What is A Network? (And Who is Andrew Lang?)

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Abstract:
This essay traces the strikingly prolific career of Andrew Lang and places that career in the context of the shifting late-Victorian literary field, which Lang served importantly to shape. The essay introduces Lang’s milieu and re-orient readers to a literary personality who, while known, is only rarely studied in his own right—a detail of reception history the essay explains with recourse to the relational sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour. Restoring Lang’s “network effect” through historical analysis helps raise a number of conceptual questions, each of which is pursued in the essays of this special issue: such questions include the nature of textual interpretation, the changing outlines of disciplines, the philosophy of historical method, and conceptions of authorship and collaboration in the modern cultural marketplace. Placing Lang back in his proper spot at the center of the late-Victorian networks he helped convene helps historicize our understanding of the modern “field of cultural production” (Bourdieu’s term) in an expanded, protodisciplinary sense and (2) discloses new genealogies of literary and theoretical history. These new genealogies in turn cast altered light on the methodological presuppositions we draw upon to evaluate Lang and his network here. “Theoretical historicism” is the term used to describe approaches that trace such feedback loops between the historical object analyzed and the modern method used to analyze them.

*His finger is in every literary pie.*

--Marie Corelli on Andrew Lang, 1892

I. Nodes and Edges

In 1892, Marie Corelli was still three years away from the runaway success of The Sorrows of Satan (1895), the now-unread theosophical potboiler that would sell more copies on its initial publication than any English novel to that point in history (La Monica 153). The melodramas of electricity and occultism leading up to S.o.S. had won Corelli cash and modest fame, but had been insufficiently appreciated, she thought, by the respectable press and the broader public to whom it granted access. To drum up interest in her brand, Corelli (real name
Minnie MacKay) decided to publish a gossipy sendup of the literary scene that had yet to accept her. The opening ruse in *The Silver Domino; or, Side-Whispers, Social and Literary* was a dedication to a critic Corelli had never met, and who had never once mentioned her name in print:

To ANDREW LANG,

Whose Literary Generosity Towards Me Is

Past All Praise,

I,

With the Utmost Recognition,

DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

Corelli’s ironic thank-you confirms that the two authors occupied antagonistic but complementary points in what Pierre Bourdieu would later identify as a field of cultural production: Lang, in the “dominant position” and Corelli as one of those “dominated producers” who, “in order to gain a foothold in the market, have to resort to subversive strategies” aimed at “overturning the hierarchy of the field without disturbing the principles on which [it] is based” (Bourdieu, “Production of Belief” 3). Corelli sought the fame and sales Lang could provide but resented him for being able to provide them. In keeping with these dual investments, she later in the book tags Lang as the “Author’s Own Patent Incubator,” an all-powerful star-maker whose “artificial warmth hatches all sort of small literary fledglings” (311). She continues by confirming Lang’s status as what Bourdieu terms a “consecrator”:

If you can only manage to place a literary egg close enough to the Incubator for him to ‘take notice’ as it were, why there you are; out comes a chuckling author immediately. . . .

He is quite a curious and wonderful institution in literature, is my dear Andrew. (312)
Corelli’s gambit failed to secure the consecrating endorsement of “dear Andrew,” but it correctly identified the man who might hatch her.\textsuperscript{1} If anyone could confer legitimacy in the dynamic media environment of the 1880s and 1890s, it was Lang. By 1895, when Corelli plugged an evil version of him into \textit{Sorrows of Satan} as the amoral McWhing, who “writes everywhere about everything” (ch. 9) and extorts money for positive reviews, Lang’s shaping influence extended to every corner of the cultural marketplace and across any number of what are now separate disciplines—poetry, fiction, folklore, history, anthropology, classical studies, and journalism, to name just several.\textsuperscript{2} Is he the vanished mediator of the late-Victorian mediascape? We think so.

I open this special issue on “The Andrew Lang Effect” with Corelli’s dedication because it illuminates Lang’s central position in the late-Victorian cultural system—or systems, since as I explain in the paragraphs that follow, the arenas of intellectual production over which Lang exercised his decisive but always easygoing influence were numerous and overlapping. Yet Lang’s status as a central node in multiple, interconnected fields, so obvious to contemporary observers like Corelli, has yet to be charted as a phenomenon in its own right. This is a result not just of historical accident but epistemological procedure. Despite robust advances by Victorianists in areas like periodical journalism, media studies, and even coterie literary production, criticism in its workaday mode still operates according to models of thinking that focus on individual objects of study—figures, texts, and (less often) institutions—rather than on the relative positions those points occupy within the broader matrices of relations denoted by terms like “system,” “field,” or (as I’ll suggest) “network.” Models that see identity instead of relation cannot but fail to take full account of a connective figure like Lang.

