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Victorian Media Studies, History, and Theory

Amy R. Wong

The newspaper editor W.T. Stead—controversially known for pioneering the sensationalistic and investigative form of journalism known as the New Journalism—was one of the late-Victorian era's most fervent supporters of the mass press. In 1886, he wrote exuberantly of mass print culture's democratizing, utopian potential, avowing in the *Contemporary Review* that "the telegraph and the printing-press have converted Great Britain into a vast agora, or assembly of the whole community" (p. 654). In 1890, as the new editor of the *Review of Reviews*, Stead marveled at the conquering spirit of electric communications, which had "annihilated time, abolished space, and it will yet unify the world" (p. 230). He also developed (alongside other more famous contemporaries such as Arthur Conan Doyle) a strong interest in telepathy and other occult communications as a natural outgrowth of technologies that enabled increasingly immediate and wide-ranging contact between and among people at a distance—or beyond the grave. Stead's varied interests capture the ideological heights that the notion of communication reached within the Victorian media landscape: more than a developing system of efficient transmissions, communication could unify the nation, the world, and beyond through the promise of a common means of discourse. As the present essay will show, the Victorians' thoroughgoing preoccupation with such dreams of communication—and their problems—have largely served as the basis for the origin and development of Victorian media studies as a scholarly sub-field.

As both media theorists Guillory (2010) and Peters (1999) have argued, the dramatic increase in new media forms during the later part of the nineteenth century precipitated a wholesale shift in understanding—respectively, in their accounts, toward the "media concept" and the presently familiar notion of "communication as bridge" (p. 16). By "media concept" and "communication as bridge," Guillory and Peters refer essentially to the same developing paradigm—of transmission and channeling—to account for diverse new nineteenth-century communication technologies such as the postal system, (wireless) telegraph, the telephone, and rudimentary radio, to name a few. As Guillory notes, the late-nineteenth century "demanded nothing less than a new philosophical framework for understanding media" and that "[t]his new framework was provided by the idea of communication" (p. 347). It is consequently not surprising that much of the work in the sub-field of Victorian media studies in the last twenty years has focused on these extraordinary historical developments in communications—both in terms of technology and ideation—in the period from the 1830s to the century's end.

At the same time, the link that Stead made between communications and (comm)unity through his celebration of the mass press is not unconnected with media theoretical concerns about mass media that would preoccupy media theory's founders in the twentieth century. Although ubiquitous now, the term "mass media" was a designation that did not emerge until the 1920s with the so-called Frankfurt School's Marxist critiques of media, becoming common parlance even later with the rise of communications departments and the professionalization of media studies in the late 1950s and 60s. There is, of course, a notable mismatch between Stead's enthusiasm for consolidated mass media (in effect, print and especially journalism during his time) and Adorno and Horkheimer's well-known critique of twentieth-century mass media's propagation of the monolithic "culture industry" (whether via the press, radio, or film), first articulated in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). As this discussion will also argue, an overall sense that the Victorian period was the historical beginning of mass media, and the productive tensions this recognition brings between conceptions

of mass media, past and present, have made Victorian media studies a particularly productive site for working through more recent debates—within Victorian studies writ large—on the place of history and theory in current scholarship.[1]

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The overview that follows of Victorian media studies in the last few decades shows the range of inquiries that take some notion of communication as a point of departure to discuss Victorian literature and culture. Subsequently, the essay will discuss the complex entanglements of history and theory in Victorian media studies, and point to the ways in which the sub-field continues a productive engagement of both—though in new ways reflective of our own present moment in media studies. Put another way, the essay points out the historicist underpinnings of Victorian media studies while also considering how the sub-field has, at the same time, seemed especially resistant to dichotomies between history and theory. In closing, I will argue that Victorian media studies presents an instance of a sub-field in which history and theory have shaped and amplified each others' aims in ways that seem inevitable, as well as energizing for the sub-field's continued development.

