



EDITED BY

LISA
RODENSKY

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
**THE VICTORIAN
NOVEL**

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Edited by
LISA RODENSKY

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INTRODUCTION

LISA RODENSKY

‘Handbook’ as ‘guide’ or ‘compendium’ came into English (from the German *Handbuch*) at the beginning of the 19th century and was then put to use, according to the *OED*, identifying works that offered ‘concise information for the tourist’. No doubt the dictionary editors had in mind John Murray’s *Hand-Book for Travellers on the Continent* (1836) which inaugurated his series of handbooks (including *A Hand-Book for Travellers in Switzerland and the Alps of Savoy and Piedmont* (1838) and *A Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1842), among many others). At the heart of Murray’s venture was the middle-class audience—an audience that could afford to travel (modestly) and buy a (modest) guidebook. This audience also read literature, and Murray took advantage of that fact. The handbooks, reports Barbara Schaff, integrated literary works into the discourse of the travel guide.¹ But tellingly, Murray chose poetry, not novels, as his touchstones (though Scott’s *Quentin Durward* (1832) turns up on two occasions and *Waverley* (1814) (indirectly) on one). Schaff argues persuasively that Murray looked to Byron and Shelley as mediators of high culture.

That Murray deployed poetry and not the novel underlines the novel’s place in the culture of 1836—also the year that the first instalments of Charles Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* broke onto the scene. Even at the century’s end, the novel was still consigned to the margins of literary history, and so too in the manuals and handbooks developed for examination cramming that Anna Vaninskaya describes in her chapter (included here) on the novel in the university. The novel’s attempts to assert its cultural authority inform a fair number of the chapters in this *Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel*, as do the central facts that underpinned the novel’s success—the growth of England as a reading nation and the inventions of technologies that served its readership, the steam-press in particular.

¹ Barbara Schaff, ‘John Murray’s Handbooks to Italy: Making Tourism Literary’, in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). See also James Buzard, ‘The Uses of Romanticism: Byron and the Victorian Continental Tour’, *Victorian Studies* 35 (Autumn 1991): 29–49.

Every (good) scholarly work guides readers, but a handbook—promising the convenience of manual portability—undertakes to present a broad range of topics without superficiality. For the contributors to such an enterprise, the trick is to balance breadth and depth, where readers rightly expect some condensing of information that covers a topic and also new material or new ways to interpret familiar material, all in the space of a reasonably sized chapter in a single volume (though it is indeed doubtful that any reader will want to travel with *this* handbook, except in its online form). This is a tall order for a Victorian novel handbook in the 21st century. Much (to say the least) has been written on the Victorian novel, and for good reason. Given the significance of the novel to the period and the continuing interest in Victorian studies, it isn't surprising that a number of Victorian novel compendiums are currently in print, not to mention collections on Victorian literature and culture more generally, and many collections on single authors and even on singular works.² To contribute meaningfully to this impressive corpus, I present here a combination of familiar but newly imagined topics and topics not often covered in other companions. Some chapters emphasize cultural and historical contexts, others the literary, though this is a matter of degree and not kind, since each of the chapters takes up the novel as both a cultural and literary form and force. With respect to the contextual information that contributors offer, it is no doubt the case that readers will find some repetition. More than one chapter makes note of the rising literacy of the period, for instance. Such repetitions are unavoidable because chapters must stand alone; no reader (except the volume's editor) should be expected to read the book from start to finish. And it must be the case that what might be unnecessary for one reader might be helpful to another. This handbook assumes its audience members are knowledgeable readers of literature, but not that all knowledgeable readers know the same things.

Probably every editor of a Victorian anthology at least considers beginning an introduction by invoking the dates of Victoria's reign to define the period and by extension the period's literature. But who believes that the Victorian novel debuted on 20 June 1837 or took its last curtain call on 22 January 1901? So it is commonsense to think about whether we can distinguish the novel, Victorian-style, by looking at the decades before and after—what we name the 'romantic' period and the 'modern' period (and I don't envy those editors the task of defining those periods, by the way). Some common threads emerge: we contrast romantic idealism with Victorian realism (the heroic

² For example, Blackwell's *Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (London: Blackwell, 2002) and *Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Francis O'Gorman (London: Blackwell, 2005), Greenwood Press's *Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), and *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). The most recent collections of essays covering the period are *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 3: *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820–1880*, ed. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 4: *The Reinvention of the British and Irish Novel, 1880–1940*, ed. Patrick Parrinder and Andrzej Grasiorek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

against the domestic) and the moral earnestness of the Victorian against the amoral aestheticism of the modern. Useful as generalizations, these assertions necessarily break down in particular cases, and we find ourselves needing terms like proto-modernism or romantic realism. Their porousness honours the complexities of works of art that won't abide by categories—and yet the categories help us define preoccupations and dominant impulses of texts in a particular period.³

The focus of this handbook is the novel published between 1837 and 1901, very roughly speaking. The overview I give below describes in more detail the handbook's organization in addition to offering brief summaries of and connections among the chapters (though the index is the best source of the many ways the chapters intersect). I have grouped (imperfectly) those chapters together under headings that highlight common threads. Moving through the various sections of this handbook, readers will register how they overlap. The overlapping is sometimes obvious: Jennifer Green-Lewis's chapter on visual culture will coincide with Emily Allen's on the novel and the theatre; Lynn Voskuil's on horticulture crosses Julia Prewitt Brown's on the *Bildungsroman*; Richard Menke and Alison Byerly's chapters on communication and travel technologies intersect with the chapters in the section, 'Commerce, Work, Professions, Status.' How could they not, given how central technological developments were to commerce and work? But like the attempts to define the 'Victorian' itself, the groupings underline a set of concerns even when one could imagine different combinations.

Beyond thematic affinities, the handbook as a whole offers a broad chronological structure—and by 'broad' I also mean 'flawed,' since many chapters don't stick to the beginning or end of the period, but travel within it. Nevertheless, I begin with three chapters that attend to the Victorian novel's beginnings and more particularly to the novel's relation to early 19th-century print culture, an area of study that has grown markedly. The seminal work by Richard Altick, John Sutherland, Laurel Brake, Simon Eliot, David McKitterick, and Peter Garside (to name just a few) has opened up this field. Drawing on recent bibliographic work of remarkable scope and detail, Garside's chapter in this handbook considers the much more complex landscape of novel production during the so-called hiatus between 1820 and 1836. While we may be tempted to

³ In their introduction to *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 3: *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820–1880*, John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor anticipate objections to the chronological limits of their volume. Redefining the period as 1820–80, the *Oxford History* invokes the major developments in technology and literary production that inaugurated the novel's ascension—and particularly the rise of Walter Scott—to delineate the period's beginning, while the intensified stratification of the novel and its reading public in the 1880s signals the end of what Kucich and Bourne Taylor rightly call 'the great age of the novel' (xviii). In their introduction to *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 4: *The Reinvention of the British and Irish Novel, 1880–1940*, Parrinder and Gasiorek pick up where Kucich and Bourne Taylor leave off, with a vision of the last two decades of the 19th century that registers the more rigid distinctions between high-, middle-, and low-brow work. Both of these excellent introductions make persuasive points about this refigured periodization that help readers see the novel's history not in terms of Victoria's reign but in terms of specific cultural forces and the novelist's responses to them. This handbook recognizes the demarcations the *Oxford History* volumes have identified, but this work—more handbook than history—does not address questions of periodization as fully as the *Oxford History* has.

think of this period as one that moves from Walter Scott to Charles Dickens (and Scott is surely the most influential literary force in these years), Garside shows it to be one not of consolidation but of diversification. And though novel production was relatively constant (averaging 78 per year), one registers the spikes and dips with more clarity. The new bibliographic details that Garside brings to bear for the years leading up to the Victorian period will help scholars develop more nuanced and substantiated arguments about the novel's growth into the dominant genre of the 19th century.

The handbook then turns from this pre-history of the Victorian novel to the Victorians' own histories of the novel. The 19th-century novel had achieved some respectability—as Garside and others (Ina Ferris, for instance)⁴ have argued, Scott masculinized the novel and its most successful subgenre (historical fiction), demoting female-authored novels in his wake. But the novel's future (as well as its past) was still in question. In 'New Histories of English Literature and the Rise of the Novel, 1835–1859', William McKelvy investigates how, at the beginning of the Victorian period, newly emerging, self-identifying literary historians invoked the 18th-century English novel to distinguish a specifically English literary tradition for a specifically English audience. Indeed, this 'new sense of literary history' (44) depended on literacy—an audience to instruct—and a printing industry that could produce publications cheaply enough for that audience to afford them. As the century unfolded, these Victorian literary historians took the opportunity to include their culture's contemporary novels in an effort to separate the wheat from the chaff, but, as McKelvy argues, the significance of such guidance was not simply that the historians asserted themselves as judgement-makers, but that the Victorian novel—their contemporary novel—was worth making judgements about: that readers should read contemporary novels which became part of a living national literature.

Including the Victorian novel in a national literature (or at least an idea of it) invested the form with legitimacy. But if the novel as a category was worthy of inclusion, not all of its creators (or their creations) were. Who would decide what was good and what not? Such decisions were not to be left to a handful of self-proclaimed literary historians, that's for sure. As Rebecca Edwards Newman describes in 'Genre, Criticism, and the Early Victorian Novel', the last chapter in this first section on 'Beginnings', the years in which the Victorian novel began its rise to power were also the years in which the periodical press expanded its reach and attempted to assert its own power by classifying novels and producing a subgeneric hierarchy. Newman further describes how novelists entered the debates. Finding themselves in competition with periodical critics for the right to determine the generic boundaries and values of their own productions, novelists (and Newman focuses on Edward Bulwer Lytton and Dickens in particular) used both hypertextual apparatus (prefaces, authorial notes) and opportunities within novels to instruct readers about the novel's worth (as a genre), elbowing out (as fully as possible)

⁴ Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

periodical writers who were insinuating themselves as mediators between novels and readers.

The tension—sometimes antagonism—between writers and reviewers was not an especially Victorian impulse. The previous century had its share of it, certainly. What changes in these years (and it's no small change) are the numbers of voices trying to participate in the conversation—not just a few voices in the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Quarterly*, say, but an expanding number of periodical writers—and novelists, and readers (a shift which brings to mind the online 'reviewers' who post their reactions to their blogs moments after completing a book). To this triangle—novelist, reviewer, reader—we add yet more voices, those that Rachel Buurma registers in her 'Publishing the Victorian Novel', the first chapter in the next section of the handbook, which moves forward into topics focusing more extensively on the relations between Victorian publishing, reading, reviewing, quoting, and censoring; Buurma attends to the complex network of relations among publishers, authors, publishers' readers, librarians, and booksellers in the production of novels and refigures the idea of the individual novelist as the sole producer of the novel published under his or her name. Buurma considers instead an alternative model of collective and corporate authorship which takes more fully into account the contributions of (and pressures exerted by) the varied groups trying to be heard.

Recognizing the collectivity of the Victorian novel's authorship necessarily recognizes the expanding and increasingly influential Victorian novel-reading public, and it is that readership which the next chapter in the handbook investigates. There is, as Debra Gettelman explains in 'The Victorian Novel and Its Readers', the well-known narrative of novel-reading history that recounts how Victorian commentators on the period's novel objected to the genre's corruption of an all-too vulnerable readership. But Gettelman, like Buurma, rethinks the ramifications of this interdependence, this porousness. As Buurma reconfigures the idea of individual authorship, so too does Gettelman propose different paradigms for readership. Moving quickly past the usual passages from pundits worrying over the disease of novel reading, Gettelman recovers the evidence showing how and where Victorians identified the novel as a genre which also encouraged readerly individuality and mental liberty. Gettelman explains:

As readers infused everyday experience with the contents of novels and projected their real experiences into those works of fiction, as they freely appropriated and personalized the latest serial instalments, novel reading in the 19th century ultimately came to be associated in the larger culture with fostering freedom of thought—a 'perfect liberty of reading,' as Margaret Oliphant called it, that, whether it was put to better or worse purposes, was imagined to be a distinctively English part of life in the period. [113–14]

The audience that Gettelman zeroes in on was more and more a reading audience, not just of novels but of essays, pamphlets, periodicals, and cheap books on a wide range of topics. Over the last twenty years (or more), work on the dynamics between the Victorian periodical (in particular) and the novel—its sometimes partner, sometimes

competitor—has illuminated both institutions. That Dickens was at once a major novelist and periodical editor already provokes us to consider the first in the context of the second (and vice versa). In ‘The Victorian Novel and the Reviews,’ Solveig C. Robinson concentrates on the novel-reviewing practices of the Victorian period, guiding us through the differences between early-, middle-, and late-century reviewing practices and attending to the larger meanings of those differences. Standing back from the period as a whole, Robinson traces the ways in which reviewers were finding their place in relation to the novel, figuring out how to distinguish themselves from the population of readers they sought to instruct, and from advertisers whose puffery tainted reviewing as a practice. In a sense, Robinson’s chapter returns us to Newman’s, but where Newman examines the novelist’s defence against the reviewers, Robinson reconstructs how reviewers inserted themselves into the world of the novel in the first place. The narrative arc Robinson travels on from the beginning of the century to its end reveals an increasing movement towards division, diversity, and hierarchical classification of reviewing itself. Different periodicals established their particular voices and specialities, while, as Robinson notes, the unfolding of the century saw ‘the emergence of new, distinct readerships, and . . . the gradual professionalization of literature, which began to differentiate “reviewing” from “literary criticism”’ (133). Here one finds both diversification—the various niche readerships emerging for specific periodical publications—and consolidation: periodicals and the novels they reviewed occupied high or low culture, a similar impulse driving the differentiation between reviewing and literary criticism that Robinson articulates. And these increasingly fixed distinctions in the world of the reviews reflected (and also helped produce) the more distinctly established hierarchies among the novels themselves.

The novel’s cultural status waxed and waned while the century went forward; different novelists and novels became targets, old targets turned into favourites, favourites became classics. Dickens had become the pre-eminent Victorian novelist securely identified with England and Englishness; George Eliot was a high culture figure and her novels objects of reverence. And yet the legitimacy of Dickens and Eliot, along with William Thackeray, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Anthony Trollope surely did not elevate the novel to a status beyond reproach, any more than a much-lauded television show might do now for the rest of the stuff on the other 500 channels. As McKelvy suggests in his earlier chapter, the novel as a genre was breaking into the culture’s literary history, but the contemporary novel was still subject to serious scrutiny. In ‘The Victorian Novel and the *OED*,’ Lynda Mugglestone investigates the formative debates about what kind of data should be included in the *OED* and teaches us how those debates reveal the continuing disagreements about the status of the novel. Notwithstanding the unwavering commitment of Frederick Furnivall and James Murray to collecting data for the dictionary from the widest range of readers doing the widest range of reading, reviews of the first fascicles, as well as comments from the *OED* delegates and other insiders, enact continuing fears about the legitimacy of certain novels and novelists—particularly sensation novels. From the detailed archival evidence Mugglestone has unearthed, one registers the intensity of anti-novel prejudices. Mugglestone’s work attends closely to the enduring tensions between lexicographers committed to a disinterested collection of

citations and those for whom the goal of protecting a particular canon remained paramount. As Mugglestone shows, the range of Victorian novels represented in the *OED* is of a piece with the editors' investment in the living English language. So while reviewers might demote the novels of Mary Elizabeth Braddon or Eliza Lynn Linton as poor reflections of the reading public's tastes, offering no better language than the daily newspaper, those novels could do what a Shakespearean play could not: give evidence of the evolution of English in the 19th century.

Like Gettelman, Buurma, and Robinson, Mugglestone situates the novel within a network of relations involving readers, editors, reviewers, and the novelists themselves. So too Barbara Leckie's chapter on the Victorian novel and censorship, the last chapter in this section, begins by shelving an approach that would focus on censorship trials (indeed only one occurred during the period, as Leckie points out), pitting an author (or publisher) against the state or laws controlling freedom of expression; instead, Leckie thinks about how a range of explicit and implicit regulatory networks—including circulating libraries, reviewers, and publishers—sought to control writers. Leckie considers the ways in which authors themselves understood these pressures in the last twenty years of the 19th century, looking in detail at prefaces to novels. Although Leckie's chapter attends to the last decades of the 19th century, I place it in this first-half of the volume because, like the chapters directly preceding it, this chapter considers the production of the novel and the responses to the novel's content within a complex system of relations. The period from 1880 to the end of the century saw the intensification of purity campaigns, and the tensions within the culture between those moving towards and those moving against free expression came to the fore. Examining three categories of print regulation—'self-censorship (exercised by both authors and readers); family-based censorship (typically exercised by the father and made powerful by the practice of reading out loud); extra-legal institutional censorship (exercised by circulating libraries, public libraries, publishers, and booksellers)' (168–69)—Leckie makes a nuanced case about Victorian print censorship that exposes a network of pressures and not one monolithic force suppressing artistic expression.

Not surprisingly, those late-century authors who felt repressed by the networks Leckie identifies also felt disadvantaged when they compared themselves to their liberated French peers—Émile Zola and Joris-Karl Huysmans, to name just two. The French novel was a force to be reckoned with throughout the period—and attempts to dismiss it as frivolous (or dangerous) didn't stop it from gaining a readership in England. But what of the Victorian novel in France? Marie-Françoise Cachin's chapter begins to answer this question as it produces the essential groundwork for this topic and is the first chapter under 'The Victorian Novel Elsewhere', the section which moves the novel outward, away from England. These chapters recognize that Victorian culture and its most successful literary genre created and capitalized on the expectations and structures (information networks, expansion of empire) that allowed the 20th- and 21st-century novel to claim a global presence.

Focusing on French periodicals that regularly reviewed English novels and the reviewers who attended to such novels, Cachin locates key responses to a wide range of novels

of the period. So too Cachin opens up questions about how French publishers selected novels for translation and how translators imagined the work they would do with those novels. By mid-century, Victorian novelists themselves knew the value of a good French translation. In a letter to Emile Montegut, among the important French translators that Cachin discusses, G.H. Lewes requests assistance in finding a good translator for *Adam Bede* (1859), asking: 'if among your literary acquaintances you know of any one who would be competent to translate it'. Not that Eliot and Lewes didn't already have some contenders. Lewes explains:

We have already had several applications, but it is of consequence to get a good translator, and I think you would be very likely to know of one. A work which has had greater success than Bulwer or Thackeray has ever achieved, and which in less than nine months has sold 10,000 copies, must surely be a good commercial speculation for a French publisher; and if a good translator could be found we are willing to sell the right of translation for 1,000 francs.⁵

In her chapter, Cachin carefully considers how France's own thriving novel culture handled the British novel's challenges to its dominance.

