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NINETEENTH-CENTURY FICTION

Edited by ANDREW MAUNDER
and JENNIFER PHEGLEY

The Higher Education Academy English Subject Centre

Teaching Nineteenth-Century Fiction

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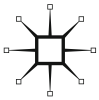

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Series Preface

One of many exciting achievements of the early years of the English Subject Centre was the agreement with Palgrave Macmillan to initiate the series "Teaching the New English." The intention of the then Director, Professor Philip Martin, was to create a series of short and accessible books which would take widely-taught curriculum fields (or, as in the case of learning technologies, approaches to the whole curriculum) and articulate the connections between scholarly knowledge and the demands of teaching.

Since its inception, "English" has been committed to what we know by the portmanteau phrase "learning and teaching." Yet, by and large, university teachers of English – in Britain at all events – find it hard to make their tacit pedagogic knowledge conscious, or to raise it to a level where it might be critiqued, shared, or developed. In the experience of the English Subject Centre, colleagues find it relatively easy to talk about curriculum and resources, but far harder to talk about the success or failure of seminars, how to vary forms of assessment, or to make imaginative use of Virtual Learning Environments. Too often this reticence means falling back on received assumptions about student learning, about teaching, or about forms of assessment. At the same time, colleagues are often suspicious of the insights and methods arising from generic educational research. The challenge for the English group of disciplines is therefore to articulate ways in which our own subject knowledge and ways of talking might themselves refresh debates about pedagogy. The implicit invitation of this series is to take fields of knowledge and survey them through a pedagogic lens. Research and scholarship, and teaching and learning are part of the same process, not two separate domains.

"Teachers," people used to say, "are born not made." There may, after all, be some tenuous truth in this: there may be generosities of spirit (or, alternatively, drives for didactic control) laid down in earliest childhood. But why should we assume that even "born" teachers (or novelists, or nurses, or veterinary surgeons) do not need to learn the skills of their trade? Amateurishness about teaching has far more to do with university claims to status, than with evidence about how people learn. There is a craft to shaping and promoting learning. This series of books is dedicated to the development of the craft of teaching within English Studies.

Ben Knights
Teaching the New English *Series Editor*
Director, English Subject Centre
Higher Education Academy

The English Subject Centre

Founded in 2000, the English Subject Centre (which is based at Royal Holloway, University of London) is part of the subject network of the Higher Education Academy. Its purpose is to develop learning and teaching across the English disciplines in UK Higher Education. To this end it engages in research and publication (web and print), hosts events and conferences, sponsors projects, and engages in day-to-day dialogue with its subject communities.

http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk

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1
Introduction

Andrew Maunder and Jennifer Phegley

In 1921, in a book called *English for the English,* George Sampson, Secretary of the English Association, set down his recommendations for the teaching of literature. Sampson, a member of the committee that in the same year produced the *Report for the Teaching of English in England*, under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Newbolt, was a devotee of Matthew Arnold and shared the Victorian sage's sense that literature was a powerful force for humanizing and civilizing. Sampson thus counselled that "Personal kindness" must guide the teacher and the teacher should think more of his students' hearts than their heads. But he recognized that enthusing students about nineteenth-century literature was a problem. How to do it? They could be asked to study and imitate passages from Austen and Dickens ("models of structure and punctuation") but could they be taught to appreciate them? Sampson's advice was as follows:

> Teachers will have their own views of how to deal with long prose works, a novel by Dickens for example. Plainly, neither teacher nor class can read the whole of *David Copperfield* or *Pickwick* in a single term. It is unfair to protract the reading of any work. The class will do much by silent reading but occasionally the teacher will read scenes or passages as a treat – if his reading is not a treat he ought not to be a teacher – and occasionally members of the class will be expected to read to the others. Any book that a class finds "dry" should not be pursued to the bitter end, however sweet the teacher may think it . . . . In fact, the whole idea of compulsion is alien to the world of art. This is certain, that if you make boys read *The Fair Maid of Perth* when they would rather be reading *Ivanhoe* you will make them dislike Scott altogether. To persist with an unpopular work merely because it has been begun is to make a discipline of what should be a delight, and to disallow a rational exercise of the taste we are trying to cultivate. We must be ready to try any new adventurous experiment in education; we must be just as ready to scrap our failures. (1921, p. 89)

Ninety years on, and notwithstanding changes in class composition and required reading, many of the anxieties Sampson sought to address still remain. Indeed to log on to that part of the World Wide Web containing "The Victoria Listserv" or the "English Subject Centre" is quickly to realize that there are some questions involved in teaching nineteenth-century novelists that never seem to go away: What, for example, do we teach when we teach nineteenth-century fiction? What do we want students to read? What do we want them to get out of it? How do we encourage them to continue reading? Is there a distinction between what students read for pleasure, as recreation, and the books they study as part of their degree course? Can we teach long novels anymore? What imaginative strategies can be used to develop a more intense engagement with nineteenth-century fiction?

