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PUBLISHING THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

RACHEL SAGNER BUURMA

INTRODUCTION

In a time before Robert Darnton’s work on the communications circuit and Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of the field of cultural production offered us the industrial-strength diagrams so useful as aids to understanding the production and consumption of Victorian novels, Royal A. Gettman wrote in his study of the papers of Victorian publisher Bentley that:

In theory a good book is a self-contained, organic entity, and it should simply be accepted or rejected by a publisher. In actual practice a decision may not be so clear-cut; a book, even an imaginative work like a novel, does not fall from the heavens a complete, crystallized object... And in theory the greater the genius of the author the larger the likelihood that the manuscript and the book will be identical. In actual practice the printed words may have been touched by other hands.¹

¹ Thanks to the many readers of material that has made its way into this piece, especially Lara Cohen, Elaine Freedgood, Laura Heffernan, Andrew Miller, Cyrus Mulready, and Megan Ward; special thanks to Lisa Rodensky for her remarkable editorial comments and infinite patience. The staff of the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library and the British Library and the manuscripts room of the British Library deserve thanks for so kindly helping me use manuscript materials from their collections. Many thanks are due to my outstanding research assistant, Anna Tione Levine, who tirelessly worked to help compile the bibliography of sources I read before writing this piece and also helped me think through the genre of the ‘handbook’ essay. I am indebted to Victorian Studies for allowing me to reprint a few pages of material from my essay ‘Anonymity, Corporate Authority, and the Archive: The Production of Authorship in Late-Victorian England’ (2007).

Setting the literary critic’s self-contained text penned by the ‘lonely writer’ against the publishing historian’s ‘other hands’, Gettman demonstrates the great significance of those other hands’ work in making Victorian novels. Since (and in fact even before) Gettman’s book, literary critics and book historians have multiplied our stories about novelistic meaning and the material forms it takes. A broad, impressionistic survey of the last hundred years of criticism of the Victorian novel turns up some critics for whom novelistic meaning comes into the world out of the intending and controlling head of an autonomous author, and others who assume it passes from a Victorian culture-shaped language through the fingers of the author as mere medium and out onto the printed page; yet another kind of critic sees meaning as a magical property of novelistic form (or formlessness) itself. By contrast, many book historians (even those who study primarily the novel or literature and inhabit literature departments) are very little concerned with the question of literary meaning. John Sutherland probably speaks for many book historians when he writes that despite his interest in the broad historical, biographical, and social contexts of Victorian novels, ‘the circumstances that interest me most have to do with the composition, publication, distribution, and consumption of novels. This, it seems to me, constitutes their “life”’. Sutherland tracks the production of novelistic meaning through attending to the stories within stories embedded within apparently minor allusions within novels or references within author–publisher correspondence; his interests lie more with the stories about the production of works like Charles Reade’s *Hard Cash* and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* than in the fictional stories those works contain.

At the intersection of literary publishing history and literary criticism proper we find what we might call, with Leah Price, a ‘materialist literary history’ which is, in the words of Don McKenzie, ‘concerned to show how forms effect meaning’, particularly literary meaning. Work in this area, like Price’s own study of the relation between the practices of anthologizing and abridgement and novelistic meaning in *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* and Priya Joshi’s study of the publication and reception of British fiction in India in *In Another Country*, focuses on the way the material forms of books enable the production of literary meaning. The Bourdieuvian approach taken by critics like Peter D. McDonald differs from Sutherland’s by working to construct

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1 In actual practice, of course, most critics combine some or all of these approaches.
5 Not about the Victorian novel but important as an example of work at the intersection of literary criticism and book history, Andrew Piper’s recent history of the Romantic book *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago
a structural map of the literary field extrapolated from interactions between individual agents like authors and publishers; this approach promises a robust account of the way cultural status is produced differentially within the social world of literary production.⁸

All of these variously book-history-inflected studies of Victorian novels offer richly detailed accounts of the engagement between publisher and author that goes into the larger scene of novel production. Yet most that I’ve mentioned centre their case studies around sites of conflict between author and publisher that read the two as autonomous intending individuals each bent on imposing their own particular meaning on the novelistic text and the conditions of its production, while those that pay more attention to the more collaborative aspects of author–publisher work often represent this as a process hidden from the common reader, who sees the author as the novel’s single creator. But here I would hope to uncover a wider range of understandings of the way Victorian novelists and publishers co-created novels as material and aesthetic objects by tracking ways publishers and authors worked in concert as often (or more often) as they did in conflict to produce novels which they—as well as their Victorian audiences of both professional and lay readers—often understood to be fully collaborative productions. At both ends of the Victorian era, writers, publishers, editors, publishers’ readers, and novel readers themselves expressed their awareness of the collective nature of novel-writing, from Archibald Constable’s slightly embarrassed admission that ‘I am sometimes half tempted to believe that of these books [the Waverley novels] I am the author’⁹ to popular late-Victorian novelist Mary Elizabeth Hawker’s serene sense that her publisher T. Fisher Unwin was ‘as interested as myself’ in preserving the value of her pseudonym.¹⁰ I myself will attempt to keep in mind that novels are collective creations of a range of individuals (the author and her own readers and editors unaffiliated with her publishing house as well as the publisher’s house reader, editors, publisher, compositor, printer) whose roles can be—in many cases—traced and untangled but also must be understood as adding up to more than the sum of their parts; I’ll assume also that all of

Press, 2009) asks ‘How did literature make sense of the book so that it in turn made sense to readers?’ and claims that ‘Literature makes books as much as books make literature’ (11). This last statement is especially relevant for the study of how author–publisher relations work to produce novels, for Piper means not only that literature mediates the reception of print for audiences, but that we must see book-making and literary meaning as interrelated through a constant circuit of production where those readers for whom literature works to make books legible also in turn become producers of knowing books whose forms are mediated by literature.

⁸ As McDonald notes in British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880–1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), a major advantage of the Bourdieuan perspective is the fact that it offers a model of literary culture that is autonomous from but linked to the economic world. McDonald’s work also offers sustained readings of the contents of the novels he discusses.


these individuals involved in publishing a novel are unevenly organized around a set of intertwined institutions.\(^\text{11}\)

Despite the proliferation of nuanced models for understanding the interplay between material form and literary meaning, Victorian publication practices are still regularly understood to represent simple economic determinism; Fredric Jameson's use of the late-Victorian shift from three-decker to one-volume publication formats as his key example of mechanical causality in *The Political Unconscious* is just the most classic example. Critiquing Althusser's claim that any perception of mechanical causality is the result of false consciousness, Jameson counters with the example of late-Victorian publishing, noting that 'there seems, for instance, to have been an unquestionable causal relationship between the admittedly extrinsic fact of the crisis in late nineteenth-century publishing, during which the dominant three-decker lending-library format was replaced by a cheaper one-volume format, and the modification of the "inner form" of the novel itself'.\(^\text{12}\) While offering more complexity and detail, many studies of Victorian novel publication make similar assumptions, tending to assign purely economic agendas to publishers and either moral or aesthetic/artistic agendas to novelists.\(^\text{13}\) Yet the interpretive framework that leans upon this truth can have the unintended effect of making us suspect that when persons involved in the publishing process offer aesthetic or ethical motives for their actions that these can be interpreted away, perhaps considered but ultimately demystified as covering up deep economic self-interest. Without naïvely discounting the importance of such economic determinism, I will show here how the questions of morality, economics, and aesthetics surrounding Victorian novel publishing intertwined in ways that resist reduction to a single type of motive and require us to rethink the categories—individual, collective, and corporate—in which Victorians themselves understood the production of literary meaning to occur via the publication process.

