regular journalism a simple step. She wrote a women's column for the *Illustrated London News* for thirty-three years, reported from and lectured at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, participated in the 1899 International Council of Women in London, was close colleagues with most of the famous women activists of her day particularly in the United States, such as Susan B. Anthony, May Wright Sewall, Rachel Foster and Frances Willard, continued to campaign for women's education and the suffrage, held public office, wrote nine books including a biography of Harriet Martineau, and edited and wrote for a number of women's journals.

A pretty formidable *curriculum vitae* by anyone's standards, into which she also crammed what appeared to be a happy marriage for the most part (although the family dark secret is that it appears possible that eventually Ford ran off with a music hall actress called Dora), and two daughters who both called themselves Miller and both distinguished themselves as politically active women. Fenwick Miller's life may thus be read as exemplary of the courage and energetic contributions made by women activists in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, a history of the movement no less.

The book is another example of Ashgate's commitment to publishing worthy new work on the nineteenth century in the series edited by Joanne Shattock and Vincent Newey, and it is therefore as handsomely produced as the rest of the titles in the series. Van Arsdel occasionally resorts to questionable generalisations such as most nineteenth-century vessels being sailing ships (steamships were increasingly being used from the mid-century onwards) and women rarely engaging in commerce as Fenwick Miller's mother did – with some success, it appears. It's not an exciting read, but somehow it engages because I found myself thinking, how could I not have known more about this woman? Could she possibly have done more with her life? I think not. Why isn't she up there with the Beckers, the Cobbes and the Fawcetts? Perhaps it was only with the release by the family of private papers that it was possible to do justice to her life, and there's a certain sense of irony in that as well. The book would also have benefited greatly from some illustrations. The only one is that on the dustcover of the subject herself.

Barbara Garlick

The Selected Letters of W.E. Henley, by Damian Atkinson. Nineteenth Century Series. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

I have to admit I'm a bit of an historical voyeur. I've always enjoyed perving on the lives of those who have gone before. And I'm not the only one. A visit to any bookshop shows that at the moment biography is BIG – big sales and big books, often padded out to enormous size by a surfeit of information. To me the sight of one of these tomes is utterly discouraging: rather than prompting me to buy, it makes me yearn for something more manageable, something less portentous, something more of the essence. And here in this selection of W.E. Henley's letters I have it, the real thing: spontaneous and heartfelt communication straight from the subject's pen, tied together with a succinct outline of his life and informative footnotes to set the whole in context. The guiding hand of the editor is apparent but he lets the subject hold the floor. The ebullient and opinionated Henley would have approved.

Of course, letters are essential research tools for biographers and historians, but they are more than that. As this selection shows they can stand alone as fascinating reading, their immediacy animating the bare bones of reportage and chronology that make up a life in retrospect, freeing the subject from the pages rather than smothering him. Readers, too, freed from the omniscient control of the biographer can form their own opinions of the letter writer and his milieu and pursue, if they wish, other avenues of his work or seek out further information about his life and times from clues planted in the annotations.

Atkinson's book is the result of an enormous amount of work carried out "off and on" from 1983. The choosing of 250 letters for a selection designed to present a "truer portrait of the man [. . .] both literary and otherwise" (xvii) was a prodigious task in itself. There are over 2,300 letters from Henley, some in private hands but most held in institutions all over the world, as well as a six-volume collection put together by Charles Whitby, Henley's friend and second-in-command on the *Scots Observer* (later the *National Observer*). Presumably Atkinson would have had to read most of these, not an easy job because he often found Henley's writing difficult to decipher. Then there is the transcribing, the chronological ordering (made easier by the fact the Henley usually dated his letters), and the annotating – the latter being the most difficult and time-consuming of all, a Holmesian paperchase made all the more tricky because Henley made a habit of destroying most of the letters he received. The annotations act as keys which open the doors to Henley's private and public worlds, probably most usefully elucidating the world of journalism, more specifically the journalism of art and literature – "higher" journalism – the axis around which Henley's life revolved. In this sense the book is an important addition to the growing body of scholarship on the nineteenth-century press.

The letters are divided into four chronological sections that together delineate both Henley's journalistic career and his private life. Each section is preceded by a short explanatory introduction providing an overview of the characters and events to follow. The vibrancy of Henley's tone animates his long-dead voice and the reader becomes a witness to the actions and reactions that gave rise to the trajectory of his life. We become aware of his gradual move from tyro journalist to respected and influential editor; his fortitude in overcoming a tuberculosis condition of the leg, his sustaining marriage and his friendships. The Henley that emerges is both vulnerable and didactic, both jealous and generous; a friend in need, but also sometimes a needy friend who made no bones about asking others to meet his bills. Through him we are presented with a detailed portrait of a nineteenth-century would-be man of letters caught up in the emerging profession of journalism with all its uncertainty and paradoxes, not the least of these being the struggle between the Bohemia of early journalism and the burden of increasing Respectability, as the profession and its protagonists moved up in the world. In 1881 Henley wrote to Stevenson tongue-incheek: "Respectability has been the ruin of us dear lad; and a little villainous company would do us no end of good' (69). Soon after, however, he warns Stevenson not to be "frolicsome" because it might cost me "my place at the Club" (86). Two years later he is elevated to the membership of the exclusive Savile Club. From an inauspicious start as a penniless poetry contributor to the short-lived London weekly the *Period*, Henley's career as a literary journalist took him to the editorship of four journals, *London*, the *Magazine of Art*, the *National Observer* and the *New Review*, gave him a respected voice in the literary community, and saw him immortalised in a bust by Rodin, which he insisted was "not quite as flamboyant or English as the poor model" (155).