That these questions seem relevant and worth engaging with is doubly the case when one considers that in most higher education institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, nineteenth-century fiction remains a dominant – if not compulsory – aspect of the English literature curriculum. Although fiction is typically taught alongside poetry and drama as part of a course surveying the nineteenth century, fear of poetry means that for many students – and some teachers – novels and short stories invariably become the cornerstones of their engagement with the period. Given the focus of the present volume, it may seem slightly disingenuous to claim that this is rather apt. Yet such preferences do reflect those of our nineteenth-century ancestors themselves, those voracious readers whose desire for stories saw novel production top 900 titles per year between 1875 and 1886, reaching an incredible 1,618 by 1914 (Hammond, 2006, p. 4). "We have become a novel-reading people," announced Anthony Trollope in 1870, in his lecture "On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement" (1938, p. 94)."Novels are in the hands of us all; from the Prime Minister down to the last-appointed scullery maid . . . Poetry also we read and history, biography and the social and political news of the day. But all our other reading put together, hardly amounts to what we read in novels" (p. 108). In London, Mudie's Circulating Library claimed to dispatch more than 5,000 volumes per day from its swanky headquarters in New Oxford Street (Hammond, p. 28). By the time Trollope died in 1882 from a seizure suffered whilst listening to a reading of F. Anstey's comic novel *Vice Versa* – but also worn out by so much writing and reading – a new mass of readers was emerging produced by the compulsory Education Acts introduced between 1870 and 1890. With these new readers came an accompanying expansion in the number of outlets for would-be novelists, notably a flood of new cheap magazines and papers, which gave a central place to serialized fiction and short stories. Novels, as journalist and all-round literary utility-man Frederick Greenwood observed in 1888, had become "ordinary commodities . . . [to] be sold at the drapers, & with pounds of tea" (qtd. in Waller, 2006, p. 61). "Short stories," likewise, as H. G. Wells recalled, "broke out everywhere." Moreover, there were so

many magazines that, as Wells noted, even stories "of the slightest distinction" tended to find an outlet:

> Kipling was writing short stories, Barrie, Stevenson, Frank Harris; Max Beerbohm wrote at least one perfect one, "The Happy Hypocrite"; Henry James pursued his wonderful and inimitable bent; and among other names that occur to me, like a mixed handful of jewels drawn from a bag, are George Street, Morley Roberts, George Gissing, Ella D'Arcy, Murray Gilchrist, E. Nesbit, Stephen Crane, Joseph Conrad, Edwin Pugh, Jerome K. Jerome, Kenneth Graham [*sic*], Arthur Morrison, Marriot Watson, George Moore, Grant Allen, George Egerton, Henry Harland, Pett Ridge, W. W. Jacobs (who alone seems so inexhaustible). I dare say I could recall as many more names with a little effort. (1913, p. 5)

The fact that so many of these "jewels" are no longer remembered (even Wells writing in 1913 seems to have a little difficulty!) says a lot about the way literary canons are formed and constantly change, and which genres are deemed important – the novel, rather than the short story, for instance. Yet even discounting the novels and stories no longer in print or that we don't know about, it can be difficult to come to grips with the reach and variety of Victorian fiction – let alone determining how best to teach it. Henry James's famous term for nineteenth-century novels – "baggy monsters" – reflects not only their size and scope, but also their astonishing prevalence and diversity (1935, p. 84).

It is with the challenges involved in teaching a broad range of nineteenth-century fictional forms that this collection is concerned. This is a literary world that can be huge and daunting from the perspective of students, yet one that is also important and exciting**.** *Teaching Nineteenth-Century Fiction* includes essays by teachers from the UK, Ireland, the US, and Australia that demonstrate a variety of approaches to teaching novels and short stories while arguing for their relevance. The essays, which offer a mix of theoretical paradigms and practical applications, are the products of a revolution in literary study that has transformed how nineteenth-century fiction is deployed in the classroom.