The situation was interestingly different in another 19th-century novel power-house—Russia—but Russia at the beginning of the period, as Julie Buckler reminds us in 'Victorian Literature and Russian Culture: Translation, Reception, Influence, Affinity', had not yet produced its great novel achievements. Timing tells a significant part of this story: that the Victorian novel coalesced before the Russian novel meant that it entered the culture without having to compete with a strong national novel already in place, though it still had the French novel to contend with. And while the Russian public certainly read the canonical authors, Buckler's research shows that 'Russian reception of Victorian literature cast a wide if unsystematic net, such that works and authors from this period translated into Russian extended to the margins of the tradition' (207). Buckler brings to our attention not only a range of authors but also a range of translators and approaches to translation—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Both Cachin and Buckler analyse the pressures of translation; the absence of such pressure shapes, in its own way, the relations between the Victorian novel and the American novel. Taking up these relations, Amanda Claybaugh tracks the migration of the American novel into England as well as the movement of the English novel into America—a transatlantic crossing facilitated by a shared language and the lack of copyright protections (international copyright laws did not extend to America). Such

⁵ G.H. Lewes to Emile Montegut, 1 December, 1859, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 8: 253. Shortly after, on 6 December, Eliot herself wrote to François D'Albert Durade, one of the best English–French translators, reporting that she and Lewes were 'very anxious to get an accomplished translation for "Adam Bede"', adding further that 'I particularly wish my books to be well translated into French, because the French read so little English.' M.E. Lewes to François D'Albert-Durade, 6 December 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3: 231.

freer exchange proved more complex as the century unfolded, with the English reviewers coming increasingly to recognize the American novel as less a poorer relation than a real threat. The closeness also bred the need to define the English novel against the American, as Claybaugh acutely shows.

There's no denying the impulse to define (and shore up) the Victorian novel as against novels from other nations, but the novel was also establishing its territory in relation to other kinds of writing in England itself. The travel memoir occupied an especially significant place in the culture, reflecting the expanding Empire and the appetite for colonial narratives that displayed the 'exotic'. And yet, as hungry as the Victorians were for these windows into exotic worlds, the novels of and at home (those we classify loosely under the rubric of 'domestic novel') kept the empire on the margins, as many post-colonial critics have observed. This fact provokes Margery Sabin, in her chapter 'Colonial India and Victorian Storytelling', to frame two key questions:

why did the mainstream domestic novel pay so little attention to the destabilizing, and even subversive, knowledge sometimes coming through writers with deep experience of the colonies? And why, in turn, did talented writers among those with that experience largely eschew fiction-writing, and (before Kipling) do mostly a mediocre job of it when they tried? [250]

By reading the dramatic representations of the interior life in the novel against the absence of such representations in a range of works by writers who had been in India, Sabin demonstrates that the novel's investment in internal and external coherence excluded the fracturing impulses that knowledge of India in particular created. Such a fracturing in relation to colonial subjects begins to be registered in the post-Mutiny novels, particularly in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) and then later, and more fully, in Kipling's *Kim* (1901), but never so fully as is rendered in Kipling's short stories and non-fiction of the period.

Sabin's chapter brings to a close this section which investigates, among other things, what happened to the Victorian novel outside of England and what it brought back from its travels. The next two chapters in the following section ('Technologies: Communication, Travel, Visuality') attend more closely to the novel's engagement with movements inside England. First Richard Menke's 'The Victorian Novel and Communication Networks' traces the evolution of different information-delivering networks—including Rowland Hill's reformed postal system and the electric telegraph system. Moving forward into the years after Hill's system, Menke observes that 'Networked communication became less an event than a constant, ubiquitous flow' which demonstrated the 'workaday ability of a communication network to subsume the structure of an entire society' (278) and perhaps—as the wireless telegraph might show—the whole world. Exploring the ways in which the novel before the 1860s more indirectly registered the power of such networks and afterwards explicitly registered that power, Menke shows the range of responses to its possibilities and dangers. The speed and distance that information could dependably travel influenced the novel, as did the new capacities for people themselves to go other

places. In ‘Technologies of Travel and the Victorian Novel’ (the volume’s next chapter), Alison Byerly explains how the train, boat, bicycle, and, finally, the hot-air balloon shaped the novel’s conventions. It is balloon-travel that moves Byerly into her brief discussion of the Victorian obsession with panoramas, a form of virtual travel that allowed Victorians to ‘imagine that they were looking at Paris, Bombay, or the Alps. Shifting panoramas, scenes which were slowly unrolled to convey the sense of a journey, were also frequently displayed in London and elsewhere’ (310). Here travel intersects profoundly with the developments in visual technologies which brought new ways of seeing and new things to be seen into the culture and its novel.

Victorian visual culture has been a lively topic in Victorian studies for the last two decades (or longer), as have the narrower (though still awesomely large) investigations of the relations between the novel and visual culture. Though Kate Flint’s *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* doesn’t limit itself to the novel, the genre occupies a vital place in her analysis of Victorian representations of the visible and the invisible.⁶ This interest in visuality and the novel has opened up into research about particular components of the visual culture —illustration and painting, for instance—and their interactions with the novel. The novel was, after all, often an illustrated genre, and when we think of illustration, we immediately call to mind the work of Cruikshank and Phiz. In the best of all possible worlds, one could include chapters on each component part, but in this world I have chosen to focus on what is arguably the most significant visual influence on the novel: photography. In her chapter on the novel and photography, Jennifer Green-Lewis analyses Victorian responses to the growing ubiquity of the photograph. Though the novel as a form preceded the photograph, the latter exerted a marked influence on the world that the Victorian novel inhabited. As Green-Lewis explains, the novel’s preoccupation with memory and identity (to name just two topoi) owes much to the cultural practices that the growth of photography stimulated. Green-Lewis asks, ‘Is it possible to imagine an artefact that more cogently expresses and defies physical and temporal discontinuity than a photograph?’ (315) Readers of novels were also readers of photographs which were ‘fast becoming both symbol and substance of reality. If novels were to render the lived reality of their readers they must depict the visible world; and to be visible, as indeed, to be memorable, at mid-century, was to be both photographable and photographed’ (318).

The Victorian novel and the photograph grew up together, through the early years of the daguerreotype and the silver-fork novels into the intensely prolific mid-century and on into the end-of-century decadence. So long and varied a period as the Victorian age necessarily divides itself up into different sub-periods—early, middle, late—and as I remarked at the beginning of this introduction, I have tried to honour this broad chronology in my chapter groupings. Figuring out what goes at the beginning and the end of the handbook (‘Beginnings’ and ‘Endings’) seemed to me more obvious than what

⁶ Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

I would put in the middle as the ‘Middle’, but what luck that Janice Carlisle’s work has focused on the novels of the 1860s. The decade often comes under investigation in work on the sensation novel—after all, this is the decade of *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863), two novels which were the subject of an 1863 *Fraser’s Magazine* review critiquing the ‘perverted and vitiated taste’ of a public that required ever more excitement.⁷ But Carlisle imagines the decade’s novels differently. As she argues:

The conventional view of the sensation novel of the 1860s... is that the genre works on the reader’s nerves, creating morbid feelings of agitation by setting forth plots involving violent crimes and secrets and deceptions. The ways in which these novels depict their characters and the state of their irritated nerves and moving bodies suggest, however, the opposite: this fiction allows its readers to pride themselves on their own relative self-possession, to conclude that they are moving at dignified and seemly rates through lives over which they have relative control. [346]

Carlisle sees this ‘complex of relationships’ between readers and characters as producing a ‘structure of feeling’—a phrase borrowed from Raymond Williams—that more usefully marks novels of the 1860s (338). While thinking of sensation novels as a separate subgenre is illuminating and continues to motivate interesting work, Carlisle’s approach thinks beyond that subgeneric category to see new and different connections among mid-century novels.

As does Evan Horowitz’s work on the industrial novel, the chapter that kicks off the next section, ‘Commerce, Work, Professions, Status’. Instead of searching out ‘signs of industry’ (factories, masters/workers, riots)—the most obvious elements of what we usually name as the ‘industrial novel’—Horowitz locates ‘either the revolutionary energy of industrial growth, the new anxiety such growth produced, or both’ (366). The critical attention to this particular ‘energy’ and ‘anxiety’ in the novels illuminates both the industrial novel as a genre and genre itself. To see genre not only as identifying form and subject matter but also as an impulse or attitude is to recognize that form (novel) and subject matter (industry) insufficiently describe what the Victorian industrial novel is.

Questions about financial profits that remain implicit in Horowitz’s chapter take centre stage in George Levine’s ‘The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Money: Max Weber, *Silas Marner*, and the Victorian Novel’, where Levine attends particularly to Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) to show how Victorians squared their Protestantism with their monetary ambitions. For Levine, what most fully illuminates the Victorian reconciliation of lucre and piety is Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism*. Here Weber exposes the work Protestant ethics must do to disassociate the acquisition of possessions from the pleasure one might take from having them. Levine zeroes in on the complications arising in Victorian novels ‘when good characters acquire wealth or morally marginal characters seek it’ (381). How is it that the good should do economically well

⁷ ‘Popular Novels of the Year’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 68, no. 404 (August, 1863): 253–69, 262.

and still remain good? Levine argues: ‘The irony that Weber pursues in finding religious “spirit” in the history and the continuing practice of capitalist enterprise plays itself out inside the novels. Thus, the secularizing influence of wealth seeps into pious novels almost without exception’ (381).

Levine reads the Victorian novelist’s simultaneous investments in the conflicting impulses of capitalism and Protestantism through Weber; Jennifer Ruth in her chapter on ‘The Victorian Novel and the Professions’ attends to a different but related conflict—one between a class-based prejudice against work and the growth of a new professional class of workers. Taking Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) as her central example, Ruth doesn’t merely argue that the novel reflects the expansion of the professional class; she maintains that the novel ‘contributed to the state’s evolution into an entity run by this figure and his cohorts’ (397), exploring the complexities Dickens, in particular, exposes as he imagines this rising ‘class’ and the sometimes-elusive work they performed. Such work the Victorians and their culture judged ambivalently, for to do work was already to raise questions about one’s class status—one’s respectability.

Respectability is a term so fully attached to ‘Victorian’ that the one term often implies the other. Kenneth Haynes, in his ‘Gentleman’s Latin, Lady’s Greek’, the chapter following Ruth’s, considers the ways in which the novel’s representation of the classics contributed to ‘the formation of different sorts of respectable identities’ (415). Quotations from and allusions to the classics in novels might situate a speaker as one thing or another—a gentleman or not, a professional or not, an Anglican or not. And yet Haynes is interested not only in how classical literature policed categories but also in how novelists deployed the classics to challenge boundaries that were themselves becoming less defined.

Chapters in the next grouping implicitly engage professions as well: the scientist, doctor, lawyer, cleric, and horticulturist find their way into work on science, medicine, law, religion, and horticulture. The section begins with what is arguably the field that exerted the most pressure on the Victorian age—science. Jonathan Smith takes on the challenge of describing not just a monolithic Victorian science but varied sciences—biological, geological, thermo-dynamical—in a range of Victorian novels. While Darwinism and literary realism surely inform Smith’s work, he attends also to non-realist forms, and as much to the scientific imagination as to novel’s science. The movement among genres and scientific subfields in Smith’s chapter enacts both the ubiquitous presence of the scientific in the Victorian novel and the novel’s influence on scientific discourse.

Smith brings his chapter to a close by gesturing towards the directions in which recent critical work on the novel and sciences has travelled—including work on medicine and psychology. Chapters on these topics follow on from science: first, Meegan Kennedy’s chapter on medicine and the novel establishes the common ground upon which Victorian novelists and the fast-developing medical world (including the physicians who published their work in periodicals alongside serialized novels) operated. As with science and law, medicine at once influences and is influenced by the novel. In her contribution, ‘Naturalizing the Mind in the Victorian Novel’, Suzy Anger narrows her field of inquiry to think through how the debates about the relations between mind and

body shaped both the form and content of novels. This work on physiological psychology and narrative exposes the ambivalence novelists felt about representing the mind as controlled by the body.

The discourses that Smith, Kennedy, and Anger put in relation to the novel demonstrate the powerful cultural cross-currents between the novel and these other disciplines. That many of the chapters in this handbook are interdisciplinary speaks to the growth of such work over the last thirty-odd years—not just with respect to the Victorian novel but throughout literary studies. While I doubt that more than a few critics ever isolated the Victorian novel from its culture, recent work now pursues interdisciplinarity more persistently and variedly. Such work makes ready sense. After all, the novel—that loose, baggy monster—brought much of its cultural context directly and indirectly into its pages. These qualities, coupled with the rise of realism, move scholars to consider the ways in which the novel situated itself with and against other institutions. As the handbook shifts from the psychological to the forensic, Jan-Melissa Schramm enters into questions about fiction's competition with the law for authority, and also its attempts to align itself with the law. Drawing our attention to the trial scenes in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), Schramm approaches their significance from a fresh direction, considering the jury as an organizational structure that would help Gaskell negotiate between the claims of the 'one' (the wrongfully accused defendant, in the case of *Mary Barton*) and the 'many'. Schramm's interpretive lens reveals both the Victorian preoccupation with questions about substitution (when the one stands for the many) and how the literary, theological, and forensic discourses competed with and completed each other in attending to such questions.

So too Patrick O'Malley narrows an enormous field of inquiry—the relations between religion and the novel—by focusing on two novels published thirty years apart: George Eliot's *Romola* (1863) Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893). While in the earlier chapter on morality and money, George Levine coupled Protestantism and capitalism, O'Malley triangulates Protestantism, Catholicism, and the emerging voices of women. 'Catholicism in Victorian Women's Novels' complicates familiar readings of Catholicism and Protestantism in the novel by considering how Eliot and Grand imagine Catholicism as a rebellious alternative to the domesticity of women that Protestant ideology promotes. This triangulation sharpens our understanding of these compelling representations of Catholicism by showing that they both reinforce a recognizable anti-Catholicism (as foreign, as medieval) and reveal it as a force anticipating modernity.

To think of anti-Catholicism in Victorian novels in terms of a disruptive, proto-modern energy is to recall how much some Victorian novelists invested in disciplining those very energies as they arose around them. Drawing together the practices of horticulturists and novelists, Lynn Voskuil underlines not only their shared commitment to improvement and control but also the intensity of the culture's commitment to these values. Though we know well that the Victorians believed in progress, the ubiquitousness and persistence of that belief comes home very powerfully in Voskuil's work. The *Bildungsroman* (a subgenre which Julia Prewitt Brown attends to at more length in her later chapter) integrates horticulture into its plot, as Voskuil shows. Part of what

distinguishes the Victorian's horticulture in particular is its dissemination through a popular horticultural press whose audience included both middle- and working-class readers, like the novel itself. And novelists invoked the meanings that the popular horticultural press reinforced—that gardens promoted peaceful, controlled cultivation of self, of others, and of the Other. This last, argues Voskuil, affirms the Victorians's cultivation of empire and the novel's participation in that enterprise.

If novelists understood the narrative possibilities generated by the forces shaping the culture, they also contended with other more direct competitors. The chapters that begin the next section of the handbook place the novel in relation to other genres—first, drama, then poetry, and finally criticism. The novel's apotheosis in the Victorian period is beyond dispute, but Emily Allen in 'The Victorian Novel and Theatre' investigates how the novel's triumph specifically over the theatre marks the novel's history and our interpretation of that history. Of course theatre has its own history, longer than the novel's, and engaging many of the same cultural anxieties we invoke when we discuss the novel. No doubt the theatre appealed to a 19th-century audience eager for spectacle; it might have proved itself the century's dominant form. It didn't. That fact affected, and was affected by, the novel. Moving from the stage back to the page, James Najarian engages the novelist's representations of the poet. His title, 'Verse Versus the Novel', already gestures towards novelists' attempts to demote poets—to turn the unacknowledged legislators of the world into effeminate versifiers (it is no accident that Najarian pits the novel against 'verse' and not poetry, enacting the novelists' strategy of demotion). Starting with Harold Skimpole of Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), behind whom lurks the poet Leigh Hunt, Najarian uncovers a pattern that suggests the ways in which novelists exploited certain stereotypes of the poet-aesthete to elevate the novel as the culture's moral arbiter.

While Najarian traces the potential competition between the novel and poetry, that relation was also powerfully collaborative. Think, for instance, of George Eliot's essay, 'Notes on Form in Art' (1868) where she appropriates 'poetry' as the term incorporating 'all literary production in which it is the prerogative and not the reproach that the choice and sequence of images and ideas—that is, of relations and groups of relations—are more or less not only determined by emotion but intended to express it'.⁸ Here poetry defines the art that creates the closest relation between form and feeling. 'Notes on Form in Art' might provoke readers to think about where and when Victorian novelists incorporate poems into their novels—and Philip Horne turns his mind to that activity in 'Poetic Allusion in the Victorian Novel'. Taking up the novel's poetic allusions, Horne finds in the combined energies of novel and poem a set of possibilities that the novel, absent allusion, could not achieve. Allusion transfuses, and interfuses, and Horne works through how and whether poetic allusion 'can be a means for the prose of novels to gain access to an additional level of suggestiveness about inner processes of the mind—by

⁸ George Eliot, 'Notes on Form in Art', in *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. A.S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin, 1990), 231–6, 232.

offering a depth of reference that is not normally available to the more exclusively functional language' (619)—the language of the everyday that drew so many readers to the novel in the first place.

The fully productive relationship between poetry and the novel that Horne engages demonstrates the power of the novelist to produce out of and with poetry a new creation. And one could think too about instances in which novelists create out of and with other novels. That claim is at the heart of Christopher Ricks's chapter, 'The Novelist as Critic', where the best criticism is also a creative enterprise. Where do we find this in the Victorian novel? Such a question activates the first sections of Ricks's chapter where he singles out the great achievements of Henry James, Dickens, and Charlotte Brontë as creators who revise their own novels and the work of others in ways that reveal their genius. But that visionary-revisionary work overshadows the relatively unexceptional writing of the novelist-critic, the novelist writing about novels non-fictionally, as it were. There are passages of such criticism to be admired, but few, argues Ricks, that rise to the heights that Matthew Arnold or Gerard Hopkins achieve as poet-critics.

After poetry and criticism, the handbook looks more fully inward, to think about quintessentially Victorian forms: first to the *Bildungsroman*, a defining subgenre of the Victorian novel, and then to specific stylistic elements that identify the novel as Victorian. There are, without a doubt, other Victorian subgenres besides the *Bildungsroman* that might rightly claim a place in this volume, and have rightly claimed places in other Victorian novel companions: the historical, silver-fork, Newgate, gothic, sensation, juvenile, and detective novels each contribute meaningfully to our understanding of what the 'Novel' had been in the 18th century, was in the 19th, and would become in the 20th. Various chapters in this volume take up one or more of these (and other) subcategories (particularly Edward's, Horowitz's, Carlisle's, and Schaffer's chapters). I choose to include a separate chapter on the *Bildungsroman* in this section because its preoccupations have grown to be so closely associated with the 19th-century English novel. Indeed, while the first thing we might register about the term *Bildungsroman* is its Germanness, the English novelist was quick to appropriate it. As Julia Prewitt Brown observes in 'The Moral Scope of the English *Bildungsroman*', the transformation of the *Bildungsroman* by English novelists enacts its Englishification, as it were. In the hands of the English, the form embodies a range of complex ethical questions—questions that arise not from a general principle but from particular experiences. Ultimately, the *Bildungsroman* became one of the most Victorian of novel subgenres—not so now, when the 'coming of age' narrative gets told most often as memoir or has been monopolized by what booksellers call 'Young Adult fiction'.

The last chapter in this section also takes on the challenge of identifying a specific aspect of a novel that we might defend as Victorian—and what a challenge it is. Are there markers of a Victorian novel-writing style, asks Mark Lambert? There are. In 'Three Matters of Style' Lambert identifies an elaborated style (manifested in Latinate diction, 'elegant variation' of noun phrases, conspicuously formal syntax, complex prepositions) and the 'suspended quotation' (when a narrator interrupts a character) as part of a recognizably Victorian novelistic style. These elements will be found in the 18th- and early

19th-century novel, but the degree to which the Victorian novelist deployed these stylistic elements distinguishes the Victorian novel. Moreover, Lambert demonstrates how these stylistic elements buttress the novel's investment in the superiority of the narrator. The elaborate style and the suspended quotation elevate the novel's narrator, and define him as a figure unmistakably Victorian.

