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny with virtually every liberal thinker of his era, but he broke orthodoxy by preferring the poetic atavism of "childhood" to its civilized opposite. This had major implications for, among other things, his theory of folklore, since it meant that stories from the childhood of human time would appeal to actual children. Lang's anthropological work had convinced him that folktales or *Märchen* were the common stock of humanity, the public archive of a shared past, which could be adapted (and monetized) by anyone with the wits to do so. It is telling that in his preface to *The Red Fairy Book* (1890), the second in the series, Lang refers to it as a "second gleaning of the fields of Fairy Land," since the word "gleaning" connotes a kind of low-level theft that is justified both by the hunger of the gleaner and the ownerless surplus he makes his own.⁵⁸

I refer to "Lang's fairy books" because that is the convention and because calling them "Lang's" is the only way to locate them in the various catalogs and databases we use to do our work. (Such do conventional

notions of authorship persist in database programming and search technologies.) But as many readers of *Victorian Periodicals Review* already know, the several hundred stories compiled in the series—tales like “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “The Golden Ring,” and “The Enchanted Pig”—were not written by Lang. Rather, as “editor” he oversaw their compilation, translation, condensation, and adaptation as a kind of maestro or Dickensian conductor. Yet these separate tasks of literary reproduction fell not to Lang himself but to what we might call a factory of subordinate author figures or actants, what my own collaborator Clark Hillard calls the “small team of amateur and professional folklorists (including Lang’s wife)” responsible for compiling these hybrid texts.⁵⁹ Whereas in later volumes the main work of adaptation fell almost entirely to Mrs. Lang, “in the earlier volume,” Lang’s biographer notes cheerily, “she had the assistance of many people, including May Kendall, Florence Sellar and Sir W. A. Craigie.”⁶⁰

These collectively transcribed volumes of tales originating elsewhere were doubly networked, in Latour’s sense, since they brought together previously disparate materials and convened an uncommonly vast aggregation of human actors, many of them female. Lang’s own work—if by “own work” we mean the literal taking of pen to paper—seems to have been confined to selecting the stories in the first place and then composing extremely short prefaces to each volume.⁶¹ Lang’s full preface to *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889) produces an elaborate lexicon for describing these various mediating operations, which are not quite authorship but not quite “not authorship” either. I highlight the relevant phrases here:

The tales of Perrault are **printed** from the old English version of the eighteenth century.

The stories from the Cabinet des Fées and from Madame d’Aulnoy are **translated, or rather adapted**, by Miss Minnie Wright, who has also, by M. Henri Carnoy’s kind permission, **rendered** “The Bronze Ring” from his *Traditions Populaires de l’Asie Mineure* (Maisonneuve, Paris, 1889).

The stories from Grimm are **translated** by Miss May Sellar; another from the German by Miss Sylvia Hunt; the Norse tales are a **version** by Mrs. Alfred Hunt; “The Terrible Head” is **adapted** from Apollodorus, Simonides, and Pindar by the Editor; Miss Violet Hunt **condensed** “Aladdin”; Miss May Kendall **did the same** for *Gulliver’s Travels*; “The Fairy Paribanou” is **abridged** from the old English translation of Galland.

Messrs. Chambers have kindly allowed us to reprint “The Red Etin” and “The Black Bull of Norrway” from Mr. Robert Chambers’ *Popular Traditions of Scotland*.

“Dick Whittington” is **from** the chap book edited by Mr. Gomme and Mr. Wheatley for the Villon Society; “Jack the Giant-Killer” is **from** a chap book, but a good version of this old favourite is hard to procure.⁶²

As the bold-face indicates, Lang's network of co-producers did many things to the original source texts, but none of those things was to "write" them: they "adapted" them, "translated" them, "condensed" them, "abridged" them, and in one of several anxious formulas, "translated, or rather adapted" them. This proliferating vocabulary seeks to capture numerous relationships in the Lang network and serves as a reminder of how impoverished our own vocabulary remains for describing the multiple ways a given actant might help generate a textual network-object. The most incredible locution in this collection, to my eye, is "is from" (as in "Jack the Giant-Killer' **is from** a chap book"), a formula whose flatness seems to indicate a straight lift of text but on closer inspection does not admit to that either. How did it come from there? The elaborate mediating processes that have been worked on this source material—the unusual that has been added to the usual—is here both elaborately highlighted and left unspecified.

