

REVIEW ESSAY

Right to Roam? Nineteenth-Century Commons and Caroline Lesjak's *The Afterlives of Enclosure*

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Carolyn Lesjak, *The Afterlives of Enclosure: British Realism, Character, and the Commons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

IT is August 2022, and I am sitting in the British Library completing a shamefully late review (this one) when I see the headline: “Trespassers Demand Right to Roam Minister’s 12,000 Acre Estate.”¹ One hundred fifty protesters led by activist Nadia Shaikh and complete with a Morris dancing troupe walked into the Englefield estate of Richard Benyon, the UK government minister responsible for access to nature, as part of a campaign around public access to land. Benyon’s ancestral estate contains sizeable areas of former common land enclosed by his ancestor, also Richard Benyon, in 1802. Nick Hayes, author of *The Book of Trespass*, who was at the protest, added:

Over the next twenty years [Richard Benyon] moved an entire village out of sight of Englefield house to make way for his deer park. Then, in 1854, a stopping order was granted by his friends in parliament to close the public road that ran in front of his house. Today the Ramblers’ “Don’t Lose Your Way” website reveals a former footpath running through the estate, identifiable on old Ordnance Survey maps, but which has since been extinguished.²

Like many other activists over the past three hundred years or more, Shaikh organized a walking—and singing and dancing—resistance to

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Victorian Literature and Culture, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 327–342.

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doi:10.1017/S1060150322000213

the legal fact of enclosure that leaves only 8 percent of English land with free access. As Raymond Williams reminded readers in *The Country and the City* (1973), the “mathematical grids of enclosure awards, with their straight hedges and straight roads, are contemporary with the natural curves and scattering of the park scenery.”³

But there is no excuse not to see the colonial history that also underlies the improvement of early nineteenth-century estates these days. With a couple of clicks I check the sites of two research projects: the UCL Legacies of British Slavery database of slave owners recompensed by the British state for loss of “property” after the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean, the Cape, and Mauritius in 1833; and “The East India Company at Home, 1747–1857.”⁴ The second yields a detailed research article by Kate Field on the Benyon family, the East India Company connections that underpinned their wealth, and the creation of Englefield House from that trade.⁵ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the thirst for “improvement” and enclosure was indivisible from “trade’s proud empire”: Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village” (1770) is one long, beautiful lament for that fact. The enclosure of the British commons and the shape of rural landscapes is also part of the logic of the plantationocene, as Sir Thomas Bertram’s Antigua estates in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* show.⁶ The dramatic irony of Shaikh’s trespass on the current Richard Benyon’s estate was not lost, I am sure, on these historically informed protesters.

It is increasingly hard to look away from the entangled roots of present-day violence and extraction that lie in the nineteenth century. The expropriation of lands, the destruction of ecosystems, and the inculcation of racism in the age of empire were made to look natural and an inevitable part of progress in Victorian Britain. There is nothing new in arguing that the nineteenth century matters because it formed the world systems that shape the present. Some of the foundational works of Victorian studies, such as Williams’s *The Country and the City*, share that premise with the recent wave of scholarship that revisits these histories of violence. The new generation of scholars in this field, however, goes one step further, drawing vital attention to the legacies of such exploitative histories in our current disciplinary practices.⁷ Victorian studies is a latecomer to methodological debates driven by decolonial and Indigenous scholarship in anthropology, social history, African American, and gender studies for at least two decades. We may need, perhaps rather urgently, to break down some of our own methodological enclosures and—as Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia

Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong have argued—to “undiscipline” Victorian studies.

One path from this presentist reckoning with the nineteenth century turns away from the canon—and in particular the high realist novel—to enact the literary studies equivalent of what E. P. Thompson termed “history from below.” If the literary canon well nigh excludes the voices and artistic expression of the working classes, imperial subjects, and gender nonconforming, Black, and Indigenous peoples, then we need to look elsewhere. In many ways this returns to an unfinished project of the 1980s. The political critique of the English literary canon and its exclusion of minoritized voices was a key part of the turn to cultural studies in many UK English departments at that time. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, founded by Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart in 1964, was a crucible for this methodological reckoning: it is no coincidence that many writers inspiring the current generation of decolonial scholars—notably Hazel Carby and Paul Gilroy—were associated with the CCCS in the 1980s. In the last part of this review I will consider Corinne Fowler’s *Green Unpleasant Land* (2020) in relation to the possibilities and risks of such wider-roaming “undisciplining.”