The handbook closes with four chapters that zero in on the novel's development in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th. The novelists we most readily identify as Victorian died before the century's turn: Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, Eliot, Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, Collins. But the novel surely lived on, though with ever-sharper demarcations between high- and low-brow productions. Eliot's novels had achieved critical praise (along with a good measure of financial success), and yet hers were not 'best-sellers,' a term that tellingly had entered into the language by 1902 to describe success measured by sales alone, thereby cordoning off sales from other forms of merit. In this respect Dickens was always the hardest case. While some reviewers of the late 1830s had tagged Dickens as a fad whose popularity would fade in time, by 1901 a reviewer of 'Popular Novelists' elevated him to the status of classic.⁹ The Victorian novel and its quintessential novelist had not only become legitimate, they had become worthy of study. But as Anna Vaninskaya explores in 'The Novel, Its Critics, and the University: A New Beginning?', the Victorian novel was nowhere on the Oxbridge curriculum and had little place in the debates about literature at university. By tracing the novel's path into England's most elite educational institutions, Vaninskaya picks up, in some respects, where McKelvy (in his chapter at the beginning of this handbook) leaves off, by describing English literary histories at mid-century, moving forward to the late-century work of George Saintsbury. Vaninskaya joins these histories with the manuals designed for those taking civil service and local examinations. The novel was a topic for these examinations, and for Mechanics and Workingmen's Institutions and in women's higher education. Still, Vaninskaya concludes that 'by the 1900s, in relation to the entire sweep (chronological and generic) of English literary history covered by the surveys, and tested in the various exams, the Victorian novel still did not occupy more than a tiny section' (727). In that 'tiny section,' the legitimate novelists were being affirmed—Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Eliot—and those so affirmed would eventually find their way past the guards at the Oxbridge gates.

Of course, the legitimacy of certain Victorian novels presupposes the illegitimacy of others, as the perceived gap between art and schlock widened. George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) enacts the tragedy of the novelist-as-artist who can't support his family while the popular novelist thrives. In 'The Next Time' (1895), Henry James refigures *The New Grub Street* plot as a short story with a narrator who bemoans the fate of the starving novelist who can't earn a decent pay cheque. Both Gissing and James chart the undoing of the novelist who lacks the capacity (or the willingness) to produce the tried and false so prized by New Grub Street publishers. Although the late 1890s was surely

⁹ 'The Popular Novel,' *Quarterly Review* 194 (1901): 244–73, 246.

the age of the privately printed, exquisitely illustrated books of the literary decadents (think of John Grey's *Silverpoints*), it also gave us the massively successful and schlocky novels of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli.

But classing novels as high- or low-brow was not as easy as Gissing or James might make it seem. Often slotted among the low-brow, money-making productions of the late 19th century that high-brow critics took against were the New Woman novels, but Gissing himself wrote one such novel—*The Odd Women* (1893)—that had some critical and little financial success. Indeed, the 'New Woman novel' category itself presents special definitional challenges. When we think of some other subgenres (gothic, historical, sensation, detective), we don't think of the authors of those subgenres as having a specific political agenda or way of life. Writers of detective novels aren't usually detectives. And yet calling a novel a New Woman novel might also suggest who that author was—except when it didn't. In 'The Victorian Novel and the New Woman', Talia Schaffer not only locates and opens up these categorical complexities, but also reveals how such complexities have provoked particular critical responses in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. So, for instance, the New Critical movement of the 20th century demoted many of these novels as anti-realistic; first-wave feminist critics lauded the works as radical. As Schaffer details, both responses limit the novels in ways that serve particular critical agendas. Moving forward into the 21st century, Schaffer sketches out the fertile work on the New Woman novel in the last decade and the developing critical possibilities for this diverse but identifiable group of texts.

The New Woman novels occupied part of a literary scene that brought the 1800s to a close. The Queen whose name defines the period survived only thirteen months into the 1900s, and though the last days of Victoria were not the last days of the Victorian novel, her end brings us to think about how novelists were registering the movement from one century's writing to another. In the last two contributions (shorter pieces) in this handbook, Rosemarie Bodenheimer and Daniel Hack choose their contender for the 'last Victorian novel', its 'lastness' illuminating most fully what the Victorian novel had come to mean. For while its conventions would ensure its endurance into the next century, they also tagged it as the last century's model. The novels that Bodenheimer and Hack have chosen—Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), respectively—are not of the 19th century but the 20th, and share the point of view of the outsider—at once critical of and indebted to that which came before. Conrad implies his double-vision most tellingly in his Author's Note to *The Secret Agent*, where he defends his pervasively ironic tone as allowing him to say 'all [he] had to say in scorn as well as in pity'. But Conrad's unrelenting irony didn't finally issue in a set of values that the reader might reproduce in her own life. What the novel's first readers objected to was precisely the sense that it offered nothing but irony; readers registered the novel's contempt as a 'gratuitous outrage'.¹⁰ Although Conrad pleaded his innocent intention, Bodenheimer sees Conrad deploying the novel's evocation of

¹⁰ Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, ed. Michael Newton (London: Penguin, 2007), 251, 252.

sympathy as the bomb that finally blows up the Victorian world of the novel and the novel itself.

If asked to conjure a list of candidates for the last Victorian novel, it is possible that other readers might nominate *The Secret Agent*. It is less likely that *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* would come to mind, but it came into at least one reader's mind—fruitfully so. Hack's argument about Du Bois's 1911 American novel shows the Victorian novel's transatlantic grasp and its hold particularly on Du Bois. It is the novel's closing scenes that Hack is most interested in, where Du Bois exposes his predecessors' commitment to the status quo by radicalizing its happy ending.

This ending about endings doesn't aim to close off further thinking about the Victorian novel's end. Neither Hack nor Bodenheimer claim to have the last word on the last Victorian novel. Nor will this be the last Victorian novel handbook. At least it shouldn't be. I hope it won't be. Other editors should have the opportunity to make a list of chapters they want to bring together and then have the great pleasure of working with scholars on those chapters. There are topics missing here about which readers might want to read and scholars might want to write more—on the novel and music, or the novel in Germany, or the subgenres not represented. Or on topics not yet imagined. As the Victorians get further away from us, our versions of their culture and its novel inevitably change. These shifting emphases reflect critical trends, of course, but from such trends emerge more enduring approaches that teach us about the Victorian world and, by extension, our own.

PART I

BEGINNINGS

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THE EARLY 19TH-CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL, 1820–1836

PETER GARSIDE

In its first article for January 1820, the *Edinburgh Review* welcomed an entirely new departure in *Ivanhoe*, reviewing it alongside *Novels and Tales of the Author of Waverley* (1819), the first in a series of retrospective collections of Walter Scott's fiction, covering the sequence of Scottish novels from *Waverley* (1814) to *A Legend of Montrose* (1819). Never since Shakespeare, according to the reviewer (Francis Jeffrey) had there been such a case of inventiveness and creative fertility:

In the period of little more than five years, he has founded a new school of invention; and established and endowed it with nearly thirty volumes of the most animated and original composition that has enriched English literature for a century—volumes that have cast sensibly into the shade all contemporary prose, and even all recent poetry.¹

Noticeably in the process Jeffrey manages to transmute earlier suggestions by reviewers that the novel was a site of excessive female reproduction into a picture of masculine potency, while at the same time intimating the potential of the novel to match or exceed poetry as a genre. The use of the word 'English', though automatic in the circumstances for Jeffrey, is also telling in the light of Scott's shift with the English medieval *Ivanhoe* to primarily non-Scottish 'chivalric' subjects for his fiction. Correspondence involving Scott and his main associates in the publishing world indicates a calculated effort to expand sales in England, a plan matched by the publisher Archibald Constable's engagement of

Statistical information in this chapter is mainly taken from the two following online sources: P.D. Garside, J.E. Belanger, and S.A. Ragaz, *British Fiction, 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception*, designer A.A. Mandal, <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>>; and Peter Garside, Anthony Mandal, Verena Ebbes, Angela Koch, and Rainer Schöwerling, *The English Novel, 1830–1836: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, <<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/journals/corvey/1830s/>>. Thanks are due to Anthony Mandal for help in producing the figures and tables in the present chapter.

¹ *Edinburgh Review* 33 (1820): 1–54, at 1.

the firm Hurst, Robinson & Co. as his main London associates. Impression numbers, which had reached an unprecedented 10,000 for *Rob Roy* (1818), stretched as high as 12,000 in the early 1820s, with Scott receiving advances in excess of £4,000. At the same time the introduction of the larger and more prestigious octavo format provided an excuse for escalating prices to an optimum 31s 6d (one-and-a-half-guineas a volume) with *Kenilworth* (1821). In the new decade Scott also went on to break even his own record of productivity, with the result that on two occasions three titles appeared bearing the same-year imprint (1820 and 1822).

Along with this output, Constable was bringing out collected editions in a range of formats, aimed at different levels of the market, the original *Novels and Tales* being supplemented by other sequences such as *Historical Romances* as fresh titles accumulated. Finally, after Constable's bankruptcy in 1826, the collected Magnum Opus edition, commencing with monthly volumes from June 1829, found a new audience, more earnest and middle class than the original Regency readers, as sales (originally projected at 12,000) soared towards 30,000 per volume.

Certainly it would be hard to overestimate the range of Scott's influence during the 1820s and into the next decade. Among now chartable factors are the establishment of historical romance as the leading fictional mode, as well as a more general masculinization of the novel both in terms of authorship and its readers. At the same time, clearly other more impersonal determinants were at work. New methods of mechanical paper-making and the lifting of war-time restrictions drastically reduced the cost of paper, the main item in publishers' costs, and enhanced the production of larger works of literature such as novels. Less immediately perceptible is a shift in readership, as covert readers of fiction in the 1810s openly embraced a genre now made more respectable, and as a new more extensive wave of younger readers, whose first expectation in imaginative literature was prose fiction, began to make its presence felt. Though Scott's pulling power as an original author had diminished by mid-decade—an early sign was the decision to reduce impression numbers from 12,000 to 10,500 with his *Peperil of the Peak* (1822)—rival novelists, sometimes offering alternative subgenres, clamoured to fill in the space. In Scotland, Constable's list of fiction, mainly comprising Scott titles, was soon exceeded by that of William Blackwood, whose key authors were instrumental in producing a noticeably different kind of 'Scotch novel'. In London, where the publisher Henry Colburn brushed off the crisis in the book trade of 1825–26 with a rapid surge of new titles, emergent forms included the fashionable 'silver fork' novel as initiated by Robert Plumer Ward's *Tremaine, or the Man of Refinement* (1825), and a succession of military-nautical titles, including titles such as George Robert Gleig's *The Chelsea Pensioners* (1829). Two other areas developing rapidly apart from mainstream fiction at this time are the shorter moral-domestic tale, as written by Barbara Hofland [formerly Hoole], and story books for juvenile readers, which could be both religious and informational in tenor. Undoubtedly such transitions reflect deeper changes in the authorship, production, and readership of fiction.

The period 1830–36, leading directly to the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, links Scott's last published novel, *Tales of My Landlord* (4th series, 1832), with Charles Dickens's *Sketches by 'Boz'* (1836–37), his first work of fiction to be published in book form. Traditionally considered as representing something of a hiatus, this phase is

probably best thought of in terms of a number of diverse movements, some apparently contradictory in nature. Seen one way, the course of mainstream fiction served to consolidate some of the main trends evident in the 1820s, with an increasing professionalization of the fiction industry, reinforcement of London's centrality in the market, and tightening of the guinea-and-a-half 'three-decker' (i.e. a novel in three volumes) as the norm for upmarket titles. Elliot Engel and Margaret F. King, however, in *The Victorian Novel before Victoria* (1984), point to a developing urban middle-class outlook, countered by an aristocratic/romantic undertow, reflecting the social tensions in post-Reform Britain, and finding expression in several new modes, notably comic-realistic fiction and the Newgate Novel.² Seen on a yet broader scale, the period can be seen as one of variety and richness, marked by diversification rather than any linear upsurge in new titles, and exhibiting a number of transformations in the production and marketing of fiction. The same diversification also points to a fragmentation and extension of the relatively homogenous reading audience which had hitherto underpinned polite fiction, a situation which by the end of the period invited similar acts of imaginative amalgamation to that achieved by Scott in the Romantic era.

RESOURCES

Until recent years, efforts to quantify trends in areas such as output and the gender balance of authorship have been impeded by the imperfect nature of the bibliographical record. The accounts left by the period of itself, including circulating-library and review listings, are diverse but notoriously unreliable. *The English Catalogue of Books 1801–1836*, compiled by Alexander Peddie and Quintin Waddington, a retrospective compilation published in 1914, incorporates information from contemporary catalogues such as William Bent's London trade catalogues, but does not match the comprehensiveness of the regular Publishers' Circulars issued periodically from October 1837, and provides no categorization by genre. Similar kinds of irregularity are carried over into Andrew Block's bibliography *The English Novel 1740–1850*,³ which compiles its alphabetical listings from a variety of mostly secondary sources, and adopts an elastic policy for inclusion, placing reprints, miscellanies, chapbooks, shilling shockers, quasi-fictional works, and not a few 'ghosts' (i.e. non-existent titles), alongside more standard novels. Other bibliographies have confined themselves to particular kinds of fiction, most notably the Gothic, and more recently women's fiction. Collections of fiction, such as those brought together for the 19th century by Michael Sadleir and Robert Lee Wolff,⁴ are necessarily

² Elliot Engel and Margaret F. King, *The Victorian Novel before Victoria: British Fiction during the Reign of William IV, 1830–37* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984).

³ Andrew Block, *The English Novel 1740–1850* (1939) (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1961).

⁴ Michael Sadleir, ed., *XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record based on his own Collection*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); Robert Lee Wolff, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Catalogue*, 5 vols. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981–86).

determined in their structure by the priorities of their collectors and the opportunities available to them, as well as tending to gravitate towards one of two main spheres, the pre-Romantic/Romantic or high Victorian, with the 1830s consequently caught in a kind of no-man's-land between.

A major breakthrough in the quantification of output has been achieved by the publication in 2000 of the two-volume *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*.⁵ Following on from previous such bibliographies charting fiction in the earlier 18th century, its entries (totalling 3,677 for the sixty years covered) are based wherever possible on actual copies of first editions, located through a variety of search methods, with entries only being reconstituted from secondary sources in cases where no copy appears to have survived. In the case of the second volume, covering 1800–29, the number of surviving novels in later years enables a situation where only some forty entries need to be reconstituted, with just two cases for the 1820s. A great boost to this volume was provided by exceptional holdings of Romantic-era novels at Schloss Corvey, in Germany, part of an aristocratic family library rediscovered by scholars in the 1980s. The evident broad-brush accession policy adopted by the library's main collectors (Victor Amadeus, Landgrave of Hesse-Rotenburg, and his second wife Elise) in acquiring the full swathe of contemporary belles-lettres publications in German, English, and French, results in a unique assembly of British fiction comparable to what might have been held by a leading London circulating library such as the Minerva Library. This in turn helped guide the compilers' sense of what in round terms constituted a 'novel' in the eyes of contemporaries, the general policy in *The English Novel* being to exclude items such as miscellanies, very short tales, religious tracts, fiction for young juveniles, and other specialist publications, some of which require their own bibliographical record. While these exclusions, and the absence of primary entries for subsequent editions, arguably have a limiting effect with regard to the full extensiveness of the fiction industry, the greatly enhanced record (both in range and detail) of new novels produced provides a fresh range of opportunity for statistical analysis.

The bibliographical record has been further enhanced by the online *British Fiction 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation, & Reception [DBF]* (<<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/>>), compiled at the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research at Cardiff University, and first made publicly available in 2004. On one level, this adds additional primary information to the original entries in the printed Bibliography, as a result of further research, with a number of fresh author attributions, improved information regarding further editions, and the addition of several new entries (making the total count 2,272 titles). The database is searchable over a number of fields. It also offers extensive contextual materials for individual entries, these including advertisements from newspapers, reviews, information from publishing archives and circulating

⁵ Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling, eds., *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

library catalogues, anecdotal records (as found in contemporary memoirs, etc.), and subscription lists where these are found. As a result it becomes possible to view with a new degree of precision elements such as publication costs, author remuneration, impression numbers, and reception.

One further publication now makes it possible to take the bibliographical survey of the novel right up to the advent of the Victorian Age. *The English Novel, 1830–1836* (<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/journals/corvey/1830s/>), initially released online in 2003, follows the same method as its printed predecessor in providing annual listings of new novels, employing the same criteria for inclusion, with a sum total of 610 entries for the seven years covered. The greater space available, however, allows the extension of individual entries in a number of ways, these including itemization of separate pieces within a work of fiction (a useful provision in view of the increased number of collections of tales at this time) and more extensive records of subsequent editions. At the same time, in responding to the increasingly variegated nature of output, the *English Novel, 1830–1836* provides a series of appendices listing various types of non-standard and quasi-fictional works, such as juvenile literature, multi-genre miscellanies, and heavily didactic/religious tales, comprising as a whole an additional 138 entries. One advantage in keeping the ‘mainstream’ annual listings separate is that it allows more direct comparison to be made with the bibliographical record for preceding years. Statistical information in the following sections in this chapter apply (unless otherwise stated) to the annual listings in both bibliographies, though data for the years 1800–29 relates to the online *DBF* version, with its slightly larger number of entries and enhanced author attributions.

NUMBERS

Some of the more sanguine commentators on the output of early 19th-century fiction have assumed a generally upward movement, stimulated by moments of exceptional growth, noticeably at the turn of the century, when exasperated reviewers gave up their endeavour to track all titles, and in the early 1830s, supposedly generated by the new technologies and a rising middle-class market. Other commentators, some much closer to events, have pointed to a stuttering of the genre at certain points, and even intimated a terminal decline. Among the latter can be counted James Grant in the second series of *The Great Metropolis* (1837). Grant, a Scottish newspaper editor who had moved to London in the later 1820s, points to a zenith of novel production ‘ten or twelve years since’, that is about 1825. Compared to this in his eyes there had been a noticeable reduction in the output of new titles more recently, other signs of decline being found in the smaller impressions printed, diminishing sales, and lower author remuneration. In his own experience, four novels published six months ago, two by celebrated authors, had failed to generate sales of more than 350 copies, and three of them somewhat less. Such novels as were produced, moreover, were more likely to be lent rather than purchased individually: ‘The truth is, that, with the exception of the works of fifteen or twenty

authors, no individual ever now dreams of purchasing a novel for his own reading. The only copies bought are for the circulating libraries.⁶

The figures for new titles published annually provided by the bibliographies described above offer a picture somewhere between these two poles. In actuality, two of the most significant surges in production had already taken place before 1800; with notable peaks in 1788 (eighty titles with that year's imprint), marked by the rise of a new species of domestic sentimental fiction and the arrival of several new female authors, and in 1799 (99 titles), in a context of ideological ferment and at a highpoint of Gothic fiction. The same period also saw a proliferation of circulating libraries specializing in novels, some of which might possibly have required as many as two new titles a week to satisfy a clientele eager for 'something new'. At the same time, a number of counterweights necessarily limited any exponential growth, negative factors including the ponderous processes involved in producing larger works of literature using movable type and hand presses, and the inability of a relatively small pool of indigenous authors to generate an exceptional number of titles.

