ROMANTIC TEXTUALITIES

LITERATURE AND PRINT CULTURE, 1780–1840

(previously 'Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text')

❧

Issue 16

(Summer 2006)

Romantic Textualities is available on the web @ *www.cf.ac.uk/encap/romtext*

Aims and Scope: Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is a twice-yearly journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality, and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists, and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. As of Issue 15 (Winter 2005), *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality, and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

CONTENTS

❦

Editorial

Anthony Mandal

❧

This issue is the second of our relaunched journal *Romantic Textualities*, which previously operated under the title *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* between 1997 and 2005. In keeping with our extended remit of publishing international scholarship on Romantic-era book history, bibliography, and intertextual studies, the journal offers a combination of peer-reviewed articles, research reports, and reviews of publications relating to these adjacent and interlinked fields.

The present issue (16) carries three articles, which deal with the interconnections between authorship and print culture in various ways.

Gavin Edwards considers the semantic effects on George Crabbe's poetry of the transformations in printers' practices that occurred between 1750 and 1820. Although modern printing conventions regarding capitalisation of proper nouns were already in place by the mid-eighteenth century, Edwards argues that the transitional period of 1750–1820 in fact represents one of great flux, which merits closer consideration. The essay then analyses the 'old' system (which links all nouns together, establishing a chain of connected valencies) and the 'modern' one, which 'dissolves the naming element of language, elevating only the proper noun'. The considerable typographical variations between the different editions (1812, 1823) of two of Crabbe's poems offer a useful *case* study through which to evaluate these transformations.

In recent times, the content of fiction published by the great novel-manufactory of the early nineteenth century—the Minerva Press—has received deserved attention. Complementing these studies, Jonathan Hill's essay examines the 'outer packaging' of these novels, drawing on his examination of a distinctive collection of Minerva novels at the University of Aberdeen. The collection is not remarkable so much for *quantity* (it is easily exceeded by such repositories as Schloss Corvey in Germany), but for the fact that so many of the Aberdeen titles retain their original bindings, which the contemporary consumer would have encountered. Hill's systematic evaluation considers the competing pressures of aesthetic appeal and low-budget, high-turnover practices on the Press, and how they resulted, for a brief time, in a distinctive 'Minerva look'—'an elegant poise and slimness of line'.

Peter Simonsen's extensive article—' "Would that Its Tone Could Reach the Rich" '—evaluates the generally neglected poetic output of Thomas Hood, whose writing stands at the interface between the Romantic and Victorian periods. Hood's work presents an opportunity to analyse the dialogic relationship between Romantic concepts of poetic genius and the vagaries of periodical publication, and how commercial imperatives transformed understandings of poetical composition. Complementing earlier, biographical studies of Hood (and his humanitarian writing), the essay approaches the issue from a more cultural–materialist perspective, by examining Hood's experiences as professional belletrist from the 1820s onwards. In doing so, Simonsen argues, we can gain a better insight into Hood's unique style of writing, which culminated with his protest-poem, 'The Song of the Shirt' in 1843.

The remainder of this issue is made up of reviews of three recent studies of the interface between Romantic-era literature and print culture, authorship, and gender. The books under review attempt to provide alternative readings of Romantic-era literary culture, by recontextualising significant literary figures through their formative roles as critics (Leigh Hunt), their reception history framed by emergent discourses of health and illness (Byron, Scott), and their negotiation between domesticity and the public sphere (Edgeworth).

We hope that the relaunched version of the journal continues to meet its aims successfully and that the material so far published will inspire scholars to contribute: *Romantic Textualities* is only as substantial as the material it attracts, and we welcome any contributions that members of the academic community might wish to make.

George Crabbe
A Case Study
Gavin Edwards

❧

> Dombey sat in the corner of the darkened room in the great arm-chair by the bed-side, and Son lay tucked up warm in a little basket bedstead, carefully disposed on a low settee immediately in front of the fire and close to it, as if his constitution were analogous to that of a muffin, and it was essential to toast him brown while he was very new.[1]

THE OPENING OF *Dombey and Son* (1848) supports Terry Eagleton's view that with Dickens

> we have entered a phase of social history in which all the real power seems to have been taken over by material things—money, institutions, commodities, power relations—while human beings themselves, falling under their tyrannical sway, are reduced to the level of coalbuckets and candlesticks.

And he notes—following Raymond Williams—the part which capital letters play in this process: 'In *Our Mutual Friend*, Shares, suitably capitalized, becomes a character in its own right, rather like young Pip's Great Expectations.'[2] One of the nice things about the first sentence of *Dombey and Son* is that the two processes Eagleton describes—the reification of persons, the personification of things and institutions—meet in 'Son', with its initial capital letter. What the capital tells us is that the infant Paul is already no more and no less than an embodiment of his future position in the patrilineal family firm.

The importance of the capital letter in some of Dickens's most powerful writing should draw our attention to the fact that with Dickens we have entered a new phase not only of social, but of typographic, history. In 1848, as in our own time, the initial capital was normally used to distinguish proper names from other parts of speech, including other substantives. Dickens was able to use the initial capital as a precision instrument because there was this established convention for him to break. That convention, however, had only become firmly established in the decade following Dickens's birth in 1812. Between about 1750 and about 1820, printing practice was in a state of confused transition where capital letters were concerned.

The choice between upper and lower case always has semantic effects, but between *c.* 1750 and *c.* 1820 it is often hard to decide what these effects are or who (author, publisher, compositor) is responsible for them. To put the same thing another way: writers sometimes tried to control the use and meaning of capital letters in printed versions of their work, but their ability to control either of these things was variable and always limited. That being so, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid either to the causes or the semantic effects of these typographic changes. It is perhaps particularly surprising that scholars of the Romantic period, which is often identified as a period of general instability, should have paid so little attention to a kind of instability which must bear so directly on the meaning of literary texts.[3]

Writing to his friend John Moultrie in 1845, Wordsworth compared modern printed versions of Gray's 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College' with a version in Gray's own handwriting:

> Throughout the whole poem the substantives are written in Capital Letters. [Gray] writes 'Fury-Passions', and not, as commonly printed, the 'fury-passions'. What is the reason that our modern Compositors are so unwilling to employ Capital Letters?[4]

Wordsworth's question has never been properly answered. The change to which he referred—as if it were a recent change—had however been identified a century before. In 1755, John Smith's *Printer's Grammar* distinguished between 'the old way, with Capitals to substantives, and Italic to proper names', and the 'more modern way', which Smith considered to be 'the more neat practice, all in Roman, and Capitals to proper names and Emphatical words'.[5]

It is indeed frequently argued (sometimes, *contra* Wordsworth, in the context of arguments for presenting modernised versions of eighteenth-century texts), that 'a general modernisation of printing practices, especially effecting the initial capitalisation of nouns, occurred in the mid-eighteenth century itself'.[6] There were, however, many exceptions to this, and while a comparison of almost any book published in 1730 with almost any published in 1830 reveals the radical difference between systems (or 'ways') to which Smith refers, books published in the intervening period present a very mixed picture. They do so partly because the frequency and meaning of capital letters often depends—as Smith's formulation suggests it must—on whether italics continue to be used to differentiate proper names from other parts of speech. In the period of confused transition between 'old' and 'modern' systems, printers who did not capitalise the initial letters of all substantives frequently continued to distinguish proper names by putting them in italic; while among printers who did get rid of italic there was plenty of disagreement about what kinds of noun deserved the emphasis provided by an initial capital. Indeed, texts—including Printers' Grammars—were often inconsistent in their use of both capitals and italic. We should not conclude from Smith's description of 'two ways' of doing things, an 'old' way and a 'modern' way, that there were two clear-cut systems between

which authors or printers could choose, with the newer system winning out either suddenly or in a clearly consistent forward trend.

J. D. Fleeman, explaining his decision to provide an edition of Samuel Johnson's poems in which 'Johnson's own practices in spelling, punctuation and capitalisation are preserved' argued that

> to retain capitals simply in accordance with modern practice for proper names and personifications only would place interpretations on the words which might well be unwarranted. There is a difference between 'Let Observation with extensive view/ Survey mankind from China to Peru' and 'Let Observation with extensive View/ Survey Mankind from China to Peru' which, though not a point affecting immediate comprehension, nevertheless raises important questions about the modes of thought which lie behind the words.[7]

I share this view of the importance of typographic case. Nevertheless, in the early printed edition of the poem which Fleeman reproduces (he also provides a printed version of Johnson's manuscript) the poem in fact begins: 'Let Observation with extensive View,/Survey Mankind from *China* to *Peru*'. The distinction between upper and lower case cannot be considered separately from the distinction between roman and italic. After all, the effect of Dickens referring to the infant Dombey as 'Son' would not have been the same if, within the novel, the name of the firm had been '*Dombey and Son*' rather than 'Dombey and Son'.

Prompted by John Smith, we need to think in terms of different systems. Both the system in general use during the first half of the eighteenth century—Smith's 'old' system—and the 'modern' system differentiate proper names from other parts of speech, the old system by italic and capital letter, the modern system by capital letter alone. But the old system also links all nouns together by giving them all an initial capital, thereby drawing attention to their shared, and by implication privileged, identity as names. The modern system is very different: it dissolves the naming element of language, elevating only the proper name, and differentiating it from all other elements of language, including the common noun.

What are we then to make of capital letters—or their absence—in texts produced during that long period of transition in which there was no agreed convention in place? In the remainder of this essay I shall look at two poems from the period of transition: 'The Widow's Tale' and 'The Convert' by George Crabbe. Both poems appeared in *Tales*, printed by Robert Brettell for Hatchard in 1812. In 1818, Crabbe sold *Tales of the Hall* and the previous copyrights to John Murray, who published a new edition of *Tales* (now called *Tales in Verse*) in 1823, printed by Thomas Davison. It is the Brettell–Hatchard and Davison–Murray versions of 'The Widow's Tale' and 'The Convert' that I want to compare.

I

The poetry of George Crabbe (1754–1832) is an interesting case where case is concerned. As his Clarendon Press editors note, Crabbe's 'literary career spanned a period of fifty years, during which there were considerable changes in printing practice and in the use of accidentals'.[8] Indeed, the Clarendon Press edition itself, with its unusually careful attention to the capitalisation of copy-texts and variants, allows readers to register and ponder the effects of capital letters in a way that few modern editions of Romantic period poets do.

To look through the three Clarendon Press volumes is to notice very considerable typographic variation. Two particularly interesting features stand out. Firstly, this is not, for the most part, a sudden change or a change in one direction, from 'old' to 'modern'. For instance, in its use of capitals and italic the 1781 edition of the *Library* published by Dodsley is much more 'modern' than the revised version included in the 1807 *Poems*, published by Hatchard. Secondly, however, there is a sudden and radical change after the move to Murray in 1818. From then on, all Crabbe's work was printed in exactly what John Smith called the modern way. The change is particularly evident in its effect on the *Tales*.

Brettell's edition of *Tales* uses a modified version of the old three-part system. Italic is used for proper names, and some other nouns are given initial capital letters. About half of these capitalised common nouns are social and familial terms such as 'Farmer', 'Son', and 'Poet'. Among the other nouns often given capitals are abstract terms such as 'Reason', 'Prudence', and 'Time', as well as words with religious connections such as 'Church' and 'Sabbath'. It is notable that words for material objects seldom get a capital letter.

What discussion there has been of capitalisation has usually focused on the contribution of capital letters to the personification of abstract terms, terms like 'Reason'. The use of capitals for the names of social roles has received less attention even though it is often these which, along with the abstract terms, often seem to hang on to their initial capital in the second half of the eighteenth century. The effect of such capitals, at least if it is systematic, may be to suggest that individuals are embodiments (or, if you like, 'personifications') of their social roles and that the names of those roles—'Father', 'Farmer'—are therefore something like the proper names of the people they name. This may be so, even if the capitalisation of such nouns is selective—though a selective capitalisation may have the effect of drawing attention to people's relationship to their role and title in a way which suggests that the relationship is problematic. In Crabbe's poems, typically preoccupied with social insecurity and social mobility, it is often a moot point which of these effects is achieved.

Robert Brettell had also been responsible for printing Crabbe's *Poems* (1807) and *The Borough* (1810) for Hatchard. In both, the capitalisation was erratic but in general much heavier than it is in his *Tales*. *The Borough* (including 'Peter Grimes') is formatted in John Smith's 'old way', with almost every noun

given an initial capital. It is unclear why there is so much variation within and between the Brettell volumes. It is not apparent why, for instance, he changed to a very modified version of the tripartite system in *Tales*: how far, that is to say, we are dealing with the influence of Crabbe or of different compositors.[9] However, while no manuscript or proofs of *Tales* survive, there are corrections to the capitalisation of some poems in the second (1812) edition for which Crabbe is probably responsible, and the main feature of these corrections is an increase in the number of initial capitals given to the names for social roles.[10] Five such changes were made to 'The Widow's Tale': a lower-case 'father', 'brother', and 'lover' become 'Father', 'Brother', and 'Lover', while an upper-case 'Love' and 'Lea' became 'love' and 'lea'. No changes were made to 'The Convert'. All such capital letters disappear with the completely modern 1823 Murray–Davison edition, with the exception of a very few 'emphatical words' ('Time' is a significant survivor in 'The Parting Hour'). While we do not know if Crabbe was involved in this edition, we do know that he was involved in the Murray–Davison *Tales of the Hall* (1819) because a fair-copy manuscript and some corrected proofs survive. Consequently, we do have some evidence about Crabbe's response to 'the modern way'.