I. Victorian Media Studies and Communication

Peters (1999) not only identifies the normalization of communication as a bridge as occurring sometime in the later nineteenth century, but also points to the simultaneous normalization of *mis*communication. Whether with regard to the technical problems of achieving transmissions of information across wide spaces or the more philosophical and phenomenological problem of reconciling two minds, communicative failure became part and parcel of the idea of communication: "communication as bridge always means an abyss is somewhere near" (Peters, 1999, p. 16). Peters's sweeping history—which crosses periodized and national boundaries, concerning itself with diverse thinkers on "the idea of communication" from the Ancient Greeks and early Christians to John Locke and nineteenth-century philosophers (in America as well as Europe) that ushered in this modern notion of bridging—does not, importantly, see this nineteenth-century shift as a narrowing one. In fact, the notion of bridging gave rise to rich traditions of thinking about what might be characterized more broadly as in-betweenness, from the work of William James to the communication theory of Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong, as well as the philosophy and phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.

It is in this broader shift that we might locate a more specifically Victorian preoccupation with the idea of communication as essentially about in-betweenness and its complications. In Britain, as well as across the Atlantic, technologies that either strove to conquer transmission across vast spaces (e.g., the telegraph or telephone), or to mediate between the human body and the world of its perception (e.g., photography or phonography), crystallized different aspects of in-betweenness.[2] Late-nineteenth century enthusiasm for occult transmissions—from telepathy to clairvoyance and automatic writing—captures something of both, where a spiritual medium's body essentially becomes a communication technology itself. The proliferation of many forms of in-betweenness and the resulting sense of modernity knitted together by communications largely informed the Steadian dream that communications would unify Britain and, eventually, the world.

One of the first studies on communication technologies and Victorian literature is Richard Menke's *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (2008). To a degree, Menke's titular emphasis on the telegraph—albeit the most emblematic of Victorian communication technologies—belies the study's broader emphasis on at least three newly constituted (and interconnected) transmission systems: the penny post, the electric telegraph, and the wireless telegraph. The genre of Victorian realism, Menke argues, participates in what media theorists call the

"ecology"—or landscape—of these new media systems. As such, realism serves as a record of changing attitudes about information; the "real world" might be transmitted and captured through prose as one among other information systems. The development of Victorian information systems continues to spur productive lines of inquiry. Aaron Worth's recent *Imperial Media: Colonial Networks and Information Technologies in the British Literary Imagination, 1857–1918* (2016), for instance, synthesizes the discussions of communication technologies and of British imperial control. Worth's study provides new insights into how technologies like the telegraph symbolically structured conceptions of imperial hegemony, and also brings communication theories such as Harold Innis's distinctions between "space-biased" and "time-biased" media to bear upon the imaginings of empire in the work of Victorian authors such as Marie Corelli and H. Rider Haggard.

Many studies on Victorian visual—and more recently, sound—technologies have also brought productive attention to how such technologies acted, in effect, as communicative mediators between the human body and the outside world. In other words, whether photography or phonography, such new technologies became conceptualized as go-betweens that could enhance—or obfuscate—the eye's or the ear's sense perception. With respect to visuality, Jonathan Crary's pioneering study, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (1990), traces the emerging "problem" of the observer's body to the 1820s. Crary argues that new machines like the kaleidoscope and the stereoscope were inventions specifically created to study the workings of the observer-body, which became, in a way, just one among many mediating factors involved in the messy transfer of information—or, we could say, communications—from the world to the mind's eye. Kate Flint's interdisciplinary *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (2000) expands Crary's work, demonstrating complexities beyond the subject-object (or observer-observed) axis that shaped different forms of Victorian visuality. Flint provides wide-ranging discussions of art, science, design, literature, and criticism to illuminate diverse visual literacies and cultural influences on Victorian vision. She also points to a central tension between the visible and the invisible, the outer observable world and inner imaginative world.

The development of photography and its impact on Victorian visuality forms a subject unto itself, and is far too vast and varied to include entirely under the aegis of Victorian media studies alone. In the literary contexts with which this overview of Victorian media studies is primarily concerned, not surprisingly because of photography's concurrent development with Victorian realism, many scholars have looked at the collusions between photography and realism in shaping the experience and imagination of the world.[3] Although the subject of photography and realism is also too vast for meaningful summary in the present context, some important titles include Jennifer Green Lewis's *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (1996), Nancy Armstrong's *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (1999), and Daniel Novak's *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2008). The integration of photography into mainstream journalism has also formed an important area of study for scholars interested in understanding the development of Victorian mass media; Gerry Beegan's *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London* (2008), for instance, offers a detailed investigation of the ways in which photographic and illustrative technologies were hybridized late into the nineteenth century to create mass images for middle-class public consumption in Victorian periodicals.