By contrast, the pattern for the new century was hardly one of uninterrupted growth. Over the thirty-seven years covered, the average from the total of 2,882 titles is slightly less than seventy-eight novels a year, with only fourteen years passing the eighty mark, and more than half caught in the band between sixty and eighty. Only in three cases is one hundred exceeded; the number in each case standing out from immediately surrounding years, and inviting interpretation in terms of special circumstances. The surge in the year 1808 (111 titles), for example, can be partly explained in terms of widespread controversy surrounding the acrimonious separation of the Prince and Princess of Wales. (Owing to the slowness in production, and a still evident practice of post-dating imprints, it is sometimes useful to look to the preceding year for root causes.) Set against the preceding decade, the 1810s show a marked drop in production, created partly by a backlash against 'low' fiction in more austere times, but governed also by material factors such as the high cost of paper, as well as a marked decline in the production of 'imported' titles in the form of translations of foreign writers. Compared with 1803, in the immediate wake of the Peace of Amiens, when nearly thirty out of seventy-nine titles were translations, mostly from the French, the whole of the 1810s exhibit only thirty-four such works, with indigenous authors as a result supplying a much larger share of output. Noticeably Scott's first venture into the genre with *Waverley* (1814) came at a low point in production (sixty-three titles), followed by an even deeper trough (229 titles only for the four years between 1815–18), though there is a suggestion of recovery (stimulated in part no doubt by the growing reputation of 'the author of *Waverley*') in 1819 with seventy-three titles.

Compared with this the early 1820s represent a period of expansion, reaching a highpoint in 1824 with just under one hundred new titles, reflecting James Grant's sense of a heyday for the novel at this time (see Figure 1.1). While there was some revival in the

⁶ James Grant, *The Great Metropolis*, 2nd series, 2 vols. (London: Saunders & Otley, 1837), 1: 122–4.

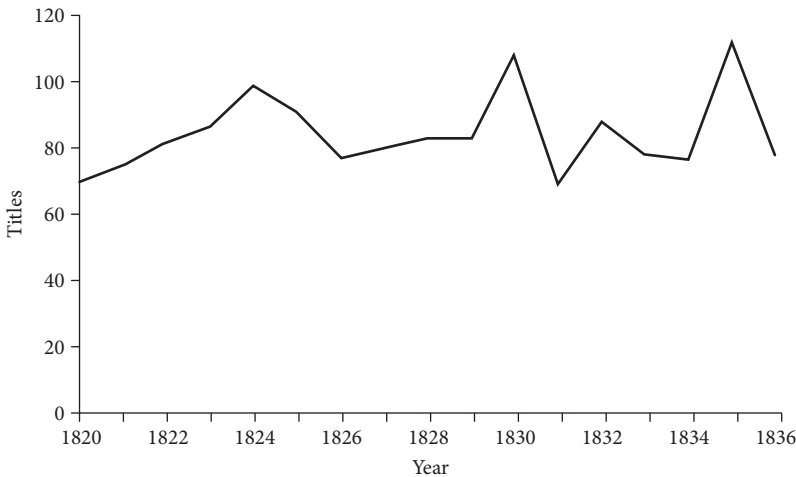


FIGURE 1.1 Publication of new novels, 1820–1836

Sources: *British Fiction, 1800–1829* (2004); *The English Novel, 1830–1836* (2003)

publication of foreign titles in translation, with an especially interesting crop of German titles in the mid-1820s, the scale was relatively negligible, and it is at this time that Britain became unmistakably a net exporter of fiction in terms of titles. A drop to seventy-seven titles in 1826 nevertheless registers an element of vulnerability, reflecting larger disturbances during the so-called ‘crash’ of that year. With the bankruptcy of Archibald Constable (as Scott’s publisher, one of the most prominent in the field of upmarket fiction), and a general tendency among the trade in times of crisis to fall back on more traditional kinds of output, the novel at this time might have seemed especially vulnerable. The resilience of the form, however, is evident in a more steady output of eighty titles or more annually between 1827 and 1829.

The previously unanalysed material provided by *The English Novel, 1830–1836* invites a number of questions. The figure of 108 titles for imprint year 1830 might seem to reflect a fairly immediate response to technological change and the new spirit of middle-class reform. However, the following four years fail to sustain this growth, with a noticeable falling back to just sixty-nine titles in 1831. One possible explanation lies in the disruption caused by political agitation leading up to the final passing of the Reform Bills in 1831/32. William Blackwood, writing to his son on 24 October 1831, had little doubt that this was a major cause:

This cursed Reform Bill has caused a dreadful stagnation in every kind of business for the whole of the year. There never has been so slack a year in our trade ever since I have been in business. Had it not been for the Magazine we should have had nothing to do.⁷

⁷ Cited in Margaret Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1897), 2: 104.

Blackwood's reference to *Blackwood's Magazine* suggests another difficulty for the novel at the time, in the shape of the growing popularity of the monthly magazines and a new species of annuals and keepsakes, specializing in smaller items of verse and prose, both of which helped cultivate a new taste for miscellaneous literature. The sudden rise in output of works of fiction to 112 new titles in 1835 might be partly owing to the form having learned to adapt and absorb such changes, in the shape of comic-domestic fiction, illustrated works, collections of tales, and other kinds of compilation. This buoyancy was also aided by an increasingly fluent interchange between British and American fiction markets, with some twenty titles originally published in North America being issued by London publishers in the early 1830s, nine of these in 1835 alone. The upward movement of 1835 is not sustained however in the following year, where output again sinks to below eighty titles (seventy-eight), perhaps partly as a result of a momentary exhaustion, but also in keeping with Grant's negative diagnosis as seen from 1837.

Any full analysis of the situation would be incomplete without reference to the total production of books, though calculation at this level is notoriously difficult, and any comparison between genres is fraught with difficulty, in view of factors such as the different sizes of book concerned. As a whole it would seem that the number of new novels produced reflects book production as a whole, albeit with variations in certain years, and with output of fiction in the earlier 1820s slightly exceeding the general pattern, achieving in the region of 8 per cent of the new book market. As part of his overall analysis of 19th-century book production, Simon Eliot points to a continuing upward trend in the 1830s, with a minor dip in 1831, and a considerable rise in 1832, followed by a slight downturn later in the decade, particularly noticeable in 1836.⁸ The latter accords with Grant's pessimism regarding the novel in 1836, a year when according to his own estimate some 1,500 different books were published in London (pointing to a market share for fiction of just over 5 per cent). Noticeably Grant is more upbeat about several other types of publication, including periodical literature and works of 'a light and sketchy kind', though he is more pessimistic still about poetry, 'at a still greater discount in the literary market than novels'.⁹

Another indication of the decline of the genre, in Grant's analysis, lay in the decrease in the impression numbers for first editions (and an absence of subsequent editions except in exceptional cases):

The authors whose works of fiction a dozen years since commanded a sale from 1,500 to 2,000 copies cannot now command a sale of 500...750 copies... That indeed is the number usually printed of novels, and other works of fiction, except where the great popularity of the author is supposed likely to carry off a larger impression. One thousand copies of such works...are considered a large edition.¹⁰

⁸ Simon Eliot, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800–1919* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1994), 24.

⁹ Grant, *Great Metropolis*, 1: 133–4, 131, 124.

¹⁰ Grant, *Great Metropolis*, 1: 123, 207–8.

Examination of publishers' archives mostly corroborates this account. At the beginning of the century an edition of no more than 500 would have been considered a normality, with only authors of reputation achieving anything higher. In the 1820s, however, there are fairly numerous examples of new or 'middle rank' authors being published in editions of 1500 or more. Longmans printed a first edition amounting to 2,500 of Amelia Opie's *Tales of the Heart* (1820), and regularly authorized impressions of 1750 for works of fiction by Jane and Anna Maria Porter, even when the tide of popularity was starting to turn against them. In Edinburgh William Blackwood at the onset of his novel-producing career risked first editions of 1,500 for James Hogg's *Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818) and Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818), though at that stage both authors were new to the form. Oliver & Boyd likewise issued 1,500 copies of *Glenfergus* (1820), by Robert Mudie (another first-time novelist), and went on to produce 3,000 copies of John Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize* (1823), having temporarily captured the author from Blackwood. In the 1830s the publishing archives of Richard Bentley provide a dense record of impression numbers, with first editions of new novels generally ranging between 500 and 2,000 copies, in gradations of 250, though in the exceptional case of Maria Edgeworth's last novel, *Helen* (1834), 3,000 were apparently produced. Numbers for imprint year 1836 would seem to show if anything a lessening of confidence, with at least one instance of just 250 copies, and several titles by novelists of reputation being confined to an impression of 750 or 1,000.

AUTHORS

From 1,437 novels belonging to 1820–36, it is possible identify nearly 550 different authors (a figure that includes some ten unidentified pseudonyms). Table 1.1 lists the twelve most productive novelists, followed by the total number of titles per author, amount of volumes involved, and (in the final column) inclusive dates of productivity within the period.

One prominent feature of this list is the absence of any dominant author covering the period as a whole. Both Scott and Galt, the two most productive writers, began their careers as novelists in the mid-1810s, and published their last works in the early 1830s. John Galt's output moved through several phases, from the early London-published *The Majolo* (1815), to the sequence of classic Scottish titles published in Edinburgh during the 1820s, mostly by William Blackwood, and then (from 1830) on to a new period of heightened activity, involving a number of London publishers, culminating in the achievement of no fewer than three titles in both 1832 and 1833. Unlike Scott, all of whose titles were in three or four volumes, Galt's output ranged from short single volumes to conventional three-deckers (a form whose constraints he more than once complained about). Two female authors in the list, Catherine George Ward (afterwards Mason) and Hannah Maria Jones (afterwards Lowndes), on the other hand, specialized for much of the 1820s in a species of serialized fiction, issued first in weekly numbers, and then bound up and re-marketed usually as large single volumes, incorporating engraved

Table 1.1 Most productive authors of novels, 1820–1836

Authors	Novels	Volumes	Imprint Dates
Galt, John ^a	24	48	1820–33
Scott, Sir Walter	17	49	1820–32
Gore, Catherine Grace Frances ^b	16	41	1824–36
Cooper, James Fenimore	14	42	1821–35
James, George Payne Rainsford	13	38	1829–36
Ward, Catherine George ^c	13	19	1820–33
Jones, Hannah Maria ^d	12	12	1821–36
St Clair, Rosalia [pseud.]	11	37	1820–34
Hofland, Barbara	11	21	1820–35
Scargill, William Pitt ^e	11	39	1826–35
Banim, John and Michael ^f	10	27	1824–35
Bulwer Lytton, Edward George	10	27	1827–35

^a includes 1 newly identified work

^b includes 1 questionable work (1 vol.)

^c includes 11 large 1-vol. serialized works

^d includes 12 large 1-vol. serialized works

^e includes 4 questionable works (10 vols.)

^f includes single and jointly authored works

Sources: *British Fiction, 1800–1829* (2004); *The English Novel, 1830–1836* (2003)

illustrations. While at the end of her career in the early 1830s Ward reverted to providing more conventional multi-volume works, Jones continued to produce the same brand of melodramatic domestic fiction for number-specialists such as George Virtue into the Victorian period. Other female stalwarts are the pseudonymous Rosalia St Clair, author of a chain of three- or four-volumed romances for the Minerva Press between 1819 and 1835; and Barbara Hofland, who first emerges as a writer of fiction in 1809, but whose output from the mid-1820s chiefly consisted of shorter moral-domestic tales, published mainly by Longmans, and ranging from *Integrity* (1823) to *Fortitude* (1835). Productive male novelists notable for the regularity of their output across virtually the whole period include James Fenimore Cooper, most of whose three-deckers from *Precaution* (1821) onwards were published in Britain shortly after appearing in North America, though on occasions simultaneously or even ahead of publications there; and the Banim brothers (Michael and John), creators of a sequence of Irish national tales beginning with *Tales, by the O'Hara Family* (1825).

Other prolific novelists can be seen beginning their careers further into the period. After a hesitant start with *Theresa Marchmont* (1824), Catherine Gore produced at least two fashionable novels in four of the years between 1829 and 1836, and went on to publish in all seventy works (including translated and 'edited' titles) over her lifetime. Edward Bulwer Lytton, whose career as a novelist began with the one-volume *Falkland* (1827), enhanced his reputation through a succession of upmarket three-deckers in the early 1830s, leading to *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) and *Rienzi* (1835). The historical

novelist G.P.R. James first entered the market with *Richelieu, A Tale of France* (1829), this being followed by no fewer than twelve similar works through to 1836, with two titles in 1832 and 1833, and three in 1835: a velocity of output that followed on into the next decade. Other novelists, not included in the list, but whose regularity of output is first seen in the early 1830s, include Frederick Marryat (nine chiefly nautical tales beginning with *The Naval Officer* (1829)), and Frances Trollope (four novels in the wake of her successful non-fictional *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)). Nearer the end of the period under view one catches a glimpse of two writers just at the start of what would prove to be spectacular careers: G.W.M. Reynolds, whose *The Youthful Impostor* (1835) gives little indication of his later sensationalism; and Charles Dickens, whose *Pickwick Papers* was serialized in monthly parts from April 1836, though not made available in book form until the following year.

One of the advantages of having access to full title-page descriptions through the recent bibliographies described above is that it allows a better view of the ways in which authors were projected at their readership when novels were originally published. Over the whole period from 1820 to 1836 less than a third of novels (31.3 per cent in the 1820s; 32.95 per cent for 1830–36) carried an authorial proper name on the title-page of the first edition. Anonymity itself could cover a range of possibilities, from a complete absence of any information, through recognition by means of stated authorship of previous titles (a practice evidently favoured by the circulating libraries), to the consistent use of a pseudonym which effectively acquires the status of a proper name. A strong influence in the case of male anonymity undoubtedly was the example of Scott, who featured on the titles of his novels consistently as ‘the author of *Waverley* [etc.]’, with the exception of the patently pseudonymous ‘Jedediah Cleishbotham’ for the *Tales of My Landlord* series, and continued to employ this method even after his enforced outing as the author. Other male novelists whose names are absent on the original title-page during this period include Bulwer Lytton and Benjamin Disraeli, both operating at the upper end of the market.

In the case of female novelists, though anonymity had long offered a shield for those wishing not to jeopardize respectability, a number of authors from the start of the century, such as Maria Edgeworth and Amelia Opie, regularly used their real names, thereby acknowledging a kind of semi-professionalism. The method of description could also change according to circumstances. While Barbara Hofland’s first work of fiction was published anonymously, her following novels generally observed the ‘by the author of...’ pattern; however, by the 1820s ‘Mrs Hofland’ had become the main signifier, serving in the process as a useful maternal trademark for tales aimed primarily at individual purchasers and juvenile readers. In some instances one senses the publisher’s priorities as much as the author’s. James Hogg’s earlier fictions combined his real name with authorship of the long poem *The Queen’s Wake*, his one unequivocal literary success. For *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), however, Longmans were persuaded by Hogg into anonymous publication, a strategy which met with a singular lack of success. In the new decade *Altrive Tales* (1832) was launched as ‘by the Ettrick Shepherd’, a nomenclature given fresh currency by the author’s recent triumphant visit

to London; while his last work of fiction, *Tales of the Wars of Montrose* (1835), swollen into three volumes at the behest of its publisher, reverted to the original pattern with 'By James Hogg, Esq., Author of *The Queen's Wake*'. Publishing considerations likewise seem to underlie the unusual appearance of 'Captain Marryat R.N.' on the title of *The Pirate, and the Three Cutters* (1836), a lavishly illustrated volume published by Longmans, while Marryat's other work of fiction that year, the three-decker *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, followed the regular pattern for his novels of identification through previous titles (though the authorship was almost certainly common knowledge at the time).

There were a number of ways by which authorship could be known or guessed at without full disclosure, some of them given new life by the cult of celebrity and practice of 'puffing' works rife in the early 1830s. One fairly common practice was for names to be revealed in paratextual materials such as Dedications and Prefaces. All Mrs Gore's mature novels appeared anonymously, apart from the listing of previous titles, a procedure which placed her on the same footing as male novelists of the 'silver fork' school. However, the Dedication to the Duke of Sussex in her *Polish Tales* (1833) is signed 'C.F. Gore', in a possibly calculated slippage of identity. More brazen still was G.P.R. James, whose name crops up on a number of occasions in this way, and who in 1835 can be found appealing to friends to preserve his anonymity in the 'Advertisement' to *My Aunt Pontypool*, while in *One in a Thousand; or, the Days of Henry Quatre* signing his Dedication to William IV as 'George Payne Rainsford James'. Newspaper advertisements and reviews are likewise found attributing authorship in the case of ostensibly anonymous works. Mary Shelley's *Lodore* (1835) was described on the original title-page as 'By the Author of "Frankenstein"' (in itself a strong mark of identification); an advertisement in *The Star* on 7 April 1835 nonetheless gives it as 'by Mrs. Shelley'. Later editions also could rapidly bring to light full ascriptions, even at a time when the author was still unrevealed in ongoing works: James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pilot* (1824) is thus given as by 'By J.F. Cooper' in the first volume (1832) of Colburn and Bentley's Standard Novels series, while authorship of the Banims' *The Smuggler* (1831) was evidently announced in an advertisement for no. 29 of the same series after a gap of only two years since its original publication.

In broad gender terms the period shows a rising masculinization of the novel in terms of authorship, sustained into the 1830s, and to some extent validating claims about an 'edging out'¹¹ of women, from a sphere where earlier (notably in the 1790s and 1810s) they had enjoyed a degree of dominance. Figure 1.2 provides a view in percentage terms of the output of titles by named and identified male and female novelists from 1820 to 1836. In the 1820s known male-authored novels outnumber their female counterparts by 426 to 289, with 112 gender-unknown cases, the male category thus claiming more than half (51.5 per cent) of the total number of titles overall. This male surge is immediately apparent in 1820, when male titles outnumber female ones by thirty-four

¹¹ The term is taken from Gaye Tuchman with Nina E. Fortin, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1989), which acknowledges the masculine influence of Scott, but whose main analysis begins with 1840–79, as 'the period of invasion' (7).

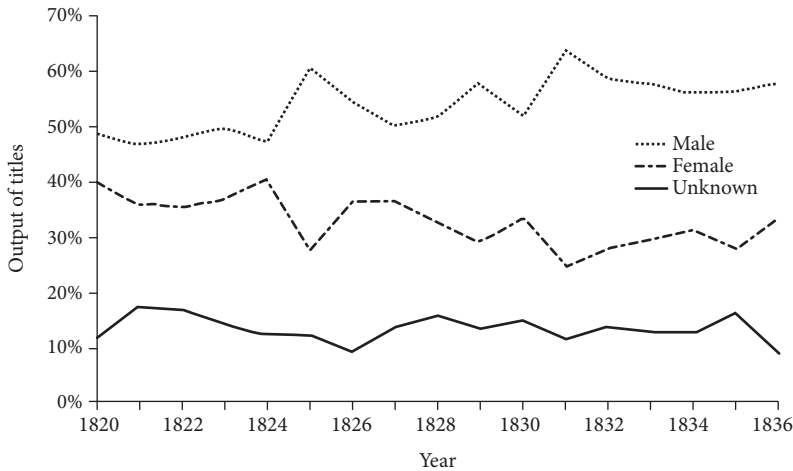


FIGURE 1.2 Authorship of new novels, 1820–1836: Gender breakdown

Sources: *British Fiction, 1800–1829* (2004); *The English Novel, 1830–1836* (2003)

to twenty-eight, the first year since 1804 to show a clear male dominance. This level is mostly sustained in the following three years, with 117 male-authored works outnumbering eighty-eight by women writers, though in 1824 a measure of equivalence occurs, forty female titles nearly matching forty-seven by males. However in 1825 the balance shifts dramatically again, with for the first time twice as many known male as opposed to female titles (55 to 25), a similar ratio again being evident in 1829 (48 to 24). One outstanding feature of the later 1820s is the high proportion of male novelists writing anonymously, an almost cult-like activity where Scott's influence is again palpable. Another influential factor at this point is the disproportionate amount of male-authored novels coming from Edinburgh, itself then at a high point of production, with only some 15 per cent of output there identifiable as by women writers.