The saga of the three-volume novel and the circulating libraries is a case in point. From the middle of the 19th century, the Victorian reader's association of the high-priced three-volume novel with circulating library control of the market for fiction, and her knowledge of the fact that to be successful, novelists had to produce work of a suitable length for circulation in that form, meant that the format itself was read by many as a

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\(^\text{11}\) It is this last assumption—so easy to express in the abstract, so difficult to actively assume in concrete examination of particular instances—that is most often left out of even the most accomplished studies of Victorian novel publishing, and studies of Victorian publishing more generally. Whatever our stated ideas about poststructuralism or 'theory', literary critics and historians of the Victorian period have generally accepted poststructuralism's insight about the composite and socially constructed figure of the author, summed up in Foucault's phrase 'the author-function'. Yet we have been slow to accept the practical, methodological ramifications of this insight.


\(^\text{13}\) As Lara Langer Cohen points out in the introduction to *The Fabrication of American Literature: Fraudulence in Antebellum Print Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), this story 'has become a staple of nineteenth-century literary history, in which writers struggle against the tyrannical market, pitting their creative energies against its stultifying power' (10).
concession to the economic over the literary; the 'three-decker' had become a cultural symbol of mechanistic causality and commodified fiction. As the Saturday Review noted, such novels, 'the children of circulating libraries', 'are articles of commerce, and are constructed with a view to certain well-established uses and well-ascertained tastes'. Public perception—at least as represented by periodicals like The Saturday Review, the London Times, and the Daily News—was that the three-volume novel was unnecessarily expensive (for readers) and Procrustean (for authors), a diabolical invention of the right-hand side of Darnton's communications circuit. And as quickly as this meaning of the three-decker's form became legible to readers, novelists like Anthony Trollope and William Thackeray began to deploy their consciousness of it as a literary effect designed to both heighten and complicate realism by claiming, for example, that an imposed length and not the fictionality of the representation was the limiting factor on what could be represented.

Further, although the three-volume novel system wasn't really dismantled until the 1890s, by which time the three-decker system had become a losing proposition for the

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14 The Victorian reader did not need to bring this information to her reading of the three-volume format of the novel she happened to be reading because so many of those novels inform her of this through references to their shortness or length, or by referring to their own content as truncated or expanded by the exigencies of the three-volume form (or their resistance to it). These references, especially those that appear before the 1870s, are not necessarily critical of the three-volume form—for Victorian readers the sense that the novel was a commodity written to fit into a certain economically viable form was not necessarily negative (though it could be read so)—but they certainly do insist on bringing it to the reader's attention. On this point see Kelly J. Mays, 'The Publishing World', in A Companion to the Victorian Novel, ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), 11–30, 26–27. Mays's essay delineates another (Bourdieuvian) version of the relationship between the literary and the economic in Victorian publishing, one which sees a mid-Victorian equation of literary and economic success give way to a later-Victorian tension between the two, a tension embodied in increasingly tense relationships between authors and publishers and the proliferation of authors' societies and literary agents. For an account of the impact of Mudie's and the circulating library on the literary marketplace more generally see chapter 2, 'Equipoise and the Three-Decker', in N.N. Feltes's Modes of Production of Victorian Novels (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 18–35. See also Guinevere L. Griest, Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 55, and Troy Bassett, 'Living on the Margin: George Bentley and the Economics of the Three-Volume Novel, 1865–70', Book History 13 (2010): 60–66.

15 By contrast, the one-volume novel is 'altogether a different type of production', one which 'may not be unfairly described as the accounts which people give of their dreams upon waking from their first sleep'. Instead of being a device for a narrator or chorus to show us all of a world in capitalist descriptive detail, a one-volume novel is 'almost always a literary adaptation' of a device made of mirrors 'so arranged, that when any one entered it he saw his own face in twenty different attitudes', 'One-Volume Novels', The Saturday Review (1 January 1859): 11.

16 See Anthony Trollope's The Warden [1855], ed. Geoffrey Harvey (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), 94–5, where the authorial narrator notes—fairly neutrally on the one-versus-three-volume issue—that:

What had passed between Eleanor Harding and Mary Bold need not be told. It is indeed a matter of thankfulness that neither the historian nor the novelist hears all that is said by their heroes or heroines, or how would three volumes or twenty suffice! In the present case so little of this sort have I overheard, that I live in hopes of finishing my work within 300 pages, and of completing that pleasant task—a novel in one volume...
circulating libraries, cultural attitudes towards the respective formats had begun to shift much earlier. The increase in numbers of one- and two-volume novels published in the 1880s seemed to herald, for writers like George Gissing, a style of novel-writing that was ‘far more artistic’ than that associated with the three-decker. As he wrote to his brother in 1885, just as he himself was ‘recasting the first vol. of my novel [Isabel Clarendon], & shall make the last two into one’ and before the economically motivated circulating library and publisher-led shift away from the three-decker:

It is fine to see how the old three-vol. tradition is being broken through. Chapman tells me he much prefers two vols., & one vol. is becoming commonest of all. It is the new school, due to continental influence. Thackeray & Dickens wrote at enormous length, & with profusion of detail; their plan is to tell everything, to leave nothing to be divined. Far more artistic, I think, is this later method, of merely suggesting; of dealing with episodes, instead of writing biographies. The old novelist is omniscient; I think it is better to tell a story precisely as one does in real life,—hinting, surmising, telling in detail what can so be told, & no more. In fact, it approximates to the dramatic mode of presentment.

The copious prose of Dickens and Thackeray—though in theory quite separable from the three-volume format—seemed to Gissing to have an affinity with it just as the decidedly more modernist-sounding limited perspective and limitation of description seemed to have a close affinity with the increasingly popular single-volume format. A widespread recognition of the ideological content of the three-decker’s form—the affiliation of a specific material format with commodification, middle-class-ness, copious description, and omniscience—underlies Gissing’s association of changed print format with changed style, and this association offered readers a partial framework for understanding the

and in The Way We Live Now the narrator writes of Lady Carbury, an aspiring novelist, as ‘false from head to foot’, and states:

It cannot with truth be said of her that she had had any special tale to tell. She had taken to the writing of a novel because Mr. Loiter had told her that upon the whole novels did better than anything else. She would have written a volume of sermons on the same encouragement, and have gone about the work exactly after the same fashion. The length of her novel had been her first question. It must be in three volumes, and each volume must have three hundred pages. But what fewest number of words might be supposed sufficient to fill a page? The money offered was too trifling to allow of very liberal measure on her part. [Anthony Trollope, The Way We Live Now (1874–75), ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 364–65].

17 Other indications of this cultural response included the issue of new series based on the one-volume format by firms like T. Fisher Unwin, polemics against the three-volume system like George Moore’s Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals (London: Vizetelly, 1885), and the comments of novelists like George Gissing.
19 Gissing, 320.
rapid acceleration of the shift from three- to one-volume formats that was precipitated by
the circulating libraries and the publishers later in the 1890s.