When English literature was introduced as a subject of study at King's College London in the 1830s and when it was taught at American universities at mid-century, it was believed to be a humanizing force for moral uplift that also provided a sense of national heritage (Showalter, 2003, p. 22). Yet, that mission waned over the course of the century until it was refined and strengthened in the 1930s when, as Terry Eagleton explains it, literary studies came into its own: "in the early 1920s it was desperately unclear why English was worth studying at all; by the early 1930s it had become a question of why it was worth wasting your time on anything else. . . . English was an arena in which the most fundamental questions of human

existence . . . were made the object of intense scrutiny" (qtd. in Showalter, 2003, p. 22–3). This shift in attitude toward the subject of studying literature was due in large part to F. R. Leavis, whose definition of the canon was, at least until the 1970s, the curriculum on which nineteenth-century fiction courses were often based. In *The Great Tradition* (1948), Leavis famously states that "The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad" (1962, p. 9). For Leavis and the Scrutiny group, writing in the aftermath of World War II and searching for literary works that could be used to resist what they saw as the debilitating influence of modern commercial and media culture, these were peculiarly fortifying and wholesome writers whose novels embodied the possibility of a moral art, "significant in terms of that human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life" (1962, p. 10)

Leavis's attractive liberal humanist agenda made itself felt in the classroom in different ways but students' analysis was often focused on the "close reading" of a novel or story, with much attention given to plot, theme, and imagery. In the United States, this movement was embodied by "New Critics" such as John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, and René Wellek, who advocated the study of "the structure of the work, not the minds of the authors or the reactions of the readers" (Leitch, 1988, p. 26). New Criticism claimed for literature a certain kind of scientific objectivity while simultaneously providing a retreat from the realm of social conflict (Showalter, 2003, p. 23). Its approach was so focused on form and language (especially symbol, imagery, and irony) that it tended to exclude even character and plot, shunning Leavis's more humanistic approach. It also, notably, neglected – if not outright rejected – nineteenth-century literature as inappropriate to its methods. Indeed, metaphysical and modern poetry were its preferred subjects and the "baggy monsters" of Victorian fiction were out of the question for the movement's formalist protocols (Leitch, 1998, p. 38).

Although it is now fashionable to disparage Leavis on the grounds that his readings are based on a narrow analysis of British fiction, his views were extremely influential in the development of the post-war study of English literature in British universities. Likewise, William Cain observes that the "attitudes, values, and emphases" of New Criticism are "[s]o deeply ingrained in English studies . . . that we do not even perceive them as the legacy of a particular movement" (qtd. in Leitch, 1988, p. 26). Methods of close reading have, of course, loosened up and now include even those "baggy monsters" of Victorian fiction. The celebrations of Leavis's "big four" as mainstays of liberal individualism, whose strengths are their social and psychological realism and their skill in creating character, have also been broken up – for good or ill – and a multiplicity of other approaches have come into play.

New interpretations have resulted from a range of twentieth-century critical developments: the resurgence of Marxist criticism as a mode of intellectual inquiry; deconstruction, taking its cue from the work of the French

philosopher Jacques Derrida; and most significantly perhaps, the emergence of cultural studies, a discipline which alongside feminism, new historicism, and postcolonialism has had a very noticeable effect on the way literature is re-discovered, written about and taught. Aside from the work of Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society* [1958]; *The Long Revolution* [1961]), key statements of this shift might be said to be such works as 1982's *Re-Reading English*, edited by Peter Widdowson, or Antony Easthope's *Literary into Cultural Studies* (1991), in which the text is no longer seen as an ahistorical "self-defining object" to be treated with reverence but as something inherently linked with the power relations and ideological discourses of its time (Easthope, 1991, p. 12). For Easthope, there was nothing to distinguish literary texts from those of popular culture. Both needed to be discussed in terms of "institution, sign system, gender, identification, subject position . . . [and] the other" (p. 71). In 1982 the idea that teachers should a) consider notions of the "popular" and b) provide opportunities for texts and their students to "interact dialectically" (Widdowson, 1982, p. 21), seemed newer in certain classrooms than others. Indeed, in nineteenth-century studies the idea of cross-disciplinary work had been around for a while, perhaps because the field had been excluded from New Critical approaches. One could cite, for example, the establishment of the interdisciplinary journal *Victorian Studies* in 1956 or the publication of Richard Altick's *The English Common Reader* in 1957. Altick's book advocated the study of literature within its historical context and emphasized the role of reading audiences, both approaches that reacted against the prevailing dominance of close reading.

Since the 1980s, however, the notion of "shifting between the novel's insides and outsides" has gained impetus (Carolyn Williams, 2006, p. 304). The concept of getting students to recognize a text's "ideological work" (to use Mary Poovey's influential phrase), making them aware of its links with the historical moment of its production, has inspired a more culturally orientated criticism focused on the idea of teaching "conflict." In turn, this mixture of textual analysis and new approaches has had the effect of offering students a different picture of nineteenth-century people as "modern, self-conscious and sexually aware; as driven by consumerism and possessed of serious misgivings about domestic stability, or imperial expansion" all of which "makes them sound more like us than they did twenty years ago" (Sanders, 2007, p. 1294). Whether the characters who populate the fictional worlds of nineteenth-century Britain and her colonies are really mirrors of "ourselves" is a moot point but it is not unusual to see some authors and their texts – such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* or Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – sold as being "of their time," that is the 1890s, but also as works which "speak to the anxieties, desires of the twentieth [and twenty-first] century" (Davison, 1997, p. 30). It seems that changing critical trends have certainly benefited the Victorian novel, making it more popular than ever to teach.