In his great essay of proto-network analysis, “The Field of Cultural Production; or the Economic World Reversed” (1983, 1993), Bourdieu identifies two modes of conceptual activity,
only one of which, we believe—the “relational” kind—can measure the full scope of Lang’s productivity (29). Bourdieu explains that most thinking conforms to the commonsense epistemology that Ernst Cassirer calls “substantialist” (qtd. Bourdieu 29). Substantialist thinking takes as its object of analysis “the individual, or the visible interactions between individuals”; instead Bourdieu calls for a focus on “structural relations—invisible, or visible only through their effects—between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions” (29). Where the first method is constrained to understand autonomous objects in simple, visible relationships, the latter comprehends fields of relations: tangled, networked, differential connections among actors of varying scales, ontological statuses, and capacities to act. In the terms of the network theory now ubiquitous in popular and academic discourse, substantialist thinking sees only nodes, where field-thinking sees the matrix of edges connecting them. To imagine the difference between the two approaches, we might recall the moment in the network-novel Middlemarch (1872), when George Eliot’s narrator opposes the “flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement” provided by the candle to the multidirectional scratches and haphazard linkages on the pier-glass (248). It is to evoke this latter epistemological dispensation—toward inter-object connectivity rather than illusions of sovereign autonomy—that our title refers to the “Andrew Lang Effect.”

Bourdieu’s main successor in the field of relational sociology, Bruno Latour, uses the figure of the network to explain why the “concentric arrangement[s]” Eliot and Bourdieu both critique can only ever be illusory. For Latour, post-Enlightenment thought is condemned to divide the world into passive objects and active subjects. From within this (false) division, things-in-themselves are incorrectly imagined to be detached from the other objects to which they are in fact linked in the dynamic associations he terms networks (We Have Never117-119). (To
emphasize their status as always-already linked, Latour refers in his own discourse not to “objects” but to “subject-objects.”) For Latour, a network is a never-stable set of such relations, comprising human and nonhuman actors alike; linked together, these chains or webs of interaction among multiple constituents become “quasi-objects” in themselves. More dynamic than a Bourdieuvian field, less total than a Marxist or Foucauldian system, such mobile webs are knowable to us, Latour says, only by virtue of their “tracers”: the “subtle pathways” of connection that are materialized in, for example, correspondence, institutional documents, or textual citations like Corelli’s mock-dedication (118).

Latour’s injunction is to focus on such local and often barely-visible moments of interaction. Rather than training attention on either individual objects held in false isolation, or on the totalizing system-concepts that, like “culture,” “discourse,” “capitalism,” and even “field,” are too often understood as the explanatory actants of history, critics should work like anthropologists, tracing “fragile heterogeneous networks” in all their minute particularity (126). This set of ideas is useful to our project because from the perspective of such network-thinking, a consummate linker like Lang becomes newly interesting both as historical case and as a methodological resource. He emerges not so much as a figure worth recovering—since figure names an object falsely decoupled from its network—but as what Latour calls a “mediator”: an agent of connection that serves to link various sectors of its network in active, shaping ways. Latour explains what Lang’s case helps demonstrate: that such mediators don’t merely draw together other nodes in an inert or neutral way. Rather they are “endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, to redeploy it” (We Have Never 81; emphasis added). Because mediators qualitatively change the networks they help organize, Latour refers to their
“relative density” as points (Reassembling 58n): “their specificity,” he says, “has to be taken into account every time” (Reassembling 39).

It bears stating directly that from within the substantialist frameworks still dominating literary-critical analysis Lang could only ever be a footnote: a collaborator, an enabler, a translator, and a compiler rather than a character of interest in his own (autonomous) right. But it is precisely this that recommends him to reassessment in the context of this special issue. By focusing not on Lang “himself” but on his “effect,” we signal our intention to account for the specificity of Lang as a mediator. Our aim is to forgo subject- and object-centered analytical frameworks and investigate instead the highly generative and almost innumerable relationships Lang helped convene. Fleeting or difficult-to-trace as they may be, these linkages produced effects: textual residues and intellectual consequences that can be reconstructed with the sort of particularizing historical inquiry we attempt to model here.

As my foregoing commentary serves to indicate, our effort to identify the network-effect Lang both embodies and makes available for analysis is not undertaken in the key of recovery. The point is not to bring to the “center” a previously “marginalized” figure so much as to suggest how Lang’s example might help us reconceive the logic of centers and margins from the point of view of networks. For this reason and others, our sense is that such an approach has the capacity to transform a historical actor who, under other epistemological dispensations, could only be ancillary into a resource for thinking about method now. Lang’s ongoing meditation on how validly to interpret artifacts from the past, for example—which he cribbed from anthropologist E.B. Tylor’s theory of cultural survivals—is the recipient of our later historicist analysis no less than a model for how that very analysis might proceed. The conviction we share, in other words, is that reassembling Lang’s network-effect requires not just that we revise our narratives of the
1880s and 90s; it also demands that we see as linked to that period the very critical procedures we would bring to such a task today. As our contributors suggest, many of these methods are themselves products of the conceptual environment of Lang’s late-Victorian moment.