One of the foremost scholarly discussions of new sound technologies in conjunction with Victorian experiences of aurality is John Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003). Picker's study pairs close readings of fiction and non-fiction prose with "case studies" that illuminate the integration of sound technologies into the general cultural landscape of an "auscultative age," marked, especially, by the new sounds of changing urban landscapes (p. 7). Picker's discussions capture the wide-ranging relationships between Victorian aurality and the literary imagination, from Charles Dickens's reworkings of Charles Babbage's sense of the air as a scroll that recorded sound in *Dombey and Son*

(1848) to Joseph Conrad's adoption of phonographic voices to create the haunted features of *Heart of Darkness* (1899).[4] With a different but related emphasis, others have focused on changing conceptions of orality within the Victorian media landscape. Ivan Kreilkamp's *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (2005) and Patrick Leary's *The Punch Brotherhood: Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian Britain* (2010), for instance, have brought important attention to the ways in which forms of Victorian orality did not become attenuated amid the proliferations of print—rather, that "voice" and "talk" became adapted in conjunction with and figured through literary and journalistic genres. Jennifer Esmail's work on *Reading Victorian Deafness: Signs and Sounds in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2013) discusses Victorian "oralism" from a disability studies perspective, bringing attention to the ways in which literature, science, and new technologies conspired to devalue the linguistic agency of sign language in favor of spoken language.

As mentioned above, the late-Victorian fascination with telepathic and occult transmissions uniquely synthesizes discourses about communication, the body, and technology. By imagining a collapse between the body and communication technology into one, such notions of immediate transfer envisioned a communicative situation that transcended what McLuhan (1964) later conceptualized as technology's prosthetic function. When a spiritual medium speaks or automatically writes down the message of another as if she *were* that other, there is no gap, ostensibly, to bring about the failures of in-betweenness. Both Pamela Thurschwell's *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking* (2001), which examines psychical research at the fin de siècle, and Roger Luckhurst's *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901* (2002), a cultural history of telepathy in England, insightfully demonstrate the ways in which the discourses on occult communications were intertwined with the mainstream hopes of science and technology.[5] Yet, as Jill Galvan's *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859-1919* (2011) has shown, the gendering of scientific and cultural discourses around communication technologies and occult mediumship alike evinced significant tensions around feminized roles within new Victorian systems of communication. Galvan offers a thorough examination of how perceptions of women as less rational and less strong willed, in conjunction with women's increasing visibility in sanctioned professional roles such as telephone or telegraph operators, meant a feminization of channeling as a vocation. Likewise, Christopher Keep has explored gender and the typewriter in a couple of important articles (1997; 2001). At the same time that women were imagined as emotionally attuned facilitators of communication, the sense of their unstable bodies could also mean unpredictable breakdowns.[6]

I have suggested in this section that much of the work in Victorian media studies has shared in an interest in the rise of the communications concept, and, in particular, an overarching notion of mediation as in-betweenness. The wealth of scholarship on the literary and cultural entwinements of the nineteenth century's boom in new communication technologies, as well as the history of how new technologies shaped understandings of perception and the body, have shown that the development of Victorian media studies owes much to the historical particularities and problems of the increasingly networked nineteenth century.

II. Recent Directions, History, and Theory

Stead's dream of global unification through perfect, telepathic communication is, of course, not what happens with media in the twentieth century (or the twenty first, for that matter). There is, however, one aspect of Stead's dream—namely, the reification of "mass media" as a singular matrix-like entity—that does become realized, through Marxist analyses of media, and thus, not in the service of mass media's elevation. According to Adorno (1954), mass media in the twentieth century constituted an integration of bourgeois "conventionalism" that was already present in "popular novels from the very beginning" (p. 163). To a large degree, the Frankfurt School's influential view of mass media's consolidations in the interwar years (subsuming under its umbrella popular media forms from radio and film to the tabloid press as well as their proto-developments in the nineteenth century) bears responsibility for a still current sense of mass media's monolithic essence. As such, however, Marxist media theory has tended to flatten the historical many-sidedness of nineteenth-century media. As Collette Colligan and Margaret Linley note in their introduction to *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sound, Touch* (2011):