But there is another path that stays with literary form and the canon and one that seems more tightly embraced in the field of Victorian studies as it thrives in the U.S. It is a path that insists, despite or indeed because of the slow violence of the long nineteenth century, study of style and form is central to our practice, the novel is a genre that matters, and canonical Victorian fiction has something to give us now more than ever. Without a doubt, the nineteenth-century canon reveals the propagation of liberal mythologies, white Western epistemology, and the naturalization of capital accumulation. Yet seeing nineteenth-century fiction *only* as a disciplinary tool for the production of competitive bourgeois individuals and colonized minds can close us off from a resource of hope as well as stripping the historical field of its record of resistance and struggle from within. Studying novels of this period can be a means to optimism of the presentist will as well as the pessimism of the historicizing intellect.

Carolyn Lesjak’s *The Afterlife of Enclosure: British Realism, Character, and the Commons* (2021) is a persuasive argument for this sort of optimistic reading for the times in which we find ourselves. In four lucid chapters examining works by Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy, Lesjak reframes the novel itself as a form of commons that pushes back against the presumption

that enclosure and privatization are inevitable and necessary. The plurality of the nineteenth-century novel—the thickness of characterization, plots, destinies minor and major—becomes a means to memorialize an alternative to regimes of landlordism and the expropriation of ownership. For the Malthusian economist William Foster Lloyd, the process of enclosing common pasture land that gained new pace in the early nineteenth century was a rational response to the need to ensure adequate food supply in the face of rising population. Cattle that grazed on common land, he theorized, in an analogy to uncontrolled population increase, were “puny and stunted,” the pasture “bare-worn and cropped.”⁸ Dividing and enclosing common land led to a natural check to overexploitation of natural resources as a result of self-interest in the value of the land itself. In a now-famous article published in 1968, ecologist Garrett Hardin gave Lloyd’s work fresh currency, terming this apparent inevitability of overexploitation “The Tragedy of the Commons,” concluding “freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.”⁹ But as Lesjak points out, Lloyd’s account of the commons is just one of many narratives of the commons circulating in the nineteenth century. And—in a bold move—Lesjak directs our attention once again to that thickly populated medium of the multiplot novel, which has been imagined by many scholars as the site of bourgeois competitive individualism and a Malthusian fear of the hungry many eating up the one.¹⁰ The nineteenth-century realist novel—in Lesjak’s hands—becomes a resource of hope and means to theorize the commons without the tragedy of individualism and self-interest.

The aspect of the novel that Lesjak places at the center of her study of the fictions of the commons is one intrinsic to its form: character—and more specifically the function of characterization in securing attention and sympathy. In “The Typical and the Tragic in Hardy’s Geopolitical Commons,” Lesjak draws an astute contrast, for example, between resistance to enclosure in Dickens’s works and the ways Hardy’s fiction stages “the myriad ways in which common space, common property, and common selves are being enclosed” (140). Unlike the “surfeit of characters” in Dickens, “Hardy’s aesthetic is of scarcity, of the same scenarios being replayed by the same small set of characters” as if there were no longer enough space to go around (141). This focus on characterization, however rewarding, comes as quite a surprise at first, given the avowed subject of the work. The book’s title and cover—which features a nineteenth-century tithe map—tends to cultivate (in this reader at least) expectations of a study of landscape, place, boundaries, or perhaps infrastructure and

the technologies of agricultural “improvement” of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as aligned with the history of the novel. Lesjak’s engagement is, however, directed at debates within literary studies on the politics of the form of the realist novel and the conceptualization of the commons that has followed the work of the critical digital scholar David Bollier and historian Peter Linebaugh.¹¹