II. The Incubator

So who is Andrew Lang? Famous in his day to the point of cliché, Lang was, as Corelli notes above, a “curious institution in literature.” An avatar of the so-called New Journalism, Lang wrote reviews and occasional pieces for the periodical press; compiled fairy tales; composed and translated poetry; worked to consolidate “folklore” studies; helped pioneer the discipline of cultural anthropology; all but invented the modern adventure romance; stoked controversies about Homer; and in tactical terms dominated the literary division of the late-Victorian culture industry from his editorial post at Longman’s. There, his causerie At the Sign of the Ship chattily remediated “high” and “low” culture for a still-expanding mass-cultural marketplace, at a moment when those distinctions between art and entertainment, high and low—later to seem so natural to analysts including Bourdieu—were being actively negotiated. Lang made careers: not just Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry Rider Haggard but George Gissing, H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, and Arthur Conan Doyle all “owed their definitive break-through to a Lang puff” (Demoor 18). (The absence of women here is a point to which we will return.) Lang edited the British Harper’s, which for a time did better than its American original. He knew George Saintsbury from their days together in Edinburgh, Walter Pater from the Old Mortality Society at Oxford. Word circulated about his “gipsy blood” and Romany coloring. “He was never quite at his ease in the modern world,” said one observer, “and used sometimes to
believe that he was a *revenant* from an earlier and simpler age” (Buchan 6; italics original).\(^5\) His *Iliad*, “*done into English prose*,” was the best selling translation of any kind during the Victorian period.

He wrote about *ghosts* with equanimity; on fairies he was an expert. Lang authored a still-uncounted number of books, and edited many more. He collaborated with Haggard on a badly reviewed novel; planned another with Stevenson; and composed a Jacobite romance with A.E.W. Mason called *Parson Kelly* (1899). Haggard recalled that Lang could converse on one topic while writing articles for the *Saturday Review* on another. Oscar Wilde dubbed him the “Divine Amateur” (n.p.), but for a more charitable observer Lang was a “Literary Proteus”:

Classical scholars remember him for his translations of Homer and Theocritus; historians for his *History of Scotland* and his Jacobite studies; essayists for his *Essays in Little* and other works; critics for his *Tennyson* and his *History of English Literature*; and anthropologists for his studies of primitive religion and mythology. By children he will always be venerated for his *Blue Poetry Book* [sic] and its companions of many colours!\(^6\) (Ormerod 3)

This 1943 assessment predicted wrongly that Lang’s poetry and translations would stand the test of time (Ormerod 3). (They are mostly forgotten, though digital archives have helped even the score). "The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction" cites Lang’s “interesting novels” and “vast” publications, but judges his “most distinguished contributions” to be in folklore and anthropology (Sutherland 361-2). Left aside by literary criticism, disavowed by anthropology, Lang is, today, disciplinarily homeless.

As Supritha Rajan suggests in this issue, part of what Lang’s example serves to illustrate is how interrelated those (and other) now-separate fields of knowledge were in the 1880s and 90s
(see Anderson and Valente 1-2): it was during these decades that previously-expansive
knowledge forms began most quickly compartmentalizing into modern specialties. But Weberian
stories of emergent disciplinarity at the turn of the century are most often told in isolation from
accounts of the equally dynamic publishing market for which the era’s newly-dividing
knowledge was packaged and sold. Lang’s case makes any such separation between ideas and
their material transmission impossible to sustain. Worldly considerations frankly shaped his
intellectual output; as he once said, “if I could have made a living out of it, I might have been a
great anthropologist” (qtd. in Leary and Nash 197). This false modesty notwithstanding, Lang
understood his various markets intuitively and without condescension; in fiction, at least, (as one
critic puts it) he held a “preference for stories that end happily and can be read without the aid of
a dictionary” (Maurer 159). He did not cannily manipulate the masses, as Bourdieu’s model
would assume (“Field” 72), so much as he embodied, in temperament, the tastes and
predilections of a rapidly expanding marketplace. He was educated in the best aristocratic
tradition but disdained pretension; he breathed literary history but shunned antiquarianism, since
for him the past was interesting only insofar as it existed in differential tension with the present.
“Solemn dullness was the one thing which broke his temper,” we are told, “and when it was
beyond reason he would laugh it out of court, leaving the poor dullards blinking startled eyes”
(Buchan 16). In Bourdieu’s terms, Lang was a producer and consecrator wrapped into one, an
author-critic, idea man, and publishing asset filtering culture from the very center of a changing
fin-de-siècle media environment.7

Lang’s version of this environment was masculine in the extreme. Poised between an
older system of literary patronage and the allegedly more democratic markets of culture later
leveraged so effectively by Corelli, Lang exercised decisive influence over only the most manly
forms and institutions of his transitional moment. As Elaine Showalter has argued, the hypermasculine literary milieu Lang convened took shape as a “complicated response to female literary dominance” in the literary marketplace (83), as male producers sought to “reclaim the kingdom of the English novel for male writers” (79). Letitia Henville explains in this issue how for all its apparently inclusive, connection-making energy, Lang’s literary network operated as an engine of exclusion too—a fact that led Corelli to mock-compliment Lang for his “frankly open detestation of literary females” (Domino 317). So while Wilde transformed the London magazine he took over in 1888 from The Lady’s to The Woman’s World (see Showalter 77) and Gissing trained attention on The Odd Women (1893), Lang helped inaugurate some of the era’s most male-focused genres—the adventure romance, the detective novel, and the “shilling shocker”—even while reviving others, like the epic. He enjoyed access to many of the most powerful institutions of his day, including the Savile Club, which, while allegedly founded to escape the “suffocating . . . traditions of Victorian Clubland,” came to count among its (all-male) members a who’s who of the dominant cultural producers of the moment.9