Henley's friendships are also a strong theme to emerge from the letters; particularly those with Stevenson, and later Kipling. Henley acted as a literary mentor to both men although he was only a year older than Stevenson. Leslie Stephen took Stevenson to meet Henley, hospitalised for eighteen months while Joseph Lister attempted to save his leg with an extremely painful operation: "There was a long cut across the foot, from ankle to ankle, dividing vessels, tendons & everything, & laying open the infected bone, which in its turn was scooped out (gouge and pliers) so that a large rectangular cavity was the result" (14). Henley had already had the other leg amputated below the knee. He was the inspiration for Stevenson's anti-hero, the wooden-stumped Long John Silver: "It was the sight of your maimed strength and masterfulness that begot John Silver in *Treasure Island*" (Stevenson to Henley, 25 August 1881). The two young men commenced an immediate correspondence which led to a friendship that was to be mutually benefiting for many years.

Henley's admiration for Kipling's work was influenced by his own imperialistic, jingoistic leanings, part of the "New Imperialism" that swept England in the 1880s. Bemoaning the death of Disraeli he writes to Stevenson that England has now fallen "into the slough of pure grocerism [. . .]. The biggest man & the biggest Force in England – the England of Clive & Cromwell, & Shakespeare & Nelson & Chatham & Fox & Marlborough – is the Ideal Banker. The Union Jack is a pocket-handkerchief full of shavings; & the Empire's heart is a Parish Pump" (68). Later he approaches Tennyson for permission to use some of his poems in *Lyra Heroica*, an anthology designed "to bring into particular relief the dignity of patriotism, the beauty of battle, the heroic quality of death" (200). This letter is tellingly juxtaposed with one to the publisher William Blackwood enclosing a piece by "a lad of twenty-two [. . .] still at Oxford [. . .] who is going to be somebody" (201). The lad, George Steevens, died nine years later at the siege of Ladysmith, a victim of the Boer War.

The selection of letters spans the years 1870 to 1903, starting when Henley was twenty-one and ending at his death thirty-three years later. The effect of seeing a life with all its hopes, all its disappointments, all its joys, all its sorrows outlined so authentically before you is tremendously poignant; a perfect case study in the human condition. Now Henley seems reckless and opinionated; now gentle (as in his early love letters to his wife-to-be); now very much the editor in command; now broke and begging for money; now the loving friend, now the puzzled enemy (as in the triviality of Stevenson's sudden antipathy towards him); now joyous; now broken hearted (as in the suspicion that he is responsible for the death of his only child, five-year-old Margaret: "It is a case of tubercular meningitis. The brain I gave her had in it the seeds of death" (222)).

I have tried to give you a taste of this well-organised and fascinating book which I particularly recommend to Stevenson scholars and to those interested in Victorian journalism. However, it deserves a greater audience than the usual academic volume because it deals so poignantly with the capricious nature of life – the most universal theme of all.

Judy McKenzie

British Future Fiction: 1700-1914, edited by I. F. Clarke. 8 vols. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001; *Hong Kong Invaded: A '97 Nightmare*, by Gillian Bickley. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001.

Much can be learned about a past culture's present hopes and fears from the ways in which it imagined its future. In nineteenth-century Britain, fictive speculation became for the first time a prolific genre, its popularity stimulated by the heady momentum of political, social and, above all, technological change. I.F. Clarke, who may be said not only to have pioneered, but almost to have invented, the academic study of future fiction, has now selected and introduced an eight-volume assembly of reprinted texts ranging chronologically from 1763 (the anonymous and pedestrian *Reign of George VI*) to the eve of the First World War. Resisting the easy temptation to reproduce readily available works like *Erewhon* and *The War of the Worlds*, his purpose has been to make accessible a representative sample of the lesser-known purveyors of imaginative prophecy and in doing so he has placed all Victorianists in his debt.

As one might expect, nineteenth and early twentieth-century projectors laid heavy emphasis on an exponential growth of knowledge as the securest foundation for future progress. William Delisle Hay, for example, managed to sustain, in *Three Hundred Years Hence; or, A Voice from Posterity* (1881), a fantasy of nearly four hundred pages detailing the astonishing advances to which humankind could look forward if only it had the good sense to base its decisions on the logic dictated by science. By 2180, we will have learned to colonise both the subterranean regions and the sea so that all land (including the sites of former mountains, which will have been shaved down to plateaux) can be given over to the agricultural support of a proliferating but peaceful and harmonious population. Human diversity, to be sure, will have become a little attenuated because it will have been deemed expedient to exterminate "the Chinaman and the Negro" in favour of the superior Caucasian races, but this need not occasion sentimental regret since science will by then have established that the "inferior" peoples (like animals and birds, which will also have been all-but eliminated) belong to different species from the "White Man."

It would be reassuring to be able to conclude that Hay, despite being a New Zealander and a graduate of Melbourne University, had a taste for subversively