The mention of those bogeymen Dracula and Gray brings us back to the texts offered for study on undergraduate degree programmes. The comment made in 1981 by the Oxford University Professor Christopher Ricks that "it's our job to teach and uphold the canon of English literature" may still strike a chord with some teachers but it's a job-description complicated by the fact that notions of what is canonical and what is not, have become more fluid (qtd. in Widdowson, 1982, p. 1). It was, as Raymond Williams pointed out, twentieth-century critics who tended to consign realist or popular novels to the "wide margin of the century" in favour of a more exclusive canon (1989, p. 35). But the last twenty years has seen a revolution in the definition of nineteenth-century fiction. The 1990s in particular saw growing interest in the world of so-called "genre" fiction – the novels of colonial adventure, of domestic crimes, of exotic worlds, tropical worlds, monsters, "New women," psychopathic femme fatales, vampires, savage natives, and heroic deeds of "derring-do" – all seeming to promise the syllabus a wider variety of cultural expression than existed before.

In *Doing English*, Robert Eaglestone notes: "A person who studied English and has become a teacher often teaches the texts that he or she was taught, in part because she or he was taught that these texts were the most important" (2000, p. 56). There is some truth in this but English departments are not simply safe houses for the canon of English literature. They also play a key role in reshaping it. It is still the case that teachers want to expose their classes to the best of what has been thought and felt but the days appear to have gone when courses could define the "nineteenth-century novel" by assigning *Vanity Fair* and *Middlemarch* and focusing on the universal human values Thackeray and Eliot reveal. It would also be a supremely confident teacher who would teach both novels in a single semester course. Elaine Showalter has written about the long-lasting consequences for the curriculum that have resulted from students' financing of their educations through part-time work, which leaves students with less and less time to devote to their studies. She also explores the university administration's attempts to control what courses are taught and on what timetable (2003, p. 91). This varies across institutions but in some this can be as little as two-hours of classroom time over ten weeks. Where once Thackeray's centrality to the syllabus was taken for granted and *Middlemarch* was bound to appear two-thirds of the way through a course, overworked or unmotivated students' inability to read these novels means that the texts and their authors slide off the syllabus, to be replaced by more "manageable" works – "easier" novels which are beneficiaries of the democratization/politicization of the literary canon (Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and H. Rider Haggard's *She* spring to mind), and which seem to provide accessible expositions of the kind of important political or formal issues presented and debated by theorists. Sitting alongside these are those texts that maintain a foothold by virtue of being comparatively short (*Hard Times*, *Great Expectations*, *Silas Marner, The*

Picture of Dorian Gray). That students are offered a different cultural experience from the previous generation is not necessarily a bad thing but it does not mean that their conceptions of nineteenth-century fiction are any less skewed than they were thirty or forty years ago.

The present collection is thus framed by changes in the student body, by changes in university administrations, and by a shift in the critical lenses used to approach nineteenth-century fiction, however these may be defined. It is, as we have noted, difficult for students to pass through a Literature programme without having to study examples of nineteenth-century fiction but it is also the case that there are many who seek it out. This may be because the names of many authors who appear on nineteenth-century syllabuses still loom large as mainstays of our cultural capital – in the US as well as in the UK. Come mid-December, it is rare, for example, not to find at least one theatre company presenting a new version of *A Christmas Carol*. These and other adaptations of classics are also regular features of the TV schedules. They attract healthy viewing figures – sometimes extraordinary ones as in the case of the BBC's 1995 serialization of *Pride and Prejudice* – and offer a carefully-tailored but nonetheless powerful, view of nineteenth-century men and women: glamorous, passionate lovers, and symbolic representatives of "Romance" and also "History" – or at least commercial filmmakers' ideas of those concepts. Some authors dominate – Austen, Dickens, Gaskell, Hardy, and – rather intriguingly – Trollope. The implication seems to be that such adaptations do not simply represent a body of entertainment but are repositories of important (British) cultural values, that they are valid for contemporary audiences. In the UK on the BBC and in the US on PBS, 2006–2007 was the TV year of *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*; 2007–2008 featured *Cranford* and three Jane Austen adaptations, culminating with *Mansfield Park* starring former "Dr Who" assistant Billie Piper as an unlikely Fanny Price. In 2008 "Masterpiece Theater," the PBS series that brings many BBC productions of Victorian novels to American audiences, capitalized on the success of the previous year's serialization of *Bleak House* by making Gillian Anderson (star of the 1990s hit series "The X-Files" who received an emmy-nomination for her performance as Lady Dedlock) the new spokesperson for the series (now divided into "Masterpiece Classic," "Masterpiece Contemporary," and "Masterpiece Mystery!"). Anderson replaced Alistair Cooke and brought a younger, hipper persona to the previously stodgy face of nineteenth-century adaptations. With the launch of the new "Masterpiece Classic" series, Victorian novels appear to be front and centre for American viewers who, in 2009, enjoyed productions of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Oliver Twist, Little Dorrit*, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*. The new season was hosted by Laura Linney, another fresh and beautiful award-winning actress who was recently honoured for her role as Abigail Adams in the HBO mini-series "John Adams." Interestingly, the use of Linney as the face of Masterpiece Classics ties British literature

