How does our understanding of Victorian novels' portrayal of social relations change if we foreground relations of bodies rather than the affective relationships of characters? This is the provocative question with which Tina Young Choi begins *Anonymous Connections: The Body and Narratives of the Social in Victorian Britain*. Focusing on the leaky, infectious, permeable body rather than the cultivation of individual sympathy, Choi seeks to show how the formal properties of the Victorian novels (especially Dickens, but also Gaskell, Collins, Kingsley, Eliot and Stoker) derive in part from new medical models of the anonymous connectivity afforded to bodies in industrial nineteenth-century Britain. Choi draws on statistical and sanitary writings (Farr, Chadwick, Snow, Gavin), sociology (Mayhew), and various popular articles on bacteriology, as well as on the imaginative literature of the period. This terrain is mostly well trodden by earlier researchers working on medicine, sanitary history, and literature. However, Choi finds new perspectives in her emphasis on the formal impact of an emerging vision of physio-social interaction. Her reading shows that "the period's liberal individualism and … corresponding liberal literary tradition, was always tempered by an alternate vision" defined by numerous and anonymous connections between the one and the innumerable many (151), and that the competition between these visions shaped the history of the novel itself.

Choi begins with the concept of risk and normativity. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the concept of the statistical norm reframed the social sphere as less a concatenation of atomistic individuals than a dynamic grouping of beings who, without necessarily intending to, behaved and experienced as part of a social whole. This new model sat uneasily with older understandings of human uniqueness and moral purpose. For example, Choi argues that Gaskell's *Mary Barton* moves from a new probabilistic understanding of risk that defines its framing plot events (the factory fire, the child deaths) to a more traditional moral economy mid-way through the novel with the death of Harry Carson, whose murder is less a matter of risk than of bad moral choices (30). In subsequent chapters, Choi examines miasma, contagion, the recycling or reappropriation of bodily waste, the circulation of body parts, and finally, bacterial infection. In each chapter, she connects her topic to innovations in the novel. This is particularly clear in her reading of the multiplot novel as a formal way to engage the seemingly aleatory and spatially distant connections that define an emerging understanding of social relations.

Of course, these are not only formal but thematic concerns, and sometimes novelists push back against the implications of new understandings even as they take them up as subject matter. For example, the conception of society as a vast, complex, and ungraspable physiological whole is balanced by and contained within a striving toward a closed economy in which all is finally knowable and recuperable within the "closed circulatory system" of Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (104). The radical anonymity of bodies that can be dissected and remade in pieces is also addressed in Dickens's texts, which often thematize bodily disintegration but finally "sustain a … belief in the value of bodily integrity" (126). Choi's work is most satisfying when she digs into the specific formal properties of works that correspond to her readings, though this focus is not equally successful in all chapters. It is less clear, for example, that the representational shift in causality in Gaskell is accompanied by a corresponding formal shift than it is that the "distant causality" of contagion (53) and the multi-plot form can be connected. But in each chapter, Choi clearly shows that there is a thematic consideration of emerging models of trans-individual sociality that is clearly linked to physiological concerns. Moreover, although these connections were often posed (and have been even more often studied) in terms of threat and anxiety, Choi shows that the chance engagements of bodies in space were also portrayed positively, as offering new opportunities for social interconnection and growth. For example, models of human-waste reuse seemed to nineteenth-century writers

to enshrine "moral values" attached to "recovery and redemption" as well as economic values such as efficiency (84).

But perhaps most interestingly, Choi's analysis of the ways the emerging view of the body placed pressure on the old moral economies and forms of literature makes one thing very clear: the notion of the continuity of the body and environment, and thus vulnerability of the liberal subject, emerges simultaneously with the concept of that subject itself. Posthumanism is, in short, either connate with liberal humanism or a slightly belated twin. Choi demonstrates how narratives of bodily connections not only show pressure to reinscribe identity and belonging, but also offer an alternate model in which the individual easily dissolves into unmarked and anonymous bodily matter dissolved and dispersed through the social body as a kind of macro-organic structure (150). By the end of the century, Choi notes, "germ narrative initiated the reader into a new conception of sociality … where contact with others was not only involuntary but also constant, not merely intersecting but also enveloping" (148). Choi suggests that although these new ways of understanding bodily connections might be represented within gothic invasion narratives, they also offered new, inclusive modes of thinking human sociality beyond traditional identity categories. Perhaps the next identity the Victorians will enable us to think past might be the human itself.

Pamela K. Gilbert
University of Florida
pgilbert@ufl.edu

When Oscar Wilde accepted an invitation from the Cassell's publishing firm to edit *Lady's World* in 1887, he suggested that the magazine should "deal not merely with what women wear, but with what they think, and what they feel. The *Lady's World* should be made the recognized organ for the expression of women's opinions on all subjects of literature, art and modern life" (*The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis [London, 1962], 194–95).

Many later women's magazines have had similar aspirations, and Caitríona Clear of the National University of Ireland, Galway, examines two notable Irish examples for evidence of what women in Ireland were thinking and feeling in the 1950s and 1960s. Thoroughly researched, *Women's Voices in Ireland: Women's Magazines in the 1950s and 60s* provides much insight into the social and cultural mores of Ireland and the changing circumstances of Irish women's lives in these decades. Nevertheless, Clear's conclusions are necessarily tentative, and she is to be commended for not claiming too much weight for what was clearly painstaking and time-consuming work.

The magazines in question are *Woman's Life*, which ran from 1936 to 1959, and *Woman's Way*, launched in 1963 and still extant. Clear looks at the former for the 1950s and the latter for the 1960s. She focuses on readers' contributions to both—specifically, letters from readers published in the magazines and issues raised by readers in the problem pages. Her book is not, therefore a history of Irish women's magazines—nor even a history of the two magazines under scrutiny. Clear decries the fact that women's magazines have been neglected in the historiography of the media in Ireland, and she is right to do so. Still, her aim here is not to fill this gap, but rather to show how *Woman's Life* and *Woman's Way* "gave voice and space to real women's satisfactions and dissatisfactions, whatever they were and however they evolved" (131).