For the period 1830–36 the same trend continues, with novels by male authors outnumbering female ones by 347.5 to 181.5 (the half point reflects a co-authored novel), and male titles again representing more than half the total output, notwithstanding a continuing residue of gender-unknown titles. Moreover, three of the seven imprint years (1831, 1832, and 1835) see twice as many male-authored novels as female ones. Certainly there are signs of women authors finding it difficult to uphold their position, as an older type of domestic fiction faded in popularity at the expense of modes such as military-nautical fiction and the Newgate novel, which by definition proved difficult for them to inhabit. Another notable loss came with the male appropriation of historical romance, first as a result of the unprecedented success of the 'the author of *Waverley*', then through a tighter-seeming, more 'fact'-bound kind of historical fiction, as spearheaded by writers such as Horatio Smith and G.P.R. James. Notwithstanding this growing dominance of male authors, and their occupancy of some of the more prestigious areas of the genre, there are scant signs however as yet of any gender-switching through pseudonym of the kind practised by later novelists.

There are no clear examples of authors at this time reaching financial independence through writing fiction. Walter Scott, by far the biggest earner, ploughed his profits into the seeming security of his estate at Abbotsford, but still maintained his professional legal posts up to and beyond his bankruptcy in 1826. John Galt, who unusually managed to command relatively large payments throughout his career, still maintained his many business interests, and effectively left the literary scene for three years near the end of the 1820s as a result of his activities in Canada. Among those female writers who attained regular and fairly substantial rewards, such as Maria Edgeworth and the Porter sisters, it would be hard to find cases where this represented the core of their social and financial existence. The records of publishing houses and other sources indicate that the optimum period for remuneration came towards the mid-1820s, with a general tailing off afterwards. William Blackwood within one year offered John Gibson Lockhart 1,000 guineas for *Reginald Dalton* (1823), his third work of fiction, and (through her father) Susan Ferrier £1,000 for *Inheritance* (1824). At the start of the new decade the Bentley records indicate payment to Eyre Evans Crowe of £500 for the copyright of *The English at Home* (1830), and a similar sum to Galt for *Lawrie Todd; or, the Settlers in the Woods* (1830). Less prominent novelists were offered more in the region of £100–£200, with the prospect sometimes of half the original sum in the event of a second edition. Other writers entered into ‘half profits’ agreements, whereby the publisher and author shared any proceeds after costs were deducted, a situation which could lead to a long wait with little or nothing at the end. James Grant in 1837 suggests as not uncommon a situation where the author took the risk of loss, with one recent would-be novelist a loser to the extent of £200, and paints a bleak picture of the lives of those attempting to live by writing alone: ‘There are scenes of destitution and misery ever and anon exhibited among literary men—aye, and literary women, too—which would make the heart sick.’¹² Ample proof of the wide-ranging nature of such destitution can be found in the record of appeals to the Royal Literary Fund, where applications relate not just to more obviously vulnerable cases, such as Catherine Ward and Hannah Jones, but to productive male novelists, such as William Pitt Scargill, operating close to the heart of the fashionable carriage trade.¹³

PUBLISHERS AND PRODUCTION

The bulk of fiction in the early 19th century originated from London publishing houses. As a whole in the period under view almost 90 per cent of new novels carry London on their imprint, either as the sole or primary place of publication. The only challenge to

¹² Grant, *Great Metropolis*, 1: 181, 141.

¹³ See *The Royal Literary Fund 1790–1918: Archives* (London: World Microfilms, 1994). An overview of the conditions of authorship, based on these records, is provided by Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

this supremacy came from Scotland, especially in the 1820s, when Edinburgh publishers acted as the managing publishers of some 11.5 per cent of all new fiction. At the same time the ‘Scotch novel’ became for a while one of the most fashionable of literary items, and went on to have a lasting effect on the history of the novel.

There can be no question that Scott operated as a powerful force in the development of a Scottish fiction industry, which in the earlier century (apart from reprints) had been virtually non-existent. All his novels without fail carried the word Edinburgh at the head of the title-page imprint, followed in earlier instances by the wording ‘Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.’, this latter reflecting the author’s lifelong insistence that his imaginative works should be printed by Ballantyne’s firm. The prioritizing of Edinburgh as the place of publication occurs even in those cases where Longmans were technically the managing publishers, though from *The Antiquary* (1816), when Archibald Constable took over the management, its positioning normally reflected the joint reality of an Edinburgh printer and publisher. Even so it would be wrong to regard Constable himself as a major producer of fiction: in the years from 1814 to his bankruptcy in 1826 he managed fewer than thirty titles, the majority by Scott, in the process rejecting approaches from a number of other novelists attracted by the cachet of an Edinburgh imprint. To comprehend fully the optimum period of production, it is necessary to turn to William Blackwood, who was the primary publisher of thirty-five new titles in the 1820s, twice as many as Constable’s output, even including the Waverley Novels. Blackwood’s productivity as a producer of fiction peaks in the years 1821–25, when his firm was the primary publisher of some twenty-five novels, representing nearly 50 per cent of all new fiction published from Edinburgh (for his full output, and that of other publishers, see Table 1.2). In the 1820s as a whole Blackwood was the fifth-largest publisher of new fiction titles in Britain, most of these with Thomas Cadell, junior, in London as the secondary publisher. An integral part of the operation from the start was *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which not only served as a source of material and means of keeping together a body of literary personnel, but also helped shape a core audience, not least in the demographically expanding Central Scottish and Northern English regions. Between 1820 and 1825, more than half Blackwood’s fiction titles were generated by just three authors, John Galt, J.G. Lockhart, and John Wilson, all closely connected with the magazine.

Encouraged by the vogue, a number of other Edinburgh booksellers moved into the field, most notably Oliver & Boyd, who published some fifteen titles from Edinburgh in the years 1819–29, mostly with the London firm of Whittaker & Co. as secondary publishers. Other Edinburgh booksellers in the 1820s account for more than forty-five titles, among these being Robert Cadell (Constable’s successor, who published titles by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder and Marion and Margaret Corbett, in addition to the later Waverley novels) and William Oliphant (proselytizing evangelical titles, mainly by Grace Kennedy). However in the later 1820s, after the jolt of the failures of 1825–26, production started to decline, as Blackwood fell back on his more regular output, Cadell turned to promoting Scott’s *Magnum Opus*, and Oliver & Boyd found safe ground in textbooks and wholesale distribution. In the period 1830–36 just 3.5 per cent of new novels were managed from Scotland.

Table 1.2 Primary publishers of new novels, 1820–1836

Publishers	Novels	% Total	Imprints Include
Colburn/Bentley	249	17.3	Henry Colburn; Henry Colburn & Co.; Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley; Richard Bentley
Minerva	186	13.0	A.K. Newman & Co.
Longmans	115	8.0	Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown; L., H., R., O., B., & Green; L., R., O., B., & G.; L., R., O., B., G., and Longman; Longman & Co.
Whittaker & Co.	89	6.2	G. & W.B. Whittaker; Geo. B. Whittaker; Whittaker, Treacher & Arnot; Whittaker, Treacher & Co.
Saunders & Otley	65	4.5	Saunders & Otley
Smith, Elder, & Co.	51	3.6	Smith, Elder, & Co.
Blackwood	38	2.6	William Blackwood; William Blackwood & Sons
Bull/Churton	36	2.5	Edward Bull; Bull & Churton; Edward Churton
Cochrane/Macrone	32	2.2	Cochrane & Pickersgill; James Cochrane & Co.; Cochrane and Macrone; John Macrone
Virtue	19	1.3	George Virtue; Virtue, Tallis & Co.
Other	557	38.8	
Total	1437		

Sources: *British Fiction 1800–1829* (2004); *The English Novel, 1830–1836* (2003)

An associated factor in this decline was the increasing professionalism of the London trade itself, as a new species of publisher began to take hold of the situation. The two leading producers of new titles in London prior to this, A.K. Newman and Longmans, had operated in distinctly different areas of the book trade. Having taken over the Minerva establishment earlier in the century, A.K. Newman managed to produce a reasonably steady stream of circulating-library fiction, maintaining a rate of up to a third of total output into the early 1820s. In mid-decade, however, the Minerva's market share began to decline rapidly, and in 1829 the concern only brought out nine novels. By this point Newman's titles had acquired a somewhat faded look, many of his (predominantly female) authors being well past any literary celebrity they may once have enjoyed, and the books themselves looking cheap compared with top-range products and being priced accordingly. Newman continued to publish fiction in the 1830s, issuing some forty titles up to 1836, with a slightly varied output, including a number of reprints of American titles, though the odd attempts to mirror immediate literary fashions are far from convincing.

The long-established firm of Longman & Co., whose operations were centrally based in Paternoster Row, issued novels consistently throughout the early 19th century, averaging about ten a year in the earlier 1820s. Apart from an early involvement with Scott, most of their titles came from authors of 'middling' reputation, such as Opie and the Porters, to whom Longmans generally showed creditable loyalty. At the end of the 1820s, however, output dips noticeably (with just two titles for 1829); and while there

was a revival of sorts in 1830–36, with just over thirty titles in all, the house could in no way be described as shaping the course of the genre. Some new authors of note were acquired in the new decade, among them James, Harriet Martineau, and Marryat, but more often than not on an occasional basis, rather than as regular authors. A similar pattern can be found in the case of Whittaker & Co., another leading wholesale house, who were primary publishers of approximately ten novels a year in the mid-1820s, notable examples including Mary Shelley's *Valperga* (1823) and Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village* (1824), followed by some thirty works between 1830–36, when authors included Frances Trollope and Theodore Hook. For the years 1826–29, however, the firm produced only six titles, with none at all in both 1827 and 1828.

It was at this low ebb in the market that Henry Colburn first emerges as a mass producer of fiction. As the proprietor of the English and Foreign Circulating Library in Conduit Street, at the heart of the West End, Colburn at first mostly published translated fiction, before turning to indigenous authors in the 1810s, his lists then containing a number of eye-catching names, notably that of Lady Morgan, though production was limited to no more than a handful of titles annually. At the same time Colburn strengthened his position in the literary world (and capacity for puffing his own wares) through proprietorship of a number of periodicals, notably the *New Monthly Magazine* and the *Literary Gazette*. This in turn led to his disposing of the circulating library in 1824 to concentrate on publishing activities from fresh headquarters in New Burlington Street. Output of fiction by his firm expanded significantly at this point, with thirty new titles in 1826–27, twenty-four in 1828, and no fewer than thirty-four (representing over 40 per cent of total production) in 1829. Six of the 1829 titles also carried on their imprint the name of Richard Bentley, the printer with whom Colburn had entered into full partnership that year. Works issued from New Burlington Street in the late 1820s include three titles that set the mould for a new-style 'silver fork' fiction, as well as Marryat's *The Naval Officer* (1829), and historical novels by James and Smith. Nearly all were in three volumes, in a supposedly octavo format, and retailed at the premium price of 31s 6d.

Before the partnership of Colburn and Bentley foundered in 1832, a further sixty-eight novels had been issued under their joint imprint, the large majority in a similar up-market mould, and involving a variety of celebrity authors, with 'aristocratic' credentials being displayed or intimated at every opportunity. Another achievement, with long-term ongoing effects, was Colburn and Bentley's cloth-backed Standard Novels series, in single volumes, commencing with Cooper's *The Pilot* in February 1831 priced at 6s and continuing until its nineteenth monthly issue before being taken over by Bentley. After the partnership's dissolution, Bentley issued no fewer than seventy-four new novels under his own imprint to 1836, among them W.H. Ainsworth's *Rookwood: A Romance* (1834), adding at the same time a number of authors to those inherited from Colburn. In June 1836, Colburn paid Bentley £3,500 to be released from his exile from the London trade, setting up new premises at Great Marlborough Street, from where he issued three novels with that year's imprint, two of them by Gore (at the onset of a rivalry with Bentley that would carry on to mid-century). At the height of their operations in

1830–36 Bentley and Colburn were responsible for no fewer than 145 new titles, representing almost a quarter of total production of novels for those years.

Two other leading publishers of novels shadowed Colburn in centring their activities on proprietorship of a leading London circulating library. Having purchased Colburn's Conduit Street library in 1824, Saunders & Otley issued a stream of fairly upmarket titles in the later 1820s, including an early female-authored 'silver-fork' fiction, Marianne Spencer Hudson's *Almack's* (1826). In the early 1830s production continued at much the same pace, with a quickening of activity in 1834–35, when the firm issued nearly thirty (twenty-seven) titles, normally in three volumes. High-profile authors assembled by that time included Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton, Gore, and the Countess of Blessington. From 1832 the firm were also publishers of *The Metropolitan Magazine*, under the editorship of Marryat, whose *Jacob Faithful* (1834) and *Peter Simple* (1834) were both serialized there in advance of their publication as full three-deckers. A similar if more fragmented path is found in the case of Edward Bull and his younger partner Edward Churton, whose operations were conducted from the British and Foreign Subscription Library in Holles Street, off Cavendish Square (the terms for which are often appended in their publications). Edward Bull published just four novels in the later 1820s, most notably Henry Neele's *The Romance of History: England* (1828), the first of a line of such post-Scottian productions. An acceleration in output then occurs with nearly ten titles in 1832, immediately prior to Bull entering into partnership with Churton, who first appeared as part of a joint imprint in 1833, before succeeding to the business in 1834 and issuing books under his own name from that point. As a whole the two were responsible for over thirty new novels during 1830–36, aimed at the higher end of the circulating-library market, though with more a more run-of-the mill look about them as time went on. Bell and Churton (then Churton solely) also published *The Court Magazine*, edited for a time by Caroline Norton, whose novel, *The Wife and Woman's Reward* (1835), was nevertheless published by the rival firm of Saunders & Otley.

One other concern leads more directly to the Victorian period proper. Smith, Elder & Co. published their first three works of fiction in 1829, from 65 Cornhill, including the single-volume *Tales and Confessions* by Leitch Ritchie, who, like its founder, originated from Scotland. In the 1830s the firm issued nearly fifty (forty-eight) titles, amongst which are the titles in the 'Library of Romance' series, edited by Ritchie, who attempted to take the lead offered by Bentley's Standard Novels one stage further in offering original (rather than just recently published) works of fiction in single-volume form, priced at 6s. In a prefatory statement in the first of the series, the Banims' *Ghost-Hunter and His Family* (1833), Ritchie promised a monthly sequence of original novels by well-known and unknown authors, translations and adaptations of novels in foreign languages, and reprints and adaptations of American novels. Underlying his remarks one senses a concerted assault on the conventional multi-volume novel with the intention of transforming the fiction industry:

One effect of the plan will be to diminish the number of novels; for it is manifest, that no work which is not presumed to be calculated for extensive circulation, will be published

at such a price. This will be a benefit even to the book-sellers themselves... for the great majority of existing novels is formed of *unsuccessful* ones.¹⁴

An element of retreat is nevertheless found in a new prospectus attached to the fourth in the series, John Galt's *The Stolen Child* (1833), which promises a division of titles into parts, allowing the libraries to purchase in sheets and make up smaller volumes of their own. A further faltering is evident in the sixth volume, *The Slave-King* (1833), a translation from Victor Hugo, where a decision to publish bi-monthly henceforth is announced. The series continued as far as its fifteenth volume, William Smith's *Ernesto: A Philosophical Romance* (1835), but clearly without making its intended mark on novel production. Smith, Elder & Co. however continued to publish individual works of fiction, a fair proportion in single volumes, with a bumper crop of thirteen titles (their highest to date) in 1836.

While marked by discord and failed opportunities, the last combination under consideration arguably shows in sharpest relief the possibilities for a new kind of novel. James Cochrane first appears as a publisher of fiction in 1831, issuing that year three titles from his headquarters at 11 Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, the most striking of which is *The Club-Book* (co-published with Pickersgill), a miscellany of shorter pieces mostly by Scottish writers, edited by Andrew Picken. Among the publications of Cochrane's firm in 1832 was James Hogg's *Altrive Tales*, projected as a Magnum-like collection in twelve volumes, but which foundered after the first volume as a result of Cochrane's financial failure that year, leaving Hogg to seek alternative outlets, ultimately leading to the posthumous publication of his *Tales and Sketches* (1836–37) by the Glasgow number-specialists Blackie & Son. After his bankruptcy, Cochrane re-established himself in partnership with John Macrone in 1833, the two names appearing on the imprint of six works of fiction in 1833–34, including John Galt's *Stories of the Study* (1833). The partnership was then dissolved in 1834 (following Cochrane's discovery of his younger partner's adulterous affair with his wife), and the two published separately after that, Cochrane issuing six titles in 1834–35, among them Hogg's *Tales of the Wars of Montrose*, and Macrone thirteen under his own name up to 1836 from new headquarters in St James's Square, his authors including Robert Pierce Gillies, Leitch Ritchie, and Allan Cunningham.

Two of Macrone's last productions—Dickens's *Sketches by 'Boz'* (1836–37), and a fourth edition (1836) of W.H. Ainsworth's *Rookwood* in one volume, likewise illustrated by George Cruikshank—stand out for dynamically bringing into play components which had hitherto mostly stood outside or run parallel with mainstream production. Ultimately Macrone's bankruptcy and premature death in 1837 led to his Dickens property passing to Chapman & Hall (themselves up to that point publishers of just one work of fiction), and the Ainsworth copyright reverting to Bentley, at what would turn out to be one of the most crucial turning-points in the history of the novel.

¹⁴ John and Michael Banim, *The Ghost-Hunter and His Family* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1833), ix.

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NEW HISTORIES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AND THE RISE OF THE NOVEL, 1835–1859

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WILLIAM MCKELVY

Where do the novel and the novelist belong in literary history? At the dawn of the Victorian period the answer to that question was not clear. There were signs that some writers of fiction in English were on the way to becoming important figures in general accounts of literary achievement. But there were also indications that the writing of novels was something best done by an author with a primary vocation elsewhere, whether it be law, divinity, the professional domesticity of the genteelly unemployed, or a life of writing in a variety of modes including poetry, drama, and non-fictional prose. To get a sense of the uncertain status of both the novel and the novelist in the 1830s, let us pay a visit to Abbotsford as described in John Gibson Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1839) and enquire about the physical location of novels there, the home where the 19th century's most famous novelist before Charles Dickens would earn his comparable fame.