to American history in a subtle way, making the celebration of nineteenth-century British fiction a part of American cultural heritage. So, in thinking about the preconceptions students bring to nineteenth-century fiction and the way in which they consume it – or manipulated versions of it – we might also note that teaching nineteenth-century fiction seems to be a matter of alerting students to different ways in which literary texts can be reworked but also bringing them face to face with – and even attempting to sell to them – the original – sometimes more ideologically disagreeable – but no less interesting – words on the page.

* * *

As a result of these ever-shifting critical and cultural perspectives about how we define and teach literary texts, a new field devoted to the study of teaching literature has developed. While the teaching of composition has always produced engaged discussions of the intersections between theory and practice, literature faculty have been slower to participate in such conversations. George Levine points out that "One doesn't have to look too far to notice how many university English departments are divided into two nations: the part that teaches writing and is therefore also likely to be concerned with the teaching of teachers, and the part that 'does' literature" (2001, p. 8). The academic journal *Pedagogy*, which published Levine's essay in its inaugural issue, set out to "create a new way of talking about teaching by fusing theoretical approaches and practical realities" (Holberg and Taylor, 2001, p. 1). In the years following the launch of *Pedagogy*, there have been other signs that the "two nations" Levine denounces are beginning to productively merge.

Books in the Modern Language Association's "Approaches to Teaching" series, usually focused on particular literary texts, were among the first to collect essays that discuss actual classroom practices in order to encourage new approaches to teaching key works such as George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1990) and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (2009). While many of these early collections include brief, practically-oriented descriptions of classroom practice that neglect theoretical paradigms, these volumes were a crucial first step toward valuing pedagogical scholarship and remain an important model. The proliferation of guides on Victorian literature that are now flooding the market further highlight the increasing attention paid not only to canonical authors and texts, but also to entire fields and genres of study. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2000) as well as *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002) and *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2003) were quickly followed by Blackwell's "companion" series, which includes *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2002), and Continuum's latest books *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2007) and *The Victorian Literature Handbook* (2008). Such guides are intended to introduce students to important issues related to their field of study and to make

teaching the literature of those fields easier by providing trustworthy contextual and background information. Responding to the turn back towards historical and cultural approaches to literary study, these guidebooks aim to recontextualize nineteenth-century fiction. However, they do not complete the process of pedagogical engagement because they do not usually directly address classroom practices.

Even more promising are the increasing number of books that attempt to wed pedagogical approaches in the classroom to movements in the field of literary studies, such as Elaine Showalter's *Teaching Literature* (2003) and Tanya Agathocleous and Ann C. Dean's *Teaching Literature: A Companion* (2003), which explore teaching practices across the whole spectrum of the literature, with some attention to nineteenth-century British fiction. In his foreword to the latter book, Levine proclaims that "the best indication that this book will have done its work effectively would be the publication fairly soon of similar books, concerned with the problems of teaching literature, not by the Modern Language Association" but by major university presses since "the profession (and the institutions that publish its work) has not taken teaching as the sort of 'contribution to knowledge' that makes for a major entry on the 'CV'" (vii). It is hoped that *Teaching Nineteenth-Century Fiction* is yet another sign that the state of the profession Levine describes is beginning to change and that we are providing a new example of "the way in which we can, at last, begin to restructure the system of paradoxes and self-contradictions that have made the teaching of literature such an oddly anomalous activity – the work we faculty get paid to do, but the work that remains, in the structures of university compensations, most ignored institutionally" (p. xii).