For Lesjak, the language of commons discloses a “profound ethical insight”: realism’s focus on “common” character types is “twinned” with the materiality of the everyday. The writers’ experiments with “character building,” Lesjak suggests, “reinvent older traditions of type and envision future forms of typical character that gesture toward a lifeworld freed from the tenets of private property and the various forms of dispossession concomitant with privatization and market dependence” (12). According to Franco Moretti, the commonness of subjects in the nineteenth-century realist novel gestures toward the inevitable ascent of the bourgeoisie of the high capitalist era. How did the everyday become interesting, Moretti ponders?¹² His answer is that the “colourless realm of the ‘habitual,’ ‘ordinary,’ ‘repeatable,’ and ‘frequent’” that is for him the nineteenth-century realist novel offers “*the kind of narrative pleasure compatible with the new regularity of bourgeois life.*”¹³ It is a delight to encounter Lesjak’s recuperation of *Middlemarch* (1871–72) from readings such as Moretti’s provocative dismissal of it as a collection of “fillers” and “the masterpiece of bourgeois Britain.”¹⁴ Lesjak pushes back against interpretations that equate Eliot’s realism with an overweening emphasis on bourgeois interiority and individualism. She argues that Eliot “highlights the material, collective nature of character and the material, collective politics such a vision of character entails” (98). Dorothea’s struggle to discover that Mr. Casaubon has “an equivalent centre of self” to her own in *Middlemarch*, Lesjak suggests, not only materializes character through the metaphor of the mirror but also undoes a possessive individualist hierarchy of being (103). The ethical work of Eliot’s fictions is to imagine a collective sense of being through common experience, an ethics that is the route to what Lesjak terms “a politics of the commons” in Eliot’s writings (106). After reading Lesjak’s chapter, the whole of *Middlemarch* seems run through with the common and uncommon: in women’s lots; provincial doctors; Celia’s common sense; Dorothea’s inability to see in Casaubon the things clear to “the commonest minds”; in petty circumstances that can never hope to be tragic; in the common basis of life that Lydgate seeks down a microscope but which turns out to be a provincial existence that swallows him up quite comfortably.

Despite many shared intellectual foundations with more historicist studies of landscape and place in the novel, including John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730–1840* (1972) and Williams's *The Country and the City*, place, space and the structuring of local landscapes are not the focus of *The Afterlives of Enclosure*. Nevertheless, Lesjak revisits ground more familiar to scholars of the Romantic period to explore the profound change in communities wrought by the more than 300-year-long process of enclosure in Britain in her first chapter. Lesjak very helpfully frames this long-drawn-out wresting of land from customary rights of strip farming and open commons to landlordism and "improvement" as "slow violence."¹⁵ In this way the process of enclosure of common land across rural communities becomes part of the global story of environmental depredation. This in itself signals a broader conceptual move in the book. Whereas Barrell mapped quite intimate connections between boundaries, landscapes, and notions of the common and the private in John Clare's poetry, focusing on specific changes the poet had lived through in one particular place, Lesjak's primary focus is on the "figuration of the common" in the novels she studies (3).

There are huge gains, of course, in this book's examination of enclosure and the commons as a narrative and conceptual tool, as opposed to a material experience. That broader figuration of enclosure as a mode of writing or of thought was one that was handy for critics in the early 1800s as well, as a new wave of privatizations were enforced through acts of Parliament. William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, published from 1822 to 1826 in his *Political Register*, are in form and content a figuring of resistance to the confinement of rural ideas and peoples. Cobbett's purposeful trespassing in the journeys he records is mirrored by the text's amplification of a plurality of voices staking their claim to common political rights. His political radicalism made explicit the connection between common access to the written word, in the shape of his *Political Register* (1802–36) and *English Grammar* (1819) and small-holding rights and freedom of movement across an increasingly privatized rural England.¹⁶ The content of Cobbett's literary form of radical commons was clear to William Hazlitt when contrasting him with the Enlightenment mode of Thomas Paine:

Paine takes a bird's-eye view of things. Cobbett sticks close to them, inspects the component parts, and keeps fast hold of the smallest advantages they afford him. Or, if I might here be indulged in a pastoral allusion, Paine

tries to enclose his ideas in a fold for security and repose; Cobbett lets his pour out upon the plain like a flock of sheep to feed and batten. Cobbett is a pleasanter writer for those to read who do not agree with him; for he is less dogmatical, goes more into the common grounds of fact and argument to which all appeal, is more desultory and various, and appears less to be driving at a present conclusion than urged on by the force of present conviction. He is therefore tolerated by all parties, though he has made himself by turns obnoxious to all; and even those he abuses read him.¹⁷

Cobbett's value, Hazlitt suggests, is that he writes into being a common ground through his pluralistic style: writing becomes a space to realize free assembly. This creation of a literary commons is as vital to Cobbett and his legacy as his resistance to the enclosure of actual public spaces, curtailed by the repressive Six Acts of 1819 passed in the wake of the Peterloo Massacre.¹⁸ Although Lesjak does relatively little with this earlier period of debate about the form and style of anti-enclosure writing from the 1820s and '30s, it gives good scope for her arguments about novels by Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy. Hazlitt identifies pluralism and changing one's mind as a characteristic of Cobbett (and Cobbett himself, in his characteristically inconsistent way, pursued enclosures and improvements on his own farm). This sense of the ever-present possibility of going off road in the anti-enclosure moment of 1820s literature resonates with Lesjak's argument about the reader's "right to roam." She suggests that the inviting breadth of character in nineteenth-century realist novels—the possibility to feel with the common lot as well as the particularity of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*—is in itself a figuration of anti-enclosure in novel form.

That "right to roam" has a long history in the culture of the left in Britain. Lesjak attributes the phrase itself to Jonathan Bate's biography of John Clare (17). But in British labor history—and now in many decolonial contexts—the right to roam is part of a still-present dynamic of resistance and political struggle, as I have suggested in my introduction. Thanks in no small part to the long afterlife of Cobbett, the sense of a dispossession from rural landscapes by rentier landlords, creating pools of factory labor, is baked into the narrative of British labor history. April 2022 marked the ninetieth anniversary of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass in 1932, and the commemorations of the protest received widespread media coverage in the UK. The 1932 mass trespass, co-organized by the Young Communist League, consisted of around five hundred ramblers from nearby Manchester trespassing on the Peak District uplands in protest over the exclusion of the urban working-class

populations from nearby privatized moorlands given over to sheep grazing and game shooting. In the hands of exceptional social historians such as Katerina Navickas, it becomes clear that the history of “right to roam” and access to public space in the UK is also always a history of popular protest: from 1819 at St. Peter’s Field in Manchester, to the 1848 Chartist mass assemblies on Kennington Common, to the 1949 National Parks Act.¹⁹ The actually existing commons were—and continue to be—sites of resistance to private capital and the state. Navickas’s most recent work makes a clear and urgent connection between the restrictions on protest and public space in the first half of the nineteenth century and a new Public Order Bill currently under review in the UK. The legislation proposes to introduce new offenses including obstructing major transport works and interfering with “key national infrastructure” in response to the tactics of climate emergency activists in recent years.²⁰ Navickas’s turn to the present day is a compelling instance of the intellectual’s own right—or, perhaps, duty—to roam and break down the enclosure of historicism and periodization in the continued struggle for the commons.

Sometimes, as Navickas’s work demonstrates, the granularity of history matters when reckoning with the present-day legacies of the nineteenth century. Although Lesjak’s work is part of a welcome movement to rethink novel form in relation to ethics of collective care and communality—in which I would include recent work by Talia Schaffer and Lauren Goodlad among others—there are still moments in her book where I want more of the politics of resistance to actual enclosures in relation to the texts she studies. Lesjak’s chapter on Hardy makes extensive use of his “Facts” notebook, containing excerpts from the *Dorset County Chronicle* and other sources to explore how the novels give form to the violent processes of moving from an unenclosed to an enclosed world (148). In her chapter on Eliot, by contrast, Lesjak leans on Tim Dolin’s introductory study for details concerning Eliot’s firsthand knowledge of rural enclosures and agricultural improvement. This leads to the mistaken assertion that the large landed estate of Arbury Hall—where Eliot’s father, Robert Evans, was land agent and where Eliot herself was born—was enclosed during Eliot’s childhood (90). Certainly Evans was a wholehearted “improver” on behalf of the many landed gentry clients who employed him across North Warwickshire, and he suggested some small further enclosures on the more pastoral estates he managed even in the 1830s.²¹ But as the opening to Eliot’s *Felix Holt* (1866) makes clear, nearly all common pasture in North Warwickshire had been