Abbotsford began with the purchase in 1811 of a farmhouse and would evolve, mostly thanks to Scott's literary profits, into a sizeable estate with a Gothic revival mansion completed in 1824. Over the course of hundreds of pages, Lockhart portrays Scott's intimate involvement with the design, construction and decoration of Abbotsford, and the seventh volume of the biography ends with an extended description of the estate in its heyday in 1825. As the tour nears its completion readers are brought into the home's most imposing room, the library containing 'some fifteen to twenty thousand volumes, arranged according to their subjects: British history and antiquities filling the whole of the chief wall; English poetry and drama, classics and miscellanies, one end; foreign literature, chiefly French and German, the other'.¹ The tour then concludes in a smaller attached

¹ John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 2nd edn, 10 vols. (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1839), 7: 405–6. The description of Abbotsford in 1825 had been added to this second edition of the *Memoirs*. The first seven-volume edition had appeared in 1837–38.

room, Scott's private study, an engraving of which served as the volume's frontispiece. This study was, for the English-speaking world in the 1830s and after, the representative site of Scott's extraordinary capacity for literary labour, that which allowed him to construct Abbotsford as well as the writing he was compelled to do following his financial ruin in 1826 when he faced the prospect of being turned out of his beloved home. The solitary writing associated with the study will eventually allow Scott to retain Abbotsford. But with Scott's death, hastened by overwork, this visit to 'the *sanctum* of the Author' is implicitly sombre in tone.² For Lockhart's initial readers, all of them aware of the 1826 crash and its aftermath looming in the next volume, the hushed atmosphere of the empty study looks forward to Scott's burial in 1832 in the nearby ruins of Dryburgh Abbey.

The most remembered endeavour in Scott's final years of literary toil was the republication, in forty-eight uniform volumes, of the Waverley Novels (1829–33), an event that has often been cited as a key juncture in the history of the novel in English. 'In collecting and annotating his writings in this way', as Jane Millgate puts it, 'Scott was implicitly assigning to fiction a status previously reserved for poetry and drama.'³ Said to ennoble the genre at the end and in part at the cost of his life, Scott has long been a crucial figure on the threshold separating the Victorian novel from earlier fiction. Yet in this famous episode in the novel's elevation there is an irony that speaks volumes to scholars with interests in the material history of books including their places of abode. For Scott's final literary labours were dedicated to reclaiming a home that physically memorialized the contemporary novel's subordinate status. In the 1825 account of Abbotsford that would be widely circulated by Lockhart's *Memoirs*, a large selection of novels makes an appearance not in the main library but in the 'charming' and 'cheerful' breakfast-room, and any suspicions that the genre might be generally excluded from the more formal room are confirmed by J.G. Cochrane's exhaustive *Catalogue* (1838) of Scott's books.⁴ A guest at Abbotsford in the 1820s could enjoy reading Jane Austen's *Emma: A Novel* (1816). But one would not go to the grand library to find this book. One would go to what Scott would describe as a 'breakfasting parlour, or a *boudoir* if the word be more fashionable, [which] serves the woman-kind of the family for making their tea or sewing their samplers.'⁵ The same was true for notable works by other novelists publishing from the 1790s to the 1820s.

² *Memoirs*, 7: 407.

³ Jane Millgate, *Scott's Last Edition: A Study in Publishing History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987), vii.

⁴ J.G. Cochrane's *Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford* (Edinburgh: T. Constable for the Bannatyne Club, 1838) individually enumerates, 331–36, the 'Novels and Romances, and Light Literature' to be found in the 'Breakfast Parlour'. Authors include Charlotte Smith (1748–1806), Fanny Burney (1752–1840), Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849), John Galt (1779–1839), Charles Maturin (1782–1824), James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851), and Mary Shelley (1797–1851). With the main library full of (then) contemporary poetry by authors such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Thomas Campbell, and Thomas Moore, it is clear that the contemporary novelists were exiled to the breakfast room on the basis of the literary form itself. For the appearance of the novels and romances in the *Memoirs*, see 7: 404.

⁵ Walter Scott, *Reliquiae Trotcosiensis, or, The gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck Esq. of Monkbarns*, ed. Gerard Carruthers and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 42–43.

The *Catalogue* does point to a few exceptions to this rule. Novels by Samuel Richardson and Tobias Smollett could be found in the library in early editions from the 1740s and 1750s. And *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* (10 vols., 1821–24), a collection of thirty-six novels with biographical memoirs of the authors by Scott, was there as well. Scott's biography of Henry Fielding from that collection, which includes the following statement about the value of prose fiction, would seem to explain why most English novels at Abbotsford were to be found in a room where the day's lightest meal was consumed:

Excluding from consideration those infamous works, which address themselves directly to awakening the grosser passions of our nature, we are inclined to think, the worst evil to be apprehended from the perusal of novels is, that the habit is apt to generate an indisposition to real history, and useful literature; and that the best which can be hoped is, that they may sometimes instruct the youthful mind by real pictures of life, and sometimes awaken their better feelings and sympathies by strains of generous sentiment, and tales of fictitious woe. Beyond this point they are a mere elegance, a luxury contrived for the amusement of polished life, and the gratification of that half love of literature, which pervades all ranks in an advanced stage of society, and are read much more for amusement, than with the least hope of deriving instruction from them.⁶

The physical segregation of certain kinds of writing at Abbotsford reflected the absence of a model of literary history that unapologetically incorporated contemporary prose fiction into a register of the nation's literary achievements. Another kind of book absent from the main library—indeed absent from Abbotsford altogether during Scott's lifetime—was what we would call a history of English literature, at least one that surveyed writing in English over several centuries and included extensive treatment of poetry, drama, non-fictional prose *and* prose fiction. Three years after Scott's death, in 1835, Robert Chambers made a credible claim to have produced, with his *History of the English Language and Literature*, 'the only History of English Literature which has as yet been given to the world.'⁷ And the authors of books surveying a historically organized literary tradition encompassing verse and prose were still pioneers into the 1850s. But things then changed with a startling rapidity, and by the mid-1860s, numerous surveys of this tradition existed in a range of different prices and formats.⁸

⁶ Walter Scott, 'Prefatory Memoir', in *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library*, 10 vols. (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1821–24), 1: xix–xx.

⁷ Robert Chambers, *History of the English Language and Literature* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1835), v. Subsequent citations appear in the text.

⁸ In addition to Craik's revised histories of 1861 and 1862 discussed below, the first half of the sixth decade of the century alone included the first appearance of the following books: Robert Demaus, *Introduction to the History of English Literature* (Adam & Charles Black: Edinburgh, 1860); William Francis Collier, *A History of English Literature, in a Series of Biographical Sketches* (London: T. Nelson, 1861); Thomas Arnold, *A Manual of English Literature, Historical and Critical* (London: Longman, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1862); David Pryde, *Biographical Outlines of English Literature* (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1862); Thomas Budd Shaw, *The Student's Manual of English Literature: A History of English*

The story of the Victorian novel is not simply one of an eventual cultural ascendancy that prompted Herbert Paul in 1897 to pen an essay entitled ‘The Apotheosis of the Novel under Queen Victoria.’⁹ The same literary period that features the rise of the novel to respectability and then literary prominence had access to a new sense of literary history that was embodied by new kinds of books that allowed novel-writing and novel reading to be incorporated into a larger history of English literature. This historiographic transformation was most broadly indebted to the emergence of a reading nation.¹⁰ It was part of a general proliferation of more reading material—made possible by the industrialization of printing—and a rise in the number of readers, particularly a growing class of readers who were content or economically destined to limit that skill to the perusal of works in English. As reading became, ideally, normative—an activity that all Britons could and should engage in—older models of literary history gave way to a new one in which the literary historian became a chronicler of the nation’s increasingly monolingual reading habits. At the same time, the new sense of literary history relied on the declining purchase of an older history of fiction that was divorced from national history and concepts of modernization, and frequently tied instead to an ancient construction of authorship and literary authority in which translation and transmission were integral elements of polite literary culture. Even as this older transnational history of fiction continued to exist in various ways in the minds of some readers, the newer short history of the novel would go viral in the handbooks, histories, and manuals of English literature that had so quickly become staples of the Victorian print market.

In 1835 Chambers opened his pioneering *History* by portraying its mission as a humble one: ‘to communicate to young persons the rudiments of useful knowledge,’ but he goes on to suggest that this goal more generally responds to the contemporary expansion of readers and their options as consumers of print. ‘Such a work,’ as Chambers put it, ‘cannot fail to be useful to many besides young persons at school,—to all, in short,

Literature. A New Edition, Enlarged and Rewritten. Edited, with notes and illustrations, by William Smith (London: John Murray, 1864); Thomas Budd Shaw, *The Student’s Specimens of English Literature. Selected from the Chief English Writers, and Arranged Chronologically, by Thomas B. Shaw. Edited, with additions, by William Smith* (London: John Murray, 1864); Joseph Angus, *The Handbook of English Literature* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1865); and Robert and Thomas Armstrong, *Class-Book of English Literature: with Biographical Sketches, Critical Notices, and Illustrative Extracts* (London: Nelson, 1865).

⁹ *The Nineteenth Century* 41 (May 1897): 769–92.

¹⁰ This term is taken from William St Clair’s *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). While most closely concerned with a surge of reading in the Romantic period, St Clair agrees that Great Britain actually ‘became a reading nation’ at the end of the Victorian era (13). Richard Altick’s classic study, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900*, 2nd edn (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), was brought somewhat up to date at the end of the last century with a new foreword by Jonathan Rose. On the rapid industrialization of the print trades at this time, see James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) and David McKitterick, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1830–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). On the subjects of literacy and the transition to mass literacy, see David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).

whose minds have been awakened to a desire of knowledge; guiding them to the stores of English Literature, and distinguishing for them those works which are most worthy of their attention' (*History*, v). Chambers would bring this history of purposeful consumption full circle by ending his narrative with 'an account of the cheap and popular system of publication, which has formed so remarkable a feature of the passing age'. Describing the making of a number of serial productions—the Library of Useful Knowledge and the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, Constable's Miscellany, Murray's Family Library, Lardner's Cabinet Encyclopedia, and the Edinburgh Cabinet Library—Chambers was insisting that the history of English literature had recently been distinguished by 'the production of books, calculated by their price and modes of production for the less affluent and more numerous portion of the community' (*History*, 269).¹¹ With most individual volumes in these series priced at five or six shillings, they offered consumers opportunities to own books at about half the retail price of most other new books. And yet, despite the impact of these affordable publishing schemes that had commenced in the 1820s, 'a step still remained to be taken before full advantage of the cheap mode of publication could be said to have been obtained'. The consummation of this trend was reserved for two serial publications, *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, priced at 1 1/2d, and *The Penny Magazine*, that had first appeared in 1832 and took advantage of new steam-powered printing machines, mechanized paper production, and stereotyping. These mass-produced and therefore highly affordable weekly miscellanies and others that soon followed, as the *History's* final sentence put it, now allowed 'a vast mass of literature' to reach 'the middle and lower departments of the community' (*History*, 271).

Chambers here was engaging in self-promotion to be sure. He ended his literary history with the story of the recently started *Journal* that was produced and published by the firm of William & Robert Chambers, a partnership he had formed with his older brother in 1832. But the claim about the dawn of a new literary age *circa* 1832 achieved some credibility as it became embodied in an unprecedented book, a new type of literary history that discloses its findings in response to inquiries about the production and consumption of reading material in English. Just as the Reform Bill of 1832 had expanded voting rights to formerly excluded members of the political community, new mechanized modes of literary production, often celebrated on the pages of works like *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* and *The Penny Magazine*, admitted new customers into an expanded literary marketplace.¹² This recent event in the history of reading as a social activity was, in Chambers's book, a crucial development in the nation's literary history. An expansion of literary production and consumption, rather than authorial invention, signalled the inception in the 1830s of a new literary epoch.

¹¹ For modern surveys of these series, see Altick, 266–77, Millgate, 91–99, and James Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 46–51.

¹² See 'Mechanism of Chambers's Journal', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* [hereafter CEJ], 6 June, 1835, 149–51 and 'Commercial History of a Penny Magazine', *The Penny Magazine*, nos. 96, 101, 107, 112 (September–December 1833), 377–84, 417–24, 465–72, 505–11.

Chambers described his 1835 history as unique upon its first appearance, a claim that was never challenged by his contemporaries. Most readers today—and just about any likely reader of this book—will find the 1835 *History* all too familiar: it surveys English literary history in seven larger periods, starting with ‘From the earliest time till the year 1400’ and ending with ‘From 1780 till the Present Time’. Along the way during the sixth period, ‘1727–1780’, readers are told that Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett were the authors in the 1740s of the first English novels still worthy of the general reader’s attention. Chambers briefly acknowledges a multilingual and ancient history of prose fiction that could serve as a prologue to this story of innovation. But the more important claim concerned the relative novelty of the English novel: ‘the rise of the species of fiction called the *novel*’ during a period that was otherwise ‘not by any means marked by such striking features of originality or vigour as some of the preceding eras’ (*History*, 159, 138).

The appearance of this claim in the first history of English literature (as we know it) needs to be contrasted with an alternative historiography found in works such as John Dunlop’s *The History of Fiction* which was first published in 1814 and reissued in a revised second edition in 1816. This three-volume history begins in antiquity, covers chivalric romances of the Middle Ages and divides most of its attention after its discussion of writings in Greek and Latin to works written in Italian, Spanish, and French before coming at the very end of volume three to a brief survey of English novels of the 18th century.¹³ Dunlop’s *History of Fiction* was a version of literary history that had also recently appeared in condensed form in Anna Letitia Barbauld’s ‘On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing’, an essay that served as a general introduction to *The British Novelists*, a fifty-volume collection first published in 1810 and reissued in a second edition in 1820.¹⁴ Often cited by recent critics as an important precursor to the later Waverley edition in its elevation of the novel’s status, Barbauld’s *British Novelists* stood out as the first extensive collection of novels written exclusively by British authors of recent times: all of the novels were from the 1740s and later, with the exception of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which was then offered (and continues to be offered) as a standard anticipation of the modern novel’s more celebrated rise at the later period. And yet, *The British Novelists* remains a monument to different claims about prose fiction. It associated the novel in English with a moment of conception in mid-18th-century modernity. At the same time it learnedly demonstrated how the writers and readers of these more recent novels were the heirs of what Mary Ellen McMullan has called ‘a long, multicultural history of the novel,

¹³ John Colin Dunlop, *The History of Fiction*, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816), 3: 457–94.

¹⁴ See Claudia L. Johnson, “‘Let Me Make the Novels of a Country’: Barbauld’s *The British Novelists* (1810/1820)”, *Novel* 34(2) (2001 Spring): 163–79 and Michael Gamer, ‘A Select Collection: Barbauld, Scott, and the Rise of the (Reprinted) Novel’, in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780–1830*, ed. Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 155–91.

encompassing ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and early modern fictions from all over Europe'.¹⁵

Histories of fiction from the early 19th century generally depicted a genre that was transnational and frequently translated, precisely because it was considered a particularly mobile cultural product that had easily traversed temporal, linguistic, and geographic borders. Underwriting this impression was the persistence of the 'structural agenda of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*', the complementary notions, inherited from Greco-Roman culture, that political power, civilization, and learning were transmitted from one location to another.¹⁶ For Dunlop and Barbauld this concept of transmission still had at its core a faith in the finest literary values residing in 'classical' models from the ancient Mediterranean world. While Europe's experience of the Middle Ages was considered in terms of learning's temporary decline, post-medieval European literary culture was correspondingly home to multinational recoveries of classical learning and standards that would subsequently inspire improvements in various vernacular traditions. Regardless of his or her individual mastery of classical languages, the normative reader imagined by Dunlop and Barbauld was situated in a larger literary landscape in which the value and character of vernacular literary cultures were judged in relation to the classical past. Even as they pointed to the 1740s as a moment of literary departures in Britain, Dunlop and Barbauld found in narratives concerning the antiquity and ubiquity of prose fiction a powerful means of vindicating the novel's legitimate literary status.

This literary status was also maintained in part by prices for books that suggested the kind of surplus capital required for the leisure to read regularly for pleasure or the higher education and non-vernacular studies that were experienced by a small percentage of the general population. Dunlop, like Scott a graduate of Edinburgh University and trained to the law, addressed his *History of Fiction*, priced at 10s 6d per volume in its first and second editions, to wealthy antiquarians and bibliophiles. Chambers addressed his 1835 *History*, which cost a total of 2s 6d, to a markedly different audience. This audience had little money to spare and sought improvement and intellectual pleasure beyond the pale of learning cultivated at the nation's universities and other institutions that were built on the prestige of classical learning and biblical studies and the presumption of some familiarity with other modern languages, especially French. For this newer audience it was largely beside the point to chart how innovations in English prose fiction in the 1740s were relatively recent instalments in a multilingual tradition stretching back to antiquity. That genealogy had been of most interest to a different audience in the course of being persuaded that prose fiction was an identifiable literary form with a long history. The new short history of English fiction—as it appeared in Chambers's *History*—was part of a different project that set out to encourage readers of different social standings and with different political and religious affiliations to be united in a common appreciation of

¹⁵ Mary Ellen McMurren, 'National or Transnational? The Eighteenth-Century Novel', in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 54.

¹⁶ McMurren, 66.

the nation's vernacular literature. And if the older history of fiction was allied to an economic context in which book ownership was a relatively exceptional luxury attending gentility, the new literary history was a product of attempts to lower the cost of reading material of all kinds and to allow 'the people' in general to own and interact with print in private, domestic settings.

The fuller story behind Chambers's *History* reads like one of the many 19th-century novels that depict a character's social and economic dispossession to be followed by acts of self-invention and the recovery of status on modified terms.¹⁷ The second son of a textile manufacturer and merchant, Chambers was a precocious scholar and intended to enter the Church after earning a degree at the University of Edinburgh. His father's bankruptcy ended these plans, and he became instead at the age of sixteen a second-hand bookseller with his initial stock comprised entirely of the books remaining in the possession of his economically distressed family. This 'adventurous project of selling the wreck of the family library, along with his own small parcel of school books' would turn out to be the first step in a literary career that would include being some twenty years later a widely read author and the prosperous proprietor, along with his brother William, of a publishing and printing firm that was, as Robert would put it in 1846, 'one of the great organizations of industry in this country, whereby more paper is blacked in a week than in many other printing-offices in a twelvemonth'.¹⁸

Before the initial publication of the *Journal* in 1832 and the formation of the corporate entity of W. & R. Chambers, Chambers had been an active participant in Edinburgh's market for print at a particularly eventful time that included in the teens and twenties the remarkable ability of 'The Author of Waverley'—known to literary insiders to be Walter Scott—to dominate the trade in new fiction as published in the expensive multi-volume form. On first publication, Scott's novels were generally priced at slightly more than 10s a volume, making the standard three-volume format normally retail for about 31s, a sum that made individual ownership of new fiction relatively rare and explained the importance of circulating libraries. While one of Scott's final novel's *The Fair Maid of Perth* retailed for 31s 6d at the time of its first publication in June of 1828, a year later one could buy one of Scott's novels in the Waverley edition for a total of 10s, one third of the recent cost. Starting in 1832, the firm of W. & R. Chambers was focused on extending this logic

¹⁷ For more on Chambers as a simultaneously innovative producer and historian of print, see my "'This Enormous Contagion of Paper and Print': Making Literary History in the Age of Steam", in *Bookish Histories: Books, Literature and Commercial Modernity 1700–1900*, ed. Ina Ferris and Paul Keen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 61–84. Drawing on extensive archival work, Aileen Fyfe's *Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) situates the commercial initiatives of W. & R. Chambers in the broader context of the age's publishing practices. Other essential studies include Secord's *Victorian Sensation* and Robert J. Scholnick's "'The Fiery Cross of Knowledge': Chambers's *Edinburgh Journal*, 1832–1844", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 32(4) (1999): 324–58.