Teaching Nineteenth-Century Fiction attempts to address a more focused topic than other collections of its kind. The essays examine what is taught in nineteenth-century fiction courses in the light of the constantly changing canon; indicate how key critical approaches can be taught effectively through nineteenth-century fiction; and discuss the relationship between the literary text and the literary, cultural, and historical contexts surrounding it, and its importance for students. Together, these essays offer a partial chronology of nineteenth-century fiction writers and texts together with an exploration of issues relating to text selection and course design. Also included at the end of chapters are sample syllabuses, the inclusion of which is intended to give a (very) brief snapshot of how nineteenth-century literature courses are currently being organized in different institutions across the globe.

The chapters which follow thus focus on a number of recurrent issues that regularly crop up in relation to the teaching of nineteenth-century fiction, though teachers working in other periods may also recognize some of them. In Chapter 2, Janice Allen discusses the changing shape of the canon – from Walter Scott and Jane Austen, publishing in the 1800s, through Newgate fiction and the emergence of realism and sensationalism, to the "New Woman"

fictions and imperial romances of the fin de siècle. Given these changes it is clearly useful for English Studies students to have a sense of how their discipline has altered, how notions of aesthetic value regularly shift and the roles that the "canon function" plays "in the production, circulation, classification and consumption of literary texts" (p. 23).

It is not simply the texts which change. Feminism, colonialism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis and the deeply held interest in the relation between literature and other forms of discourse underlie a whole host of readings and re-readings of nineteenth-century fiction over the last twenty years. Inevitably there has arisen a sense on the part of teachers that students need to know about these developments. Julian Wolfreys provides his perspective on the use of theoretical approaches to nineteenth-century fiction in Chapter 3, analysing the impact of theory on students. Wolfreys explores the difficulties in talking about "theory *and* the novel" at the same time as highlighting some of the benefits to student – and teacher – of re-thinking what it is to read with theory and what might take place in teaching a nineteenth-century course in which "theory" is supposed to figure. Wolfreys argues that "it is not a question of learning a theory so that "practically" they can "apply" something "useful" to a novel, as though the novel were soft jelly being poured into a mould" but rather "the close and patient reading of "theory" can serve to illuminate ideas already at work in the novel, which in the drive for narrative content the student might otherwise overlook" (p. 37).

The acknowledgment of the novel's place within the history of nineteenth-century ideas has been one of the most positive developments in recent criticism, even if it has meant that critics have perhaps spent too much time trying to link its proponents to Darwinism, Comtism and a whole variety of other "isms" that make the study of the novel a heavily academic pursuit. More accessible for students perhaps are concepts relating to empire, imperialism, and the deeply held interest in the relations between literature and forms of colonial and postcolonial discourse. These underlie Patrick Brantlinger's essay which forms Chapter 4. Brantlinger explores some of the ways in which British imperialism serves as a backdrop to several of the nineteenth-century novels commonly taught in literature courses, before suggesting some of the ways students might be encouraged to deal with this topic.

The idea of reading nineteenth-century fiction in an interdisciplinary context is one of the themes taken up by Teresa Mangum in Chapter 5. Mangum discusses two approaches to teaching Bram Stoker's *Dracula* that ask students to become engaged interdisciplinary scholars. The first outlines a moot court project that involves students in "the overlapping practices of literature and law," while the second asks them to consider the "survival, reinterpretation, and critique of nineteenth-century literature and culture in the world of the graphic novel" (p. 64).

The questions of context and text selection are part of the discussion taken up by Talia Schaffer in Chapter 6. Taking up the issue of canon formation

discussed by Janice Allen, this chapter focuses on the challenge of including women writers on a crowded syllabus. It begins with canonical figures – Jane Austen, the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell – with whom most teachers – and some students – have had experience – but those are also authors who bring considerable baggage with them. In a recent article, "Reader, I Triumphed: Complicating the Appeal of *Jane Eyre*" Simon Dentith has written of the (understandable) "popular simplification" of nineteenth-century novels by women on the part of twenty-first-century readers and the tendency to read them "as narratives of heroic women 'beating the odds.'" As Dentith points out, recasting Jane Eyre as a "triumphant liberal narrative" is not implausible and is clearly what makes it appealing to many contemporary readers (2005, p. 19). In a discussion of what she terms "over-identification," Schaffer takes up this issue and suggests possible solutions. She then moves on to focus on less-well known writers and the benefits of making their inclusion part of one's pedagogy.

In Chapter 7, Jennifer Phegley suggests via a case study how a specialist module focusing on a particular sub-genre might be organized. The chapter takes as its central example a relatively new addition to nineteenth-century fiction courses: the sensation novel. Phegley surveys the place of sensation fiction in the current curriculum by examining on-line course syllabuses and publishers' lists of sensation novels in print. She then explains how she developed and revised a course focused on sensation novels. She advocates for the importance of a sustained focus on the genre as a way of mapping out the criteria critics (past and present) have used to justify the divisions between high and low culture and the formation of the literary canon.