The manuscript of *Tales of the Hall* shows Crabbe using a handwritten equivalent of Smith's 'old way', with initial capitals for most nouns and underlining for proper names. The surviving proofs show two interesting things: in making his handwritten verbal changes, Crabbe continues to capitalise the initial letters of his nouns; however, he makes no attempt to change any of Davison's printed lower-case nouns to upper case. Taken together, these two features of the corrected proof suggest that Crabbe is accepting a complete separation between handwriting and print so far as capitals (and italic) are concerned, with the printer and compositor having complete control over the printed version. That is, in his handwriting, he continues to capitalise in a way that he clearly expects the compositor to ignore.

We may speculate that Crabbe had felt able to modify Brettell's printed version of *Tales* because Brettell's was reasonably close to his own handwriting where Davison's was not. Both Crabbe and Brettell used a three-part system. The change from a three-part to a two-part system, with proper names no longer distinguished by italic, probably put Davison's versions beyond the reach of the kind of piecemeal modifications that an author would be allowed. Piecemeal modification, in this new context, would give the few reinstated capitalised nouns the status of proper names (the status Dickens clearly wanted for 'Son').

Crabbe's poem 'The Widow's Tale' tells the story of a farmer's daughter, Nancy Moss, who has been sent at the insistence of her socially ambitious mother to a genteel boarding school where—encouraged, it is implied, by reading romantic fiction—she has developed ideas above her station.[11] But the mother has now died and Nancy must return home to a father who expects his

daughter to make herself useful about the house and accept that her destiny is to be a farmer's wife, not a lady of leisure. Like most of the poems in *Tales*, this is a story about young people whose class position is ambiguous and who therefore face particular problems in moving from one stage of the life-cycle to another:[12]

> 'Tis true she had without abhorrence seen
> Young *Harry Carr*, when he was smart and clean;
> But, to be married—be a Farmer's wife,
> A slave! A drudge!—she could not, for her life.   (ll. 51–54)

Seeking relief from the prospect of Harry Carr and the crude ways of her family, Nancy notices what she calls ' "a Lady" ' (l. 74) living nearby, a widow whose genteel appearance suggests that she will be a kindred spirit. The widow, Lucinda, accepts the offer of friendship; but, instead of echoing Nancy's romantic views, she successfully counters them by telling the story of her own youthful romantic aspirations and their disappointment. At first Nancy protests, 'nothing pleased to see/ A Friend's advice could like a Father's be' (ll. 147–48). She feels that Lucinda should have been ruled by her feelings for the young man she had loved—her father's apprentice—not by the refusal of the 'tyrant' father (l. 251) to give his assent to their marriage. The widow replies:

> 'Alas! My child, there are who, dreaming so,
> Waste their fresh youth, and waking feel the woe;
> There is no spirit sent the heart to move
> With such prevailing and alarming love;
> Passion to Reason will submit—or why
> Should wealthy maids and poorest swains deny?
> Or how should classes and degrees create
> The slightest bar to such resistless fate?
> Yet high and low, you see, forbear to mix;
> No Beggars' eyes the hearts of Kings transfix;
> And who but amorous Peers or Nobles sigh,
> When titled beauties pass triumphant by?
> For Reason wakes, proud wishes to reprove;
> You cannot hope, and therefore dare not love:
> All would be safe, did we at first require—
> 'Does Reason sanction what our hearts desire?'
> But, quitting precept, let example show
> What joys from Love unchecked by Prudence flow.   (ll. 194–211)

In the event, some combination of the widow's tale, her moralising, and her present condition do have the desired effect on the younger woman: Nancy starts to busy herself about the farmhouse and before long is contentedly married to the young farmer, Harry Carr.

Most of the nouns given capital letters in the poem as a whole, as in this passage, are words for feelings and values like 'Reason' and 'Love', and words

for social roles like 'Father', 'Beggars', and 'Kings'. What is also clear is that the two kinds of word are interdependent. While we cannot be sure that 'Passion' would have a capital if it were not at the beginning of a line and a sentence, the status of 'Reason' is assured by its consistent capitalisation and its ability to act as an independent, personified force ('For Reason wakes, proud wishes to reprove' [l. 206]). However, in the context of love and marriage, its authority (like the authority of Fathers, who seem pre-eminently to be its agents) depends on the possibility of knowing what 'class' or 'degree' you and other people in fact belong to. It depends on Peers, Beggars, and Ladies being able to recognise themselves and each other as such. 'The Widow's Tale' does seems to confirm the linked authority of the capitalised terms: taught by Lucinda's example, Nancy resolves the uncertainty of her class situation and becomes a 'Farmer's wife' rather than a 'Lady'.

However, some doubts remain, both about the authority of 'Reason' and about the characters' social class. The ambiguity of Nancy's class position is indeed resolved: it is the class position of Lucinda and Lucinda's father which remain obscure. The lesson Lucinda has drawn from her own unhappy experience of love is that you should marry within your class: that is what she means by 'Passion' submitting to 'Reason'. Not only, however, does it seem as if her love for her father's apprentice had more to do with romance than with passion, but the father's motives for having opposed the relationship are not wholly transparent. Faced, as it later turned out, with the possibility of financial disaster, it looks as if he were conscious that the only way in which his daughter could hope to maintain her present social position would be by marrying someone much wealthier than herself—not an equal but a superior. Crabbe's poems constantly hint at, circle around, a contradictory reality in which to marry your equal may be to lose your class position and you can only maintain your 'class and degree' by leaving it. He is attempting to articulate situations of radical social insecurity, which make it impossible to be sure what 'Reason' entails or whether someone really is a 'Lady'. The authority asserted by the capital letters is not really justified by the complex and sometimes obscure particulars of the relationships the poem describes.

It therefore marks a significant change, and makes a kind of sense when, in 1823, all these words lose their capitals. 'Reason' becomes 'reason', less an absolute authority than a process of reasoning. The fathers lose some of their authority too along with, more obviously, kings and nobles and, presumably, those 'titled beauties'. Though Beggars lose their titles too, typographic levelling has more to do with social mobility and a modern experience of class than with equality and classnessness. It is as if the 'modern way' with typography lends itself to more modern meanings. The poem now seems to take social mobility, a more contingent relationship between people and their roles, a little more for granted; and take a little more for granted, along with that, a more empirical and context-bound ethics.

II

My second example from the *Tales*, 'The Convert', is a particularly interesting
case where case is concerned because, like *Dombey and Son,* it is a story about
patrilineage and the family firm. It is preoccupied, even more than is 'The Wid-
ow's Tale', with people's relationship to their names (their proper names—like
'Dombey'—and their category names—like 'son'). It is nicely relevant too
because it is a poem about the book trade. 'This tale was suggested', Crabbe
later explained, 'by some passages in that extraordinary work *The Memoirs
of the Forty-five First Years of the Life of James Lackington, Bookseller, Written
by Himself, 1791*'.[13] Lackington's *Memoirs* told the story of his conversion by
Wesleyan Methodists, who had helped to set him up in the book trade; it went
on to describe his commercial success and disenchantment with Methodism.
Crabbe was clearly interested in Lackington's presentation of the uncertainties
and changes of identity associated with religious conversion and upward social
mobility. The uncertain origins of Crabbe's protagonist, John Dighton, are
an element which Crabbe added to Lackington's story but which emphasise
these themes.

   Here are some passages from the narrative as it appeared in 1812, followed
by the 1823 rendering:

> Some to our Hero have a hero's name
> Denied, because no father's he could claim;
> Nor could his mother with precision state
> A full fair claim to his certificate;
> On her own word the marriage must depend,—
> A point she was not eager to defend:
> But who, without a father's name, can raise
> His own so high, deserves the greater praise.

> Some to our hero have a hero's name
> Denied, because no father's he could claim;
> Nor could his mother with precision state
> A full fair claim to his certificate;
> On her own word the marriage must depend,—
> A point she was not eager to defend:
> But who, without a father's name, can raise
> His own so high, deserves the greater praise.   (ll. 1–8)

> Suffice it then, our Hero's name was clear,
> For, call *John Dighton*, and he answered 'Here!'
> But who that name in early life assigned,
> He never found, he never tried to find:

Suffice it then, our hero's name was clear,
For, call John Dighton, and he answered 'Here!'
But who that name in early life assigned,
He never found, he never tried to find: (ll. 15–18)

John, now become a master of his trade,
Perceived how much improvement might be made;
And as this prospect opened to his view,
A certain portion of his zeal withdrew;
His fear abated,—'What had he to fear,—
His profits certain, and his conscience clear?'
Above his door a board was placed by *John*,
And '*Dighton, Stationer,*' was gilt thereon.

John, now become a master of his trade,
Perceived how much improvement might be made;
And as this prospect opened to his view,
A certain portion of his zeal withdrew;
His fear abated,—'What had he to fear,—
His profits certain, and his conscience clear?'
Above his door a board was placed by John,
And 'Dighton, stationer,' was gilt thereon.   (ll. 127–34)

Thus he proceeded; trade increased the while,
And Fortune wooed him with perpetual smile:
On early scenes he sometimes cast a thought,
When on his heart the mighty change was wrought;
And all the ease and comfort Converts find,
Was magnified in his reflecting mind;
Then on the Teacher's priestly pride he dwelt,
That caused his freedom; but with this he felt
The danger of the free—for since that day
No guide had shown, no Brethren joined his way;
Forsaking one, he found no second creed,
But reading doubted, doubting what to read.

Thus he proceeded; trade increased the while,
And fortune woo'd him with perpetual smile:
On early scenes he sometimes cast a thought,
When on his heart the mighty change was wrought;
And all the ease and comfort converts find,
Was magnified in his reflecting mind;

Then on the teacher's priestly pride he dwelt,
That caused his freedom; but with this he felt
The danger of the free—for since that day
No guide had shown, no brethren joined his way;
Forsaking one, he found no second creed,
But reading doubted, doubting what to read.   (ll. 348–59)

Our Hero's age was threescore years and five,
When he exclaimed, 'Why longer should I strive?
Why more amass, who never must behold
A young *John Dighton* to make glad the old?'
(The sons he had, to early graves were gone,
And girls were burdens to the mind of *John*.)
'Had I a boy, he would our name sustain,
That now to nothing must return again; […]'

Our hero's age was threescore years and five,
When he exclaimed, 'Why longer should I strive?
Why more amass, who never must behold
A young John Dighton to make glad the old?'
(The sons he had, to early graves were gone,
And girls were burdens to the mind of John.)
'Had I a boy, he would our name sustain,
That now to nothing must retain again; […]'   (ll. 366–73)[14]

At every point, the change from one typographic system to another makes a significant difference to the poem's meaning and taken together the changes point, I shall suggest, in one direction.

The literal elevation of the capital 'H' of 'Hero' (l. 1, repeated in ll. 15 and 366) is a typographical representation of Dighton 'raising his name so high' (ll. 7–8). The poet's and the compositor's understanding of capital letters could well converge here: Joseph Moxon, advising compositors on the use of capitals in his *Mechanic Exercises in the Whole Art of Printing* (1684) had argued that '*Capitals* express Dignity wherever they are Set'.[15] Printer's Grammars often spoke of capitals in this way. John Smith, for instance, refers to words being 'graced with Capitals' (p. 51). Furthermore, if 'Hero' might deserve a capital for the same sort of reason as God or King, it also deserves a capital as the name of a character—the protagonist—in a narrative, an entry in a list of *dramatis personae*. The question at issue for those who would have 'denied' such a name to him (l. 2) being that, as a man of doubtful birth he was not a proper person to play the lead in that way.

As for our Hero's proper name—John Dighton—its meaning is different when it is typographically distinguished from the words around it from when, in 1823, it is not so distinguished. Most obviously, 'call *John Dighton,* and he answered "Here!" ' (l. 16) draws attention to the caller's actual use of John's name more directly than the 1823 edition's 'call John Dighton, and he answered "Here!" '. The 1812 italic functions like quotation marks, and the change in 1820 is therefore, in effect, a

change from direct to indirect speech. One of the great pleasures of Crabbe's poetry is his way with everyday idioms. These lines take literally the everyday figurative expression 'to answer to the name of'; but they do so more pointedly in the 1812 version.

There is a similar difference between the 1812 and 1823 versions of the station-er's shop-sign. The italic—' "*Dighton, Stationer*" was gilt thereon' (l. 134)—draws attention to the written character of the name on the signboard (and therefore to the wonderful play on 'gilt') to a degree that the 1823 version, all in roman, does not. Is this because italic resembles signwriter's script? Probably not: the effect would have been the same if the poem as a whole had been printed in italic, with proper names distinguished by the use of roman. In this respect, the distinction between roman and italic differs from the distinction between upper and lower case. For Moxon, '*Capitals* express Dignity wherever they are *Set*', but the significance of italic and roman was wholly reversible: 'when [the compositor] meets with proper Names of Persons or Places he *Sets* them in *Italic*, if the *Series* of his *Matter* be *Set* in *Roman*; or in *Roman* if the Series of his *Matter* be *Set* in *Italic*.'[16]

When scholars and critics discuss capital letters it is usually in the context of the personification of abstract nouns, such as 'Fortune' (l. 149). It is often hard to say whether, or how much, an initial capital contributes to an effect of personification. But in this instance, where 'Fortune wooed him with perpetual smile' we are surely closer to the goddess Fortuna than we are when 'fortune wooed him with perpetual smile' (though not so close as we would have been if '*Fortune*' had wooed him). Indeed, the change from upper to lower case seems to modify the meaning of the word: it is almost as if in 1812 John Dighton was wooed by the prospect of good fortune, while in 1823 he was wooed by the more down to earth prospect of making a fortune.