Measured in numerical terms at least, Lang was the king even among these fellow men. The unreal profusion of his written work has been called “incalculable” (Leary and Nash 197), though many have tried to calculate it. One survey, “exclusive of articles, contributions, fairy books, chapters on books and games, and editorial or prefatory work” nevertheless yielded eighty volumes (Webster, “Introduction” viii). Jonah Siegel counts some two hundred volumes in the library at NYU. Another survey arrived at “four hundred and ninety-five titles” by Lang, “embracing six hundred and fifty-eight volumes” (qtd. in Webster, “Introduction” ix). In 1949, the British Museum catalogue 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. (Webster, “Introduction” ix, n)

Such efforts to enumerate Lang’s oeuvre read, today, like parodies of Franco Moretti’s quantitative method. Indeed as Siegel notes, without digital collating mechanisms like Google books, Lang’s disparate works would hardly be accessible to us at all. Even with such technological assistance, placing a final number on Lang’s far-flung and multiply distributed texts (often included in books by other authors) is all but impossible—all the more so since new electronic editions of his works continue to proliferate, in a Kindle-era replay of the “versioning” Lang oversaw in his own lifetime (see note 6, above), by which identical or nearly-identical content would appear in slightly altered form, in slightly different packaging: version 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, and onward to maximum profitability. Despite their reality effect, then, numerical representations of Lang’s work can only ever be approximate: as Max Beerbohm is said to have remarked, “Lang’s writings, like the hairs of our heads, are doubtless numbered—somewhere” (Maurer 173).

This “almost riotous fecundity” gave rise to what became known as the “the Lang Legend” (Gordon 4), namely the widespread perception of him as a literal version of the “nonhuman actors” Latour seeks to include in modern networks. George Bernard Shaw “counted the day empty unless an article by Lang appeared” (qtd. in Demoor 15), but rarely had to, since Lang’s work appeared so regularly and in such diverse venues that there emerged a belief that “Andrew Lang” did not name a man at all, but a shadowy syndicate of authors operating in a kind of literary sweatshop. This theory of distributed authorship was only disproved with recourse to Lang’s singular style, which had the “beautiful thin facility” Henry James would later deride in
a letter to Stevenson—who was at that time also corresponding with Lang (qtd. in Weintraub 5).

So recognizable was Lang’s prose that, while Grub-street aspirants were known to submit articles marked with Lang’s name in hopes of sneaking into print, they could usually be caught on evidence of syntax alone (Demoor 16). Given the marketability of Lang’s idiom, it’s unsurprising to find him referring already in 1890 to “the author’s ‘brand’” (“At the Sign” 348)—which is ironic, perhaps, given that Lang’s own literary products were so often filched from other sources that charges of plagiarism were never far off.

As his nuanced understanding of intellectual property and brand-management suggests, Lang’s hyperproductivity testifies not just to his singular energy but to the singularity of the media environment in which this energy took form. The final two decades of the nineteenth century were “a particularly yeasty period in the evolution of the literary marketplace” (Colby 114), since they saw revolutionary changes to both the economics and formatting of popular literature: the birth of copyright, royalties, and literary agents; the death of the triple-decker novel and explosion of the magazine and newspaper industries; the standardization (and broad lowering) of book prices; and technological advances in printing, binding, and illustration related to all these. Lang exploited such changes with cheerful aplomb, using short occasional pieces to meet the “general tendency towards increased compression” (Law 81) characteristic of the new periodical formats even as he devised new forms for old content (as in the Fairy Book compilations) and sought market penetration in all of the era’s sanctioned long-form media—from the epic poem (e.g. Helen of Troy, 1882) and the mantlepiece book of “great man” history (Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart, 2 vols., 1896), to the novel itself (though his tended to be bad). Lang had a product for every niche of this new media ecology.12
Such diversity testifies to Lang’s mastery of the nascent fin-de-siècle culture industry and the transitional disciplinary structures alongside which this market of ideas developed. Indeed the range of Lang’s interests, and the ease he evinced in moving between apparently separate knowledge fields—connecting ideas that had not before been linked—gave rise to another legend, namely that as a child he had the habit of opening six books on six topics on six different chairs, flitting from one to the other to read fragments of each (Gordon 12). From Latour’s perspective, such hybridizing, mediating work might best be understood as conceptual relationship-building: the linking of not-yet connected thought-objects. To critics it looked like dilettantism. No doubt Lang’s “discursive genius,” which “sowed and flung with such an open hand” (Webster, “Introduction” xi), was ill-suited to the disciplinary age just dawning around him, when as Max Weber would soon describe, specialization was to become the rule of modernity. Lang specialized in everything, and if such wide angle competence and network-generating tendencies matched poorly with the values of the twentieth century’s new disciplinary society—and to the modern critical practices that are its legacies—it left Lang himself mostly unbothered: “While people were still enumerating the various things he might have been, [Lang] strolled about and was them all” (Gordon 12).