> The moment of consolidation of the nineteenth-century multiplicity of media into a totality of unique singularity in the early twentieth century thus marks the simultaneous appropriation and disavowal of media history, the spatial incorporation of the historical many into the one true media now understood as the first sign of a media matrix. (p. 2)[7]

History, in other words, became the exorcised ghost of theory—even though the formation of the mass media concept, as we have seen, was likely a mutual production of history *and* media theory: the heightening of the communications dream to a fever-pitch in the late nineteenth century (à la Stead), plus its simultaneous reification and rejection by theorists in the twentieth century.

In advocating for a renewed attention to the "historical many," the essays that Colligan and Linley include in their edited volume on nineteenth-century media collectively reflect a view of the Victorian period as not only diverse in new technologies, forms of art, and print culture, but also varied in how the multi-medial landscape restructured visuality, aurality, and haptic engagement. Colligan's own essay on *Teleny* (1893) as a novel that privileges tactile exchanges enabled by the clandestine book trade over the media culture of visual obscenity is one example of the growing attention to Victorian media and changing understandings of touch. As a whole, the collection's varied focus does more, ultimately, than to de-center the mass media "matrix" and recuperate the histories of unruly nineteenth-century media and their complex relationships with human sense perceptions. The expanding field of what counts as media and mediation has also productively complicated the picture of communication as the main framework for approaching the Victorian media landscape.

The increased focus on studying typically neglected—or forgotten—Victorian media forms, interestingly, has meant a swing toward sustained considerations of media immersion—a concept we associate most readily with the digital landscape of the post-internet age. Alison Byerly's study of Victorian travel, *Are We There Yet? Virtual Travel and Victorian Realism* (2012), for instance, argues that typically ignored media objects such as panorama advertisements, maps of the Thames, railway guides, periodical travel accounts, as well as fiction all aspire to create the "as if" experience we now associate with the imperfect immersion of virtual reality. For Byerly, contemporary media theories about immersion and virtual reality's "suspension" between feeling *both* inside and outside of an experience (another articulation of "as if") serve as an access point to a complex history of Victorian feeling and experience.[8] But this history simultaneously drives its own thinking about virtuality that is not necessarily continuous with ours. As such, we see historical inquiry and contemporary theory operating in mutually illuminating ways—as Veronica Alfano and Andrew Stauffer note in their introduction to *Virtual Victorians: Networks, Connections, Technologies* (2015), the word "virtual" doubly names a present and past condition."[9]

Similar to Byerly's work, Susan Zieger's study on print ephemera, *The Mediated Mind: Affect, Ephemera, and Consumerism in the Nineteenth Century* (2018), also begins with unconventional print media as a way to broaden our understanding of the immersive habits of Victorian media consumption. Zieger argues that widely circulated ephemera—such as advertisements, memorabilia, ink blots, and cigarette cards—reveal an untold diversity of experience with media objects. The Victorians did not just "read" print media (a conception that may be specifically and normatively bourgeois); they often immersed themselves in complicated and idiosyncratic affective attachments to ephemera.[10] After all, as King and Plunkett (2005) have observed—citing Abraham Hayward's 1843 comment in the *Edinburgh Review*, "we live and move and have our being in print"—Victorians simply felt absorbed into a print-rich environment much as we feel ourselves absorbed into digital media (p. 1). By highlighting, essentially, experiential diversity in how the Victorians had their "being in print," studies like Byerly's and Zieger's complicate and de-center the linear, transmissive relations of the communications model, revealing—as well—new dialectical relationships with twenty-first century media models.