Understanding how novelists and critics mediated shifts in material print format as
much as economically determined changes in the print formats of books affected liter­
ary form might be viewed in the light of recent critical work that seeks to recover the
complexity of Victorian understandings of novelistic form and meaning. Though the
critical tradition has long registered dissent from the view that Victorian novel readers
confused realism with reality and responded to fiction in primarily moral and literalist
terms (i.e. thought of characters as ‘real people’ and therefore evaluated novels by ethical
rather than aesthetic criteria), recent and ongoing work on both professional reviewing
and lay reading of the 19th-century novel has begun the concrete work of expanding
such theorizing into an entire field of inquiry, uncovering a world of reception which
neither sees Victorian novel readers as benighted creatures whose inability to separate
fiction from reality made them endlessly and unresistingly subject to the ideologies
encoded in fiction nor attempts to interpret their responses in such a way as to make
them form-focused New Critics avant la lettre. The archives that record the histories of
author–publisher relations offer us another window into such Victorian understandings
of the novel as an aesthetically, morally, and materially meaningful object.

Where do the traces of these Victorian novelist–publisher relationships survive?
Certainly in published and unpublished letters, autobiographies, and memoirs—often
the first and main sources for studies of author–publisher relations—but also in unbound
proofs and morocco-covered dedication copies, readers’ reports and book contracts, and
stereotype plates and circulating library catalogues, not to mention in the characters,
plots, dialogues, and descriptions contained in the novels themselves. Perhaps the best
record of prolific Victorian novelist Margaret Oliphant’s half-century-long relationship
with two generations of Blackwood family publishers can be found not in the thousands
of pages of letters exchanged between Oliphant and the Blackwoods (now preserved in
the National Library of Scotland), but in the light pencil markings—often little more than
underlining and bracketing, accompanied by a few marginal crosses in black ink—which
Oliphant’s hand sprinkled across the entire Blackwood’s publishing archive. These marks
are the traces of Oliphant’s own use of the archive; at the very end of her long career she
wrote volumes one and two of the monumental *Annals of a Publishing House: William
Blackwood and his Sons, their Magazine and Friends*, whose very title and subtitle imply
a great deal about how late-Victorians saw the publishing house as an institution which

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readings of Victorian reading, see Suzy Anger, *Victorian Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University
Dickens’, *Victorian Literature and Culture* 37, no. 2 (2009): 583–607; Beth Palmer and Adelene Buckland,
eds., *A Return to the Common Reader: Print Culture and the Novel, 1850–1900* (Farnham, Surrey, and
both organized and was organized by individuals, families, print forms, and social connections. The difficulty here lies in transforming marginal notes into evidence of author-publisher relations, making a few light lines tell a story. It is more immediately gratifying, more exciting, and very much more dangerous to investigate cases in which such relations go spectacularly wrong, producing epistolary dramas or enduring cultural myths that ask us only to transcribe and pick a side. The story of Caroline Norton's copious (and yet nonetheless archivally incomplete) correspondence with Macmillan's publishing house over the interrupted serialization of her novel *Old Sir Douglas* in *Macmillan's Magazine* between January 1866 and October 1867, which I take up in the first of my three case studies, offers one out of scores of possible examples. Archives like this one seem self-dramatizing because they fit neatly into our own ideas about authorial autonomy and the battle for control between novelist and publisher. While they offer us a very accessible written record, such dramas also tempt us with clearly delineated competing narratives, asking us only to choose between them, and can also distract us from the much broader, less visible field of Victorian novel-publishing-as-usual. But arguably no marginalia or archive of correspondence tells us as much about the publication process of Anthony Trollope's short novel *The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson* (1861–62), the subject of my second case study, as that novel's own plot does. Finally, I'll examine the everyday and relatively unremarkable correspondence between the T. Fisher Unwin publishing company and author 'Lanoe Falconer' (Mary Elizabeth Hawker) about her novel *Mademoiselle Ixe*, published in Unwin's *Pseudonym Library* series of novels, to show how even late Victorians sometimes saw novel production as a collective activity and assigned novelistic meaning a collective authority.

**Serializing: Old Sir Douglas in Macmillan's Magazine**

Up to the late 1850s, Victorian novels first appeared before their first readers either as individually bound novels (in one-, three- or the less common two-volume form) or as individually wrapped monthly part-publications. By the early 1860s, part-publications' popularity had diminished, replaced by the less risky initial format of magazine

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21 As Andrew Piper writes, 'The more we come to see literature as a social process and not as a singularly generative (or autopoetic) moment, the more we can begin to "recover the collectivity" in Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi's words, [footnote omitted] that informs the making of literature in general and nineteenth-century literature in particular' (9).

22 The three-volume form, made popular by the publication of Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels, had been around since the 1820s but came to prominence—and under attack—in the 1850s with the cementing of the reading public's association between the three-decker and Mudie's circulating library. Nevertheless, as Simon Eliot has pointed out, one-volume works of fiction still represented a significant portion of Mudie's stock. See Simon Eliot, 'Fiction and Non-Fiction: One- and Three-Volume Novels in
serialization, in which a few to several chapters of the novel would appear in each weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly issue. Like a successful part-publication, a successful serialization would often be followed by bound-volume publication suitable for circulating libraries and then, over time, a series of increasingly inexpensive formats which ensured not only a kind of ‘omnipresence’ for the most popular novelists but also a longer period of diffusion and reception than book history’s traditional focus on first formats tends to imply. One downside of the ‘to be continued’ magazine serial model was that disruption or discontinuation caused by either author or publisher always potentially threatened such episodic publication, as when Charles Dickens had to defer All the Year Round’s serialization start date for Charles Reade’s Very Hard Cash from December 1862 to March 1863 due to Reade’s difficulties composing, or when the Evangelically flavoured general weekly Good Words stopped its announced serialization of Anthony Trollope’s Rachael Ray due to a dispute about its representation of Evangelicals (negative) and dancing (positive), and Wilkie Collins’s The Moonstone in All the Year Round was nearly interrupted due to the novelist’s illness. (Recounting the episode in the preface to the first three-volume edition of that novel, Collins explains that remembering that his audience was waiting for a new instalment each week kept him not only writing, but alive.) And authorial procrastination could always potentially cause disruption, since for every novelist who refused to allow serialization to begin before he had completed a manuscript of the entire work (such as Trollope) there were probably half a dozen who wrote to the episode’s publication deadline and rarely beyond (like Dickens or Norton).