As in 'The Widow's Tale', the effect of a selective capitalisation of the names of social roles—here 'Converts', 'Teacher', and 'Brethren' (ll. 352, 354, 357)—is not the same as it would be if all nouns were capitalised, or—something dif-ferent again—if all nouns of this type were capitalised. In a poem which is anyway about a man of unstable identity, this selective capitalisation becomes very much a part of what the story is about, helping to draw attention to the fact that some people inhabit their social roles more securely than others and are therefore more reliably identified by their titles.

More specifically, while the poem refers explicitly to John's relationship to converts as a species ('And all the ease and comfort Converts find,/ Was magnified in his reflecting mind'), 'the Teacher' of 1812 is the species—or an individual as an embodiment of the species—whereas 'the teacher' of 1823 is a single individual who happens to be a teacher (and does 'The Convert', as the title of the poem, therefore become more flexible in its meaning in 1823?). Once again, as in 'The Widow's Tale', one effect of typographic modernisation is to take social mobility—and a contingent relationship between people and

the roles they may occupy—for granted in a way that the capital letters of 1812 tried to resist.

<p style="text-align:center">∗   ∗   ∗   ∗   ∗</p>

Some of the interpretations I have offered of the 1812 and 1823 versions of these two poems will no doubt seem tendentious, forcing more meaning onto typographic details than they can possibly bare. However, if we are to move beyond saying that capital letters 'give emphasis', we do have to risk being fanciful or over-specific about what it is that is being emphasised, in a way we do not have to be with *Dombey and Son.* And while I may have read too much, or read the wrong things, into some of the examples I have looked at, those examples do, I think, point clearly in one direction, particularly in 'The Convert'. This is, both in 1812 and 1823, a poem about identity and naming: but the use of capitals and italic in the 1812 version draw attention to those issues to a degree and in a way that the 1823 version does not.

In the final lines from 'The Convert', John Dighton bemoans his lack of sons to 'our name sustain'. He has daughters but 'girls were burdens to the mind of John' (ll. 376, 375). These lines surely take us right back to *Dombey*:

> [Mr and Mrs Dombey] had been married ten years, and until this present day on which Mr Dombey sat jingling and jingling his heavy gold watch-chain in the great arm-chair by the side of the bed, had had no issue.
>
> —To speak of; none worth mentioning. There had been a girl some six years before, and the child, who had stolen into the chamber unobserved, was now crouching timidly, in a corner whence she could see her mother's face. But what was a girl to Dombey and Son! In the capital of the House's name and dignity, such a child was merely a piece of base coin that couldn't be invested—a bad Boy—nothing more. (p. 3)

Only when the modern practice exemplified by Thomas Davison had become the norm, when upper and lower case had become the markers of a clear and absolute boundary between proper names on one hand and all other parts of speech on the other, was it possible for an author to calculate with precision, as Dickens does, the effect of breaching that boundary. Would he otherwise have been able to pun on the word 'capital' itself, as he does here?   ❖

Notes

1.   Charles Dickens, *Dealings with the firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation,* (1848; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 1.
2.   Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 146; Raymond Williams*, The Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 56.
3.   For a preliminary attempt at an overview of the field, see Gavin Edwards, 'William Hazlitt and the Case of the Initial Letter', *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual*

of Textual Studies, 9 (1996), 260–79. For a brief but very helpful presentation of the relevant typographic history, see N. E. Osselton, 'Spelling-Book Rules and the Capitalization of Nouns in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English, for John Gerritsen*, edited by Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes, with Hans Jansen (Groningen: Wolters–Noordhof, 1985), pp. 49–61.

4.   *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821–1853,* edited by Ernest de Selincourt, 4 vols, 2nd edn, revised and edited by A. G. Hill, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), IV, 644.

5.   John Smith, *The Printer's Grammar* (London: For the Editor, 1755), pp. 201, 202.

6.   *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*, edited by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1989), p. xlvii.

7.   *Samuel Johnson: The Complete English Poems,* edited by J. D. Fleeman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 11, 14.

8.   *George Crabbe: The Complete Poetical Works,* edited by Norma Dalrymple-Champneys and Arthur Pollard, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), I, xxxv. Hereafter, *CPW.*

9.   For some careful speculation on variations within and between *Poems* and *The Borough*, see *CPW*, I, 688–91 and I, 713.

10.   For a discussion of the capitalisation of another poem from *Tales*, 'The Frank Courtship', see Edwards, 'William Hazlitt', pp. 274–77. See also the annotations to *Tales* in *George Crabbe: Selected Poems*, edited by Gavin Edwards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991). J. L. Swingle's argument that Crabbe is a 'lower-case poet' seems to have been written without a knowledge of the pre-Murray texts, but is nevertheless very suggestive—see 'Late Crabbe in Relation to the Augustans and Romantics: The Temporal Labyrinth of his *Tales in Verse,* 1812', *ELH*, 42 (1975), 580–94.

11.   For a reading of 'The Widow's Tale' which ignores the question of capital letters, see Gavin Edwards*, Narrative Order 1789–1819: Life and Story in an Age of Revolution* (London: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 123–38.

12.   It is not hard to see why Fanny Price has a copy of *Tales* in her room at Mansfield Park. Indeed, Harriet Martin would have found much to think about in 'The Widow's Tale', just as her patron, Emma Woodhouse, might have recognised herself in her namesake in 'The Patron'.

13.   Quoted in *The Poetical Works of the Rev. George Crabbe: With his Letters and Journals, and his Life by his Son,* 8 vols (London: John Murray, 1834), V, 155.

14.   Quoted from *The Works of the Rev. George Crabbe,* 5 vols (London: John Murray, 1823), I, iii.

15.   Joseph Moxon, *Mechanic Exercises in the Whole Art of Printing*, edited by H. Davis and H. Carter (1683–84; London: OUP, 1958), p. 217.

16.   Ibid., p. 217.

Copyright Information

Minerva at Aberdeen
A. K. Newman and Books in Boards
Jonathan E. Hill

❦

AMIDST ALL THE JUDGEMENTS PASSED ON THEM, nobody has ever claimed that, in their original board bindings, Minerva Press novels were aesthetically appealing and distinctive in appearance.[1] But, for a few years at least, they were. At the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Minerva Press, under A. K. Newman, quite suddenly and rather briefly, published novels whose binding displayed an unusual elegance all the more striking and unexpected for the competitive market conditions in which they were produced. We can arrive at this judgement thanks to the remarkable collection of books in boards, the majority of which are Minerva Press novels, housed in Special Collections and Archives at the University of Aberdeen. Other libraries, on both sides of the Atlantic, in particular Schloss Corvey in Germany,[2] may have larger collections of prose fiction from the Romantic period, but do any of them have as many volumes in their original paper-covered boards, paper spines, and printed labels—style that constituted the standard, low-cost retail binding of the opening decades of the nineteenth century? The quantity of Minerva books in boards at Aberdeen, alongside a significant number issued by other publishers of the same period, provides a unique opportunity to learn more about this style of binding as it was practised by the day's leading publisher of popular fiction.[3] Many of the physical features of the Minerva books in boards are shared by other duodecimo (12mo) novels of the period, yet in a subtle but noticeable manner the Minerva look distinguished itself from those of its competitors. Within a range of structural and decorative binding options limited by the need to keep costs low, production swift, and distribution wide, Newman managed to give his Minerva novels a distinctive house style that allowed them to stand out from their rivals.

But first, why Minerva at Aberdeen? By an Act of 1709, the four universities of Scotland became entitled to receive a copy of every book registered at Stationers' Hall in London.[4] What later, in 1860, became the single University of Aberdeen was, at that date, two separate institutions: King's College, established in 1505, ten years after the university's founding in 1495, and Marischal College, established 1593. In 1738, following a legal dispute between the two colleges as to which should receive books from Stationers' Hall (the Act did not extend the privilege to both), King's won the exclusive right to do so,[5] a verdict that laid the basis for the appearance, some seventy years later, of a substantial

number of novels. In the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, someone at the library requested works of prose fiction in large quantities. The volumes arrived in their board bindings, and since there were apparently no funds to have them rebound, that is how they remained, up to the present day. The number tails off rapidly in the 1830s. This might have had something to do with a Royal Commission that between 1826 and 1830 investigated the Scottish universities. It remarked on the poor state of funding and conditions at King's College library, and doubted whether the Stationers' Hall privilege should continue: ' "trifling or pernicious works" ', they remarked, ' "are sent in great abundance" '.[6] Whatever the reason, in 1836 Parliament repealed parts of the 1709 Act and the college ceased thereafter to receive books from Stationers' Hall.

The boarded novels at Aberdeen, including the Minerva Press volumes, vary in physical condition: some are ragged and frayed, others fresh and intact. Most, however, are in a solid state of preservation, though not all arrived complete. Some lacked preliminary leaves. At least six of Newman's works are defective in this regard. From 1819, the anonymous *Families of Owen and De Montfort* (3 vols) and Arthur Spenser's *Iskander* (3 vols), lack half-titles and title pages in all of their volumes, while M. S[?mith]'s *Frances* (3 vols), lacks them in volumes I and III.[7] Sarah Green's *Gretna Green Marriages* (3 vols, 1823), lacks preliminaries in volumes II and III, Mac-Erin O'Tara's *Thomas Fitz-Gerald* (3 vols, 1825), in volume I. These defective volumes almost certainly arrived at King's College in this state, since the Latin accession inscription (*Lib Coll: Reg: Ab. St. Hall*, or variants thereof, an abbreviated form of *Liber Collegii Regii Aberdonensis. Stationers' Hall*) is written on page 1 of the narrative text, the first page available in each volume. Did the deposit status of these volumes make Newman or his binders less concerned about sending King's College defective copies? Are these statistically unusual occurrences? It is hard to answer either question. What one can venture is that with production levels of the kind maintained by the Minerva Press, occasional imperfection is to be expected. Whatever the condition of the novels, they were not ignored. A few are unopened, but most have clearly been read. Occasionally readers have left their comments in margins or on blank pages.[8] Whoever ordered the works knew there was an audience for them among the university population. However many times they were handled or read, and to the extent that they were complete when they arrived at King's College library, they come down to us with all of their original constituents (boards, spines, labels, textblocks) intact.

The level to which the boarded Minerva books in the collection overlap with the Press's total output between 1814, the date of the collection's earliest example, and 1834, the date of its last, can be suggested by the following selected data: the library contains, in original boards, nine out of eleven works by Selina Davenport;[9] four out of five by Miss C. D. Haynes (later Mrs Golland);[10] three out of sixteen by Sarah Green;[11] four out of six by Anne Raikes

Harding;[12] four out of twelve titles by Jane Harvey;[13] eleven out of fourteen works by 'Anne of Swansea', Anne Julia Kemble Hatton, accounting for all except her three earliest;[14] the final eight novels of Francis Lathom's total of nineteen;[15] the last five of eleven works by Henrietta Rouviere Mosse;[16] four of eleven by Regina Maria Roche;[17] all but two of the pseudonymous Rosalia St Clair's twelve novels;[18] five out of sixteen works by Louisa Sidney Stanhope;[19] and four by Zara Wentworth.[20] That is seventy-one titles, or 263 volumes, and, as indicated, that is only a portion of the total number in the collection.[21]

Format, Sewing, Squaring

As in earlier years, the standard Minerva novel in boards in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century is a 12mo in format; that is, the individual gatherings that make up the textblock comprise twelve leaves or twenty-four pages each. The outside board measurements are about 7½" x 4½". The width, or thickness, of volumes is principally determined by the number of pages in any given volume. It is usually less than an inch. Volume thickness is also affected by the pattern and tightness of the sewing, and by the work's handling over time: use tends to loosen the structure and expand the width of the textblock. The spine is solid (the spine paper covering glued to the back edge of the textblock) and, in a curve of varying sharpness, rounded. Sewing is invariably on two recessed supports (with two outer kettle-stitches). Sewing patterns, as we shall see, show considerable variation.

The textblock is usually slightly smaller than the board dimensions, and this creates the squaring, the projection of the boards, at top, front, and bottom edges, beyond the dimensions of the textblock, to afford protection to the page edges. The pages are untrimmed, leaving the irregular deckle edges at the front and bottom of the textblock. Since the pages are not trimmed to a uniform dimension, their exact size varies. Beyond these structural features are two further physical elements of significance, the one decorative (paper colour), the second substantive (printed labels). The most common colours of the paper used on Minerva and other novels of the period are various shades of blue-grey for the boards and cream for the spines. Almost as frequent are shades of brown paper, used for both boards and spines. The printed labels carried by the Minerva volumes typically provide four to five items of information: the title of the work; the author's name (when not anonymous); the number of volumes in the set; the number of the volume in question; and the price. The label size changes over time, a development that is central to the evolution of the distinctive Minerva look. Looked at more closely, all of these physical features of the Minerva novel provide information about Newman's production and retailing practices.