¹⁸ William Chambers, *Memoir of Robert Chambers, with Autobiographic Reminiscences of William Chambers* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1873), 141; Robert Chambers, *Select Writings of Robert Chambers*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1847), 1: iii.

even further as it reminded readers that contemporary publications of all kinds often derived from modes of production that aimed to create relatively few copies to be purchased at high prices. Just as the Waverley Novels were advertised as bargains in contrast to the standard high prices for new fiction, the products of W. & R. Chambers boasted yet another level of affordability in comparison to the world of publishing volumes at five or six shillings a piece.

Published in November of 1835 the *History* appeared as one of two inaugural volumes in a new series, 'Chambers's Educational Course'. Written at a time when Chambers was convinced of the likelihood of the long-term success of W. & R. Chambers, the *History* was a product of the rapid transformation of the firm into an independent entity for the production of unusually affordable reading material. For the first two years of the *Journal's* publication, the printing of it had been contracted out—as was the norm—to various printers. Starting in January of 1834 the firm had invested in its own steam press which was soon able to produce the requisite number of copies of the *Journal* in something less than a full six-day workweek. Now owners of a printing machine that was at times idle, W. & R. Chambers looked for other works to print and publish and set a precedent in which the *Journal*, in addition to being a successful weekly publication in its own right, became the vehicle for promoting other products such as the *History of the English Language and Literature*.¹⁹ All of the works that rolled off the increasing number of steam presses owned by W. & R. Chambers—there were ten by 1845—were said to be sold at the lowest possible cost and were intended for education and amusement in ways that avoided political partisanship or religious sectarianism.

This underlying purpose was expressed in the prospectus for another series launched at the start of 1838, 'Chambers's People's Editions of Approved Works in All Departments of Literature':

If the aim of the Publishers be accomplished, the poorest working man in the country will be enabled, from the earnings of a week, to spare as much as will purchase, for his permanent possession and enjoyment, one of the deathless productions of those Intellectual Great who are his brethren in race, and whose names are sparks of Immortality.²⁰

Language from the prospectus shortly reappeared in the *Journal* in 'What English Literature Gives Us', a lead article that would point the way to the next great innovation in the making of literary history in the early Victorian period. There Robert Chambers

¹⁹ In the case of the *History of the English Language and Literature*, the *Journal* was in one number the vehicle for announcing the work and the new series that it inaugurated only to become the venue in the next number for publishing the first chapter of the *History* as 'Popular Information on Literature: Rise of English Literature'. See *CEJ*, 14 November 1835, 336 and 21 November 1835, 338–39.

²⁰ *CEJ*, 27 January 1838, 8. The 'People's Editions' soon included four 18th-century novels—Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1838, 1s 8d), Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1838, 1s 8d), Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1839, 8d), and Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1839, 10d)—as well as the more recent *Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1838, 8d; 1st edn, 1808) by Elizabeth Hamilton. The most expensive novel published in the series was Mary Brunton's *Self-Control: A Novel* (1839; 1st edn, 1811) priced at 2s 2d, a sum that was still

spoke of the 'substantial wealth' represented by English literature and compared that form of wealth to the nation's 'public works' including 'roads', 'bridges', and 'halls of popular assembly':

England is in both these respects a wealthy country. It has been put by our fathers into our hands, furnished with an amount of physical conveniences and sources of comfort beyond all precedent, and endowed with an intellectual inheritance such as no other country ever had. Evils manifold may affect it, if some will have the case to be so; but, amidst all that troubles her, there still remains, unsullied, intact, ever ready for the solacement of her thinking sons, the deathless productions of her intellectual great.²¹

This great 'intellectual inheritance' was, as Chambers well knew, until recently beyond the grasp of most people. As *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* had been reminding readers since 1832, limited literacy and the economic structure of the English book trade had often made it impossible for most members of the national community to have access to past and contemporary products of English literary genius.

'What English Literature Gives Us' contains strategic wishful thinking that was satisfied by the *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (2 vols., 1842–44), a work that Chambers produced with the assistance of Robert Curruthers. An extensive elaboration of the 1835 *History* and incorporating most of that text directly or in some revised form, the *Cyclopaedia* also came with hundreds of pages 'of extracts from our national authors'.²² Initially published in weekly numbers of double-columned 'sheets' of sixteen pages for 1 1/2d and also sold as a more substantial monthly number (of sixty-four pages) for 7d, the ambitious project was advertised in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* as a widely affordable bibliographic surrogate for the libraries and studies that were regular features of the homes of the wealthy: 'For the self-educating everywhere, such a work will be as a whole English Library fused down into one cheap book'. Costing 'five shillings and eightpence sewed, or seven shillings in boards' the first volume was declared to be in either state 'the cheapest volume of its size ever published in Great Britain'.²³ At 14s, the entire two-volume *Cyclopaedia* in a standard binding was less than half the price of many new novels and 30 per cent cheaper than a single novel published in twenty monthly shilling parts, the format in which Charles Dickens's roughly contemporary *Martin Chuzzlewit* had appeared from January 1843 to July 1844. Heavily illustrated by numerous woodcuts, the completed *Cyclopaedia* was a national history, a biographical dictionary, a copious anthology and a pictorial tour. With its 1,476 densely printed pages, it was the most

much cheaper than the 6s charged for the same text first published in 1832 as volume XV in Bentley's Standard Novels.

²¹ *CEJ*, 26 January 1839, 2. Reprinted in *Select Writings*, 2: 165–72.

²² 'Preface', *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1842–44), vol. 1. The *Cyclopaedia*'s close relationship to the 1835 *History* is further confirmed by its division of English literary history into the same seven periods outlined below at n. 62.

²³ *CEJ*, 22 October 1842, 320; 7 October 1843, 304.

comprehensive history of English literature and the most comprehensive English literary anthology (encompassing verse and prose) in existence.

The *Cyclopaedia* provided readers with a retrospective pageant of literary achievement. But the book's most urgent historical claim concerned its own production and reception, an event that was framed in terms of a large portion of the community coming into an inheritance that it had traditionally been denied. For the first time, by virtue of the *Cyclopaedia*'s price, a complete literary history and extensive examples 'of the best productions of the English intellect' were being presented for 'the mental advancement of the middle and humbler portions of society'. Addressing an imagined readership that was adding to the recent acquisition of basic literacy a desire to be schooled in the pleasures of the aesthetic imagination and trying to economize on all non-essentials to make room for greater coverage, the *Cyclopaedia* omitted altogether any mention of the ancient history of the novel that had been noted in passing in the 1835 text and began instead with developments in the 17th century.²⁴ The English novel had become unambiguously new in this literary history invested in 'training the entire people to venerate the thoughtful and eloquent of past and present times.'²⁵

Literary historians like Dunlop and Barbauld had spoken of novels in English as a subject matter within the larger topic of prose fiction over the course of hundreds of years and across many cultural boundaries. The *Cyclopaedia* celebrated the English novel as an essential component in the nation's recent history of literary self-expression. Beyond the key innovations of the 1740s, readers only needed to go back to 1719, the year of the publication of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, to understand the history of the English novel in any detail. Here pronounced 'the father or founder of the English novel', Defoe earns this title through the practice of a kind of unprecedented realism: 'In England, the first pictures of real life in prose fiction were given by Defoe, who, in his graphic details, and personal adventures, all impressed with the strongest appearances of truth or probability, has never, in his own walk, been excelled.'²⁶ The collective accomplishment of the standard triumvirate of the 1740s—Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett—is then described as a narrative synthesis that unites this type of descriptive power with an enhanced capacity to portray different kinds of characters and to manage more complicated plots. And they do so in response to the determinant conditions of commercial modernity and a relative fixation on the bourgeois marriage plot and its complications. 'The gradual improvement in the tone and manners of society, the complicated relations of life, the growing contrasts between town and country manners, and all the artificial distinctions that crowd in with commerce, wealth and luxury', as the *Cyclopaedia* put it, 'banished the heroic romance and gave rise to the novel, in which the passion of love still maintained its place, but was surrounded by events and characters, such as are witnessed in ordinary life, under various aspects and modifications.'²⁷

²⁴ *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 2: 160.

²⁵ 'Preface', *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), vol. 1.

²⁶ *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 1: 617, 2: 160.

²⁷ *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 2: 160.

Chambers's status as an innovative literary historian grew out of an ambitious, self-advertised project to succeed commercially in the literary marketplace by harnessing the reproductive capacities of the newest printing technologies. Dependent on mass consumption in order to turn profits, the business model of W. & R. Chambers reflected a faith in the fact that reading and regularly purchasing print were on their way to becoming essential activities for the nation at large, not habits that distinguished the wealthy or learned. A self-made man, Chambers had the vision to understand the mechanical means of his own rise in the world as part of a broader development in a reconceived national literary history that shifted attention to consumption. Chambers articulated the enabling logic here in 'Literary Revolutions', a lead-article that appeared in the *Journal* in 1842. 'The student of English literary history', Chambers begins, 'is familiar with the fact, that every successive age has been distinguished by the development of some species of literature distinct in its character from those which delighted the public in the preceding and subsequent ages.' And he goes on to give an account—starting with Scott's popularization of 'the historical novel'—of the rise and fall of a wide range of literary genres and styles.²⁸ Assuming that 'the human mind remains fundamentally the same,' Chambers wondered why literary modes were constantly changing rather than moving either towards or away from ideals of perfection. The answer was, to him, clear: once a public's taste had been stimulated by a new style, writers would increasingly seek to satisfy that taste and make it 'the predominant literary feature of the time, in short, the fashion'—until the 'next great wit carries away the public mind in a new direction.'²⁹ Chambers here inaugurates a relativistic understanding of literary history as a potentially ceaseless development of forms and styles driven by habits of literary consumption. Inventive literary production operates in tandem with the changing motivations of readers in search of new kinds of literary encounters.

The open-ended, fundamentally economic sense of history informing the *Cyclopaedia* undergirded Chambers's other great work of the 1840s, the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* which was published in October of 1844, a few months after the completed *Cyclopaedia* was made available. Now recognized as the most important 19th-century explication of evolutionary theory before the appearance of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), the *Vestiges*, like the *Cyclopaedia*, was an historical narrative of vast scope, but one focused on natural history instead of national literary history. Its topics 'ranged from the formation of the universe, the record of life and the evolution of new species, to the origin and future destiny of human beings'.³⁰ The recently published *Cyclopaedia* proclaimed itself to be the instrument for and evidence of a transformation of national life based on the positive exploitation of modern printing technologies. The *Vestiges* enacted a maximized

²⁸ *CEJ*, 28 May 1842, 145. Reprinted in *Select Writings*, 4: 162–68.

²⁹ *CEJ*, 28 May 1842, 146.

³⁰ James A. Secord, 'Introduction', in *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation and Other Evolutionary Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), ix.

dilation on the same theme of progress. It featured the march 'of mankind from the darkness of barbarism to the day of knowledge and mechanical and social improvement' as the culminating event in a cosmic history of development.³¹ What both books have most importantly in common is the programmatic desire to reconcile constant variation with notions of design and higher purpose. In the *Vestiges* that purpose is the will of a beneficent Deity governing biological systems inclined to progressive change. In the *Cyclopaedia*, mechanical improvements offer to the nation at large a form of cultural reconciliation through 'a social and uniting sentiment' derived from 'our common reverence for a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Scott'.³² The *Cyclopaedia* and the *Vestiges* reached back into the past, but they were also vehicles for a declaration of faith in change itself—in the past, present, and future—as the primary mechanism of history. Chambers's notion of perpetual innovation as described in 'Literary Revolutions' and the *Vestiges* in general embraced an optimistic sense of development that would later be described in the closing lines of *On the Origin of Species* where Darwin would write about 'the endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful' that 'have been, and are being, evolved'.³³

Wary of compromising the brisk business of W. & R. Chambers with the controversy he rightly suspected would be ignited by the *Vestiges*, Chambers had it published anonymously. Despite having for its inspiration the same essential historical vision, one that could be called anachronistically Darwinian, the *Cyclopaedia* stirred no major controversy. A brief notice in the *Athenaeum* did, however, show how the *Cyclopaedia* practised a form of history that could be considered at least unsettling. Providing 'a connected outline of the history of English literature from its first rude shapings-out, down to the present time—we might almost say to the present hour', Chambers was guilty in the eyes of the reviewer of 'crossing the Rubicon which divides literary history from journalism, and venturing boldly among his contemporaries'.³⁴ Implying Chambers had a compromised sense of historical tact, the reviewer failed to understand how integral was the contemporaneity of the work. The widening audiences of the 1830s and early 40s—and the authors addressing them—could not be ignored precisely because they were represented as the recent climax of English literary history.

The novel, as a genre, was awarded no undisputed formal superiority at the moment of the *Cyclopaedia*'s publication. But the present times, all too present for the *Athenaeum*, were unique in the (now short) history of novel-writing: 'in no previous period of our literature was there so much respectable talent, knowledge, and imagination embarked in fictitious composition'.³⁵ Indeed the *Cyclopaedia* dedicates a full hundred pages in the

³¹ Robert Chambers, 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation' and Other Evolutionary Writings, ed. James A. Secord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 322.

³² 'Preface', *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), vol. 1.

³³ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859), 490.

³⁴ *Athenaeum*, 31 August, 1844, 792–93.

³⁵ *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 2: 630.

second volume to novelists ranging from Frances Burney to Charles Dickens.³⁶ These figures active from the 1780s up to the present time were collectively credited with expanding the thematic, formal, and stylistic range of fiction—‘extending’ the ‘dominion’ of the novel—while the two greatest novelists in the still unfolding 19th century—Scott and Dickens—were given unquestionable heroic status. In this setting, Dickens was not simply the last writer featured in the section on modern novelists. His career up to the publication of *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44) and *A Christmas Carol in Prose* (1843) was represented as the culmination of a tradition binding the nation’s readers to the authors of a native form of recent origins. He was ‘next to Scott, the greatest of modern writers of fiction’ and ‘the most genuine English novelist we have had since Fielding.’³⁷ What was new here was the appearance of this genealogical claim in the context of a larger literary history that featured the rise of the novel in the 1740s and its subsequent proliferation as a corollary to the nation’s march to modernity.

Throughout most of the 1840s the only rival to Chambers’s literary histories was George Lille Craik’s *Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England* (6 vols., 1844–45). Published by Charles Knight as part of his Weekly Volume Series in which readers were offered single 18mo (duodecimo) volumes for 1s 6d bound in cloth, Craik’s work was, no less than Chambers’s much larger *Cyclopaedia*, yet another venture in the cheap publishing movement.³⁸ But unlike the *Cyclopaedia*, Craik’s history did not significantly incorporate into its narrative its mode of production and consumption. Even though it was completed shortly after the *Cyclopaedia*, Craik’s history stopped short in the early 1820s, ‘about the close of the reign of George the Third.’³⁹ His narrative ended, in other words, on the threshold of ‘the cheap and popular system of publication’ that Chambers had identified as the precursors to the more inventive attempts to reach wider audiences that had begun in the early 1830s. Observing a historiographic convention barring discussion of contemporary writers perhaps had the advantage of lending to his work the appearance of conveying more disinterested historical verdicts. But Craik, as his title implies, also remained partially attached to the concept of *translatio studii* and the older sense of literary history focused on the history of learned writing: his was a history of *Literature and Learning in England*, not of *English Literature*. In Craik’s narrative too the novel had a comparatively muted importance. He and Chambers gave similar accounts of the modern English novel’s origins in the 1740s, but Craik’s literary history did not have a string of stirring sequels to this act of invention. Its coverage of fiction from the 1780s and after required little more than a short paragraph.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 2: 533–633.

³⁷ *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 2: 533, 534.

³⁸ See the *Times*, March 3, 1845, 2, for a full-page advertisement of works published by Charles Knight and Co., including the Weekly Volume series. Like Chambers, Knight was a major agent in the cheap publishing movement as well as an early historian of it. See ‘The Modern Epoch of Cheapness’ in his *The Old Printer and the Modern Press* (London: J. Murray, 1854), 238–59.

³⁹ George Lille Craik, *Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England*, 6 vols. (London: Charles Knight, 1844–45), 6: 201.

⁴⁰ *Sketches*, 5: 151–58 and 6: 103–4, 206.

The first history of English literature to emerge outside of the cheap literature movement was Thomas Budd Shaw's *Outlines of English Literature* (1849) published by John Murray, a traditional publishing house then best known as the proprietor and publisher of the *Quarterly Review* and for its standard editions of Lord Byron's works. Shaw noted the 'singular' fact that no comparable work 'existed in English.' But he also acknowledged that Chambers's earlier works might be considered exceptions, though he insisted that 'Chambers's valuable and complete "Cyclopaedia of English Literature" is as much too voluminous as his shorter sketch is too dry and list-like.'⁴¹ Priced at 12s, the single volume *Outlines* in comfortable octavo format cost nearly five times the price of Chambers's short *History* and close to the price of the vastly larger two-volume *Cyclopaedia*. To a status conscious reader, Shaw's book had the added value of not coming with a helping of humble pie. Chambers's literary histories made much of welcoming new arrivals to the book-buying public. Shaw's respectably pricey volume addressed itself to those born into that class.

In Shaw's book, as he explained it, 'only the *greater* names—the greater types of each period—have been examined; whilst the inferior, or merely *imitative*, writers have been unscrupulously neglected.'⁴² Correspondingly, most of the twenty-one separate chapters of the *Outlines of English Literature* featured the names of writers ranging from 'Chaucer and His Times' to 'Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the New Poetry'. And in this survey of heroic originality, chapter XIV, entitled 'The Great Novelists', will pronounce the 18th-century rise of the novel to be one of the nation's most distinctive moments of invention:

We are now arrived at that point in the history of British literature where, in obedience to the ever-acting laws which regulate intellectual as they do physical development, a new species of composition was to originate. As in the material creation we find the several manifestations of productive energy following a *progressive* order,—the lower, humbler, and less organized existences appearing first, and successively making way for kinds more variously and bounteously endowed, the less perfect merging imperceptibly into the more perfect,—so can we trace a similar action of this law in the gradual development of man's intellectual operations. No sooner do certain favourable conditions exist, no sooner has a fit *nidus* or theatre of action been produced, than we behold new manifestations of human intellect appearing in literature, in science, and in art, with as much regularity as, in the primeval eras of the physical world, the animalcule gave way to the fish, the fish to the reptile, the reptile to the bird, the beast, and ultimately to man.⁴³

This ardent expression concerning the 18th-century English novel's originality was followed by a later chapter, 'The Modern Novelists', that declared the novel to be 'the

⁴¹ Thomas Budd Shaw, *Outlines of English Literature* (London: J. Murray, 1849), iii. Shaw also quotes Chambers at length on Addison, on page 294, from the *Cyclopaedia* (42–44), 1: 606.

⁴² *Outlines*, iv, original emphasis.