III. Network Theory, Network Form

Manifest at the level of his proliferating relationships and extrahuman productivity, Lang’s network-effect also took shape in his textual practices. Lang’s desultory column At the Sign of the Ship performed the work of interconnection 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 other news stories. Very often
Lang’s most “original” ideas had originated elsewhere—a fact that, as Siegel notes in this issue, exposes fatal weaknesses in our myths of heroic creativity even as it rightly annoyed those from whom the ideas had been lifted. So too was Lang’s tendency toward collaboration a mode of interrelation realized in form, since despite the efforts of later (substantialist) scholars, Lang’s “personal” contributions to co-written texts like *The World’s Desire* (1890) are impossible to parse from those of his collaborators (in this case Haggard). *The Fairy Books* are themselves massive formal realizations of network-thinking, since as Molly Clark Hillard explains in this issue, Lang is not so much authoring these texts as he is remediating already-written material into newer contexts and more marketable platforms.\(^{14}\) This is to say nothing of the collaborative enterprise of Lang’s numerous translations, which placed his own intellect in service of another, prior one—as in his Homers, both of which were actual collaborations too: with S.H. Butcher on *The Odyssey* (1879) and with Walter Leaf and Ernest Myers for *The Iliad* (1883). In short, despite the seemingly heroic qualities tempting us to read him as a figure in his own right, Lang is better seen as a hyperconnected point in a thicket of always-developing relations, inseparable from those relations and (for that reason) endlessly productive of what Latour might call new objects.

This special issue is one such networked “object.” Lang’s collaborative energy, which produced new network-elements while deprioritizing its central node, is one facet of his legacy that recommends him to us now. In a twenty-first century scholarly marketplace that continues to reward individual lone-guurnanship, Lang stands as an example of collaborative work. We have followed his example to the extent permitted by the conventions of academic publishing: our own statements appear under individual names, but links between and among essays model our conviction that this project is finally a collective one. To underscore this conviction we have
sought to maximize the affordances of the special issue’s online medium. Each article includes hyperlinks to relevant digital objects in the public domain; pathways move between and among our arguments. In its own comparatively low-tech way, this approach resonates doubly with new work in the digital humanities, since we aim here to both trace Lang’s networks in a historical key and enact another, newer one in our own form.15

Each of the essays I link to now charts Lang’s effect in one or more particular area of intellectual activity. But in collective terms, these arguments also perform the claim that attention to Lang’s position as a focal node or Latourian mediator—drawing together multiple actors, institutions, and forms of knowledge—might open up new questions about method in Victorian Studies. What might it mean, we ask, to study not an isolated critical object (like a text) or an individual historical agent (like an author)—nor even a closed series of them—but an effect? To pursue this question the contributors forgo positivistic inquiries into biography and bibliography—the present introduction has offered enough of that—in favor of what I will call conceptual historicism: that is, study of how concepts are transmitted in local, historically specific acts of exchange that themselves alter the concepts being conveyed. Together we hope to plot Lang’s positions in the historical networks that have given shape to the critical paradigms we use, now, to analyze them.

Kathy Psomiades (LINKTOISSUEHIDDENMEANING) tracks Lang’s rivalry with Max Müller over the status of myth in the field of early anthropology to query the theories of interpretation still governing the hermeneutic enterprise. As Psomiades shows, Lang’s popularization of E.B. Tylor’s theory of survivals ramified across multiple and disparate areas of Lang’s output: from his explicitly Tylorian anthropological writings in texts like Custom and Myth (1884) to his theory of the adventure romance, which sought to rekindle in modern man the
dead embers of a prior and more vital age—a savage era Lang seemed to suggest was preferable to modernity. This concept of myth as a trace or representation of a lost thought-world gives rise, Psomiades explains, to a theory of reading for the past that is still our own: this understands the present object (the myth, the artwork, or the adventure romance) as but the semiotic displacement of another, more essential thing that the belated critic hopes to reassemble in the act of reading. In tracing a genealogy of theoretical borrowing on this topic—one connecting Lang to Haggard to Freud and that leads, we might add, to Marxist hermeneuts like Fredric Jameson and their now-proliferating critics—Psomiades traces the conceptual pedigree of metaphors (of burial, encryption, and latency, for example) that continue to shape our understanding of the reading process. Seen this way, Lang’s work on myth opens a prehistory of controversies over so-called surface reading; more significantly, it complicates our own suppositions about the relationship between critic and object, theory and ideology. In Psomiades’ telling, the set of ideas so often treated as a “Victorian ideology of survivals”—a benighted (because racist or otherwise politically naïve) suite of mistaken notions to be criticized using “theory” from the vantage point of the later critic—has transformed, over time, into the very core of what we conceive as “theory” in the first place. Beyond its significant contribution to our understanding of romance, then, Psomiades’ essay outlines the interactivity we intend to model between the objects of our historical inquiry and the conceptual resources we use to evaluate them.

