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*In Science's Shadow: Literary Constructions of Late
Victorian Women* (review)

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inequality and dissatisfaction" in *The Doctor's Wife*, perhaps it is because that is too much to ask of a popular novel, or series of popular novels (p. 184). Although they attempt to provide a source for Braddon's "authority" in her enormous readership, the fact remains that these novels were written in haste, with the wolf or the printer at the door, as Braddon herself readily admitted (p. 9). Painting with a broad brush, keeping abreast of a fast market, Braddon, like other popular novelists, knew how to push the hottest buttons of her particular culture. She wrote with panache, insouciance, and wit, which the Schroeders, in their moral seriousness, tend to ignore. What has endured from her work is not argument or any program for reform, but indelible images and situations and character types—most of all, to Braddon's later chagrin, the iconic scene of the fair-haired child-wife pushing her extraneous husband down an abandoned well. There is something unanswerable about Lady Audley and her kin, something that still ignites even the most resistant twenty-first-century imagination.

Winifred Hughes

IN SCIENCE'S SHADOW: LITERARY CONSTRUCTIONS OF LATE VICTORIAN WOMEN, by Patricia Murphy. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006. 256 pp. \$39.95 cloth.

Patricia Murphy's *In Science's Shadow* gives a lucid account of misogynistic attitudes that underlay representations of women and science in the late Victorian period. The book has many virtues, including its clarity and coherence. Something of a recovery project, it examines lesser-known works by novelists Thomas Hardy and Wilkie Collins and calls attention to the poet Constance Naden, botanist and memoirist Marianne North, and the novelist Charles Reade, figures who are fascinating if less well known. Unfortunately, the book's clarity is also a weakness; while its argument is never fuzzy, it can be reductive, resting on the familiar binaries of masculine and feminine, or public and private, as if those categories were unproblematic in nineteenth-century ideology and practice. Victorian studies has been complicating them for some time now, but that scholarship has not found its way into this work. *In Science's Shadow* makes a real contribution to the history of science, women's studies, and Victorian studies, but, ironically, it would be a more satisfying book if it were a bit messier.

The book's most successful chapter focuses on Marianne North, botanist, painter, and author of the memoir *Recollections of a Happy Life*. Murphy delineates North's textual strategy of "gender nullification" to create a persona who is neither masculine nor feminine (p. 146). Examining her art—which sounds stunning—the spatial politics of her home, and

her relationship with other botanists of the day, Murphy reveals a woman who avoids both male impersonation and self-deprecation. This analysis is convincing and original.

Less successful is the chapter on Collins's *Heart and Science*, which oversimplifies the novel and Victorian gender ideology. A notorious gender-bender in fiction, Collins is hardly one to promote unproblematically "a Victorian female ideal" of passivity (p. 119). If Mrs. Gallilee is condemned because of her obsession with science and medicine, then so is Benjulia; it is not women scientists but the inhumane use of medicine by women *and* men that Collins attacks. Murphy does not consider the larger Victorian debate over medicine itself, assuming that, as a male domain, it enjoyed unquestionable social and moral capital. Moreover, when she attributes attitudes to "all medical men in the novel—and more broadly, in Victorian society as a whole," it is too easy to question whether Collins's characteristically bizarre novel accurately represents widespread medical opinion (p. 129).

In Science's Shadow could provide more detailed historical mapping. "Science" is a big tent, including many subfields that developed in disparate ways throughout the century. The discussion of North provides an illuminating account of the gendering of botany, highlighting its need to overcome its feminine connotations in order to assert its professionalism. Other fields, especially medicine, would benefit from similar treatment. In her chapter on Reade's *A Woman-Hater*, Murphy quotes contemporary responses linking the novel to the struggle of women to enter and survive medical school, including an essay by Sophia Jex-Blake, one of those very women, who praised the novel's accuracy. However, we find out very little about the process by which the medical profession decided to admit women or the way in which its institutions carried out this decision. To interpret public debates, Murphy could also take account of foundational works that include materials on femininity and professional caretaking such as Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (University of Chicago Press, 1988) and Judith Walkowitz's *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

In Science's Shadow develops a powerful argument about the opposition between women and science. While its passion is admirable, its single-minded approach leaves the reader hungry for more detail, more context, and more nuance.

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