enclosed decades before Eliot's childhood, and the sources of rural discontent that led elsewhere in Britain to the rick-burnings of the "Captain Swing" protests in the 1830s did not affect this part of England.²² By the time Robert Evans and his family started working for the Newdigate family at the Arbury Hall estate, it was clear where the family fortunes lay. Not through the East India trade or estates in the Caribbean, but underground.²³ The Newdigate family were pioneers of the carbon economy, from the estate hosting the earliest examples of Newcomen engines to drain shafts in 1715, to the sinking of three new shafts between 1830 and 1835, while Evans, and his daughter Mary Ann, were living at Griff House within view of the workings. By 1897, a thousand tons of coal a day were being extracted from collieries at Griff: mines that could never be seen from the landscaped parks of Arbury Hall a couple of miles away, but which underpinned the estate's existence. The diaries of Robert Evans are in themselves a remarkable record of a working life in transition from the arboreal to the carbon economy: a transition gestured to in *Adam Bede* (1859).²⁴

This particularity matters because I would suggest it is visible in the form of *Felix Holt* in ways that enrich Lesjak's argument. The unsteadiness of affect, the entanglements of the inheritance plots, and the complex conservative radicalism of the novel's politics: there can be no unified movement in a nation so divided and literally undermined by uneven development. Felix repeatedly trespasses across private landed estates, long enclosed and comfortably insulated from the already proletarianized pit villages just down the canal. Part of the instability of Felix's characterization and affect arises from this mobility: he walks into being a right to roam, one that rejects—as the novel's romance plot does—a linear narrative of improvement and development by staying off-road and on foot. The very early date of industrialization in Britain meant that, even by the 1850s, George Eliot could read Wilhelm von Riehl's account of peasant subsistence cultures still existing in Germany as a way of life that was past when she grew up in rural Warwickshire in the 1820s.²⁵ There is a sense in which the commons have been and are always lost in accounts of British modernity; but resistance to that loss is a vital and unifying force, inscribing shared political common ground.

The right to roam in *Felix Holt* is given form through characters that are framed as exceptional but who choose the commons. That Felix and Esther are framed as eccentric by other characters for refusing the smooth road of material self-improvement echoes an argument Lesjak makes in her compelling chapter on Dickens. In a rich exploration of

eccentricity and the materialization of character types and collective biographies, Lesjak suggests that Dickens's embrace of eccentricity "shows common sense to be deeply ideological" (84). To find a chapter on Dickens in a book exploring what is usually associated with rural life is a surprise, but Lesjak's arguments concerning the "urban commons" and the thriving world of eccentric minor characters is thoroughly persuasive. Building on work by Juliet John, among others, Lesjak explores the materiality of character in Dickens's works and the thick intertwined world of strongly marked types. Rather than seeing the abundance of minor characters in Dickens's works as some sort of Malthusian struggle for existence, Lesjak argues that "the common in Dickens involves a dialectical and utopian relationship figured in terms of the one *as* the many, an active problematic that motivates him as he navigates the destruction of one way of life and the creation of a new one" (49). This is a joyful reading of what others have termed Dickens's modernity: his reimagining of an optimistic—but firmly urban—collective existence.

