

## Reflections on *19 Live*

Herb Sussman

The current interest in things Victorian beyond the classroom, the scholarly conference, the learned journal, and the scholarly monograph brought *Victorian Literature and Culture* to examine how and why the Victorians remain healthy, remain alive. Encouraged by the editors Adrienne Munich and John Maynard and with the editorial work of Vicky Mills, the journal initiated *Victorians Live* to register in essays by Victorianists how contemporary activities, such as movies, exhibitions, and plays reshape the nineteenth-century historical tradition.

Our ground rules were simple. No coverage of the purely scholarly. Little coverage of the neo-Victorian since that has its own critical superstructure. The essays should move beyond mere reviews to speculate on what was newly brought to attention and on what was transformed.

What we did cover was the flourishing of certain Victorian genres, particularly the visual arts, photography, the so-called lesser arts, such as embroidery, and the nearly forgotten, such as taxidermy. As scholarship rediscovered the vitality of Victorian visual arts, so did museum-goers. *Victorians Live* covered blockbusters like the comprehensive Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at Tate Britain and the National Gallery, Washington DC, as well as the shows of less well-known artists such as William Frith and Holman Hunt. *Victorians Live* also worked to bring to the attention of its readers activity on the margins, like the cyanotypes of Anna Atkins and spirit photography. We also could not avoid the work of Hollywood such as the biopic of Turner and the retelling of the Ruskin–Millais–Effie Gray affair in the film *Effie*.

As the editor of *Victorians Live*, I must admit my liking for resurrecting the forgotten, the bit weird by our standards though significant within Victorian culture. I particularly liked our account of the show of Victorian taxidermy at the wonderfully named but unfortunately defunct Museum of Morbid Anatomy in Brooklyn. Without condescension *Victorians Live* described the popular imagination of the Victorians as seen in the Dickens World amusement park at Chatham with its 'Great Expectations Boat Ride'. We also wrote about contemporary art that honours the nineteenth century, such as 'Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison', an exhibition of work shown in the prison cells and corridors as homage to Oscar Wilde.

Victorians Live was distinctly international covering the UK, United States, South Africa, New Zealand, and parts elsewhere. Surely, moving the home base to Birkbeck will continue this cosmopolitanism. So, we who lived for many years with Victorians Live wish good fortune to its continuation and the expansion in *19* Live under the capable and experienced editorship of Vicky Mills.