Mid-Victorian observers spent considerable time thinking about the effects of these serial formats on the novel’s narrative form. Just as Victorian critics noted

Some Mudie Catalogues, 1857–94, Publishing History 66 (2009): 31–47. Part-publication had long been a popular format for reprints of older works, but Charles Dickens’s Pickwick Papers (1836–37) famously introduced it as a viable format for new fiction. The sandwiching of regular novel instalments between the pages of a print vehicle already boasting a certain circulation made selling fiction seem less risky for both author and publisher. The magazine’s pre-existing audience offered authors a certain circulation for their novels, and a popular novel promised to increase not only overall magazine sales but also the publisher’s prestige, which was linked to publishers’ often eponymously named magazines (Bentley’s Magazine, Macmillan’s Magazine, Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine are a few examples), and many publishers used their house magazines as a way of launching unknown novelists. Laurel Brake turns this familiar argument about serialization around to also argue that ‘the widespread incorporation of the novel into mainstream periodicals in the 1850s and after helped to assure the proliferation and economic viability of the periodical press’ (11). The combination meant that with magazine publication of novels ‘there was less risk all round for the reader/consumer, the author, and the publisher’ (12), Laurel Brake, Print in Transition, 1850–1910: Studies in Media and Book History (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).


that the three- and one-volume formats invited different styles, the monthly part-publication and the magazine serial too seemed to demand, or at least encourage, specific formal characteristics. As E.S. Dallas wrote in a Times review, Wilkie Collins's

*The Woman in White* [1859–60] is a novel of the rare old school which must be finished at a sitting. No chance of laying it down until the last page of the last volume has been turned. We have lately gotten into the habit—strange for these fast days—of reading our novels very leisurely. They are constructed on the principle of monthly instalments, and we read a chapter on the 1st of every month, quietly sauntering to the end of the story in about a couple of years. Even the novels which are published complete in three volumes are for the most part built on the same model. It is possible to open the volume at any page and read right on without embarrassment.\(^{28}\)

Though *The Woman in White* was in fact first serialized in the weekly *All the Year Round*, as Dallas points out at the end of his review, its form reminds him of an earlier order of things. Writing for the large general audience of Great Britain's leading national newspaper, Dallas claims that before serialization novels were coherent intact wholes whose construction encouraged absorbed, through-the-night reading; the new narrative forms of novels built with serialization in mind are, by contrast, so episodic that one can begin them on any page, and the recursive, homogeneous narrative style developed for such episodic material forms has become the general rule for *all* novels. Significantly, for Dallas the novel's narrative form must be understood as linked to, but not determined by, its mode of publication. Unlike Gissing, who imagines the old-fashioned, omniscient, descriptive three-volume novel giving way to the lean, allusive one-volume in a perfect match that aligns material form with literary form and literary form with spirit of the age, for Dallas a new material form has actually caused a disjunction between zeitgeist and literary form. Though serial episodes are short, they—'strange for these fast days'—encourage a 'leisurely' reading practice; though the older form of the novel offers readers a much longer stretch of text, its tighter construction requires them to cover that textual ground much more quickly. Dallas's description complicates what in this light looks like an oversimplified association between material publication form and narrative/aesthetic form on Gissing's part.\(^{29}\)

Related questions about novelistic form were central to novelist-publisher-editor discussions about the disrupted publication of Caroline Norton's *Old Sir Douglas* in


\(^{29}\) Dallas would have liked Nicolas Dames's recent analysis of Trollope's chapters, which as Dames explains must be 'understood as a unit of technical interest—something novelists can wrestle with or against—and also a unit of philosophical interest' linked to Trollope's understanding of the way the chapter as a formal unit mediates 'the relationship between segmented experiences (the episode) and a concept of overall education (a life) [as] the central formal problematic of the novel in its classical period', Nicolas Dames, *Literature Compass* 7 (2010): 855–60.
Macmillan’s Magazine, which was serialized between January 1866 and October 1867 with a hiatus between June and September of 1866. In April of 1866, with the serialization of Norton’s novel well underway, publisher Alexander Macmillan wrote to Norton to explain the non-appearance of one chapter (titled ‘Royal Idols’) in the most recent May multi-chapter instalment. ‘Pardon my saying’, he began politely, ‘that I think you can hardly have duly considered this chapter, as it has an air of personal pique that would be liable to very severe strictures, and I think most hurtful to yourself. The effect on the minds of all of us who read it was the same surprise and regret and a strong conviction that it would not do to put it in the Magazine under any possible circumstances.’ The chapter in question apparently included a negative representation of the Queen’s personal conduct, a representation which Macmillan as publisher and David Masson as editor of Macmillan’s both considered could on no account be included in their magazine. To publish the chapter, as Macmillan argued, would be to put forward such unacceptable views of royalty as his and the magazine’s own. Couching his complaint in insistently moral terms—and remaining agnostic on the accuracy of the representation in question—Macmillan explained in this first letter that ‘There may be I have no doubt there is very much of pettishness about Court conduct and Kings and Queens may be open to all sorts of reproach. But our Queen who whatever she is in herself... does command our loyalty whatever that may mean.’

The ensuing correspondence between Norton, Macmillan, and Masson dramatizes not primarily the moral conflict one might expect from this opening shot, but more essentially reveals a basic epistemological divide between two entirely different understandings of the interpretability, authority, and function of the novel as understood in relation to its publication format, publisher, and author. Norton conducts the debate by insisting on the primary importance of the unified coherence and aesthetic wholeness of the novel, the self-enclosed fictionality of what it represents, and her own authorial autonomy over that representation, while Macmillan speaks of the novel’s moral content, the fact that its characters’ views would be read as both Norton’s and the magazine’s own, and the resulting responsibility for the novel borne by the corporate identity of Macmillan’s as much as by the individual authority of Norton. Masson’s epistolary voice intervenes at the end of the discussion; the single extant letter he contributed shows him

30 As noted above, at this time magazine serialization was gaining in popularity, and as John Sutherland points out, by the mid-1860s experimental forms of serialization (Middlemarch’s eight short books, Trollope’s thirty-two weekly 6d parts of the Last Chronicle of Barset) were increasingly popular as novelists and publishers came to feel that ‘the traditional forms like the three-volume novel and the monthly thirty-two page serial had had their day’ (John Sutherland, Victorian Novelists and Publishers (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 198). It is worth noting in this regard that at the same time that novelists and critics were increasingly applying ideas about organic form to the novel, the material forms of those novels were increasingly various and disunified.


marshalling the conflicting terms of the discussion in an attempt to mediate between Macmillan's and Norton's irreconcilable perspectives.\textsuperscript{33}

Though she vigorously protested the editorial excision of the relevant chapter of *Old Sir Douglas*, Norton did not do so by defending the morality of the sentiments in question. Rather, as she insisted repeatedly, those sentiments were the words of a single character rather than of the author or the novel or the magazine, unchangeable because like everything in the novel they formed an essential element of the novel as aesthetic whole. As she explained to Macmillan, the integrity of the novel as a work of art requires that if one chapter be removed, the entire serialization be discontinued since 'each of my novels has been written, not as a mere story but with a distinct purpose, and I cannot unweave my book because those who differ from me are [startled] at what one of the personages in it is made to say'.\textsuperscript{34} In consequence, she continued, 'I am compelled to repeat that it is not a question of omitting a chapter but omitting the book—if one main purpose of the book is to be objected to.'\textsuperscript{35} Macmillan in his reply returns to the moral question ('But I am sure personalities about our Queen would only cause pain and work no amendment', he explains, taking her 'purpose' to be social rather than aesthetic), while Norton's rejoinder again attempted to frame the question in aesthetic terms: 'I cannot have my book published in a mutilated form', she explained, 'Nor would it be possible to omit in the way you imagine. The groundwork of the story, the characters in the story, and the opinions advanced in it, are (as I have said) warp and woof, and not beans strung on a thread to be pulled off at pleasure.'\textsuperscript{36}

Though Norton was far from the first writer to use the well-worn 'warp and woof' metaphor for the integrity of a text, her usage marks what was in 1863 a tension between different ways of thinking about the novel's purpose and structure. Though the 'warp and woof' metaphor had long been used, from the early 19th century it served as a figure for the text's artistry, the revelation of which might destroy the reader's impression of the text's integrity. As a reviewer of Scott's Magnum Opus edition wrote in 1829 of Scott's new prefaces to the novels, 'Why show us the warp and woof of that tapestry which, in its unbetrayed state, was so perfect? Yet by the 1860s such integrity was something the novel itself rightly displayed, and the figure came to serve as a desirable description of novelistic structure that would be legible to readers. Character, plot, and social

\textsuperscript{33} Masson's letter is the last letter on the topic I can find in the BL Macmillan papers or in existing printed Macmillan-related correspondence; clearly more correspondence or perhaps face-to-face discussions continued, however, as the serialization was interrupted only through the summer and resumed in September. In June and July several literary gossip and news columns registered the interruption of the novel's serialization, though none that I have seen hinted at the cause.

