to all three. More of a grand sweep than a detailed exploration, the book indicates areas of intriguing complexity, but by no means exhausts them, and perhaps its greatest achievement is its development of a new approach to the study of nineteenth-century culture.

LEAH PRICE

A Classroom of Their Own

Isobel Armstrong (ed.), *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment. The Making of a Canon, 1730–1820*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.

Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (eds), *Women's Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian. Gender and Genre, 1830–1900*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999, £47.50.

Harriet Devine Jump (ed.), *Women's Writing of the Victorian Period 1837–1901. An Anthology*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, £48, £16.95 pbk.

The common origin of both *Women's Poetry* volumes, in a 1995 conference, 'Rethinking Women's Poetry 1730–1930', helps explain at once their dazzling variety of approaches and their rather makeshift format. (Some articles have footnotes but no bibliography while others do the reverse, and a typo on the first page of the nineteenth-century volume soon turns out not to be the last.) But if the two books' material form is slipshod, the research that they make available is just the opposite. In *Women's Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian*, for example, Paula Feldman's 'The Poet and the Profits' uses a meticulous reconstruction of Felicia Hemans's business dealings to challenge received literary-historical wisdom. (Publishers' archives reveal that Hemans commanded a higher price than many male writers, including Sir Walter Scott.) Feldman uncovers the importance to Hemans not only of periodical publication but of the gift books which form the topic of Cynthia Lawford's chapter on Letitia Elizabeth Landon. However, Lawford's zeal to defend the annuals from the straw man whom she terms 'the cynical critic in all of us' has been rendered superfluous by recent research on annuals by critics like Peter Manning and Lee Erickson, who make no appearance in her bibliography. Landon is better served by Linda Peterson's intertextual reading of *Aurora Leigh*, which demonstrates that allusions to Landon create a tension between biographical and autobiographical interpretations, allowing Barrett Browning to work through—and supersede—the model of the Romantic poetess. Intertextuality underpins Tricia Looten's equally compelling argument that Felicia Hemans's poetry—read in Britain as safely domestic—acquired a more polemical edge in antebellum America, where heirs like Lydia Sigourney and Frances

E. W. Harper appropriated Hemans's abstractions for local political purposes. In another transatlantic contribution, Cheryl Walker uses Emily Dickinson as a case-study to examine changing styles of American feminist criticism before comparing the role of violence in a lesser-known American poet, Rose Terry Cooke. Cora Kaplan's equally reflexive 'Endnote' raises searching questions about 'the mini-history of the sub-field of feminist questions', probing the relation of debates within feminism to feminist literary history's battles with other critical schools. And Isobel Armstrong's far-reaching 'Msrepresentation' opens up a new field of research by pleading forcefully for a reconstruction of affect, which she theorizes as an 'imagined response to a fractured culture'.

Each of the three articles devoted to lesbian poetics confronts the problematic relation of biography to interpretation. Virginia Blain contrasts Margaret Veley with another poet identified only as 'A Ploughman's Daughter' to argue that the non-referentiality of the lyric poem and its ungendered pronouns created a safe space for women to explore deviant desires. Robert Fletcher examines the interplay of authorial collaboration, readerly extrapolation and same-sex desire in the work of the aunt-niece pair 'Michael Field', in a chapter complemented by Edward Marx's survey of the even more complex relation between cross-gendered and transnational pseudonymity in the work of the Anglo-Indian poet 'Laurence Hope', which in turn builds on questions raised by Meenakshi Mukherjee's analysis of gender and language in the reception of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu. Emma Francis suggests provocatively that Amy Levy's prose critique of Anglo-Jewry is blunted by the same 'commitment to internecine warfare' that renders the sexual politics of her poetry so sophisticated.

Cynthia Scheinberg approaches the intersection of the woman question with the Jewish question from a rather different angle, comparing the function of biblical heroines in Christian and Jewish women's poetry. Yopie Prins takes Caroline Norton's writing to exemplify 'how a poet might come to personify the problem of personification', teasing out the paradox of a poet who demands to be read personally in the absence of legal personhood. Christina Rossetti forms the focus of two essays—Kathryn Burlinson's on *Speaking Likenesses* and Linda Marshall's on *From House to Home*—and is discussed more briefly, alongside lesser-known figures like Dora Greenwell, Mathilde Blind and Augusta Webster, in Helen Groth's wider-ranging 'Victorian Women Poets and Scientific Narratives'. The volume concludes with two introductions to 'forgotten poets', Adelaide Procter and (more fully forgotten) Emily Pfeiffer.