Molly Clark Hillard (LINKTOISSUETRYSTINGGENRES) shifts from the methodological problem of interpretation to show how the very nature of collaboration produces analytical difficulties for later readers like us. Her essay opens by sketching the ambivalent connection between Lang and Thomas Hardy legible in Hardy’s 1885 tale of graverobbing and historical reanimation, “Tryst at an Ancient Earthwork.” Lang critiqued his friend Hardy’s
novels for their “Tessimism,” but Hardy’s earlier story stages, in fictional form, Lang’s own sense that the past might be plundered for fragments valuable in the present. Graverobbing might seem to be merely another name for Lang’s own procedure in his work as a collector and editor of fairy tales. But as Clark Hillard recounts, Lang understood the tales collected by other scholars in volumes he served to introduce, like those appearing under his own imprimatur in the endlessly proliferating *Fairy Books*, not as dead forms waiting to be unburied, but as live material in dynamic relation to the present. Since these fragmentary textual traces were reactivated (and sold!) as part of constant, incremental processes of cooption and minor adjustment, though usually with claims that an “editor” has “unearthed” ancient stories, fairy tales point out the insufficiency of many of our vestigially romantic notions of single authorship. Like Lang himself, the collector-figure described in Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (1927-40) remediates bits of found matter into new contexts and platforms. But if this modality of knowledge-making appeals to our reflexively postmodern taste for *bricolage*, Clark Hillard is quick to point out that Lang himself characterized such remixing practices as both savage, which was for Lang a compliment, and effeminate, which was not. Lang’s ambivalence over his own assemblage practices helps Clark Hillard place Lang’s often-dismissed fairy work at the center of the debates over authorship and its widely-reported “death” that also interest Henville and Siegel. Her essay frames its intervention in historical terms, but challenges us to consider whether distributed production on the Fairy Book model could ever have a place in an academic economy—ours—where the individual and the new, packaged as “innovation,” have never been fetishized more.

**Letitia Henville** (LINKTOISSUEANDREWLANGSLITERARYPLAGIARISM) takes an alternative approach to Lang’s propensity for literary borrowing and narrows her focus on the
plagiarism debates into which Lang so vibrantly intervened. Lang’s essay on “Literary Plagiarism” (1887) has become famous for its seemingly prescient defense of what anti-copyright apologists now celebrate as open access. Henville nuances such ahistorical polemics by pointing to the context of the essay and the networks of local skirmishes into which it intervened. As Henville explains, Lang’s argument in favor of “literary borrowing” (as he helpfully rebranded plagiarism) was a partisan one, having been spurred into motion by accusations against Haggard that he’d stolen—and profited monetarily from—other writers’ literary property. Lang argued correctly but self-interestedly that no good writing can ever be devoid of such thievery. If Henville’s essay documents Lang’s casual attitude toward such “borrowing,” it also points out that the plagiarism debates raised still-unresolved questions about the ontological status of text-based information. As Henville shows with reference to more recent thinking about the status of things, remixing practices like Lang’s stretched existing definitions of words like “thing,” “matter,” and “object,” since in what, after all, does the fundamental matter or thisness of a given textual “object” consist? Is the text itself the “object,” or the idea behind the text—and what might it mean, anyway, for an idea to be “behind” a text? By focusing attention on the metaphors that structured debates about late-century publishing practices, Henville adds a historical chapter to recent discussions about material culture and reading; she builds on these metaphysical dilemmas to chart the material exclusionary practices sustaining Lang’s remix culture. The Lang figure or Benjaminian collector must perforce exercise some form of sovereign power, and is, in the fin de siècle at least, almost always a he. Henville shows that Lang’s male network of privileged access renders problematic any celebrations of “open-access” that would see borrowing, adapting, and reoutfitting—we train our students to call it plagiarism—in the pure light of celebration.
Fluidity and cross-pollination underpin Supritha Rajan’s (LINKTOISSUENETWORKINGMAGIC) essay as well, though where Henville focuses on material interconnection among texts and authors, Rajan traces the interrelationship of concepts like magic and force in the late-century protodisciplinary environment. For Rajan, Lang’s multiple connections to figures in anthropology, economics, and the physical sciences helped organize a network of shared ideas about the place of “magic” in primitive societies. For a group of thinkers including Tylor, James Frazer, and Herbert Spencer—all nodes in the Lang network—magic came to denote a disruptive force that functioned as the negation (and also, therefore, as the complement) not just to scientific rationality in its authorized Victorian forms but to communally-sanctioned religious belief. And yet, in the emergent discipline of economics especially, the shunted-off category of magic served as the very explanatory factor guaranteeing that most allegedly rational system of all, the free market. So while a category called “magic” helped a network of thinkers imagine their difference, as scientists, from primitive man, magical thinking persisted at the very core of the ideologies of the modern free market they differently naturalized. Spencer’s belief that the markets could “magically” balance otherwise antagonistic forces shows how fully anthropological theories of the primitive secretly structured even so hyperrationalistic a system as the Spencerian economy. Placed back into this genealogy of conflicted and interrelated ideas, Lang’s diverse commentary on primitive thinking helps generate Rajan’s own method: her article’s synthetic conceptual account cannot be called “interdisciplinary” so much as historicist, insofar as the interchanges it charts among anthropology, economics, and fiction—Hardy’s The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886, 1912) illustrates the reach of Lang’s thinking on magic—were possible only because boundaries between these fields had yet to be sealed. Her essay models a theoretical historicism that refuses
to project modern disciplines backward onto the generative conceptual interchanges of Lang’s moment.