The regular 12mo format is an unassuming size of volume for an adult audience. Children's works were even smaller, but that was part of their appeal. The relatively small physical size of 12mo novels was one of the reasons for the

critical condescension aimed at them. We know that Scott sought to raise the dignity of the novel by insisting that *Ivanhoe* (which appeared on 20 December 1819) be published in the larger and more culturally prestigious octavo (8vo) format.[22] At about the same time, other publishers played with variations on the 8vo format. In March 1819, Taylor and Hessey published, in one volume, *The Authoress* (attributed in EN2, Item 1819: 67 to Jane Taylor). Though no larger than the standard 12mo (the boarded copy in the Aberdeen collection measures 7¼" x 4½"), the work was advertised as a 'foolscap 8vo'.[23] The phrase is ambiguous, if not actually misleading, given the meaning of 'foolscap'. Though the leaves might have been gathered and sewn in 8vo signatures (that is, with eight leaves or sixteen pages in each), the size of a foolscap sheet (17" x 13½"), on which a single gathering was printed, was smaller than that of a demy sheet (22½" x 17½"), on which a full-sized 8vo was normally printed, and hence it yielded a textblock no larger than a standard 12mo.[24] What the advertised format offered in folding and sewing, it took away in paper size. It seems that if some form of 8vo could be claimed, it was worth doing so. Another example of this practice in the Aberdeen collection is Lady Caroline Lamb's *Ada Reis* (3 vols, John Murray, 1823). It also was advertised as a foolscap 8vo, and it also is no larger than a 12mo publication.[25]

Newman did not use an 8vo format, whether foolscap or demy, but from 1813 onwards the size of his 12mo format became larger than anything the Minerva Press had employed hitherto.[26] Later, very occasionally, while retaining a 12mo sewing structure, he used a large page size. There are two examples in the Aberdeen collection, Mac-Erin O'Tara's *Thomas Fitz-Gerald the Lord of Offaley* (3 vols, 1825) and *The Stranger Chieftain* (2 vols, 1834). In both instances, the overall dimensions of the volumes are in excess of 8½" x 5". The setting of the type on the page, however, conforms to a 12mo scale, the result being unusually wide margins. *Thomas Fitz-Gerald* was advertised as an 8vo, but it is that only in page size, not in sewing structure.[27] Advertisements at the back of each volume of *The Stranger Chieftain* list only 8vo works, a designation with which *The Stranger Chieftain* is presumably to be associated, but again on the basis of page size, not sewing structure. These large-page 12mos represent a reversal of the foolscap 8vo strategy practised by others: Newman offered in paper what he saved on sewing. He might have advertised them as 'Elegantly printed'. This was the phrase used by F. C. and J. Rivington, and T. Hookham in their advertisements for Lætitia-Matilda Hawkins' *Heraline* (4 vols, 1821).[28] The work was a large-page 12mo, for which the phrase 'Elegantly printed' drew attention to the typographical luxury of wide margins—an extravagance befitting, we might assume, the novel's royal dedicatee, the Duchess of Gloucester. But Newman did not follow suit. What he did do, with some frequency, to give his Minerva novels increased consumer allure, was to advertise them as being 'large'.

In this context, the term 'large' refers not to the size of the boards or pages, but to the thickness of the textblock, as determined by the number of pages. A count of fifteen novels at Aberdeen that Newman published between 1815

and 1825, and advertised as comprising 'large' volumes, reveals that volumes earned the adjective if the average number of pages in each approached 300 (the word being applied not to the whole work but to its constituent volumes).[29] Each of the fifteen works save one (Jane Harvey's *Singularity* [3 vols, 1822]) is a four- or five-volume work (and Anne Hatton is responsible for six of them). On average, each volume in a set designated 'large' contains 294 pages, with a high of 354 in the case of Hatton's *Secrets in Every Mansion* (5 vols) and a low of 236 in the case of the anonymous *Jessy* (4 vols), both published in 1818. The disparity in the average number of pages in these two works would seem to suggest a problem with, at best, the consistency, at worst, the credibility of the word 'large'. But *Jessy* is a singularly slim contender for the designation. Six of the works average over 300 pages per volume, a further three over 290 pages, and others come within a respectable distance of that number. In sum, there is a rough-and-ready truth in advertising. What, by contrast, is surprising are the odd occasions upon which Newman could have justifiably used the 'large' claim in advertisements but did not. Such is the case with three further works by Anne Hatton—*Lovers and Friends* (5 vols, 1821), whose total page count is 1,498, for a volume average of 300; *Deeds of the Olden Time* (5 vols, 1826), at a total page count of 1,615, for a volume average of 323; and *Uncle Peregrine's Heiress* (5 vols, 1828), at a total of 1,722 pages for a volume average of no less than 344 pages. The first omission could simply have been an oversight; the second and third were published after the date in the mid-1820s when Newman seems to have dropped this particular promotional tool in his advertisements. While he was employing the designation 'large', Newman would doubtless have been aware of one exceptionally formidable challenge to his definition of the word. The anonymous writer of *Hardenbrass and Haverill* (4 vols, Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1817), in 'the Author to his Book', says to his work, 'thy bulk is four fat volumes' (I, ix). He was not exaggerating: these volumes, while standard 12mo in format, provide a total of 1,830 pages of narrative (I 422pp., II 606pp., III 382pp., IV 420pp.), for an average of 458 pages per volume.

However 'large', whatever its thickness, the extent to which a volume will remain intact relies principally on its sewing. Sewing patterns in the Minerva novels range from the rare 1-on, to the more common 2-on, to the even more common 3-on, and up from there.[30] Inconsistencies, in the form of mixed sewing patterns, occur both within volumes and between volumes comprising a single title. Amelia Beauclerc's *Montreithe* (4 vols, 1814), can stand as a representative example. Volumes I and III utilise 1-, 2-, and 3-on patterns, in no particular order. Volumes II and IV use 1-on to commence and conclude the sewing, and 2-on, consistently and competently, for the bulk of the volumes. Two inferences suggest themselves. First, different sewers worked on different volumes, perhaps one on volumes I and III, another on volumes II and IV. Second, the first sewer was either not particularly skilled, or not particularly careful, or perhaps did not consider that he, or she, was being paid for a more than a passable level of work. Whatever the case, that indifferent sewer was more adept than the sewer

or sewers of Mary Johnston's *The Lairds of Glenfern* (2 vols, 1816). Here we find
a confused mix of 1-, 3-, 4-, and 6-on sewing patterns. And even that mixture
is restrained compared to the sewing of M. S[mith]'s *Frances* (3 vols, 1819),
which offers the following eclectic combinations: in volume I, 4-on and 2-on;
in II, 10-on; and in III, 8-on and 1-on.[30] This mix suggests the levels to which
untrained or indifferent craftsmanship employed on these bindings could dip,
and the minimal attention given to quality control. But the Minerva Press was
not selling fine bindings, rather economic and serviceable ones, and whatever
the lapses and inconsistencies of workmanship, by far the greater number of
Minerva volumes at Aberdeen have survived any carelessness in their sewing.

   If sewing ensures the cohesion of the textblock, squaring—the projection of
the boards beyond the top, front, and bottom of the textblock—offers protection
to the exposed page edges. The Minerva Press volumes reflect the increasing
use of squaring in boarded books in the opening decades of the nineteenth
century.[31] Its introduction and refinement during the period is illustrated by a
quite different kind of work in the Aberdeen collection. William Frend's *Evening
Amusements; or, the Beauty of the Heavens Displayed* (19 vols, London: J. Maw-
man, 1804–22), was an annual publication offering descriptions of the night
skies and written for a general audience. These nineteen 12mo volumes offer an
object lesson in the gradual and steady adoption of squaring by binders of books
in boards. Though there is some squaring on the first volume—presumably
the publisher wished to make the opening number of the work as attractive as
his budget would allow—there is effectively none on the next seven volumes,
1805–11. Squaring then begins to creep in with volumes IX–XIII (1812–16). By
volumes XIV–XIX (1817–22), it is fully established. A comparable evolution is
visible in the binding of Minerva novels, but now, nearly two hundred years
after their production, it is often difficult to judge the depth of the original
squaring with which the novels were provided on first being published. The
novels' solid spines would originally have been hammered into a rounded curve
as part of their preparation. This convexity pulled the textblock up and back
against its own spine, away from the edges of the board squaring. The boards
would then have remained clearly projecting beyond the edges of the textblock
and protectively functional. Over time, the textblock, especially if the sewing
was poor and the volumes were 'large', would sag under its own weight, sink-
ing down and forward to the edges of the boards and pulling the spine flat
behind it, to the detriment of the squaring. This is the condition of many of
the Minerva volumes, especially the heavier ones. But cause and consequence
is less straightforward than it seems. There are a sufficient number of volumes
from the 1820s that have both flat spines and good all-round squaring to suggest
that their spines were only minimally rounded to begin with. The possibility
arises that, by this decade, what was being spent on squaring was being saved
on the hammering and rounding of the spine. In sum, while squaring is ever
more present in Newman's publications from the mid-teens to the late twenties,
its execution and quality is unpredictable.

Binding and Wrappers

That Minerva novels of this period were invariably published in boards meant that they were retailed to circulating libraries ready-to-rent (to echo James Raven's statement that 'novels were published to rent out'),[32] and made to last at least as long as the novel was in fashion and being read. Other publishers were still issuing novels bound in a more fragile, old-fashioned manner—in wrappers. The Aberdeen collection suggests that the Hookhams did this often: T. Hookham, Jr and E. T. Hookham issued John Hamilton Roche's *A Suffolk Tale* (2 vols, 1810) in blue-grey wrappers. T. Hookham published Abel Moysey's *The Confederates* (3 vols, 1823) in blue wrappers together with, in a puzzlingly decorative detail for a case of the most ephemeral binding possible, pink labels. From the 1830s, we find a further three works from Thomas Hookham in wrappers, brown for Elizabeth Cullen Brown's *Passion and Reason* (4 vols, 1832), bright navy-blue for the anonymous *Marston* (3 vols, 1835), a perishable binding all the more unexpected for being on an 8vo publication, and brown again for Frederic Reynolds' *The Parricide* (2 vols, 1836). Beyond the Hookhams, we find wrappered novels at Aberdeen from Longmans (Robert Gillies' *The Confessions of Sir Henry Longueville* [2 vols, 1814]), and Law and Whittaker (the anonymous *Delusion* [2 vols, 1818]). One can interpret the use of wrappers on novels during the 1810s to 1830s in various ways: it was a way of moving unsold stock as cheaply as possible; it was a way of keeping the publication less expensive by passing on the cost of a more durable binding to the purchaser; or it was, perhaps, simply a case of flimsy covers for fugitive literature. Whatever the motive for those who employed wrappers, Newman at the Minerva Press used only board bindings, and thereby furthered the binding style's prevalence, increased its acceptability, and supplied his own and other circulating libraries, and individual customers, with a binding that blended economy and utility.

Very occasionally, we find a Minerva novel bound in some colour other than the ubiquitous and economic blues and browns. Coloured papers on boarded works in general were not uncommon by the 1810s,[33] but they were more expensive than standard blues and browns and were not usually employed on novels. In the Aberdeen collection, we find coloured papers employed on other literary genres: for instance, on poetry (in the musk-rose boards of Mrs Cowley's *The Siege of Acre* [G. Wilkie and J. Robinson, 1810]), on print history (the olive-green boards and marbled spines of William Parr Greswell's *Annals of Parisian Typography* [Cadell and Davies, et al, 1818]), and on drama (the all-over carmine covering to Richard Paul Jodrell's two slim quarto volumes, *The Persian Heroine* and *Illustrations of the Persian Heroine* [Printed for the Author, 1822]). They do also appear on novels, such as John Jones' *Hawthorn Cottage* (2 vols, James Asperne, 1815), bound in beige-pink boards, a cream spine, and grey-green labels. Among the Minerva works, Amelia Beauclerc's *Montreithe* (4 vols, 1814), Selina Davenport's *The Hypocrite* (5 vols, 1814), the two earliest Minerva novels in boards in the collection, and Anne Hatton's *Secret Avengers* (4 vols, 1815), each have pale- to buff-pink spines, and the anonymous *Bandit*

Chief (4 vols, 1818), is bound in rose-red boards and a buff spine. But these are exceptions, the reasons for their more attractive colours open to guesswork, and probably rather banal (some spare coloured paper on hand at the binders, for example).

Labels

Just as he stuck to board bindings, so Newman almost invariably used printed labels. This was not the universal practice. Boarded novels without printed labels are to be found published by Walker, Baldwin, Longman, and Whittaker, and in two cases from the Minerva Press—Elizabeth Bennett's *Faith and Fiction* (5 vols, 1816), and Charles Lucas' *Gwelygordd* (3 vols, 1820). These last two works, as with most of the originally unlabelled works by other publishers at Aberdeen, do in fact carry labels, but these were supplied not by the publisher but apparently by the library (just when is difficult to say). Further, the individual volumes so labelled have been stamped with their respective numbers. The style of this library labelling is uniform. Its tell-tale sign are the ruled lines at the top and bottom of each label: they run over the edge of the label paper onto the spine paper. These were not pre-printed labels; they were added later to the spine and ruled in place.

While present, labels can be erroneously placed. Those, for example, on the two volumes of Mary Johnston's *The Lairds of Glenfern* (whose muddled sewing has already been noted) are reversed. Misplacement also occurs on two Longman publications, Edward Harley's *The Veteran* (3 vols, 1819), and the anonymous *Arthur Seymour* (2 vols, 1824). The labelling of Alexander Brodie's *The Prophetess* (3 vols, Thomas Clark, and Longmans, 1826), turns into a three-card trick: the label for volume II is on volume I, III is on II, and I on III. Statistically, these errors of labelling are insignificant, but even on that scale they suggest, as with missing preliminaries, part of the cost in quality of low-budget production.