If the nineteenth-century volume's strength lies in the dialogue between individual essays, the eighteenth-century volume's consists rather of its rich variety of approaches. The most successful chapters are those which address head-on the premises of the volume, by probing the codes that writers use to

name and gender themselves. Isobel Grundy asks what it means to include her discussion of an anonymous writer's *Original Essay on Woman . . . Written by a Lady* in a book on women's writing: can one take the signature at face value without wanting to know *which* lady it refers to? Stuart Curran approaches women's self-naming from an even more oblique angle, comparing women's evasions of the proper name on title-pages with their inscription of identity through acrostics. Curran's bravura readings make even the flattest clichés yield clues to what he calls 'the art whose subject is its own coming into being'.

The section on patronage juxtaposes Mary Waldron's plea for twentieth-century critics to shake off eighteenth-century readers' misperception of Ann Yearsley as a poet of nature with Roger Sale's more nuanced analysis of the dynamics of middle-class editors' patronage of working-class poets. Sale's discussion of the complex relation between the servant poet Charlotte Richardson and the philanthropist Catharine Cappe suggests that, far from trying to strip the patron's distortions away from the poet's authentic voice, we need to look more closely at the paratextual spaces occupied by patrons' names (title-page, preface, subscription list, footnotes, advertisements). His demonstration of middle-class reformers' editorial power complements Anne Mellor's ground-breaking 'The Female Poet and the Poetess, 1780–1830', which urges critics to acknowledge differences among women's strategies and traditions, distinguishing the figure of the 'female poet'—public, didactic, political—from the 'poetess' on which much recent criticism has focused. Yearsley reappears in Margaret Doody's equally suggestive analysis of women's representation of animals, which along the way offers a trenchant series of observations about the rather different role played by the senses in contemporary men's writing.

Other chapters cover topics ranging from the georgic to the elegy to the representation of deformity. Though all contain valuable local readings, not all offer methodological surprises. When Lisa Freeman's chapter concludes that Elizabeth Carter's 'life stood as a testament to her conviction that women could successfully lead a life of the mind, and in "A Dialogue" she found a witty, yet effective vehicle for expressing her concern that all too often they were prevented from doing so', as when Kathleen Hickok announces in the companion volume that she 'will demonstrate the aesthetic merit of [Emily Pfeiffer's] work', one is left wishing for something more. One version of what that might consist of is sketched out in Curran's eloquent plea for critics to develop new ways of reading rather than simply accumulating readings of ever more poems, and another in Elizabeth Eger's reflexive 'Fashioning a Female Canon', which not only demonstrates how continuously critics up to the present have accepted the exclusions of early nineteenth-century editors, but goes further back to trace a genealogy for recent anthologies of eighteenth-century women's poetry in analogous

collections edited during the period itself. Eger's bibliographical research raises crucial questions: What relation do anthologies posit between life and literature, canon and nation? How can recovering the history of literary history help critics, and editors, experiment with new conventions of representation in future?

The late twentieth century has been as prolific in anthologies of women's writing as the eighteenth, but Harriet Devine Jump's *Women's Writing of the Victorian Period* stands out in its generic range. The anthology draws on letters, biographies, sonnets, reviews, polemics, conduct-books, diaries, even editorial introductions. The excerpt from Frances Power Cobbe's *Wife Torture in England*—a vignette of a French gentleman refusing to help a lady at Boulogne find her luggage—provides an instructive contrast with the generous selection of travel narratives, from Anna Jameson to Isabella Bird. The relation between servants and their employers reappears from a number of different angles, as entries from Hannah Cullwick's diary and Jane Welsh Carlyle's household budget rub up against excerpts from Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management*: 'Briefly to conclude what we have to say of suffocation, let us treat of *Lightning*. . . . *Treatment*: Same as for drowning. It is not, however, of much use.'

This variety comes at a price: few texts are complete, and many fragments under two pages. The choppiness of the excerpts, the cursory annotation, the tell-tale 'Period' in the title, and the index of twenty 'themes' (running triumphantly from 'Abuse, physical and sexual', to 'Woman writers and women as writers') all make clear that Jump's anthology is intended as a set text. But the under-representation of poetry and exclusion of narrative will probably make it most pedagogically useful as a supplement either to novels or to less truncated anthologies like Isobel Armstrong and Joseph Bristow's *Nineteenth-century Women Poets*, Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds's *Victorian Women Poets* or Andrea Broomfield and Sally Mitchell's *Prose by Victorian Women*. The advantage of Jump's anthology over the latter (more comprehensive and more scholarly) is its breadth. While Broomfield and Mitchell are stronger on radical than reactionary views, and on the essay than on more mundane genres such as the cookbook, Jump makes room even for Lady Jane Wilde's diatribe against wives who hum in their husbands' presence.