In ways that draw out links implicit in the essays preceding it, **Jonah Siegel’s** (LINKTOISSUELANGSSURVIVALS) response reanimates the question of survivals at the heart of Lang’s anthropological criticism on myth. For Siegel, Lang’s ghostly historicism, which construes the past as a jumble of fragments available for reactivation in the present, is best seen in a longer tradition of Victorian thinking about history that includes more critically-sanctioned figures like Pater and John Ruskin. For Siegel all three writers dwelled on the processes by which the past might be remade in the present. Like Ruskin’s attention to the reuse of classical ruins in modern architecture, or Pater’s sense, crystallized in the etymology of *renaissance*, that any seeming novelty is really the rebirth of something old, theories of survivals like Lang’s serve to undercut ideologies of heroic creativity. But perhaps more importantly in the present critical moment, the notion of survivals also nuances postmodern fetishizations of assemblage culture, since for all three writers the reanimation of the past produces not just repetition but qualitative difference: something new has come into the world by the agency of a creative intelligence.

Siegel points out that nineteenth-century accounts of creativity challenge current critical orthodoxy in two ways: on the one hand, they undercut the old-saws of Romantic ideology that would fetishize authors as heroic individual producers; yet on the other hand, they also challenge those ideas’ dialectical cancellations in, for example, the Foucauldian or Althusserian commonplaces suggesting that authorship is merely the false appearance of group phenomena like discourse or ideology. Lang’s insistence that individual creativity is required even to remake something old will not let us rest comfortably in the death-of-the-author myths that have come to seem like second nature to twentieth-century literary criticism. In this way Siegel’s response,
like the other essays convened here, locates in a historically-particularized evaluation of Lang and his network a resource for generating theory now.

To close I will note the pleasant irony that our collective avowal of Lang’s relevance to the contemporary moment includes several projects whose political and social assumptions are far from Lang’s own easygoing Toryism and sometimes-blathe misogyny. This fact alone helps demonstrate two lessons of historicist inquiry we owe to Lang’s own example—lessons that characteristically derive from ideas he adapted from someone else. These are that dead ages can live again, and that the past always makes itself available for committed reanimation in the present. Happy news for us, no doubt, the “bald-headed students of the future” who are nevertheless part of Lang’s network now (“Realism” 693).

Notes

1 Lang was languid in ignoring *The Silver Domino* and a long line of (mostly male) cultural gatekeepers has followed this dismissal. On Corelli’s legacy and the problems her work poses for the value-assumptions of a still-implicitly modernist contemporary criticism, see Federico, esp. 1-14. It is worth savoring the irony that Lang and Corelli have experienced identical critical fates for the identical reason that their frankly market-based approaches rang false to the Jamesian Great Tradition and later adherents to its aesthetic priorities.

2 “For Lang could make a reputation,” recalled a contemporary in the 1930s, “or at any rate sell an edition, in a way no critic can to-day” (Reid 116). This power led to accusations of “logrolling”—puffing bad books because of personal connections—though for Lang such genial promotion of his friends seemed to come naturally. Anyway he denied the accusations vehemently (Demoor). On the other hand he was rumored to have written no fewer than twenty separate laudatory reviews of *King Solomon’s Mines* (Swinnerton 45).

3 As Latour’s work indicates, Bourdieu is less concerned with the material forms such relationality must take, where Latour is empiricist in his insistence that connection be observable in material form (“tracers”), Bourdieu’s relational thought seeks to chart connections that are “invisible, or visible only through their effects” (“Field” 29). Our use of “effect” borrows this usage in an effort to map Lang’s ripple-effect at the level of ideas, even while we document, too, the material forms through which such ideas were mediated.

4 The greatest empirical chronicler of the Lang network is Marysa Demoor, whose dissertation documented Lang’s career and whose many subsequent articles have made his textual “traces”—letters, journals, and the like—available for analysis by other scholars, a doubly great achievement given that Lang wished these traces to be destroyed. (“My wrists ached for weeks after tearing up Andrew’s papers,” his wife later recalled [qtd. in Green 8]). We recognize Demoor’s efforts gratefully here, and also note a 1993 thesis on Lang by Ann Louise McKinnell, which rightly claims that a study of Lang is “the study of the history of ideas in Victorian England” (n. pag.).

5 In contemporary accounts of Lang’s demeanor the word “languid” appears with striking regularity. I use it in homage to these impressions.