I close by underscoring what kind of historical consciousness these remarkable compilations model for us. Like Lang's other writings on anthropology and folklore, *Custom and Myth* draws on E. B. Tylor to elaborate a theory of sedimented cultural-historical time. For Lang, the present moment is not so much the culmination of a modernizing arc but the ciphered, jumbled archive of past thought forms. Lang explains that the practice of folklore—he hesitates to call it a science—is not unlike walking through a field after heavy rain and finding enigmatic ancient fragments turned up by the storm. Folklore "finds everywhere, close to the surface of civilized life, the remains of ideas as old as the stone elf-shots [arrowheads], older than the celt of bronze."⁶³ The present world is, in other words, a tissue of earlier mental idioms that live on, in a changed but always materialized way, in the present. This theory of survivals (Tylor's term) would later, via Levi Strauss, inform Marxist hermeneutics in its high Jamesonian mode, but in its fin de siècle form, it was already a fully worked-out version of what we might call historical networking, whereby "resemblances and analogies" (as Lang calls them) connect ideas from widely divergent historical moments, producing "curious correspondences" between epochs that prove the present to be thick with "echoes out of some far-off time."⁶⁴

To reassemble these fragmented correspondences, to hear those echoes, is to engage in a mode of historical network thinking in which the present is conceived as inextricably linked to the past and that past is viewed in a key not of condescension but of affirmation. The past is not a scapegoat for ideologies of modernity but a resource for remaking the present. In the words of Lang's only substantial biographer, Roger Lancellyn Green, Lang was most of all a "popularizer and an interpreter," one who aimed "to impart his own enthusiasm, [in an] attempt to provoke interest, to invite a reading."⁶⁵ In imparting, provoking, and inviting, Lang's curatorial intel-

ligence disposed itself positively toward the human and nonhuman objects it brought together; it modeled an affirmative affect toward the historical actants it so tirelessly arranged into new ensembles. *The Green Fairy Book*, third in the series, addresses its preface “To the Friendly Reader,” a quietly forceful hailing gesture that legislates our friendliness as readers even while outlining the readerly affect Lang himself most preferred to model. He liked things, and in his alchemic processes of adaptation and translation—call it plagiarism if you must—Lang qualitatively changed the networks he seemingly only convened. Out of the usual he generated unusual objects, and out of extant material leaped new things that are marked, even if only ineffably, by his own intelligence. To use Rita Felski’s term, Lang’s method was “postcritical” in the sense that it retained a positive affect toward its objects but was non-positivist insofar as it refused to merely describe, recount, or “trace” and instead qualitatively changed its inputs.⁶⁶ For all its faults, then—and there are many—Lang’s was a process of productive historical reading in which critique in its familiar negative sense had no place at all. As he explained in the opening poem of “At the Sign of the Ship,” “In this, our stall of Bric-a-Brac, / We shall do everything—but scold.”⁶⁷

Lang’s hybridizing, mediating procedures were generated in a moment of unprecedented change in the media landscape, a “particularly yeasty moment” in the history of the literary marketplace when established economies of scholarly and literary production were being remade yearly, monthly, even weekly—and no one quite knew what was next.⁶⁸ As we find ourselves perched on a similar threshold between regimes of intellectual production, it may be that Lang’s network-making example can provide guidance for our own attempts to chart what new models of method and practice—we could say “theories”—literary scholarship demands now. Will scholarship in Victorian studies seek new and more elaborate ways of re-circulating pre-existing content—passively, even positivistically representing the “way the nineteenth century really was”? Or will we, like Lang, accept the challenge to build odd new networks out of previously unlinked historical materials and in that act of curatorial building—half reiterative and half speculative, half plagiaristic and half creative—change qualitatively the very materials we drew on in the first place?