A relatively new branch of media studies known as media archaeology—which is also interested in discovering media objects that have fallen by the wayside, though objects that tend to be far less familiar than print—has articulated more explicitly polemical stakes in connecting history to presentist theoretical concerns. Media archaeology, which prefers forgotten, outmoded, or "failed" media objects that specifically do not fit linear narratives of technological becoming and progress, has demonstrated particular affinities with the Victorian age. Parikka (2012) introduces the very concept of media archaeology by way of the steampunk aesthetic, which revels in retro-futuristic (mis-)assemblages of Victorian steam-powered machinery. Like media archaeology, steampunk explores "new media cultures through insights from past new media, often with an emphasis on the forgotten, the quirky, the non-obvious apparatuses, practices and inventions" (Parikka, 2012, p. 2). After all, "[t]he steam-engined machine worlds of the Victorian era . . . marked the birth of modern technological culture" and thus provide a fertile ground for a fascination with old gadgets made anew for creating contrapuntal narratives of history in the present (Parikka, 2012, p. 1). Notably, as Roger Whitson argues in *Steampunk and Nineteenth-Century Digital Humanities: Literary Retrofuturisms, Media Archaeologies, Alternate Histories* (2016), in practice, steampunk and media archaeology can both serve activist as well as aesthetic ends. Whether through the deliberate mis-assembly of technological artifacts or conducting what Zielinski (2006) has memorably called "anarchaeology," such practices can counter not only normative or overdetermined historical teleologies but also institutionalized forms of scholarship.[11]

The growing work on Victorian sound studies, in particular, has formed notable intersections with media archaeology's overarching advocacy for so-called "alternate histories." This affinity mirrors the trajectory of sound studies more broadly—which has emphasized its departure from ocular-centric narratives of history. Matthew Rubery's recent *Untold Story of the Talking Book* (2016), for example, explores audiobooks and the sidelining of their historical geneaologies prior to the present. Rubery (2016) covers more familiar media such as Edison's phonographic recordings and Audible, as well as lesser known artifacts such as books recorded for blind veterans during World War I. Jason Camlot's work on "phonopoetics" (2015) notably adopts media archaeological orientations of motivating untold histories towards specific interventions in scholarly methodologies today, coordinating research on late-Victorian and early-twentieth century voice recordings with theoretical insights into our own scholarly relationships with digitized acoustic artifacts.

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In closing, I suggest that the apparent turn in Victorian media studies gradually away from the notion of communication toward the diversity of immersive experiences and messy alternate

histories might be encapsulated more broadly by a conceptual embrace of media as milieu or environment. Certainly, in light of immersive digital media of the present such as cloud computing and internet infrastructure, that media constitute an endlessly complex milieu seems a thoroughly twenty-first century formation. Indeed, Peters's most recent book, *The Marvelous Clouds* (2016), which again articulates simultaneously historical and theoretical shifts, capaciously contends that "when our most pervasive surrounding environment is technological and nature—from honeybees and dogs to corn and viruses, from the ocean floor to the atmosphere—is drenched with human manipulation," it no longer makes sense to think of media as "message-bearing institutions" (p. 2). Rather, Peters (2016) suggests that we should understand media as "vessels and environments, containers of possibility that anchor our existence and make what we are doing possible" (p. 3). Much of what he argues also feels familiar and timely in light of broader academic trends toward theorizing the anthropocene, the posthuman, and other conceptual shifts that have problematized human-centered points of view.[12]

But even such erasures between the body and media environments find resonances in the Victorian context—as I argue in my own work on the relationship between print and everyday talk. In my current book project, I contend that amid dramatic increases in print, Victorian writers became more interested in theorizing everyday forms of talk in media terms. Specifically, embodied interactions became conceptualized as immersive and integrated media processes, inclusive not only of orality but also gestures, unintended stops and starts, and any number of environmental contingencies from unexpected passers-by to the weather. My sense is that this awareness of the complex, immersive mediation of such "real world" interactions was actually a consequence of the heightened preoccupation with communications. For instance, a writer like Robert Louis Stevenson, who expressed a particular enthusiasm for talk, theorized how to capture talk in its contingent, immersive, and embodied operations in print, in hopes specifically to complicate the transmissive economies of mass market novels.[13]

The gradual movement of Victorian media studies, then, toward examining the messiness of capacious media-as-milieu, continues to point to productive loops of influence between history and theory. The increasing interest in a diverse history of media objects—especially those that have not survived as markers of technological advancement—has produced theoretical orientations in the form of new scholarly methodologies with ethical commitments to objects and experiences that have been marginalized, excluded, forgotten, or discarded. In turn, our most seemingly presentist theoretical investigations—of immersion, virtuality, of milieu—seem just as resonant with the historical situation of Victorian media, intertwined, nonetheless, with the thread of a strong drive toward perfecting and understanding communication. In these many ongoing entanglements, Victorian media studies maintains its promise as an exciting sub-field, continuing to work productively from the dialectic of history and theory.