\textsuperscript{34} Caroline Norton to Alexander Macmillan, 24 April 1866 (Macmillan Archive, Volume CLXXIX, MSS 54964, British Library, London), 79, original emphasis.

\textsuperscript{35} Norton to Macmillan, 24 April 1866, 7–9.

\textsuperscript{36} Macmillan to Norton, [n.d.] April 1866, 10–11; Norton to Macmillan, [n.d.] April 1866, 12–13, original emphasis.

commentary are so tightly woven into the novel's narrative form that, according to Norton, to omit a chapter would be to tear a rent in the fabric of the novel rendering it useless. Despite what the seriality of the publication form might imply about chapters' exchangeability, she insists, her chapters— unlike dried, stored 'beans on a string'—are not interchangeable or extractable. Although she capitulated (to who or what is not clear) in writing Old Sir Douglas as a serialized novel (something she does not, as she tells Macmillan, like to do or often do), she resists the serial-linked narrative form that E.S. Dallas a few years earlier implicitly devalued in his praise of The Woman in White.

Related to Norton's perception that Macmillan misunderstood her novel's form was her inability to communicate to him the idea that her novel's expressed opinions were distinct from the magazine's editorial perspective, and that her characters' opinions were not—and would not be by readers—identified with her own. As she attempted to explain to Macmillan—not for the first time— 'It is perhaps scarcely worth while after saying so much to refer to the argument again that these censures of royalty are in the mouths of one of the personages to no more be taken as the Editor's or publisher's views than any other kind of strong language in the mouth of a particular fictional character.' By contrast, for Macmillan the entire content of the magazine was at a certain level editorial content. The flagship magazine of the publishing house and publisher whose name it bore expressed a consistent perspective and embodied a certain decorum from which even the opinions of novelistic characters were not permitted to depart. Although each instalment of the novel emblazoned the words 'By the Hon. Mrs. Norton' just below the title, and despite the fact that, as many scholars have documented, Macmillan's was perhaps the first Victorian periodical to consistently feature signed non-fiction (and therefore break from the traditional periodical practice of anonymous publication which subsumed individual writers within a corporate editorial set of opinions and style), nevertheless the sense that the periodical and the publishing house bore ultimate responsibility for the serialized novel's content—were, in fact, as authorial in their relation to the novel as Norton—remained strong.

Norton's opposition of the bean-on-string and warp-and-woof metaphors gives new meaning to Henry James's much later use of the two in 'The Figure in the Carpet' (1896) (Selected Tales, ed. John Lyon (London: Penguin, 2001)). The young reviewer-narrator offers the textile 'figure in the carpet' metaphor to the established novelist Verecker as a description for the still-unguessed 'intention' that Verecker insists pervades his work. 'It was something, I guessed, in the primal plan; something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet.' As the unnamed reviewer goes on to explain, Verecker 'highly approved of this image when I used it, and he used another himself. "It's the very string," he said, "that my pearls are strung on!"' (295). Norton's dismissive use of the string metaphor allows us to reread what seems at first merely Jamesian stylistic exuberance. Not simply a semi-satirical piling up of figures for an authorial intention expressed as a supposed aesthetic wholeness that (the story implies) can never be truly expressed, carpet vs string is now legible as an opposition between an older and a newer model for the structure of the novel or an oeuvre. Verecker's name thus comes to hint the more strongly at outmoded practices of realism.

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40 Norton continues in other letters to insist that 'beyond softening the expression,— [or omitting]
a name,— or causing these opinions—(which are not given as mine, but as the opinions of one of the
David Masson, editor of *Macmillan's* as well as professor of rhetoric and English literature at the University of Edinburgh and author of *British Novelists and Their Styles* (1859), took up the correspondence where Alexander Macmillan—at least as far as one can tell from the existing record—left off, and in so doing reveals his consciousness of the impasse created by Macmillan's and Norton's radically different orientations towards the novel, literary authority, and publication. Replying to a letter in which Norton had assured Macmillan that 'no one can expect that after more than 30 years successful authorship both with my name and without it, (a severer test of success)—I should submit any work of mine to editorship!', Masson immediately distinguished his approach from Macmillan's by using Norton's own terms in order to mediate between her position and Macmillan's. Assuring her that 'nothing could have been further from my thoughts than the notion that it would be tolerable or becoming in *me* to apply any process of editorship, in any ordinary sense of the word, to anything bearing your name or coming from your pen,' he responded to the precise way Norton framed her career-long resistance to editorial intervention in the terms of both her signed and unsigned literary successes. Confirming her claim of autonomy, he wrote that when reading proofs of her work he had always found 'not only the story and the conception of the situations and characters but also the minute touches and details and the exact and artistic texture of the writing perfectly free from any need of correction'. So perfect is Norton's self-editing, he suggests that 'but for my focused habit of reading all proofs before final publication, and also my pleasure in each successive instalment of “Old Sir Douglas” the 'offending chapter' might easily have made it to press unseen by editorial eyes. 'It was then in no mere exercise or presumption of Editorship', he explained, 'in short, on no literary ground

characters in the book), to be disputed and argued against by another of the characters,—I could make no alterations whatever' (Norton to Macmillan, 24 April 1866, 7–9).


Solveig C. Robinson in "Sir, It is an Outrage": George Bentley, Robert Black, and the Condition of the Mid-list Author in Victorian Britain, *Book History* 10 (2007): 131–68 describes another such drama played out between publisher George Bentley and relatively unknown author Robert Black between 1877 and 1878 during the time that Black's novel *Love or Lucre* was being prepared for the press. Robinson concludes that the violence of Black's reaction to the editorial intervention of publishing house staff was unusual, and generalizes from the evidence of the Bentley archive that such cases were 'exceptions to the rule' of authorial acquiescence in editorial intervention. In this she agrees with Gettman's general sense that most novelists did not much resent even significant alternations to their manuscripts during the publication process (Gettman, *A Victorian Publisher*, 212). In any case, the extensive evidence from the Bentley–Black correspondence Robinson cites does also suggest that Black's main strategy for insisting on authorial control was based not on an appeal to aesthetic criteria but rather on an identification of author with text; Black explicitly disclaims any special literary or artistic merit for his novel, insisting in a legal language of rights that 'an author has an indisputable right to make his own corrects for himself' (Black quoted in Robinson, 140).