The size, specifically the length, of labels is determined by three factors: the amount of information they carry; how they are cut; and how they are designed. Save for a rare addition, labels carry the four or five pieces of information already noted (title, number of volumes, price, volume number, and, when given, the name of the author). The rare addition is the date of the work. The earliest example in the Aberdeen collection is on the unusual work already noticed, Lætitia-Matilda Hawkins' 'Elegantly printed' *Heraline*—another sign, perhaps, of its over-production. The label, in addition to title, author, number of volumes, and volume number, though no price, carries the date, 1821. Newman did not add such data until the mid-1830s, on the anonymous *Benson Powlett* (2 vols, 1833) and Timothy Flint's *Francis Berrian* (3 vols, 1834). The latter is exceptional in offering six pieces of information—title, author, number of volumes, price, volume number, and date—indeed, we could claim seven, if the subtitle, *or, the Mexican Patriot*, also supplied, is counted in its own right.

The cutting of the labels, self-evidently if minimally, affects their size. Labels were issued printed and undivided on a single integral sheet forming part of the preliminaries of one of the volumes. Which volume, in a multi-volume work,
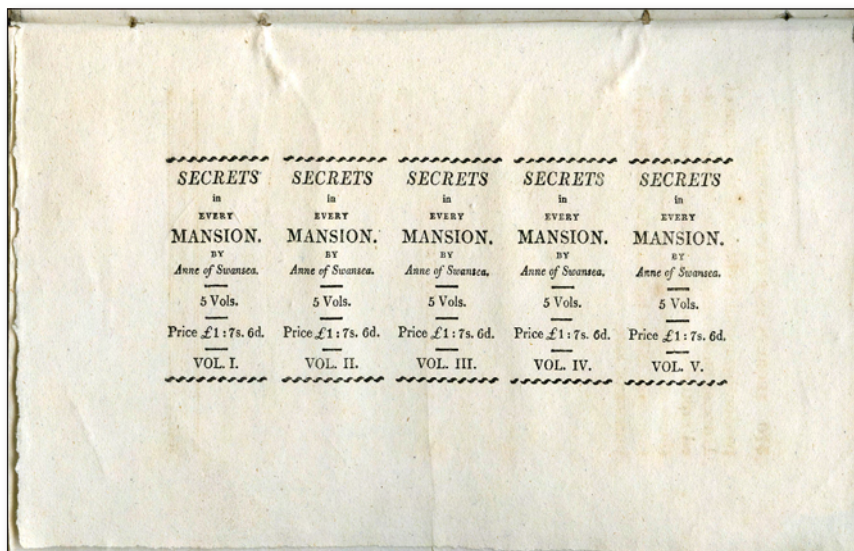

Fig. 1. The page of undivided labels from vol. iii of
Anne Hatton, *Secrets in Everty Mansion* (5 vols, 1818).
Reproduced by permission of the University of Aberdeen.

can vary. The survival of these sheets of undivided labels *in situ* is rare. They are usually found in leather-bound volumes for which the binder had no need of the paper labels. In these cases, by intention or oversight, the binder omitted to cut out and discard the unwanted leaf. In the Aberdeen collection, there survives an example of the rarest label sheet of all, a page of undivided titles in a boarded book which, nevertheless, carries a set of printed labels on its spines. The work is Anne Hatton's *Secrets in Every Mansion*, whose 'large' volumes we have already met. The recto of the final leaf, R6, in volume iii, contains the five undivided labels printed laterally on the page in a vertical stack (Figure 1, above). The binder took the labels used on the spines either from another copy of the work (which was issued unlabelled?) or from an additional, unbound sheet of labels provided by the printer.[34] The surviving integral sheet, in its unfaded and fresh whiteness, is a vivid reminder of just how bright the labels on boarded books, and the rest of their paper coverings, would have been when they were first issued, before dimmed by time and use.[35] The labels to *Secrets in Every Mansion* are ruled at top and bottom, the ruled lines providing a guide to their cutting and dividing. The space between the top and bottom rule on each label is 1¾". The labels on the spine are 1⅞" tall. Thus, the person who cut the labels on the spine found an extra margin of ⅛", divided between the upper and lower edge. In the case of ruled labels, there is not much room for

choosing the height of the label. When there are no ruled lines, there is more choice, a small measure of discretion. We can assume that labels were usually cut with a chopper, but sometimes they must have been cut more fastidiously with scissors. The irregular bulge on either side of the labels to Selina Davenport's *An Angel's Form and a Devil's Heart* (4 vols, 1818), there to accommodate the length of the title's lines of type, indicates careful hand cutting.

The principal determinant, however, in the size of Minerva labels was a matter of discretionary design: in the space of a few years the labels were in-

Fig. 2. Selina Davenport, *The Hypocrite* (5 vols, 1814);
Anne Hatton, *Woman's a Riddle* (4 vols, 1824).
Reproduced by permission of the University of Aberdeen.

creased in height. Between the mid-1810s and the mid-1820s, there is a general evolution from shorter, squarer labels to taller, rectangular ones, from labels 1½" in height to labels approaching double that measurement. Davenport's *The Hypocrite* (5 vols, 1814), has labels that are 1½" (Figure 2, above). They carry four pieces of information: the novel's title, the number of volumes, the price, and the volume number. With slight variations, this remains the height of

Minerva labels until 1818, in which year an increasing number of the press's labels approach 2″ or more. Typical is Miss C. D. Haynes' *The Foundling of Devonshire* (5 vols, 1818) (Figure 3, below). The five labels vary in length from 1¾″ to 2″, there is some inconsistency in their cutting, they are affixed on the volumes at differing heights, and they carry five pieces of information—to the earlier four is now added the name of the author. This new length becomes the norm, until by the mid-1820s it stretches to 3″. The labels on Anne Hatton's *Woman's a Riddle* (4 vols, 1824) are 2¹³⁄₁₆″ (Figure 2), those on her *Deeds of the Olden Time* (5 vols, 1826), a full 3″.

FIG. 3. MISS BRODERICK, *THE CUMBERLAND COTTAGER* (3 VOLS, 1818); MISS C. D. HAYNES, *THE FOUNDLING OF DEVONSHIRE* (5 VOLS, 1818). REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN.

Newman's tall labels of the late 1810s and early 1820s are distinctive for prose fiction of their period. To make but one contrast: the labelling on boarded copies of Scott's novels, whether published by Constable or by Cadell, and their respective co-publishers in London, hover around 2″. The taller dimensions of the Minerva labels have patent retailing motives. In the first place, on small

12mo volumes, they attract attention. What, in part, they draw attention to is
a commercial communication quite different from that offered by the labelling
of earlier leather-bound volumes and from many other contemporary books in
boards. To make the point in the form of a double question: what leather label
ever carried on it the price of the book to which it was affixed, or indicated the
number of volumes in the set of which it was a part?[36] Other boarded novels
at this period often omit any mention of price, but not those from Minerva.
Certainly a volume's title, author, and volume number are equally convenient
for bookseller and purchaser. But, in general, the labelling of leather-bound
volumes, and of boarded books without price information on their labels, points
to a moment in the existence of work that comes after its purchase, to the
condition of ownership, to the moment the book is shelved in the library. The
labelling of books in boards with the price on them points to an earlier moment,
to the activity of selling the product. The same is true of the label's indication
of the number of volumes in the set: it ensures that vendor and purchaser, at
the moment of transaction, know how many volumes are meant to be changing
hands. (Later on, it let the circulating-library client or reader know how many
volumes there are to go.) The label then becomes as much a retailing device as
a sign of bibliographic identification. One might speculate about the evolving
impression over time that a price on a label might make on an observer, but in
its original release into the public view we can probably be more certain about
its messages: it indicated a fixed and guaranteed price; it enabled the purchaser
to calculate the per volume cost; it marked the book as a consumer item; the
title and, if supplied, the author, made it, the publisher trusted and the buyer
would hope, worth the cost; and for those lucky enough to get a discounted
price, the label would be a satisfying reminder of their savings.[37]

   The basis of the gradual elongation of the Minerva label had been laid down
by a structural innovation in leather-bound books of the second half of the
eighteenth century—the introduction of recessed supports and smooth spines
(or, more accurately, the reintroduction, since the technique had been used in the
seventeenth century, dropped, and then revived again). The traditional placing
of labels on book spines had been determined by the position on the spine of
the raised bands covering the raised sewing supports beneath. Conventionally,
on leather-bound books, the upper label occupied the compartment demarcated
by the raised bands of the top two sewing supports. Such other labels as were
used would then be placed in lower compartments.[38] Early books in boards with
printed labels followed the practice of using the upper compartment, and when
there was no printed label, and the title or volume number was handwritten onto
the spine, there was a natural or, more properly stated, culturally determined
tendency to write the information in the upper compartments.[39] The return
of smooth spines on leather bindings in the later eighteenth century, effected
by the sawing of grooves in the spine and the sinking therein of the sewing
supports, might have changed all this, since the surface of the spine was no
longer structurally divided into compartments by the protrusion of the sewing

supports. But it did not. For the most part, smooth leather spines continued to be tooled and decorated, and even supplied with false raised bands, as if their surfaces were still divided by raised supports, and labels continued to occupy, and to be confined in size, by the memory of their traditional compartments.[40] It was likewise for printed labels on books in boards. But there was an early difference between leather labels and paper labels: with the former there is frequently more than one label (each placed in its own spine compartment); with the latter, that is never the case.[41] On books in boards, a single label carries all the information the publisher wants disclosed; it made no economic sense to print, and to pay for the labour to attach, more than one. If there was to be but one label, the more information it carried, the taller it needed to be.

The development of the smooth spine opened up more vertical space on the surface of the spine in which labels might grow in length. Further encouragement was given to employing the spine space more fully by a reduction in the number of sewing supports used in the binding of books in boards. At the turn of the century, many 12mo books used four sewing supports; by the second decade of the century this has been reduced to two. (The same is true of many 8vo volumes.) If the two sewing supports are well spaced, this enlarges the distance between them in which a label can expand and be placed. On many books in boards, however, recessed supports are not always sunk deeply into the textblock, they are often awkwardly positioned, the spine covering is usually of thin paper, and the labels are not always placed between the supports but frequently placed across the upper one. The result is rubbing, erosion, and deterioration in the legibility of the label. The upper portion of many labels on 12mo novels shows stress of this kind.

Even if its motives were primarily commercial and pragmatic (the provision of retailing information), the evolution and design of the long label on Minerva novels also had subtle but effective aesthetic consequences. The tall labels on certain Minerva titles conduce to an elegant poise and slimness of line. This is most apparent when the spines retain their original, rounded convexity, and that most often occurs when the novels are not obviously of the 'large' category. Two works of 1818 illustrate this appearance. Miss Broderick's *The Cumberland Cottager* (3 vols) is of standard 12mo dimensions, approximately 7½" by 4½" (Figure 3). Its boards are covered in blue-grey paper, its spine in green-grey. The labels are 2⅜" tall, that is, very close to being in a one-third proportion to the (7½") height of the spine. Because the page count is low—including preliminaries and advertisements, volume I is 250 pages, volume II 240, and volume III 265, for a volume average of 252 pages—the spines are relatively narrow, about ¾". They also remain well rounded, the convexity adding to their structural elegance. There is consistent squaring on each volume. Volumes II and III are almost entirely unopened, which brings their compactness close to what they enjoyed on the day they first left the bindery. In the intervening two hundred years, the surface of the volumes has become soiled, stained, inscribed, and library-labelled, but these blemishes notwithstanding, the proportions and

design of the volumes still suggest a crisp, simple, and finished elegance. The same ingredients combine to produce comparable effects in Miss C. D. Haynes' *The Foundling of Devonshire*, already noted for its taller labels (Figure 3). This was one of those titles whose volumes were advertised as being 'large', but at an average volume length (on this occasion including preliminaries in the count) of 260 pages, it is not a bulky work. Its overall dimensions are the same as those of *The Cumberland Cottager*. It is wholly covered in a not-so-common olive-green paper. Its labels are about 2" in length—not as long as those on *The Cumberland Cottager*, but sufficient to create the effect of vertical extension on the spines. The spines are slim and rounded, the squaring even and functional. Here again, surface fraying and distress apart, are volumes of poised elegance, created out of the standard materials of books in boards, but assembled and harmonised to raise their appearance to a level of distinctive visual appeal.

Conclusion

Overall, the physical quality of Minerva novels suggests a rough-and-ready calculus of costs and economies in their construction and binding. Strength or quality in one area is offset by weakness or haste in another. Time on or investment in one task is taken away from another. Competent sewing and adequate squaring do not always come together. Thick volumes can come at the price of adequate squaring. There can be qualitative differences between volumes in the same set, particularly in the sewing patterns employed. All such variables are, we can surmise, the result of achieving rapid, bulk production while trying to contain the aggregate cost of the product. We can assume that publishers preferred to allot a fixed cost for binding. The separate ingredients may vary in quality and price, but the overall outlay remains constant. In economic terms, the isocost remains fixed, while the cost of the various parts may fluctuate.

   Even given the variable quality and the limited structural and decorative aims of their bindings, there was a brief moment when Minerva novels achieved an elegant proportion of design and finish that stands out and is worth acknowledging. Few of the volumes produced in the 1820s or later, with flatter spines and heavier, block-like shapes, prolong the appealing design of the late 1810s. By the mid-1820s, all paper-covered books in boards were, in any case, being rendered if not obsolete—they persisted, in dwindling numbers, until the 1840s and beyond—then certainly outmoded by the introduction of cloth binding. Cloth-bound books were to achieve levels of design, appearance, and durability quite beyond the reach of the paper-covered books in boards. Many books in boards quickly adopted the cloth spine. Others did not, and the standard blue or brown, all-paper book in boards, failing to develop in the 1830s, became increasingly fusty and outmoded in appearance. What could and had been achieved, however, in this binding genre, as applied in the commercial and consumer context of low-budget, high-production publishing, is memorably illustrated in the assembly of Minerva novels at Aberdeen.[42]

Notes

1. I here make flexible use of the famous name, Minerva Press, to refer to novels published by A. K. Newman not only up to 1821, when he was still using the imprint, but also after that date, when he dropped it. Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press 1790–1820* (London: Printed for the Bibliographical Society at the University Press, Oxford, 1939), remains the primary work on the Minerva Press. Deborah Anne McLeod's 'The Minerva Press' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1997) provides a valuable bibliographical update and a more current critical appraisal of Minerva publications.