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NOTES

1. Lang, “Literary Plagiarism,” 831.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 832.

4. Ibid, 833. In a way that performs the argument of this essay, these pages would not have been possible without the ideas and influence of my co-editor, Molly Clark Hillard, and the contributors to the special issue "The Andrew Lang Effect: Network, Discipline, Method," including Molly Clark Hillard, Kathy Psomiades, Supriha Rajan, Letitia Henville, and Jonah Siegel. Their thinking, along with the insights of Marysa Demoor, probably the world's foremost expert on Lang, informs my efforts here, thus proving Lang's point that nothing new genuinely comes into the world. I acknowledge these collaborators here with warm thanks.
5. For Benjamin's notion of constellation see, for example, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 34.
6. Lang, "Literary Plagiarism," 831.
7. Henville, "Andrew Lang's 'Literary Plagiarism,'" 1.
8. Corelli, *Silver Domino*, 312.
9. Demoor, "Andrew Lang's 'Causeries,'" 18.
10. Swinnerton, *Background with Chorus*, 45.
11. Leary and Nash, "Authorship," 197.
12. As quoted in Webster, "Introduction," 9.
13. Maurer, "Andrew Lang and 'Longman's Magazine,'" 173. In Langian manner, the above two paragraphs derive significantly from my own article, "What Is a Network?"
14. As Trettien notes, "Thus far, the fields of digital humanities in general, and electronic editing in particular, have not adequately addressed the consequences of these POD publications for the present and future of a digitally-inflected literary studies." "Deep History of Electronic Textuality," 3.
15. Ibid.
16. MacGregor-Leyland, "Content outstanding; presentation poor."
17. Barry, "Cannot recommend this volume."
18. Trettien, "Deep History of Electronic Textuality," 3.
19. Colby, "Harnessing Pegasus," 114.
20. Lang, *Book of Dreams and Ghosts*, xv.
21. Murphy, "Introduction," 3, 5.
22. Levine, *Forms*, 112.
23. Jagoda, "Terror Networks," and Selisker, "Literary Data."
24. Murphy, "Introduction," 5.
25. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition, s.v. "network."
26. Google Ngram, <https://books.google.com/ngrams>.
27. "Most Cited Authors."
28. Ibid.
29. Love, "Close Reading and Thin Description," 402.
30. Felski, "Latour and Literary Studies," n.p.
31. Murphy, "Introduction," 8.

32. The seeming “immateriality” of digital communications was, of course, always an illusion since even the most “virtual” networks and processes rely on elaborate (and often secret) material infrastructure, like undersea cables or, in a famous case revealed by Edward Snowden, a San Francisco equipment closet.
33. Williams, “New Modesty in Literary Criticism.”
34. English, *Economy of Prestige*; Guillory, *Cultural Capital*.
35. Philpotts, “Role of the Periodical Editor,” 40.
36. McGurl, *Novel Art*.
37. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 121; his emphasis.
38. *Ibid.*, 122.
39. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 23.
40. See Leary, “Googling the Victorians”; Fyfe, “Technologies of Serendipity”; Menke, “Touchstones and Tit-Bits”; Mussell, *Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age*.
41. Fagg, Pethers, and Vandome, “Introduction,” 93.
42. Alan Liu, as quoted in Fagg, Pethers, and Vandome, “Introduction,” 94.
43. Wolff, “Charting the Golden Stream,” 24–25.
44. *Ibid.*, 25.
45. *Ibid.*, 26.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Brake, “Time’s Turbulence,” 115.
48. *Ibid.*, 116.
49. *Ibid.*, 119.
50. *Ibid.*, 124.
51. Murphy, “Introduction,” 4; emphasis added.
52. As Easley explains in her introductory essay, “Of course, RSVP has always demonstrated a commitment to social and scholarly networking. The organization owes its very existence to the network of relationships that arose from the first and greatest of all Victorian studies collaborative projects, the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*. In the years that followed, RSVP became well known for its collegial company of scholars as well as its numerous scholarly publications, including edited anthologies and the quarterly publication of *Victorian Periodicals Review*. Such collaborative projects create and enhance a network of relationships, thereby promoting what network theorists call a location of ‘high connectivity’ between individuals.” Easley, “Introduction,” 112.
53. Murphy, “Introduction,” 7.
54. See Felski, “Latour and Literary Studies,” n.p.
55. On the anti-normative thrust of Latourian description, see, for example, Goodlad and Sartori, “Ends of History,” and Hensley, “Curatorial Reading and Endless War.”
56. Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” 317; emphasis added.

57. Lang, *Green Fairy Book*, 10.
58. Lang, preface to *The Red Fairy Book*.
59. Hillard, "Trysting Genres."
60. Green, *Andrew Lang*, 82.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Lang, *Blue Fairy Book*; emphasis added.
63. Lang, *Custom and Myth*, 12.
64. Lang, *Blue Fairy Book*, 12.
65. Green, *Andrew Lang*, 158.
66. Felski, "After Suspicion," 34.
67. Lang, "At the Sign of the Ship," 317; line order reversed.
68. Colby, "Harnessing Pegasus," 114.

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