Masson to Norton, 4 May 1866, 14–15.
whatsoever—that, when I did read that last chapter, I telegraphed to stop it until we could refer it to you'.

Masson's language seeks to separate the literary from the moral, the unvarying perfection of each instalment’s plot, characterization, and style from the incidental referential content of this single disputed chapter. He also takes up the separate question of authorial versus corporate editorial responsibility for the novel's contents, noting that he had carefully considered ‘[a]ll the reasons which you suggested for our [i.e. the Macmillan’s editorial persona] caring nothing of the matter’, as well as her point about ‘the dramatic character of the language in the fatal chapter... coming as dialogue in the mouths of the characters in the story’. Having expressed clearly and specifically his understanding of her arguments and the meaning of the way she frames the question, he explained—notably in passive-voiced terms—that after all ‘the conviction remained that we, as connected with Macmillan's Magazine, should be culpable, and would be held culpable, if, in whatever circumstances and under whatever name, that chapter appeared in its pages.

This entire correspondence occurred between late April and early May; instalments of *Old Sir Douglas* were suspended through June, July (when a small notice appeared in *Macmillan's* notifying readers of the suspension), and August; in September they quietly resumed, and no record seems to exist of the further discussions the three parties must have held. Whatever the final terms of the agreement, the significance for publication history is that we must read Macmillan's short-term personal victory—Norton’s excision of ‘Royal Idols’ and the resumed serialization of *Old Sir Douglas*—alongside the

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45 Masson to Norton, 4 May 1866, 14–15, original emphasis.
46 George Worth’s account of the episode in his *Macmillan’s Magazine, 1859–1907: No Flippancy or Abuse Allowed* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) pits a ‘strong-willed’ (11) Norton against a Macmillan ‘Who always replied calmly and politely to Norton’s angry letters’. Offering us the Norton–Macmillan correspondence as plot rather than rhetoric, Worth omits Masson’s role altogether (except very briefly in a footnote) and reads the episode in terms of ends rather than means, explaining that:

Norton bristled when Macmillan informed her on 24 April 1866 that he had held back a chapter from the May instalment of her *Old Sir Douglas* because he considered it disrespectful to the Queen... He went on to state his ‘sincere hope that you will kindly leave it out of the novel as it appears in the Magazine’ because, ‘much as I feel it would cause obloquy to us, I should regret much more what I think it would bring to you’. In her reply of the same date Norton was indignant. She maintained that she had written her novel ‘with a distinct purpose’ and, after a long and often tumultuous career in the public eye, she had come to be indifferent to ‘obloquy’... Although Norton did promise to take another look at the revised proofs of the offending chapter, it began to appear that Macmillan had met his match, for the serialized version of ‘the book’ was actually withdrawn from *Macmillan’s* for the next three months. [27]

In framing Norton as merely disrespectful and Macmillan as serenely heroic, Worth exemplifies one of the troubles of accounts of author–publisher relations, comparing them to battles of will for particular outcomes, for if Macmillan did achieve his moral goal of controlling the political content of *Old Sir Douglas*, the terms in which Norton sought to frame the debate were to dominate the literary field by the century’s end.

47 Masson to Norton, 4 May 1866, 14–15, original emphasis.
48 Masson to Norton, 4 May 1866, 14–15.
longer-term success of Norton’s way of looking at novelistic form from the point of view of the autonomous author who controls her enclosed text from a detached position.

As more than one critic has noted, book history and poststructuralism have long shared the insight that the author function is performed by a number of individuals, and that literary texts are both more and less than the sum of the intentions that go into making them. We have almost forgotten—as Macmillan knew in 1865—that the wider Victorian reading audience possessed similar assumptions about the often collective, flexible nature of literary authority. Laurence Briscoe explains that this scholarly disregard of the 19th-century sense of the difference between the ‘collectivism of the serial as a cultural form and the individualism of the book’ is due to ‘the privileging of books and the marginalization of serials by our author-oriented system of cultural value’. The idea that an author might exercise near-total control over the meaning of her novel while at the same time insisting on a conceptual splitting of textual meaning from authorial intention became one of our critical orthodoxies by the mid-20th century and therefore does not seem unusual when we encounter it in Norton’s letters in 1866. Yet at the time her terms were nearly illegible to Macmillan, a signal that the controversy over Old Sir Douglas’s serialization was one symptom of a moment of real change in thinking about the relationship between material and literary form.

**EDITING AND INVESTING: ANTHONY TROLLOPE’S THE STRUGGLES OF BROWN, JONES, AND ROBINSON IN THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE**

Following the money through the circuits of Victorian author–publisher relations is difficult not only because there were so many ways novelists could be paid for copyright, but also because successful Victorian novelists were often involved in both editorial work and—increasingly as publishing houses continued to incorporate from the 1860s onwards—the financial oversight of publishing houses. Anthony Trollope’s

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49 In ‘Ideas of the Book and Histories of Literature’ McDonald notes that despite the similarity of their basic insight about print culture and authorship, the poststructuralists’ (Derrida, Foucault) focus on book-related technology has largely been interested in constraints on meaning, while book historians (Donald McKenzie, Roger Chartier) have largely been focused on how print positively effects ‘new and different meanings’ (Peter D. McDonald, ‘The Idea of the Book and Histories of Literature: After Theory?’, *PMLA* 121 (January 2006): 217–28).


51 Norton was far from unique in her problems with Macmillan; Anthony Trollope, for example, had a brief argument with him over the question of expanding his Macmillan’s-serialized *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humslethwaite* (1870) into a two-volume novel. See Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* [1883], ed. Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 336.
Autobiography provides detailed and regular accounts of how much each of his novels was sold for and to whom as well as a self-approving account of negotiations with publishers over the value of his books, but tends to downplay his other kinds of financial relations with the publishing industry. His first few unpopular novels—The MacDermots of Ballycloran, The Kellys and the O'Kellys, La Vendée—were published on the profit-sharing model, in which the publisher footed the bill for the production of the novel and paid the author a certain contractually determined portion of the profits. In the case of his first three novels, Trollope recounts in his autobiography, no profit meant no payments. But after the publication of The Warden, his first novel to achieve respectable sales, Trollope realized that he could negotiate to sell his copyrights outright (before publication for a lump sum and permanently), a method of payment for fiction which, like profit-sharing, was popular. Variations on outright sale also existed, in which an author would sell permission for the publisher to use the copyright for a certain number of years (five, for example) or for certain editions defined by price. Less popular than either of Trollope's models, but still sometimes practised, was the system of publishing on commission, which reversed the profit-sharing model; an author would undertake to pay for all of the costs associated with publication in return for virtually all of the profits, a risky but potentially high-yield venture. The royalty system, in which the novelist was paid a certain contractually determined amount of money per copy sold, did not come into use until later in the 19th century, but then became widely favoured.

Yet novelist–publisher relationships involving money were not limited to the negotiation around payment for novels. The same questions about individual authorship and publisher's institutional responsibility that characterize the Norton–Macmillan relationship arose in even more complex ways in Trollope's life. Though clearly not squeamish when it came to the monetary aspects of his own career as a novelist, his investments in and responsibilities for various publishing ventures seem to have worried him considerably. Late in his life Trollope lamented in a letter to a friend that 'You remember Chapman & Hall. Their business has been turned into a Limited Company, & I am one of the three Directors. Nothing more pernicious and damnable ever occurred, or more likely to break a man's heart.'