2. See Peter Garside, 'Collections of English Fiction in the Romantic Period: The Significance of Corvey', in *Die Fürstliche Bibliotek Corvey: Ihre Bedeutung für eine neue Sicht der Literatur des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Rainer Schöwerling and Hartmut Steinecke (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992), pp. 70–81, and his later overview in 'The English Novel in the Romantic Era: Consolidation and Dispersal', the introductory essay to *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, Volume II: 1800–1829, edited by Peter Garside and Rainer Schöwerling (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 24–29 (hereafter cited as EN2).

3. Minerva tops all three tables of Primary Publishers: see Tables 7.1 (1800–09), 7.2 (1810–19), and 7.3 (1820–29), compiled by Garside in EN2, pp. 83–84.

4. Colin A. McLaren, *Rare and Fair: A Visitor's History of Aberdeen University Library* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Library, 1995), p. 8.

5. Ibid., p. 8.

6. Ibid., p.15.

7. The author attribution for *Frances* is taken from EN2, 1819: 62. Here, and hereafter, I give only the main title of the novels cited.

8. One reader, for example, has left particularly caustic comments on the overblown style of the Preface and first fifteen pages of E. A. Archer's *Saragossa* (4 vols, 1825).

9. *The Hypocrite* (5 vols, 1814); *The Original of the Miniature* (4 vols, 1816); *Leap Year* (5 vols, 1817); *An Angel's Form and a Devil's Heart* (4 vols, 1818); *Preference* (2 vols, 1824); *Italian Vengeance and English Forbearance* (3 vols, 1828); *The Queen's Page* (3 vols, 1831); *The Unchanged* (3 vols, 1832); *Personation* (3 vols, 1834).

10. *The Foundling of Devonshire* (5 vols, 1818); *Augustus & Adelina* (4 vols, 1819); *Eleanor* (5 vols, 1821); as Mrs. C. D. Golland, *The Ruins of Ruthvale Abbey* (4 vols, 1827).

11. *Gretna Green Marriages* (3 vols, 1823); *Who is the Bridegroom?* (3 vols, 1822); *Parents and Wives* (3 vols, 1825).

12. *The Refugees, an Irish Tale* (3 vols, 1822); *Realities, Not a Novel* (4 vols, 1825); *Dissipation* (4 vols, 1827); *Experience* (4 vols, 1828).

13. *Brougham Castle* (2 vols, 1816); *Singularity* (3 vols, 1822); *Mountalyth* (3 vols, 1823); *The Ambassador's Secretary* (4 vols, 1828).

14. *Secret Avengers* (4 vols, 1815); *Chronicles of an Illustrious House* (5 vols, 1816); *Gonzalo de Baldivia* (4 vols, 1817); *Secrets in Every Mansion* (5 vols, 1818); *Cesario Rosalba* (5 vols, 1819); *Lovers and Friends* (5 vols, 1821); *Guilty or not Guilty* (5 vols, 1822); *Woman's a Riddle* (4 vols, 1824); *Deeds of the Olden Time* (5 vols, 1826); *Uncle Peregrine's Heiress* (5 vols, 1828); *Gerald Fitzgerald* (5 vols, 1831).

15. *Italian Mysteries* (3 vols, 1820); *The One-Pound Note, and Other Tales* (2 vols, 1820); *Puzzled and Pleased* (3 vols, 1822); *Live and Learn* (4 vols, 1823); *The Polish Bandit*

(3 vols, 1824); *Young John Bull* (3 vols, 1828); *Fashionable Mysteries* (3 vols, 1829); *Mystic Events* (4 vols, 1830).

16. *A Bride and No Wife* (4 vols, 1817); *A Father's Love and a Woman's Friendship* (5 vols, 1825); *Gratitude* (3 vols, 1826); *Woman's Wit* (4 vols, 1827); *The Blandfords* (4 vols, 1829). The collection also includes *Craigh-Melrose Abbey* (4 vols, 1816), but EN2, 1816: 45 questions its attribution to Mosse.

17. *The Munster Cottage Boy* (4 vols, 1820); *Bridal of Dunamore; and Lost and Found* (3 vols, 1823); *The Tradition of the Castle* (4 vols, 1824); *The Castle Chapel* (3 vols, 1825). The collection also has *London Tales* (2 vols, John Booth, 1814), assigned in EN2, 1814: 48, to one who is probably a different Mrs Roche.

18. *The Son of O'Donnel* (3 vols, 1819); *The Highland Castle, and the Lowland Cottage* (4 vols, 1820); *Clavering Tower* (4 vols, 1822); *Fashionables and Unfashionables* (3 vols, 1827); *The First and Last Years of Wedded Life* (4 vols, 1827); *Ulrica of Saxony* (3 vols, 1828); *Eleanor Ogilvie, the Maid of the Tweed* (3 vols, 1829); *The Sailor Boy* (4 vols, 1830); *The Doomed One* (3 vols, 1832); *The Pauper Boy* (3 vols, 1834).

19. *Treachery* (4 vols, 1815); *The Nun of Santa Maria di Tindaro* (3 vols, 1818); *The Siege of Kenilworth* (4 vols, 1824); *Runnemede* (3 vols, 1825); *The Seer of Tiviotdale* (4 vols, 1827).

20. *The Recluse of Albyn Hall* (3 vols, 1819); *The Hermit's Cave* (4 vols, 1821); *The Uncles* (3 vols, 1822); *De Santillana* (4 vols, 1825).

21. In keeping with standard cataloguing practice, the University of Aberdeen's library database lists authors and titles but does not describe bindings. More works by the authors I have selected to mention may be found in the library. Some, while in boards, were not published by the Minerva Press; others, though published by Minerva, are no longer in boards, having been rebound. A more comprehensive numerical count of the novels at Aberdeen for 1810–29 is given by Garside in 'Collections of English Fiction in the Romantic Period', Table 2: 'Review Listings of Fiction and Aberdeen Novels, 1810–29', p. 80. There is no separate and complete listing, or count, of all the nineteenth-century novels specifically in boards in the Aberdeen collection; without a more systematic survey than this article attempts to offer it is not possible to be exact about their number. Most carry the library number S[special] B[ooks] 82379. Almost all have been removed, *en bloc*, from the SB section and shelved together in the nineteenth-century literature stacks, occasionally intermingled with bound volumes and with boarded works of non-fiction. A few still remain in the SB section. One rough way of quantifying the totality of boarded novels in the collection is by estimating the shelving space they would occupy if they were all shelved continuously, side by side. My own calculation is that they would occupy some 155 linear feet, or 47.2 metres.

22. See Jane Millgate, 'Making It New: Scott, Constable, Ballantyne, and the Publication of Ivanhoe', *Studies in English Literature*, 34.4 (Autumn 1994), 795–811. Scott was by no means the first to use the 8vo format for prose fiction: see *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, Volume 1: 1770–1799, edited by James Raven (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 96–97 (hereafter cited as EN1), for instances of the practice during the years 1770–99, and EN2, p. 92, for the years 1800–29.

23. *Morning Chronicle*, Advertisements for 26 Aug and 2 Sep 1819; *Star*, Advertisements for 17 and 26 Aug 1819; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Advertisement for 7 June 1819; given in 'Newspaper Advertisements' for Jane Taylor's *The Authoress*

(1819), in P. D. Garside, J. E. Belanger, and S. A. Ragaz (eds), *British Fiction 1800-1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception*, designer A. A. Mandal (hereafter cited as *DBF*) *<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>* [19 Sep 2005], Record Number: 1819A067.

24. The paper sizes are taken from Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1972), p. 224.

25. *Morning Chronicle*, Advertisements of 21 and 22 Mar 1823; given in 'Newspaper Advertisements' for Lady Caroline Lamb's *Ada Reis* (1823), *DBF*: 1823A049

26. Blakey, *Minerva Press*, p. 81, cites (without a reference) Michael Sadleir on this point.

27. *Morning Chronicle*, Advertisement for 27 Sep 1825; *Star*, Advertisement for 6 Apr 1825; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Advertisement for 26 May 1825; given in 'Newspaper Advertisements' for Mac-Erin O'Tara's *Thomas Fitz-Gerald* (1825), *DBF*: 1825A064.

28. The novel was heavily advertised, in both its first and second editions, in the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Star*, and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, as given in 'Newspaper Advertisements' for Lætitia-Matilda Hawkins' *Heraline* (1821), *DBF*: 1821A042.

29. The advertisements designating the works as having 'large' volumes are those from the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Star*, and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, as given in 'Newspaper Advertisements' under the relevant author, title and year entries in *DBF*. The fifteen novels here drawn upon, in order of appearance, with the total number of pages of narrative text and the average number of pages (rounded up for fractions of a half or more) in each volume, are as follows: Anne Hatton, *Secret Avengers* (4 vols, 1815), 1,174/294; Elizabeth Bennett, *Faith and Fiction* (5 vols, 1816), 1,510/302; Anne Hatton, *Chronicles of an Illustrious House* (5 vols, 1816), 1,555/311; Marianne Breton, *The Wife of Fitzalice, and the Caledonian Siren* (5 vols, 1817), 1,408/281; Anne Hatton, *Gonzalo de Baldivia* (4 vols, 1817), 1,183/296; [Anon], *The Bandit Chief* (4 vols, 1818), 1,157/289; [Anon], *Jessy* (4 vols, 1818), 942/236; Anne Hatton, *Secrets in Every Mansion* (5 vols, 1818), 1,770/354; Miss C. D. Haynes, *The Foundling of Devonshire* (5 vols, 1818), 1,295/259; Anne Hatton, *Cesario Rosalba* (5 vols, 1819), 1,455/291; Mrs Kelly, *The Fatalists* (5 vols, 1821), 1,426/286; Miss M'Leod, *Tales of Ton; the Second Series* (4 vols, 1821), 1,215/304 (the third volume of this title is missing from the Aberdeen collection; I have taken its page count from EN2, 1821: 58); Jane Harvey, *Singularity* (3 vols, 1822), 942/314; Anne Hatton, *Guilty or Not Guilty* (5 vols, 1822), 1,534/307; E. A. Archer, *Saragossa* (4 vols, 1825), 1,112/278.

30. The 1-on pattern provides the tightest and most secure sewing. Thereafter, the tension declines as the pattern number rises. Whatever the number chosen, the consistent use of a single pattern helps to ensure an evenness of tension. For a fuller explanation of sewing patterns, see Jonathan E. Hill, 'From Provisional to Permanent: Books in Boards 1790–1840', *The Library*, 6th ser. 21.3 (Sep 1999), p. 252, n. 19.

31. On the adoption and increase of squaring on books in boards, see ibid., pp. 259–60.

32. EN1, p. 84

33. See Hill, 'From Provisional to Permanent', pp. 268–72.

34. Another example of this rarity is recorded by Stuart Bennett, in *Trade Bookbinding in the British Isles, 1660–1800* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, and London:

British Library, 2004), p. 87, where he tells of having seen a copy of the 1783 edition of Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* which, bound in boards, and with a complete set of labels on its spines, still retained an integral, undivided sheet of labels. He suggests the possibility, which I here borrow, that publishers may have printed spare sheets of labels not incorporated within textblocks.

35. Such unfaded freshness was the source of Sadleir's astonishment on first seeing the pristine books in boards from Mount Bellew: Michael Sadleir, *XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record Based on his Own Collection*, 2 vols (1951; New York: James Cummins, 1992), I, xx–xxi.

36. The answer to the first question is at least one. Bennett, *Trade Bookbinding*, Fig. 4.41, shows a leather-bound copy of William Speechly's *A Treatise on the Culture of the Pineapple and the Management of the Hot-House* (1779), one of whose two labels carries the price 'One Guinea'. But this practice is, as Bennett puts it, 'highly unusual'. It contradicts my rhetorical question in particular but not in general.

37. Among trade purchasers, librarians were the chief beneficiaries of discounts, as Christopher Skelton-Foord shows in 'To Buy or To Borrow? Circulating Libraries and Novel Reading in Britain, 1778–1828', *Library Review*, 47.7 (1998), 351.

38. For a recent and entertaining account of the birth and persistence of raised bands, often spurious, see Nicholas Pickwood, 'The History of the False Raised Band', in *Against the Law: Crime, Sharp Practice and the Control of Print*, edited by Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, and London: British Library, 2004), pp. 103–31. David Pearson's *English Bookbinding Styles, 1450–1800* (London: British Library, and New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2005), pp. 94 and 102–04, also discusses raised bands and smooth spines.

39. Bennett, *Trade Bookbinding*, has illustrations of both of these practices, the labelled and the handwritten. For the positioning of printed labels, see Fig. 3.29; for hand titling and volume numbering, see Figs 3.24, 3.26, and 3.28; also Fig. 3.30 for an example of a work not in boards but in wrappers, with handwritten titles and volume numbering.

40. For representative examples of late-eighteenth-century spines, see Pearson, *English Bookbinding Styles*, Fig. 4.13.

41. Pearson, *English Bookbinding Styles*, Fig. 6.23, shows a possible exception to this generalisation: a work bound for the author and slavery abolitionist, Granville Sharp (1735–1813), in the idiosyncratic mode that he used for many of his books: they were bound in paper coloured and gold-tooled to look like leather. The spine carries four labels, three for the title and one for library numbering. The volume, however, is more accurately classified as book in *faux* leather than a book in boards.