Another popular sub-genre, the ghost story, is the basis for Chapter 8. Ruth Robbins explores the short story as a quintessentially nineteenth-century form arising out of a particular set of publishing and market contexts. Robbins argues that in terms of undergraduate teaching, the nineteenth-century ghost story has some marked advantages, especially in entry-level modules. Because the primary texts are, by their nature, very brief, students are able to develop their reading skills, critical vocabulary, and comprehension of the conventions of narrative fiction across a wide range of materials and do so in ways that are often not possible where the primary materials are longer. Robbins outlines particular assignments that are conducive to the study of short fiction and provides an analysis of how Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* can provide a model for the study of narrative (un)reliability that is directly tied to the culture's often troubled relationship to concepts of desire.

In Chapter 9, Richard Pearson explores the benefits of introducing students to the visual/literary interface with which nineteenth-century readers were so familiar. In recent years the subject of nineteenth-century novelists and their illustrators has attracted a substantial amount of scholarly attention from literary critics, art historians, and those working in the field of publishing history. Scholars have explored a diverse range of

themes, including the relationship between illustration and text, the study of illustration-as-narrative, or as-marketing ploy, and the ideological role played by illustration within, for example, discourses of gender, class and national identity. As with Chapters 5 and 13, part of Pearson's focus is on how teachers practise interdisciplinary approaches to the nineteenth-century novel – approaches which allow connections and contrasts, invite consideration of ideological messages, and allow students to approach nineteenth-century fiction through a range of forms (book illustrations and covers, narrative paintings, prints). Using *Great Expectations* as a case study, this chapter examines how the use of illustrations or paintings expands or complicates students' understanding of the texts they read, of narrative, and of nineteenth-century culture more generally.

Readers who have encountered nineteenth-century novels in their original publishing format (which, in many cases involved not only illustrations but part-issue as well, either separately or in a magazine), will know that this conjures up a very different prospect from the one which confronts us in modern editions. It is with this way of encountering fiction that Linda Hughes and Michael Lund are concerned in Chapter 10. They examine historical, theoretical, and pragmatic reasons to introduce students to fiction in the context of magazine culture, ranging from enhanced understanding of fiction's form and relation to the literary marketplace to students' increased engagement with novels read in parts over the course of a term or semester. The discussion of pedagogical strategies includes, among others, individual or multiple novels read serially in introductory and advanced courses and undergraduate and graduate research in periodicals to probe nineteenth-century fiction's intertextual relations.

Earlier in this chapter we suggested that, to the extent that they engage readers of a given culture at a certain moment with the nineteenth-century novel, film and television adaptations are as influential as all those other examples of canon building and literary criticism in which different generations take part in acts of "revision." The term "revision" is here used in the sense that John Wiltshire uses it in his *Recreating Jane Austen*, i.e. as the act of looking back, "of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" at a particular moment (2001, p. 38). In Chapter 11, Terry Wright focuses on a number of recent film and television adaptations (mainly from the 1990s and 2000s), attempting to analyse conventions which they share with novels and other narrative techniques for which "translation" is necessary from one set of codes (those of the novel) to another (those open to film and television). Among the examples considered are recent versions of *Wuthering Heights*. Questions explored are the role of the narrator (for which an alternative needs to be found in film), the nature of characterization (very different in written narrative than on screen), and the issue of ideology (how it is possible to portray an author's world-view in film or television adaptations). Studying film and television

adaptations of nineteenth-century fiction, the chapter argues, can alert students to conventions they have internalized but have often not consciously analysed and articulated.

This is also a theme taken up by Grace Moore in Chapter 12. She explores ways in which contemporary fictional re-imaginings of the nineteenth century can play a role in broadening students' sense of nineteenth-century fiction, its recurrent motifs and ideologies. Perhaps the most famous and groundbreaking examples of this kind of fiction are Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and A. S. Byattt's *Possession* (1990), although Michael Sadleir's 1943 take on the shadier elements of Victorian society in *Fanny By Gaslight* (greeted with shock and outrage at the time of publication) is a reminder that this particular sub-genre has a longer history. Whilst these and other popular examples – Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997), Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith* (2003) and Michael Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2003) – determinedly shrug off the bedclothes of inherited tradition, it is also possible to see this kind of post-modern representation in terms of "writing back" (to use a term popular in postcolonial criticism), but also as determinedly historical and respectful, with a definite awareness of contemporary fiction's indebtedness to the past and present.