Notes

My thanks to Jill Galvan, Roger Whitson, and Susan Zieger for their feedback on earlier versions of this article.

[1] Of late, the terms "history," on the one hand, and "theory" (sometimes "form"), on the other hand, have been posed as somewhat oppositional in discussions on whether historicist methodologies in Victorian studies have overshadowed the development of theoretical engagements

that may be more "strategically presentist." Broadly speaking, advocates of "strategic presentism" are concerned with questions of how scholarship can theorize the most urgent concerns of the twenty-first century. This phrase has materialized most prominently in a forum provided by the V21 Collective, a group formed in 2015.

[2] Colligan and Linley (2011) offer a fuller list of devices that colorfully highlights both well-known and lesser-known technologies that originated in the Victorian period—all of which, Guillory might argue, came to be seen as bridging forms of media: "the kaleidoscope, thaumatrope, phenakistoscope, zoetrope, praxinoscope, and kinetoscope . . . the stereograph, photograph, telegraph, typewriter, player piano, telephone, phonograph, [and] early film" (p. 1).

[3] An important recent essay by Martin (2012) notes important continuities between problems with visual realism explored by late-Victorian Gothic fictions—in particular, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)—and early cinematic forms.

[4] The final section of this essay will return to discuss the increased interest, more recently, in connecting investigations of Victorian aurality to theoretical models of "sound studies," which emphasize the significance of discarded and forgotten sound technologies to the construction of "alternate histories" of media.

[5] On the American side, Sconce (2000) traces a media genealogy that stretches from the interrelated developments of electric telegraphy and spiritualism to the continued "fascination with the discorporative and emancipating possibilities of the looming virtual age" (p. 28).

[6] Thomas (2012) brings necessary attention not just to gender but also class in her discussion of another communication technology, the uniform penny post. The universalization of the postal system, Thomas reveals, also enabled queer and "illegitimate" communications contra the system's overall, unifying aims. The work of Galvan, Keep, and Thomas illuminate the complex political dynamics at play as these new systems of communication unfolded.

[7] Colligan and Linley also elaborate that alongside Adorno and Horkheimer's culture industry, "other analytical touchstones" that have contributed to this consolidation of mass media include "Martin Heidegger's enframing . . . Guy Debord's society of the spectacle, Harold Innis's present mindedness, Jean Baudrillard's simulation, and Paul Virilio's information bomb" (p. 2).

[8] Bolter and Grusin's (1999) framework of "remediation" is important for developing Byerly's sense of virtuality. "Remediation" stresses how new media has always remade and incorporated old media, striving for greater "immediacy" (which we associate with the immersive environment of unmediated life) but also reveling in the engaging interactivity of "hypermediacy" (which we can connect, for instance, to the palimpsestic interface of a news website today). Byerly specifically conceptualizes realism as the remediation of the more neglected media she discusses in order to stress the operations of virtuality at work on different levels within the Victorian media landscape.

[9] They contend in their volume that a willingness to confront the messy virtualities, for instance, of digital archives enables us "to see more clearly the [Victorian] era's own immersion in virtuality, both optical and textual, as a result of its own novel technologies and networks" (p. 1).

[10] In de-centering the activity of reading, Zieger's work builds on Price's (2012) pioneering work on Victorian experiential diversity when it comes to the matter of books.

[11] Zielinski (2006) disrupts progressive teleologies and periodized scholarly practices, but Parikka and others have rightly critiqued his normative troping of the misfit male genius as a unifying figure of "anarchaeological" history. Although without a media archaeological focus, Clayton (2006) similarly motivates anachronism—juxtaposing past and present experiences of technology—toward disrupting normative scholarly accounts: for Clayton, Dickens helps illuminate postmodernism's convenient amnesia about nineteenth-century critiques of Enlightenment thinking.

[12] Though Peters's latest work is more abstract in its philosophical aims, I see it as continuous with other more concrete and specified accounts of media that fully integrate human embodiment, such as Thacker's *Biomedia* (2004), which articulates flesh as a carrier of information, or Hayles's account of an embodied posthumanism (1999).

[13] See my essay on talk and Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (2014) for a fuller articulation of this argument.

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