42. The research for this article could not have been accomplished without the help of Iain Beavan, Head of Special Libraries and Archives, University of Aberdeen Historic Collections, who generously gave of his time, and that of his staff, to facilitate my access to the Special Book stacks, and who supplied valuable guidance and information in the course of the work.

Copyright Information

ship. The material contained in this document may be freely distributed, as long as the origin of information used has been properly credited in the appropriate manner (e.g. through bibliographic citation, etc.).

Referring to this Article

'Would that Its Tone Could Reach the Rich!'
Thomas Hood's Periodical Poetry
bridging Romantic and Victorian

Peter Simonsen

❧

Thomas Hood's versatile career spans the years from the early 1820s until he died of consumption and overwork in March 1845. At various stages, he worked as engraver and illustrator, reviewer, editor, publisher, playwright, novelist, and short-story writer, but it is his large body of poetry in particular that still merits sustained critical attention. Yet, the productive period in Hood's poetic career coincided with what both his contemporaries and literary historians since have seen as a transitional 'interregnum', characterised by the absence of strong creative poets and the demise of the art under commercial pressure. When William Michael Rossetti in 1872 famously characterised Hood as 'the finest English poet between the generation of Shelley and the generation of Tennyson', he was therefore not necessarily saying too much.[1] In a lecture on 'The Present State of Literature' (1827), John Stuart Mill expressed a common perception, which Byron's death in 1824 had crystallised:

> No new poets have arisen or seem likely to arise to succeed those
> who have gone off the stage or speedily will […] I am not sure that
> I am able to assign any cause of our being thus left without poets,
> as it seems probable that we soon shall be.[2]

Nevertheless, even if they were unnoticed and unexpected by Mill, certain poets did write in the immediate wake of the second-generation Romantics, and increasing critical interest has in recent years been given to the 1820s and 1830s.[3] Hood's poetry nonetheless remains neglected—even as it calls out for critical attention to complete further the picture that is emerging of the interface between the Romantic and Victorian periods as a fertile place of creative transformation. Hood played an important role in the formation of the characteristic early-Victorian interventionist poetry of public, social protest. This type of poetry may also be found in the writings of such Chartist poets as Thomas Cooper and Ebenezer Elliott, and in the works of Letitia Elizabeth Landon ('The Factory', 1838), Caroline Norton ('The Weaver', 1840), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning ('The Cry of the Children', 1843). What Hood has to offer in comparison is an understanding of how the emergence of this poetry was

conditioned not only by issues such as class and gender, but more generally by the commercialisation of poetry that occurred in the periodicals and which dominated the literary marketplace of the 1820s and 1830s.[4]

Hood's poetry must be approached in its own terms rather than terms informed by High-Romantic ideals of solitary genius, quasi-divine inspiration, disinterested spontaneous creativity, organic form, and transcendent aspirations for 'something evermore about to be'. The terms in which to understand and by which to evaluate Hood and other poets of the period (such as Landon, Felicia Hemans, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, and Edgar Allan Poe), were set by the popular literary periodicals for which most of his work was written. A periodical culture had been present in Britain since at least the late seventeenth century, but it was arguably not until the appearance of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1817 that the periodical format became a decisive factor in literary history. As Kim Wheaty puts it, with *Blackwood's* a notable 'heightening of the literary pretensions of the miscellaneous magazine' set in.[5] Soon, a distinctive, fiercely competitive, and financially lucrative market for literary periodicals emerged in the 1820s and beyond, as a broad range of often short-lived journals mushroomed to attract and spur the productivity of some of the most talented writers of the day.[6]

Throughout his career, Hood was an omnipresent and dominant figure in the periodical marketplace. His experiences as a professional periodical writer shaped both his poetry and his poetics in ways that combined to make him a significant Victorian 'forerunner'—as John Clubbe has shown in what remains the most thorough critical revaluation of Hood's life and work.[7] Clubbe focuses his investigation on Hood's last decade, relating it to the poet's mental breakdown in 1834/35. For Clubbe, this explains what enabled Hood's humanitarian poetry of social protest, which legitimises our continued interest in his work. This essay sets out to revise Clubbe's psychological reading of Hood's career by arguing in a more materialist manner that we must begin with Hood's experiences as a professional man of letters from the early 1820s onwards. This may suggest not only what caused the breakdown itself, but more importantly it will provide a better account of what gave Hood special insight into the inhuman social conditions of exploitation in late-Romantic/early-Victorian England. Finally and most importantly, it can explain what gave Hood the unique style of writing that enabled him to articulate this insight in the influential protest-poem, 'The Song of the Shirt' (1843).

I

Thomas Hood entered the periodical marketplace in 1821 as a contributing sub-editor for one of the most famous literary periodicals in the first half of the nineteenth century, the *London Magazine.* He ended his career as the editor of *Hood's Monthly Magazine* (1844–45), which numbered Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, and Walter Savage Landor among its contributors. He had

been part-owner of the *Athenaeum*, edited the *New Monthly Magazine* (1841–43), produced ten *Comic Annuals* of his own (1830–39), and had edited the annual *The Gem* (1829–32), securing contributions from, among others, Walter Scott, John Keats, John Clare, Charles Lamb, and Alfred Tennyson. In his *Literary Reminiscences*, issued serially in the monthly *Hood's Own* in 1838, Hood described his years at the *London Magazine* (July 1821–June 1823) in glowing terms: 'I dreamt articles, thought articles, wrote articles […]. The more irksome parts of authorship, such as the correction of the press, were to me labours of love'.[8] As James Reid has put it, this was the 'turning point of Hood's life. At twenty-two he found himself plunged into the world of letters and in contact with some of the leading writers of his day. […] In the new environment, his literary gifts flowered'.[9] In the 1820s, Hood published large quantities of poetry and prose not just in the *London*, but anywhere he could—for instance in the weekly *Literary Gazette*, monthlies such as the *Atlas*, *Blackwood's*, and the *New Monthly*, as well as in the popular illustrated annual gift-books that appeared after 1823, such as *The Forget-Me-Not*, *The Literary Souvenir, Friendship's Offering* and, of course, *The Gem*.

Hood subsequently collected most of these periodical poems and published them in book format along with new material: the satirical and humorous *Odes and Addresses to Great People,* co-authored with John Hamilton Reynolds, came out anonymously in 1825 (Coleridge at first believed it was authored by Lamb), and in 1826 and 1827 the two series of *Whims and Oddities in Prose and Verse* were issued with Hood's own characteristic illustrations. These career-launching books were successful and soon saw second and third editions. In these works, Hood fashioned an image of himself as an unpretentious minor poet in a low-key, inconspicuous manner. 'It happens to most persons', Hood said in the Preface to *Whims and Oddities*,

> in occasional lively moments, to have their little chirping fancies and brain crotchets, that skip out of the ordinary meadow-land of the mind. The Author has caught *his*, and clapped them up in paper and print, like grasshoppers in a cage. The judicious reader will look upon the trifling creatures accordingly, and not expect from them the flight of poetical winged horses.[10]

This reflects the self-deprecating image of the poet given in the first poem in *Odes and Addresses*, 'Ode to Mr. Graham, the Aeronaut' (*CW*, pp. 1–4). In the poem, Hood imagines going up in a balloon with Graham, who had recently made a spectacular ascent. Typically, Hood promised his readers a spectacular poetic flight in one of the new products of the burgeoning entertainment industry rather than on 'poetical winged horses'. Midway through the poem, the poet-speaker says, 'we are above the world's opinions,/ Graham! we'll have our own!' (ll. 92–93). The poem then turns self-reflexive, as the speaker begins to question reigning opinions of literary celebrities: 'Now—*do* you think Sir Walter Scott/ Is such a Great Unknown' (ll. 95–96). And, before he comes to

the real subject, his own failure to achieve success on the periodical market-place, he says: 'And, truly, is there such a spell/ In those three letters, L.E.L.,/ To witch a world with song?' (ll. 127–29).

'L.E.L.' were the alluring initials of Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who, with the strong support of William Jerdan and his weekly *Literary Gazette* (founded soon after *Blackwood's* in 1817), had captured the imagination of poetry readers in 1821 to become one of the most popular poets of the 1820s and 1830s. Hood's question is in other words rhetorical and it sets up the pathetic self-presentation of the poem's speaker:

> *My* name is Tims.—I am the man
> That North's unseen, diminish'd clan
> So scurvily abused!
> I am the very P.A.Z.
> The London Lion's small pin's head
> So often hath refused!
>
> Campbell—(you cannot see him here)—
> Hath scorn'd my *lays*:—do his appear
> Such great eggs from the sky?—
> And Longman, and his lengthy Co.
> Long, only, in a little Row,
> Have thrust my poems by!   (ll. 148–56)

This is a fitting, even if caricatured, image of the 'minor' male poet in the years after Byron that could also easily suit Hartley Coleridge, George Darley, or Winthrop Mackworth Praed: belittled by L.E.L., abused by 'Christopher North' (alias John Wilson) in the Scots *Blackwood's*, rejected in the *London Magazine's* famous editorial column 'The Lion's Head' (which Hood wrote when he was editor), scorned by Thomas Campbell, the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and neglected by Longmans.

Hood made a single attempt to escape the self-imposed role and status of comic minor and be counted, in his own word, a 'serious' poet. In the Preface to *Whims and Oddities*, he had alerted readers: 'At a future time, the Press may be troubled with some things of a more serious tone and purpose,—which the Author has resolved upon publishing, in despite of the advice of certain critical friends' (*CW*, p. 736). The 'serious' poems were, incidentally, published by Longmans in 1827 as *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies, Hero and Leander, Lycus the Centaur, and Other Poems*. Primarily inspired by Keats, this book 'represented a carefully organized attempt to win a name as a poet of substance', as Reid notes, calling it 'one of the most interesting and appealing books of poetry of its decade'.[11] In a letter of 18 July 1827 to his friend and fellow man of letters, Alaric Watts, Hood was writing to generate publicity for his volume in the *Literary Gazette*, saying that

> Longmans are to bring out my Serious Poems. You shall have
> one of the first sets of sheets I can get. I expect it will be out in a
> month—& any notice you can get for it will oblige me. Poetry
> I suspect is nowadays of somewhat suspended animation & will
> require artificial inflation alias puffing.[12]

Writing to thank Watts for the solicited puff, Hood recognised that his book
'is of a kind […] that in these times requires all helps' (*LTH*, p. 85). However
much help the book was given, it did not impress a utilitarian-minded market
increasingly uninterested in books of poetry with aesthetic pretensions by
single (male) authors; as Hood's son remarked: 'My father afterwards bought
up the remainder of the edition […] to save it from the butter shops'.[13] Though
encouraged by friends such as Allan Cunningham and Lamb to persist in
writing serious poetry, Hood could not, like Tennyson, afford to not publish
for a whole decade out of spite for the market's treatment of his work; hence,
his characteristically punning and humorous personal motto: 'I have to be a
lively Hood for a livelihood'. If Tennyson forged one kind of Victorian poetry
during his 'silent decade' in the 1830s, then Hood forged another in the same
years—not through resistance to the market but through assimilation of it.[14]

II

Hood had to produce according to the demands of the market and his char-
acteristic identity as minor, unpretentious comic poet was dictated by these
demands. 'It has often been claimed', Reid points out, 'that the hostile and
indifferent reception given to *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* was a disaster
for poetry in that it diverted the considerable talents of Hood into second-rate
entertainment, and verbal slap-stick'.[15] However, against this claim, Reid im-
portantly suggests that it was not until 'Hood had rid himself of his ambition
to become another Keats and came to draw his subjects and his emotions more
directly from life that he wrote poetry that is remembered'.[16] Accepting this
interpretation of the career, I wish to develop it further by showing how the
work best characterised as 'second-rate entertainment, and verbal slap-stick',
and the conditions under which it was produced, constitute the condition of
possibility for the production, and consequently our fuller understanding and
appreciation of the humanitarian poetry of social indignation and protest that
Hood is remembered for. Reid, like Clubbe, suggests that Hood's most valuable
poetry somehow emerged from within virtually by itself, while I argue that it
was to a large extent dictated by the material circumstances of his career and
profession.

To earn a living in the periodical market meant a pragmatic readiness to
write what a given editor thought his or her audience wanted and the ability
to deliver the right amount of sheets in time to meet the deadline, irrespective
of whether inspiration had set in or there was time for final revisions. Hood
openly articulated these prosaic and mundane concerns from a High-Romantic

point of view. Midway into an early piece for the *London Magazine* in October 1821, a rather long review of a cookery book (Dr Kitchener's *The Cook's Oracle*), Hood revealed his concern with quantity as well as a characteristic consciousness of the physical palpability of his work, when he reflected on the similarity between cooking and printing in terms of the transformation of handwritten manuscript into printed text:

> these our articles in the London Magazine boil up like spinage [*sic*]. We fancy, when written, that we have a heap of leaves fit to feed thirty columns; and they absolutely and alarmingly shrink up to a page or two when dressed by the compositor.[17]

For the periodical writer, quantity and palatability were crucial aspects to take into account in literary productivity, and as Mark Parker points out, the commodity mode of production was typically 'referred to openly within the pages of the magazine'.[18]

As Parker also observes, this meant that 'there [was] little space for the high-flown rhetoric of aesthetic idealism in the working world of magazines and reviews'.[19] This was humorously and symptomatically articulated by the writer ('H') of an article of 1823, entitled 'Printed by Mistake' and published in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Giving voice to a widespread anxiety of overproduction, the writer commented:

> a crisis is approaching;—there must be some great convulsion in the world of Ephemerides;—this prodigious multiplication of Magazines and Periodicals can never endure, for how can their myriad and insatiable maws be replenished without generating a literary famine in the land?[20]

One answer was that the articles turn self-reflexive and deal with their own coming-into-being: 'Printed by Mistake' is about a writer who has missed a deadline and now writes about this in order to supply copy after all. The problem for this writer was the commercialisation of literature brought about by the periodicals, a commercialisation perceived as having reached a new alarming level compared to eighteenth-century Grub Street hack-writing. 'Editors and booksellers', the article continued and symptomatically illustrated,

> have committed a great mistake: paying for our contributions by the sheet instead of their intrinsic weight, they have offered a premium for adulterating the commodity of which they are the purchasers. Dilution and dilation are tempting processes, when there is no standard gauge or measure. (ibid.).