In the UK, the past decade has brought a reckoning with the idea that cities are interconnected sites of global modernity whereas the countryside evokes an always receding past. All too often in present social discourse in the UK, "urban" is used as a synonym for people of color: a form of racist ideological enclosure of the countryside. As Caroline Bressey suggests, the erasure of the actually existing historical presence of people of color in English rural life over hundreds if not thousands of years leads to increased vulnerability for the racially minoritized in the countryside in a context in which nationalism and racism are increasingly associated with the landscape of England.²⁶ The literary canon of the English countryside has a part to play in this. William Cobbett's *Rural Rides* is a beautiful and haunting outcome of his populist politics, which are troubling and ugly. The work's evocation of a countryside in mourning for a lost past of home-brewed beer and good bacon eaten away by enclosures and the ganglion of global capital shares much with current right-wing nationalisms. Cobbett was, as Ryan Hanley has documented, "at the forefront of British popular racism": his politics rested on articulating the rights of the freeborn Englishman and woman and deploying anti-Semitism, anti-abolition, and very deliberate racism to create that sense of "we the people" against others.²⁷ Other radicals of the early nineteenth century did not tend in this direction. Thomas Spence's networks included several radical activists of color including William Davidson, a British Afro-Caribbean man hanged for his part in the 1820 Cato Street Conspiracy. It is in this territory of rewriting the

Black presence in the English countryside and its history from the 1780s that historians, geographers, and literary critics have started to roam—and their work is seen as trespass by an unforgiving right-wing media.

Corinne Fowler's *Green Unpleasant Land* (2020) is one outcome of her involvement in a larger project with the British National Trust exploring the historic links between colonialism, slavery, and the estates and country houses in the trust's care.²⁸ The book maps the enmeshing of the colonial in the English countryside through literary genres and loci including the pastoral, country houses, moorlands, and gardens before embarking on Fowler's own creative responses to these sites. The book is written for a broad audience and published by Peepal Tree, a trade press specializing in Caribbean and Black British writing. It is, as Fowler notes, "purposely reparative." "I have indeed crossed a line," she writes in her preface: "I am involved and this story belongs to all of us."²⁹ For literary scholars well versed in postcolonial scholarship on eighteenth-century pastoral, postcolonial readings of Austen and Brontë, neo-Victorian fiction, and contemporary poetry by John Agard and Grace Nichols, among others, there are probably few surprises in the critical narrative of the book itself. Where Fowler roams is in her deliberate intent to take this work beyond the academy and embed it in the practices of heritage and education and make it impossible to be uninvolved. In order to do this work, she sets aside boundaries of periodization, critical voice, and canonicity to focus on a problem of still actually existing culture. Undisciplining English literature in this way comes with risks that we might usually think of as intellectual or professional; but in Fowler's case the backlash led to her being offered police protection and submitting evidence as a witness to a proposed Online Safety Bill in June 2022.³⁰

Interviewed in the *New Yorker*, journalist Charles Moore sees the meticulous research behind the overall National Trust Colonial Countryside project as fashionably reactive: "endorsing B.L.M. . . . The idea that our greatest conservation body should be, as it were, taking the knee to them seemed absolutely dreadful. . . . Why should I pay a hundred quid a year. . . [in National Trust subscriptions] to be told what a shit I am?"³¹ As the introduction here makes clear, in fact, the work by the National Trust builds on similar work completed by Miranda Kaufmann and others for English Heritage in 2007 as well as the earlier academic projects *Legacies of British Slavery* and *East India Company at Home*.³² It is probably no coincidence that public displays of white fragility such as Moore's are directed at research that aims to

reach readers beyond the academy and civil servants. The public presence of Fowler's work made her the visible target of that rage.

For all the complexities of researching and teaching nineteenth-century literature in the UK at present, the fraught nature of our version of the culture wars makes it feel quite urgent. As a head of department this past year, I have fielded three separate Freedom of Information requests from representatives of the press requiring (as is their right) disclosure of any texts in our courses that come with content warnings and any instances in which texts in any of our courses have been changed in relation to concerns about content. Suddenly the decision by a colleague to swap out a novel by Austen or Dickens one year or to flag the anti-Semitism of *Oliver Twist* has become worthy of headlines in *The Times* and *Mail on Sunday*.³³ Meanwhile, the image of George Eliot's statue "guarded" by a handful of middle-aged white men in her former hard-pressed hometown of Nuneaton flew around social media in June 2020 in the wake of Black Lives Matters protests.³⁴ I was working with heritage professionals in the town's museum and art gallery at the time—a scantily funded, excellent public institution that works hard to show why Eliot's works and legacy matter. Whatever the men guarding the statue thought Eliot represented, the question that we wrestled with was how, if at all, to respond to local social media posts claiming Eliot was under imminent attack because some academic work identified her as racist. Taking down the fence and finding common ground to start broader public conversations about the enduring legacies of race and colonialism in nineteenth-century literature feel like the right task. But if anything, that makes a study like Lesjak's, which conveys the power of these great works to imagine a world otherwise, only more vital as a resource of hope and optimism of the will for what is ahead.