6 Ormerod gets his sequencing of the Fairy projects wrong here, though one appreciates the difficulties. *The Blue Fairy Book* (1890) was followed by the *Red Fairy Book* (1891) and many others: *Yellow, Brown, Green,* etc. Only after the runaway success of the *Blue Fairy Book* did he collect, in 1891, an anthology of fairy-tinged poetry—the *Blue Poetry Book* to which Ormerod refers. In 1892 Lang made “the third, and probably the last” fairy book (qtd. in Green 49), the *Green one* (it was not). He then published *The True Story Book* (1893), which rhymed with his first title (“Blue”) and seemed to readers an extension of the series; “In the end the series ran into twenty-five annual volumes (1889-1913), though only twelve of these were Fairy Books” (Green 49-50). This proliferation is best seen as branding and multiplatform distribution, both of which Lang helped pioneer. Lang’s biographer Roger Green reports that while Lang never altered the text of his books through their various reprints, Longman’s printed many versions of the texts in smaller “prize versions” and in other formats and at multiple price points. Green reports tracing fifty-one of these before 1940.

7 For an overview of changes to the print environment of the late-century, see the essays collected by McKitterick in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol VI*. See also Reid.

8 Founded in 1883, Walter Besant’s Society of Authors is a case in point, since despite being nominally open to “literary men and women of all kinds,” lists no women among its council or board (qtd. in Colby 113). Lang refused to join the club, but in an ironic move, contributed a negative review of Gissing’s *New Grub Street* (1891) to the official journal for this writer’s union. His characteristically cheerful argument was that the situation was not so grim as Gissing let on.

9 As Showalter notes, “Clubland operated as a lifetime training ground for men wishing to exclude women” (12). The Savile’s roster included among others Haggard, Hardy, Stevenson, Kipling, Doyle, Wells, W. B. Yeats, Max Beerbohm, Charles Darwin, John Morley, and Henry James; right wing historian Niall Ferguson and pop-opera composer Andrew Lloyd Webber are now members. The club’s website explains ambiguously that its “membership embraces all professions today; it is much more a question of ‘what kind of person’ is a prospective member rather than ‘what he is or does.’”

10 None of this takes count of the poetry. Says the same literary statistician: “The poems, other than *Helen*, published in his lifetime number just over 300. About 160 had appeared in books before 1885; about 140 between 1885 and 1905. In *Grass of Parnassus* there were 34 new poems in 1888, and 32 in 1892; and in *Ban and Arriere-ban*, 42 in 1894. The sub-title of *Grass of Parnassus* in 1888 was *Rhymes Old and New*: this became *First and Last Rhymes* in 1892.” (Webster, “Poetry” 31).

11 Lang’s biographer notes tastefully that “practically none of his voluminous writings could ever be considered hack-work” (Green 53).
To be sure, Lang is hardly unique among massively prolific Victorian men of letters, nor yet is he among the most powerful of the era’s multi-platform media magnates. Lang was hardly a magnate, barely maintaining housekeeping at 1 Marloes Road, Kensington, and media barons like George Newnes, Alfred Harmsworth, C. Arthur Pearson were the entrepreneurs more directly responsible for the teeming diversity of publications at different price-points during the era (Law 74).

The chronology of Lang’s publications suggests the intermixture of his “fields” and the finally unbounded nature of his curiosity and learning. The first article in his signal contribution to cultural anthropology and the study of myth, *Custom and Myth* (1884), was composed at the time of Lang’s first and best book of poetry, *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France* (1872), and as one bibliographer states, “The decade during which he made his solid contribution to the study of the beliefs of primitive races saw the publication of five of his seven volumes of new verse” (Webster xv)—not to mention, we might add, the publication of both of Haggard’s key romances, and Lang’s major translations and monographs on epic. Said Lang: “One read what one liked; I liked a good deal of magic, and a great deal of poetry” (qtd. in Webster xvi).

Further confirming (and complicating) Lang’s role as a Latourian mediator is the fact that the fairy stories were “retold, translated, or adapted mainly by Mrs. Lang [!],” with the help of “many people, including May Kendall, Florence Sellar and Sir W. A. Cracie” (Green 82)—all of this despite appearing under the brand name, Andrew Lang. By the end of his life, after *The Lilac Fairy Book* had appeared (in 1910, the name itself suggesting how far the franchise had stretched from primary colors), he felt called upon to deny his role as impresario of this franchise: “My part has been that of Adam, according to Mark Twain, in the Garden of Eden. Eve worked, Adam superintended. I also superintend. I find out where the stories are . . . . I do not write the stories out of my own head. The reputation of having written all the Fairy Books . . . is . . . slowly killing me!” (qtd. in Green 96).

Perhaps the most sophisticated historical social-networking project I know is the “Six Degrees of Francis Bacon” digital initiative, spearheaded by Christopher Warren, Mike Finegold, Cosma Shalzi, and Daniel Shore, which aims to digitally reconstruct what they call the “Early Modern Social Network (EMSM).” See [http://sixdegreesoffrancisbacon.com/overview](http://sixdegreesoffrancisbacon.com/overview).
Works Cited