The idea of writing backwards and forwards – and sideways – also features in Sofia Ahlberg's essay "Transatlanticism," which forms Chapter 13. Until relatively recently, nineteenth-century fiction has been taught from a nationalist perspective with tutors and students working within a nationally framed literary history. The division of literary studies into "British" and "American" often goes unquestioned. In some instances there might be some discussions about the representation of American subjects in works by British authors – Antony Trollope or Wilkie Collins perhaps – or vice versa. But as Ahlberg points out it is also worth thinking about some of the other links to be made between British and American writers and writing in the nineteenth century and some of the acts of reciprocity and exchange that occur over and beneath the Atlantic ocean and which, given the supposedly "special" relationship existing between the two countries, are worth pursuing. Looking at real and imaginary encounters between America and Britain from both sides of the Atlantic encourages students to consider the art of fiction in the nineteenth century as not exclusively a national art. Transatlantic literary studies, it is suggested, encourages students of nineteenth-century English fiction to view writers from this period in terms of what Edward Said calls their "worldliness" (1993, p. 13). As Alhlberg puts it: "A precursor to globalism, the hemispheric context of the nineteenth-century text provides fascinating pointers on how to read literature in the wider context of religion, race, capitalism, and colonialism – then and now. A transatlantic reading encourages students to bring their own experience as global citizens into the classroom" (pp. 198–9).

The final two essays in this volume return to the issue of how students might be further encouraged to think about fiction via the cultural conditions within which texts were produced and consumed. In Chapter 14, Josie Billington considers the challenges not just of contextuality but what Peter Barry in *English in Practice* (2003) has usefully described as "total textuality" i.e. "the different kinds of textuality which can be seen as 'in play' (to varying extents) in works of literature" (2003, p. 48). Barry suggests that these will include:

> *Textuality* (also known as "the words on the page")
> *Intertextuality* (roughly the words on related pages)
> *Contextuality* (the social, cultural, and historical context of the work)
> *Multitextuality* (the textual variants of the work itself)
> *Peritextuality* (also known as literary criticism – the works alongside the text)

Taking her cue from Barry, Billington's essay starts from the premise that the big and necessary challenge to students in this era of interdisciplinary research is thinking about fiction in relation to other nineteenth-century discourses. Students will generally be familiar with the use of secondary criticism and programmes will usually provide library instruction in the use of relevant online research bibliographies. However, Billington argues that one of things which helps develop students as scholars – particularly in the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate work – is the literary training they undergo in the use of manuscript and primary sources to help generate research projects. Billington suggests something of the originality and richness which can derive from working creatively with primary sources and/or using them for ancillary conceptual, contextual, or framing support, whilst drawing attention to some of the practical, intellectual, and developmental-learning issues surrounding the issue of textuality which are integral to growing into postgraduate study.

One of these issues is of course the World Wide Web. In the final essay, Priti Joshi asks whether the internet can enhance students' understanding of nineteenth-century fiction, whether it can add to the complexity and nuance of their engagements? As Helen Rogers notes in a recent round table discussion hosted by the *Journal of Victorian Culture*, "the new technologies offer much more than resource enhancement and advanced search tools" but she observes, too, how teaching with technology raises concerns about sustainability, out-datedness, and plagiarism (2008, pp. 56–7). As Joshi argues in the present volume, using the internet involves taking on board two seemingly contradictory lessons: that scepticism about using technology in teaching is healthy and necessary *and* that technology can be thoughtfully used to advance learning. By way of example, Joshi explores the use of online maps alongside Dickens's *Oliver Twist* to discuss some

potential possibilities of the use of web material before posing some larger questions: should we use technology at all? Should we simply use those aspects of technology that allow us to post materials for common use? If we deploy technology in the classroom, how might we frame its introduction? What sorts of assignments scaffold or enhance the primary material rather than detract from it? How might we manage its demands on our time?

As the essays in this volume reveal, approaches to teaching nineteenth-century fiction remain more diverse than ever. A number of very different versions of what constitutes a nineteenth-century literature course exist and co-exist. The essays included suggest once again that such different constructions of nineteenth-century fiction are the result of productions of cultural politics, of positions being constantly formed and held, challenged and subverted but also of nineteenth-century fiction's own diversity and complexity. This same complexity means, of course, that the directions in which future developments might go are numerous. For example, if teachers of the 2000s are not now as obviously concerned with the "best" of what has been written as they might have been ninety years ago they are more alert to texts' involvement in the creation of social discourse and to the anxieties that fiction may manipulate or conceal. They are slowly beginning to be conscious too of the cultural and economic milieu in which fiction was produced and consumed and are anxious to convey this to their students. The recognition that nineteenth-century fiction covers a vast canvas, that nineteenth-century readers enjoyed lots of different kinds of stories and that students are interested in exploring similarly widely is one point on which there is general agreement.

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