Caroline Norton, for example, told Macmillan while negotiating a deal for reprinting some of her more popular novels in an inexpensive collected works that 'I cannot print under five shillings the vol of "Stuart of Dunleath" being bound by agreement not to do so'; she had sold the rights to the cheap edition to another publisher. Norton to Macmillan, 15 August 1863, 3–4.


the limited liability company that owned the new *Fortnightly Review*. While Trollope's novels more often than not include a publication subplot (from controversy over newspaper editorializing and anonymous publication in *The Warden* (1855) to novelist Lady Carbury and her trio of editor friends in *The Way We Live Now* (1875)), his short fiction of the 1860s, especially his short novel *The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson*, are particularly concerned with the overlap between financial and literary forms of responsibility and how (or if) they might be equitably shared between author, editor, and publisher, with a particular emphasis on the problems arising when a clash between a model of the novelist as autonomous individual and the publishing house as corporate authority become involved with questions of money.

The massively unpopular *Struggles*, first published in two instalments in the Thackeray-edited *Cornhill Magazine*, tells the story of the rise and fall of a department store company while thematizing author–editor struggles and the kind of collective responsibility over the fictional text upon which Macmillan and Masson insisted and which Norton resisted in the drama over the publication of *Old Sir Douglas* just a few years later. Parallels between periodical publication and financial firms are built into *Struggles*’ narrative; the collective narrative voice of ‘we the Firm’ employed throughout the novel echoes contemporary debates about periodical anonymity and signature, and raises the broader question about whether periodical-published novels are the responsibility of author, publisher, or a collective amalgamation of the two.

Like Dickens’s earlier *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son: Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation* (1846–48), *Struggles* presents itself as a company history. Unlike *Dombey*, however, *Struggles* is narrated in the first-person plural of the firm’s collective voice. In the fictional preface, however, Robinson (the only member of the fictional firm who has not actually invested any money in it) notes that ‘It will be observed by the literary and commercial world that, in this transaction, the name of the really responsible party does not show on the title page. I—George Robinson—am that party.’ While Robinson insists that he is actually the author of the collectively voiced memoir, he nevertheless reveals that it has been heavily edited, perhaps rewritten. As he recounts in the preface, another firm member complained

> that I can’t write English, and that the book must be corrected, and put out by an editor. Now, when I inform the discerning British Public that every advertisement that has been posted by Brown, Jones, and Robinson, during the last three years has come from my own unaided pen, I think few will doubt my capacity to write the ‘Memoirs of Brown, Jones, and Robinson’ without any editor whatsoever.

The title-page of the Smith and Elder 1870 one-volume edition of the novel includes a prefatory image of the entrance to the haberdashery shop with the firm’s name on top as the title-page of the novel, graphically representing this doubled way of talking about financial and literary responsibility.


Robinson gives in at last, however, and ‘It was then arranged that one of Smith and Elder’s young men should look through the manuscript, and make any few alterations which the taste of the public might require.’ Robinson’s remarks foreground one common Victorian argument in favour of understanding magazine writing as collectively authored, the argument that almost all published writing is the product of multiple hands and thus should appear as coming from a corporate whole rather than any one individual involved in the writing process. Ending his first-person preface, Robinson again remarks that:

I have now expressed what few words I wish to say on my own bottom. As to what has been done in the following pages by the young man who has been employed to look over these memoirs and put them into shape, it is not for me to speak. It may be that they might have read more natural-like had no other cook had a finger in the pie. The facts, however, are facts still. They have not been cooked. Robinson argues that although the prose style may have suffered from this collective writing, the facts are the same. Unlike a company that might ‘cook’ its books under the protective secrecy of the corporate form, collective writing, he claims, should not cause the reader to be suspicious of the memoir’s truthfulness. Editorial intervention is represented as affecting style, not substance; Robinson seeks to preserve himself as the authority behind the text in the face of editorial intervention which is both invisible to the reader and, since it occurs after his act of writing, out of Robinson’s control. He claims that corporate or collective authorship is an inaccurate fiction even as he admits that the memoir has been substantially rewritten by one of Smith and Elder’s ‘young men’.

Trollope’s representation of such a transparent reliance upon and disavowal of editorial intervention fits oddly with the terms of publication upon which he insisted for Struggles. Just before Struggles’s serialization, a letter from George Smith of Cornhill publisher Smith and Elder arrived to assure him that after conferring with Thackeray ‘I am now however authorized by him to say that “Jones Brown & Robinson” [sic] shall be inserted in the “Cornhill Magazine” without any editorial revision.’ Trollope replies with satisfaction, writing that ‘I should have been unhappy to feel myself severed from the most popular periodical publication of the day.’ Invested in an idea of himself as an individual and autonomous author—an idea which required special care to maintain in the context of periodical publication—Trollope’s chagrin at editorial intervention and his demands that his text be preserved from such meddling are very much akin to Robinson’s feelings about editorial intervention. Yet Robinson, at least, is clearly very much a writer in need of an

59 Trollope, The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, 11.
60 Trollope, The Letters of Anthony Trollope, 867.
editor. This may simply not have seemed like a contradiction to Trollope. Nevertheless, things are complicated further when the 1870 bound-volume edition of the novel adds ‘Edited by Anthony Trollope’ to the title-page, using the familiar trope of the author as fictional editor in order to bring sense to the republished format. In Struggles’s republication, Trollope himself fictionally takes on the editorial power he had in fact so emphatically resisted when it was offered by Thackeray during the novel’s initial serialization. As in the novel’s own struggles over how to represent financial, authorial, editorial, and publication responsibility, we see in Trollope’s negotiations over its conditions of publication his desire at once to maintain a novelist’s position of individual authorial autonomy and to fictionally incorporate the editorial role within his own sphere of responsibility. In several other instances—for example in Trollope’s involvement with the founding of the Fortnightly magazine as a limited liability company and his fictionalization of that founding in the short story ‘The Panjandrum’—Trollope continues to replay these conflicting relations in ways that raise but never resolve the practical and theoretical conflicts that arise when one person seeks to play two institutional roles, and when the literary and financial forms of collective responsibility need to be thought about together.

The Publisher’s Series and Mary Elizabeth Hawker’s and T. Fisher Unwin’s Mademoiselle Ixe in the Pseudonym Library

While the precipitous fall of the three-volume novel from (perceived) popularity did not occur until the mid-1890s, by at least the 1870s publishers and novelists alike had already begun to notice the aesthetic and economic promise of shorter formats for new novels. In this context the publisher’s series—the uniform issuing of a series of one-volume novels by a single publisher, a popular Victorian format for cheap reprints—took on a new life as a form in which new one-volume novels (often by new novelists) could be introduced to the public. John Lane’s ‘Keynotes’ series (named after the novel by ‘George Egerton’ which initiated the series) and T. Fisher Unwin’s ‘Pseudonym Library’ series were two of the first series of this kind, following in the wake of Samuel Tinsley’s apparent partial success in introducing new novels in the one-volume format into his lists in the 1870s.