⁴³ *Outlines*, 303.

prevailing form, or type, of the present age . . . just as the epic is the natural form of the heroic or traditionary period.⁴⁴ Using the period's evolutionary thought to mutate what had been a history of literary descent into an epoch-making divergence, Shaw links his close attention to contemporary English fiction to appreciative notions of transformative modernization. He acknowledged the older pan-European tradition of the novel in the major romance languages, but this gesture was a rhetorical prelude to locating an essential if unexplained British originality in the relatively recent works of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett: 'Spain, France, and Italy had all possessed the germ or embryo of prose fiction before it can be said to appear as a substantive, independent, and influential species of literature in Great Britain.'⁴⁵

Like Chambers, Shaw had become an innovative literary historian in part because of his need to improvise a literary career in the wake of financial stress and disappointments in pursuing a more conventional vocational path. The seventh son of a successful architect, Shaw was able to enter Cambridge in 1833 shortly after the death of his father but was declared an insolvent debtor in 1840 after taking his degree and failing to support himself in London as a tutor and miscellaneous writer. Decamping for the Russian capital of St Petersburg, he became there an adjunct Professor of English Literature at the Imperial Alexander Lyceum and co-edited the short-lived *English Review*, a bi-monthly that presented 'in a condensed form, the quintessence of all that is most interesting and instructive in the periodical literature of Great Britain.'⁴⁶ Where Chambers's sense of literary history was grounded in his attempts to reach large segments of the public not usually considered reliable literary consumers, Shaw took stock of the nation's literary history for another usefully defamiliarized audience: he needed to describe English literary history's greatest moments for Russian aristocrats and bureaucratic leaders in training, an audience in the 1840s that was generally predisposed to allow that Britain was post-Napoleonic Europe's most advanced, politically stable nation-state.⁴⁷ Originally published in 1847 in St Petersburg, Shaw's *Outlines* was a text-book for his students there. It was re-addressed in the 1849 edition to an English audience of substantial means with only minor changes.

The *Outlines* originated in a different context and had a different intended audience in both St Petersburg and in England, but it shared with the *Cyclopaedia* the twin conviction that a superabundance of periodicals, including cheap ones such as *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, and the dominance of prose fiction gave to contemporary 19th-century English literary culture its most distinctive features, ones that could be appreciated as legitimate sequels to earlier defining events of English literary history.⁴⁸ Shaw's *Outlines* also

⁴⁴ *Outlines*, 471.

⁴⁵ *Outlines*, 303.

⁴⁶ *English Review* (1843), 5. For its first two issues, Shaw composed a two-part 'History of Periodical Publication in England' that stretched from the late 17th-century and concluded with an appreciation of 'the vast and brilliant field now occupied by this portion of our literature' (97).

⁴⁷ On the reception of the English novel in Russia, see Julia Buckler's chapter in this volume.

⁴⁸ The *Outlines* spoke approvingly of 'the publications by Constable and Chambers in Scotland, and the prolific brood of "Family Libraries," "Cabinet Cyclopaedias," and penny journals' (517).

had in common with Chambers's celebrations of the expansion of the reading public a self-congratulatory enthusiasm for a form of bio-mechanical cultural productivity described in the volume's closing lines:

The English intellect, thanks to the happy freedom of our institutions, and the strong virility of national character, has no dull, dead, periods of feeble imitation and languid servility. The moment it has duly developed itself in one direction, it instantly takes and steadily maintains another: and our literature—essentially the literature of a nation of men—rich in the finest and most unequalled models of every kind and class of excellence—is in every sense worthy of the greatest, freest, and most thoughtful people that the world has ever seen.⁴⁹

Initially standing as the peroration for a series of lectures addressed to all-male students in St Petersburg these claims were likely inspired in part by a teacher's wish to justify the just completed course of instruction. Transferred verbatim to the conclusion of the first English edition of the *Outlines*, they can be read alongside Thomas Babington Macaulay's *History of England*, the first two volumes of which had appeared in November of 1848 as much of Europe was concluding a year of revolutions and counterrevolutions. Like Shaw's volume, Macaulay's *History* was a tribute to England's contemporary greatness as measured by the blessings of commercial modernity and a stable body politic that allowed England to avoid the traumas of 1848. For Macaulay, this solidity and flexibility had been endowed by the events of the late 17th century that culminated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Shaw and Chambers were engaged in the related task of portraying the 18th-century rise of the English novel as an essential element in the evolution of modern England's national identity. In the new literary histories, the English novel was the typographic fruit of the late 17th-century political reconfigurations that had allowed England to become a leading, stable European power.

Following Shaw's work, two other single-volume surveys soon appeared. They illustrate how the character of the 18th-century English novel was being contested in the day's new literary histories, even as the genre's essential modernity was now routinely reconfirmed by writers with different agendas. *Sketches of English Literature* appeared in 1852 and is the first comprehensive English literary history to be written by a woman, Clara Balfour. Priced at 7s 6d, Balfour's *Sketches* was addressed to the 'general or the young reader' and especially 'the female reader who snatches from daily duties brief opportunities for reading'.⁵⁰ Idealizing a domestic sphere in which the ladies of the house are engaged with woman's work but also able to read for pleasure and instruction,

⁴⁹ *Outlines*, 539.

⁵⁰ Clara Lucas Balfour, *Sketches of English Literature, from the Fourteenth to the Present Century* (London: Longman & Co., 1852), iii. Subsequent citations appear in the text. Balfour's status as trail-blazing literary historian has been largely ignored, though Kristin G. Doern in 'Equal Questions: the "Woman Question" and the "Drink Question" in the Writings of Clara Lucas Balfour, 1808–78', in *Women, Religion, and Feminism in Britain 1750–1900*, ed. Sue Morgan (London: Palgrave, 2002), 159–76, does mention the *Sketches* in the context of her writing and lecturing for the temperance movement.

Balfour speaks with the voice of a well-read, respectable figure addressing younger or less educated women eager to benefit from her guidance. She quickly describes the rise of the modern English novel with the work of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, but seems most intent on making it clear that contact with the last three should be avoided beyond the recollection of their historical roles: with Fielding, his 'aim... was to amuse rather than amend his reader, and the coarseness of his books necessarily restricted them entirely to male readers'; Smollett had 'great wit and a racy humour', but 'the absence of all delicacy made his writings, notwithstanding their great intellectual power, revolting to all right-minded persons'; while Sterne's writings 'are equally open to the charge of immorality and coarseness' (278). After efficiently noting the perils to be encountered in these three, Balfour proceeds with a more appreciative and extended discussion of Richardson and Oliver Goldsmith, author of *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), followed by a general discourse on 'the utility of works of fiction' that is equally critical of 'those who reject them entirely and those who read them exclusively and indiscriminately' (294–301). Thereafter the various indiscretions associated with some of the founding fathers of the English novel are atoned for by a series of literary refinements and reforms that are often indebted to the work of a long list of female novelists including Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Ann Radcliffe (294–301).

Balfour's brief look back to the 18th-century rise of the novel provides a chance to describe a general improvement of national literary culture that is attributed, in no small part, to the fact that novels were increasingly being addressed to and written by women apparently uninterested in or unable to stomach the coarseness that marred the work of some of the members of the all-male cast presiding over the English novel's modern inception. No less than those by Chambers and Shaw, Balfour's narrative was a chronicle of national progress that featured the making of a more earnest, refined and well-informed reading public moulded by Evangelical religious piety, the increasingly prominent role of women in national life, and technological advances that had 'altered more in the last fifty years than in any three centuries previously' (394).

Balfour concluded by noting how new levels of demand for print had become a leading feature of the period's literary history: 'A reading public makes a demand so vast and continuous, that it has caused a supply unprecedented. The press of our time is as great a marvel as the railroad or the electric telegraph' (401). This superabundance was a topic of her literary history as it reached contemporary times as well as the grounds for the need of histories, such as her own, that assigned value to a seemingly boundless supply of new and republished writings. The age's general 'diffusion of knowledge'—reaching both men and women on increasingly equal terms according to Balfour—was a great gift but one that came with the danger that it might be 'neglected or misused': 'Young people roam in libraries and read at every opportunity; but they too often neglect all system in their reading, and therefore are not much the wiser after all' (403). The fact that Balfour's well-instructed reader could and should legitimately make time for reading contemporary novels was another sign of how English fiction was being incorporated into the period's well-regulated library. Scott's actual library at Abbotsford banished recent fiction

and admitted on historical grounds a few works by the native form's founding fathers. Balfour's ideal library reversed this judgement. Coarse mid-18th-century patriarchs were acknowledged by virtue of an historical obligation but ushered away in favour of a large brood of greatly improved descendents of 'the present day', the authors of 'historical, metaphysical, philosophical, conventional, ethical, national, humorous, and domestic fictions, contributed by writers male and female of the very highest reputation' (285).

Not long after the appearance of Balfour's work, William Spalding's *History of English Literature* (1853) was 'offered, as an Elementary Text-Book, to those who are interested in the instruction of young persons' at the low price of 3s 6d.⁵¹ Perhaps with this tender audience in mind, it was more comprehensively critical of the coarseness of the pioneering English novelists of the 1740s and shortly after. 'When we pass from Johnson to the Novelists of his time', Spalding wrote, 'we seem as if leaving the aisles of an august cathedral, to descend into the galleries of a productive but ill-ventilated mine. Around us clings a foul and heavy air, which youthful travellers in the realm of literature cannot safely breathe' (Spalding, *History*, 336). But Spalding was nonetheless convinced that the English novel originated at that time—with the obligatory anticipations by Defoe noted earlier. Where Balfour had documented in detail a reform of fiction largely accomplished by the expanding participation of female writers in the later 18th century, Spalding was not 'inclined to study novels deeply' during this period, and simply named, in addition to praising highly Goldsmith's *Vicar*, eight novelists—four men and four women—active in the period 1760–1800, some of whom 'did much to prepare the way for the greater prevalence of nature and common-sense in this kind of writing' (Spalding, *History*, 349).

Spalding's ultimate destination in the more recent history of the novel was the appearance of Scott's *Waverley* and all that followed from that author: 'By him above all, with two or three precursors and several not unworthy successors' the novel would become a respectable fixture of contemporary literary culture (Spalding, *History*, 363). The unique accomplishments of Scott in Spalding's history included the notion that novel-writing immediately after him was an overshadowed affair. Citing 'the hundreds of novels and romances which have been poured forth in our day' in his overview of the period 1830–52, Spalding said 'it would be rash to seek for any parallel to the multifarious power of Scott' (Spalding, *History*, 399). Spalding nevertheless highlights the work of Dickens and Thackeray among a larger class of authors who aim 'at making the novel illustrate, as far as the form would allow, the questions which agitate society most powerfully'. Despite their admitted differences as writers, they are described as 'the founders of a new school in novel-writing' (Spalding, *History*, 400).

At the heart of Spalding's simplified version of literary history stands his desire or willingness to see a few individuals make transformative innovations in a prolific genre

⁵¹ William Spalding, *The History of English Literature; with an Outline of the Origin and Growth of the English Language: illustrated by extracts* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1853), 1. Subsequent citations appear in the text.

with its roots traced to the mid-18th century. This reductive historical narrative would be widely circulated in various guises for well over one hundred years. Some subsequent historians would follow the direction suggested by Balfour and focus on characterizing the manifold and expanding subgenres of English fiction, while others would stay closer to Spalding's approach and use the proliferation (or over-production) of the genre as an occasion to celebrate a few acts of true literary distinction that were achieved despite the commonplace nature of writing a novel. Both approaches paid tribute to Shaw's claim that the novel was the age's representative literary form and both agreed as well that the English novel was indeed new.

Thirteen years after the publication of the first edition of Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*, a second 'New and Improved Edition' began to appear in November of 1857 in the same format: in weekly numbers for 1 1/2d, in monthly parts at 7d, or by the volume, with the slightly longer volumes of this second edition priced at 8s each.⁵² With both volumes ready for purchase at the end of October of 1859, the work was advertised in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* without the fanfare so much in evidence in the 1840s about unique cheapness. The *Cyclopaedia* remained a remarkable deal given the amount of text and illustrations it offered for its total price of 16s, particularly when compared to the price of much new fiction.⁵³ But it was no longer aimed primarily at 'the middle and humbler portions of society' seeking 'mental advancement'. Instead it was intended for and embraced by middle-class consumers with expectations that the larger market for books would include more affordable titles, even as many new publications came with a steep duty to be paid by their first owners. The prices and formats that were initially inspired by catering to a new audience in the 1830s and 40s had now become standard options for a larger book buying public.

Comparing the first and second editions of the *Cyclopaedia* allows one to appreciate how rapid was the rise of a number of new novelistic careers that continue to be at the centre of the academic study of Victorian fiction. Completed in July of 1844 and covering events up to the end 1843, the second volume of the first edition had already hailed Dickens as an author 'crowned with unrivalled success'.⁵⁴ But the Brontës (Charlotte, Emily, and Anne), Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, and George Eliot are for obvious chronological reasons not to be found in the first edition. William Makepeace Thackeray's barely budding career was rendered in two sentences.⁵⁵ Just short of fifteen

⁵² Most of the expanded scope came from a commitment to including events and publications between 1844 and 1859 into the larger narrative of English literary history. The closing 'Addendum' to the second volume referred to events as late as August 1859. Though this second edition is dated '1858-60', its actual publication dates—1857-59—are used here. The first number of the first volume was published on 7 November 1857; the two volumes complete were available for purchase on 29 October 1859. See *CEJ*, 31 October 1857, 288 and 29 October 1859, 288. It was common to publish books late in the calendar year, in November or December in particular, bearing the date of the approaching year. This habit allowed publications to extend their 'freshness' into a near-term future.

⁵³ George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, the fictional sensation of the spring of 1859, initially retailed for 31s 6d, just about twice the cost of the *Cyclopaedia*.

⁵⁴ *Cyclopaedia* (42-44), 2: 633.

⁵⁵ *Cyclopaedia* (42-44), 2: 625.

years later, in the second volume of the second edition, Trollope is recognized as a distinguished chronicler of national characteristics—‘There is a degree of reality, vigour, and genuine fresh English feeling about Mr Trollope’s novels, which render him remarkable among his contemporaries’—and Thackeray has proven himself ‘another master of English fiction,’ a rival to Dickens in his creative powers if not in his overall popularity.⁵⁶ Dickens himself has the many events of his post-1843 career added, and his lucrative public readings, which began in 1858, are said to ‘form a new feature in the modern literary life.’⁵⁷ The brief, loss-laden careers of the Brontë sisters—with Charlotte taking centre stage—unfold with a level of detail indebted to Gaskell’s *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857).⁵⁸ Her portrayal of the ‘manufacturing population’ in her own novels, starting with *Mary Barton* (1848), is praised for throwing ‘light on conditions of life, habits, and feelings comparatively new and original in our fictitious literature.’⁵⁹ The final contemporary novelist to earn recognition in the *Cyclopaedia*, George Eliot, does so on the strength of *Adam Bede* alone.⁶⁰ Running to a fifth edition as the *Cyclopaedia* was nearing completion, *Adam Bede*’s combination of commercial success and critical acclaim demonstrated how an unknown writer could earn fame with what was now considered to be the technical mastery of the ‘art’ of the novel.⁶¹

The second edition of the *Cyclopaedia* had also reorganized its coverage of novelists to draw attention to what now appeared to be a discrete post-1830 era for the English novel. The first edition of the *Cyclopaedia* surveyed English literary history in seven major periods, with the second volume containing two relatively long periods of 1727–80 and 1780–present, while the second edition included nine periods with the second volume featuring three briefer periods of 1760–1800, 1800–30, and 1830–59.⁶² Where the first edition had charted the rise of the novel to be followed by one long generation of novelists active from the 1780s to the early 1840s, the second edition discussed four separate generations of novelists: the inauguration of the form appeared towards the end of volume one and was followed by three additional sections in volume two corresponding to the three periods just noted. The general headnote for the final period of 1830–59 called special attention to the ‘rich abundance of our prose fiction’ and concluded ‘the novel has indeed become a necessity for our social life—an

⁵⁶ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 631, 650.

⁵⁷ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 650.

⁵⁸ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 659–62.

⁵⁹ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 668.

⁶⁰ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 677.

⁶¹ The *Times*’s review of *Adam Bede*, 12 April 1859, 5, began by declaring it ‘a first-rate novel, and its author takes rank at once among the masters of the art.’

⁶² In both editions, the first five periods were identical: From the Earliest time–1400, 1400–1558, 1558–1649, 1649–89, 1689–1727. The first volume of the 1842–44 edition stopped at this point, and all of the second volume was taken up by two additional periods: 1727–80, and 1780–the Present. The first volume of the 1857–59 edition added a sixth period (1727–60) to complete the first volume, and devoted all of the second volume to three periods (1760–1800, 1800–30, 1830–59) covering only the past one hundred years of literary history, a disproportional shift towards the present that was justified by the great increase of readers and reading material during that time.

institution'.⁶³ As the subsection 'Novelists' went on to highlight the talents and prestige of writers such as Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, the Brontës, Gaskell, Eliot and many others, the *Cyclopaedia* was institutionalizing what would soon be called the 'Victorian novel'. With an Index entry that had not appeared in the first edition, browsing readers in 1859 were also now directed to 'Novels, Rise of'.⁶⁴ This addition of 'The Rise of the Novel' to the *Cyclopaedia*'s organizing logic was no minor development if we imagine it as a preliminary step in the phrase's long migration from the back of a book sold to general readers to the title-page of Ian Watt's academic study first published in 1957.

The new literary histories published in the period 1835–59 were responsible for familiarizing readers with a twofold rise of the novel in English: a mid-18th-century moment of formal origins followed by the new genre's recognition, sometime after 1830, as the age's characteristic literary form. Two years after W. & R. Chambers had issued its revision of the *Cyclopaedia*, the publisher Griffin, Bohn and Co. began to do the same for George Craik's *Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England* (6 vols., 1844–45) in two different forms: *A Compendious History of English Literature, and of the English Language* (2 vols., 1861) and *A Manual of English Literature, and of the English Language* (1862).⁶⁵ Craik mostly recycled his earlier work, but the changes and additions he made reflect and confirm the developments in literary history that have been traced back to key texts by Chambers and Shaw from the 1840s. Most obviously, both new works, by way of their titles, no longer aligned themselves with the older tendency to imagine and document the fate of 'Literature in England'. These were books about *English Literature*. Craik's new material on the history of the English language would also reflect this lexical shift. Historical philology's attention to a long history of English was displacing an earlier inclination, still strong in the 18th century, to regard old varieties of English as rude, irregular, or underdeveloped.⁶⁶ In the Victorian era, historical philology would be practised with a formidable level of learning, but this scholarly endeavour had a powerful synergistic relationship with a popular, racialized idealization of the nation—the people themselves—as readers and, in some senses, creatures of English. Even as the common reader of the 19th century was increasingly skilled in one language alone, this reader could proudly be the legatee of a rich and glorious linguistic inheritance that had been entailed in ancient times.

⁶³ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 572.

⁶⁴ *Cyclopaedia* (57–59), 2: 812.

⁶⁵ The *Compendious History* (24s) was a resetting of the text of the earlier *Sketches* with the addition of more extracts from primary texts, a history of the English language, and a final chapter that extended the history to present times. The *Manual* (7s 6d) was abridged from the *Compendious History* by excising most of its extracts and footnotes. Having Craik's narrative available in these two forms allowed his publisher to sell two versions of what was essentially the same book to two different kinds of consumers.

⁶⁶ Craik referred to what we now call Anglo-Saxon or Old English as 'Original English'. See *A Compendious History of English Literature, and of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London: Griffin, Bohn, 1861), 1: 32–41.