NOTES

1. Horton, "Trespassers."
2. Horton, "Trespassers."
3. Williams, *Country and the City*, 124.
4. The Legacies of British Slave Ownership Project, initiated by Catherine Hall, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, 2009–2012; Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2013–2015. Now hosted by the UCL Centre for the Study of Legacies of British Slavery with support from the Hutchins Centre, Harvard,

- www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs; The East India Company at Home, 1747–1857: The British Country House in an Imperial and Global Context, led by Margot Finn, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, 2011–2014. <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah>.
5. Field, “Englefield House, Berkshire.”
 6. See Harraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Cthulucene,” 159–65.
 7. See, for example, Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong, “Introduction,” 369–91. In relation to the new eco-histories, see Hensley and Steer, *Ecological Form*.
 8. Lloyd, *Two Lectures*, 30.
 9. Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons,” 1244.
 10. Lesjak’s reference points for this alternative view of the novel as site of competitive individualism are Eagleton, *The English Novel*; and Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*.
 11. Bollier, *Silent Theft*; Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!*
 12. Moretti, *Bourgeoisie*, 79.
 13. Moretti, *Bourgeoisie*, 81 (emphasis in original).
 14. Moretti, *Bourgeoisie*, 178.
 15. Lesjak borrows the term from Nixon, *Slow Violence*.
 16. Cobbett, *Grammar*. Cobbett was also the first to publish transcriptions of proceedings in the British House of Commons, later selling on the concept to Hansard.
 17. Hazlitt, “The Character of Cobbett,” 131.
 18. The Seditious Meetings Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 6) required permission to assemble more than fifty people; the Newspaper and Stamp Duties Act (60 Geo. III & 1 Geo. IV c. 9) targeted cheap radical publications.
 19. Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; Navickas, “The Contested Right of Public Meeting.” See also Navickas’s project site: <https://historyofpublicspace.uk>.
 20. Public Order Bill.
 21. See the transcription of Robert Evans’s diaries for March 1, 1832, in which he proposes enclosing two acres of the Packington Estate woods to his client Lord Aylesford.
 22. Richards, “‘Captain Swing,’” 86–99; Livesey, “Radicalism on the Cross Roads.”
 23. The 444-acre estate between Bedworth and Nuneaton is still owned and occupied by the Newdigate family.

24. For more on this topic, see Livesey, “Arboreal Thinking”; and Paterson, *Fair Seed Time*.
25. “The condition of the tenant-farmers and small proprietors in Germany is, we imagine about on a par . . . with that of the English farmers who were beginning to be thought old fashioned nearly fifty years ago” (Eliot, “Natural History,” 113).
26. Bressey, “Cultural Archaeology,” 387. For “right to roam” walking projects resisting racism in the countryside, see Sethi, “Kinder Scout 90 Years On,” on the Kinder in Colour Walk 2022.
27. Hanley, “Slavery,” 117.
28. Huxtable et al., *Interim Report*; Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*.
29. Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*, 11.
30. Online Safety Bill.
31. Knight, “Britain’s Idyllic Country Houses.”
32. Kaufmann, *English Heritage Properties*.
33. Morgan-Bentley and Beal, “Universities Blacklist ‘Harmful’ Literature,” 1–2.
34. The image was used in the *LA Review of Books* version of Chatterjee et al., “Undisciplining Victorian Studies,” <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/undisciplining-victorian-studies>.

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