62 ‘The Panjandrum’—both the name of a short story by Trollope and of the magazine founded by the story’s characters—dramatizes this conflict between author and editor perfectly by forcing the first-person narrator to untenably inhabit the position of both contributing author of fiction and editor-publisher of the magazine at the same time.

63 Pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright.
Published, in accordance with the series' unifying principle, under the pseudonymous name 'Lanoe Falconer', the first novel in the 'Pseudonym Library', Mademoiselle Ixe (1890), takes its title from its main character's own pseudonym. This double pseudonymity is emphasized by the novel's opening discussion, which centres on the name of the soon-to-arrive governess. As Mrs Merrington explains to a friend, Mademoiselle's last name is spelled 'I-X-E': 'Evelyn says it should be pronounced Ixe, like "eeks" in weeks, but we don't know whether it is a French or a German name.' Although Mrs Merrington pretends to know enough French to judge an earlier, discarded governess's accent as 'quite Parisian', neither she nor her friend Mrs Barnes recognize that Mademoiselle's strange name is the phonetic spelling of the French letter 'x'. The presumably more sophisticated reader of the novel, however, recognizes the name as an obvious pseudonym (and, as it turns out, a nom de guerre in the war of Russian anarchists against the ruling aristocracy), overtly designed to announce itself as such. Effacing her name and replacing it with a marker of its absence, Mademoiselle Ixe similarly seems to efface her personality, adapting herself in turns to suit the needs of each member of the family she joins.

Despite all of this emphasis on pseudonymity, Mademoiselle Ixe posits and rejects a narrative technique grounded in temporary secrecy and eventual disclosure. Instead, Ixe aims to instruct the reader in interpretive strategies that favour collective and corporate understandings of both personal identity and literary authority. The circumstances surrounding the publication of the novel reflect this collective conception of authority: author Hawker and publisher Unwin's correspondence concerning Ixe treats 'Lanoe Falconer' as a collective entity in which they are jointly invested. Hawker mentions more than once that she knows Unwin to be, as she says in one letter, 'as much interested as myself' in Falconer's literary reputation. And both consciously exceed the bounds of the equally autonomous author (usually understood to be sacrosanct) and literary text by actively shaping the cultural context of their novel's reception; together they worked to ensure that the novel was 'blacked out' by the Russian censor, a circumstance which, in the words of Hawker, 'dramatic fitness demand[ed]'. Mademoiselle Ixe both represents and meditates on the complicated Victorian understanding of who authorizes textual meaning and of the complex relationship between material and novelistic forms, an understanding which the publication stories surrounding Old Sir Douglas and Struggles, as well as the (partial) record of the author–publisher relations that produced Ixe, also exemplify.

65 Hawker, Mademoiselle Ixe, 1.
67 Hawker, Letter to Unwin, 22 March 1891, fol. 1.
Substitutions of corporate and collective for individual forms of authority find repeated expression in the novel’s plot; Ixe regularly raises the possibility of certain kinds of hermeneutically suspicious reading practices, only to show that their reliance upon the category of the individual as their interpretive basis (especially in the marriage plot) must ultimately be replaced with readings that foreground the collective responsibility. One example of this is the character Evelyn’s misreading of Mademoiselle’s interest in the Russian Count who turns up in the neighbourhood of the English country house in which the novel is primarily set. Evelyn’s obliviousness to the fact that Mademoiselle Ixe wishes to kill the Count rather than marry him arises from her inability to distinguish between political and personal motives, between collective interest and self-interest. This failure is registered particularly in Evelyn’s misunderstanding of the material form of Mademoiselle’s story. When Mademoiselle first encounters the evil Count and turns ‘deadly pale’, Evelyn immediately (and incorrectly) thinks she understands why: “There can be no doubt about it,” was the verdict of this experienced little novel reader, “she is in love with the Count”. 68 Evelyn, schooled in the old-fashioned, domestic, three-volume novel, mistakes Mademoiselle Ixe’s literary form, which turns out to be the distinctively slight, one-volume novella recounting a political rather than a domestic story. Because Evelyn is not aware of current events and knows nothing of ‘the throes and pangs which now convulse the national life of countries less happy than her own’, she is unable to make the proper interpretation. 69

While recent criticism seeks to demonstrate that late-Victorian literary culture often understood anonymity or pseudonymity as a ploy designed to heighten the effect of the ultimate disclosure of an author’s name and identity—part of a larger pattern (by no means without exception) in studies of print culture—this was of course not the only possible way Victorian readers and writers interpreted such forms of authorship. Contemporary reviews of Mademoiselle Ixe, for example, interpret the Pseudonym Library’s authorizing structure quite differently, viewing the author as having given up name and even personality for a greater good or an increased collective authority, rather than for the production of a deferred individual celebrity. The Times begins its review of the series by remarking that:

the Pseudonym Library deserves the success it has done much to obtain from the very audacity of the conception. It was a bold and original idea to invite a variety of writers, presumed to be exceptionally gifted, to merge their personalities in that of their publishers, and bring any fame they might gain into a common stock. 70

While acknowledging the fact that the pseudonymity of the series encourages an unsubstantiated assumption that the writers are ‘exceptionally gifted’, this article nevertheless

68  Hawker, Mademoiselle Ixe, 122.
69  Hawker, Mademoiselle Ixe, 135. The novel proliferates in other examples of such training in collective reading.
emphasizes the collectivizing effects of the series format. The publisher, as The Times implies, represents itself as the central authority of the series. The practice of issuing books by different authors in a uniform format and under the unifying publisher’s imprint and series title produces a partially corporate authority figure quite different from the individual author who claims unmediated responsibility for his or her text—the person most critics assume underlies Victorian understandings of authorship. The series format necessarily foregrounds the role of the publishing house in selecting the novel, dictating its material form, specifying its genre and range of topics, and editing the text itself. In any given Victorian publisher’s series, the publisher’s imprint and series title guarantee as much (or more) about a volume as the author’s name on the title page does; the Pseudonym Library, as The Times review points out, capitalizes on this tendency.

The fields of 19th-century print culture and publishing history continue to grow, generating excellent new work each year, yet we are only slowly beginning to consider the possibility that a culture with such a broad, complex, and changing range of textual production practices may have been provided with an equally impressive range of ideas about material and literary form. Recent work in print culture and publishing history has offered us increasingly detailed accounts of the collaborative nature of 19th-century textual production; most of these studies similarly represent themselves as uncovering modes of collaboration and multiple authorship which were not understood by Victorian readers and writers themselves. Yet as the author–publisher discussions surrounding the serialization of Old Sir Douglas, the editing of The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, and the publication of Mademoiselle Ixe make clear, during the 19th century individualism and literary authority were neither as consolidated nor as inextricably linked as 20th-century critics have implied; it was the 20th century that saw the naturalization of the individual author as the dominant or even sole structure for representing literary authority. And a glance at late-Victorian discussions of the shift from one- to three-volume publication or the discussion between a mid-Victorian novelist like Caroline Norton and her publisher shows that Victorian understandings of the interplay between economic, moral, and aesthetic factors that influenced the ways novels were invested with material print forms were both complex and uneven. By paying attention to the literary shaping of understandings of print publication as well as to the ways the material forms of Victorian novels shaped changing understandings of narrative forms in both the 19th century and today, we can continue to trace in more detail the outlines of these still distantly glimpsed formations.

**Selected Reading**