Although the writer acknowledges that '[h]igh prices have certainly brought great talents into the field of periodical competition', this also meant that 'he who can get paid for glass beads and trinkets, will not take much pains to search for diamonds' (ibid.). For the periodical writer, quantity and visibility often mattered more than quality and substance.

In the *Literary Reminiscences*, Hood sketched his poetics when he looked back on his first attempts as periodical writer:

> my lucubrations were generally committed to paper, not in what is commonly called written hand, but an imitation of print […] to make the reading more easy, and thus enable me the more readily to form a judgment of the effect of my little efforts. It is more difficult than may be supposed to decide on the value of a work in MS., and especially when the handwriting presents only a swell mob of bad characters, that must be severally examined and reexamined to arrive at the merits and demerits of the case. Print settles it, as Coleridge used to say; and to be candid, I have more than once reversed, or greatly modified a previous verdict, on see-ing a rough proof from the press. But, as editors too well know, it is next to impossible to retain the tune of a stanza, or the drift of an argument, whilst the mind has to scramble through a patch of scribble scrabble, as stiff as a gorse cover. The beauties of the piece will as naturally appear to disadvantage through such a medium, as the features of a pretty woman through a bad pane of glass; and without doubt, many a tolerable article has been consigned hand over head to the Balaam Box for want of fair copy. Wherefore, O ye poets and prosers, who aspire to write in Miscellanies, and above all, O ye palpitating Untried, who meditate the offer of your maiden essays to established periodicals, take care, pray ye take care, to cultivate a good, plain, bold, round text. Set up Tomkins [author of *The Beauties of Writing* and other works on calligraphy] as well as Pope or Dryden for a model, and have an eye to your pothooks. Some persons hold that the best writers are those who write the best hands, and I have known the conductor of a magazine to be converted by a crabbed MS. to the same opinion. Of all things, therefore, be legible; and to that end, practise in penmanship […]. Be sure to buy the best paper, the best ink, the best pens, and then sit down and do the best you can […]. So shall ye haply escape the rash rejection of a jaded editor; so, having got in your hand, it is possible that your head may follow; and so, last not least, ye may fortunately avert those awful mistakes of the press which sometimes ruin a poet's sublimest effusion, by pantomimically transforming his roses into noses, his angels into angles, and all his happiness into pappiness.[21]

In this passage Hood playfully undermines central aspects of High-Romantic conceptions of disinterested, inspired, and spontaneous composition. Hood's poetic is predicated on 'legibility' rather than sincere self-expression and on achieving an immediate, powerful 'effect' thereby avoiding the capricious reader–editor's 'rash rejection'. This reflects the basic criterion for success in periodical poetry, which was to please immediately. Such work could not rely

on a slow mode of dedicated rereading that pondered sublime moments of obscurity.

Hood articulates an awareness of and readiness to utilise the transformative impact of the medium of publication. He presents print as virtually the condition for achieving the beautiful when he says that 'The beauties of the piece will […] appear to disadvantage through [the] medium' of bad handwriting whereas print, or handwriting that imitates print, gives a better sense of a poem's real value. For Hood, 'Print settles' the value of a given work. The traditional High-Romantic view of this issue, against which Hood reacted, has it the other way round. As Mario Praz says in *The Romantic Agony*: 'The Romantic exalts the artist who does not give a material form to his dreams—the poet ecstatic in front of a forever blank page […]. It is romantic to consider concrete expression as a decadence, a contamination'.[22] While Praz primarily had the German Romantics in mind, this position can be found among the English poets as well. In his note to 'The Thorn' in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth, for instance, said that 'Words, a Poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling, and not measured by the space which they occupy upon paper'.[23] Later in his career, Wordsworth would sneer at the popularity of writers like Scott and Byron, as well as at the literary annuals and other more ephemeral journals and magazines, where he seems to have found evidence of this idea that undue attention to exterior matters was detrimental to poetry.[24] Shelley more famously but along similar lines proposed, in the *Defence of Poetry* (1821), that 'when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet'.[25] Like Wordsworth, Shelley did of course write and frequently wished to see his poems published in print; yet, the manner in which he wrote and his motives for publication were different from Hood's.

In Chapter 8 of his *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* (1858), Edward J. Trelawny tells us that he found Shelley 'in the pine forest […] writing verses'.[26] Trelawny picks up a fragment, but 'It was a frightful scrawl':

> words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together 'in most admired disorder'; it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered:
>
> 'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch, as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing. If you ask me why I publish what few or none will care to read, it is that the spirits I have raised haunt me until they are sent to the devil of a printer'.[27]

Shelley's motive for printing as reported by Trelawny was personal rather than commercial (he knows no one will buy what he makes): he sends his manuscripts off to the printer not to enhance their value but to keep the 'spirits' from haunting him and potentially to have an impact on future generations (as envisioned for instance in 'Ode to the West Wind'). In comparison with this idealistic view, which does not count the present as audience and money as an incentive for writing and publishing, Hood integrated the conditions of the periodical marketplace in his formulation of a materialist counter-poetic. Hood thus theorised poetic production in a more unpretentious and unmetaphysical manner, and foregrounded the value of mechanical acts of composition (both in the sense of writing as such and of the printed work of the compositor). For Hood, the physical realisation of poetry on the page added to its value. Clearly, he could not afford the luxury of inexpressibility or of producing 'what few or none will care to read'.

The idea that the technology of print participated actively in the creative process and contributed positively to the value of the end-product was common within periodical culture during the 1820s. When he ascribes to Coleridge the idea that 'Print settles' the value or merit of a poem, Hood may be teasingly alluding to Coleridge's anxiety about the medium—for instance, expressed by the fact that Coleridge often circulated his best works in manuscript (such as 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel') and only reluctantly submitted them to print (something Hood could by no means afford); or by what he says in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817) about poetry's degeneration to consist merely of clichés produced mechanically in a press room. For Coleridge, this

> spares the reader the trouble of thinking; prevents vacancy, while it indulges indolence; and secures the memory from all danger of an intellectual plethora. Hence of all trades, literature at present demands the least talent or information; and, of all modes of literature, the manufacturing of poems.[28]

Hood surely knew that the saying and the sentiment belonged to his friend, Charles Lamb, who had used the phrase in the essay, 'Oxford in the Vacation', first published in the October 1820 issue of the *London Magazine*. 'There is something to me repugnant, at any time, in written hand', wrote Lamb,

> The text never seems determinate. Print settles it. I had thought of the Lycidas as of a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in evil hour, I was shown the original written copy of it […]. How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected![29]

Along the same lines, in the essay, 'The Proof-Sheet', published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1821, the writer ('D.C.') reflected that

> The printer it is who *consummates* the author's conceptions. The mechanic puts the finishing stroke to the finest dreams of imagination […]. Without the compositor and the printer's devil, what a

> poor dreaming, fruitless, futile thing, is a wit. He is a soul without a body […]. An author in MS. is a half-fledged sloven, unseemly to look upon; but, when turned out from the various hands, who conspire to dress and powder him for the public, what an Adonis he walks forth! what a typographical dandy![30]

Print and fine writing are necessary to achieve the goals of periodical poetry; something the author of 'The Proof-Sheet' recognises in speaking of 'the beautifying hands of the compositor, devil, printer, sewer, and boarder'.[31] As Hood recognised, print and fine writing are media and technological processes by virtue of which, and not in spite of which, a creative author's conception can be realised as something beautiful, as well as an attractive marketable commodity.

This view earned periodical writers the scorn of proponents of High-Romantic aesthetic ideology from Wordsworth and Coleridge to the most important Victorian disseminator of their 'invention' of the poetry of sincere self-expression, John Stuart Mill. Mill provided one of the most damning characterisations of periodical literature in his lecture, 'The Present State of Literature' (already referred to), in which he emphasised 'one feature which particularly marks the literature of the present day, and which I think has contributed more than any other to its degradation: I mean the prevalence of periodical publications'.[32] For Mill, periodical works were less valuable than other works because of their topicality, and because they had made publication too easy. By virtue of their anonymity and pseudonymity, they encouraged irresponsibility among authors, who found that

> that accuracy of research, that depth of thought and that highly finished style, which are so essential to a work destined for posterity, would not only not contribute to [their] success, but would obstruct it, by taking up [their] time, and preventing [them] from composing rapidly. (p. 416)

Yet, the most damning aspect of the literary periodical was that it 'made literature a trade' (p. 417). The periodical press brought into being a new breed of authors,

> who chose authorship as an advantageous investment of their labour and capital in a commercial point of view, contracted for a stipulated quantity of eloquence and wit, to be delivered on a certain day, were inspired punctually by 12 o'clock in order to be in time for the printer's boy at one, sold a burst of passion at so much per line, and gave way to a movement of virtuous indignation as per order received.

Mill lumped together all literature written for and published in periodicals, and denounced it as trash because compromised by the pervasive commercialism of the medium. According to Mill, a true poet must have no ulterior motives for production; poetry should come as naturally as leaves to a tree and not

because there was a blank page that needed to be filled before a given deadline. If the latter were a concern for a poet, then 'the occupation of a street walking prostitute is surely far more respectable'.

Mill's description of typical periodical poetry (even if not his final conclusion) was apparently endorsed by one of the most prominent periodical publishers, William Blackwood. This is suggested in correspondence from the early 1830s between the renowned astronomer, William Rowan Hamilton, and his friend Wordsworth. Hamilton had asked Wordsworth to endorse the publication of Hamilton's sister, Eliza Mary Hamilton's poetry in *Blackwood's*. In the course of this correspondence, Hamilton reports Blackwood as having said:

> 'the existence of high merit in a poem does by no means imply adaptation to produce effect in a popular miscellany. In truth in most cases is inconsistent with it, for the readers of such works demand something racy and highly peppered, a sort of poetical *devil* […]. In short, *Magazine* poetry must deal in Exaggeration, or in other words must be written in vicious taste to suit the diseased craving of the public. They want something of strong and stirring incident, the display of furious passion'.[33]

Such elitist and essentially High-Romantic characterisations of periodical literature as aesthetically worthless because theatrical, topical, superficial, exaggerated, 'racy and highly peppered', composed too rapidly, and inherently compromised by its commodity character and interest in entertaining the reader–consumer hardly account for all periodical poetry of the 1820s and 1830s. But they do take us a long way toward capturing what Hood aimed for in his periodical poetry and what his conditions of writing were in terms of time pressure and audience expectations.

III

Hood's aim and ambition in his typical periodical poetry may be illuminated by considering his attraction to the fireworks in the amusement park at Vauxhall, and his sense that the master of fireworks, Madame Hengler, was in charge of something that poets could only envy. In 'Ode to Madame Hengler. Firework-Maker to Vauxhall', first published in the inaugural *Comic Annual* in 1830, Hood begins:

> OH, Mrs. Hengler!—Madame,—I beg pardon;
> Starry Enchantress of the Surrey Garden!
> Accept an Ode not meant as any scoff—
> The Bard were bold indeed at thee to quiz,
> Whose squibs are far more popular than his;
> Whose works are much more certain to go off.   (*CW*, p. 257, ll. 1–6)

To achieve a comparable pyrotechnical style of writing was the aim of the periodical poet, whose main ambition was to catch but not indefinitely to monopolise

the reader's attention, and whose pieces were ephemeral 'squibs' meant to be popular here and now, not inscrutable monuments for posterity.

In 'Sonnet to Vauxhall', published in the same *Comic Annual*, Hood tried to verbally emulate Hengler's fireworks:

> Hengler! Madame! round whom all bright sparks lurk,
> Calls audibly on Mr. and Mrs. Pringle
> To study the Sublime, &c.—(vide Burke)
> All Noses are upturn'd!—Whish—ish!—On high
> The rocket rushes—trails—just steals in sight—
> Then droops and melts in bubbles of blue light—
> And Darkness reigns—   (*CW*, p. 274, ll. 6–12)

The language of these lines struggles to come off the page to re-enact the movement and effect of the rocket ('!—Whish—ish!—') in a casual, mock-sublime manner where the 'darkness visible' of the terrifying eighteenth-century sublime has been commercialised and packaged like a periodical publication, for punctually repeatable and predictably alluring theatrical performances. The poem shows how Hood provides a humorous instance of a more general trend among poets during the 1820s and 1830s 'to bring romantic sublimity and visionariness under control',[34] and both thematically and formally it instances a poetry that foregrounds surface effects and abides a principle of instant gratification—it provides cheap thrills.

Other characteristic examples of Hood's ephemeral periodical poetry can be found in two poems published in the *Comic Annual* in 1832 and 1833 respectively: 'A Nocturnal Sketch' (*CW*, pp. 221–22), which was a part of 'A Plan for Writing Blank Verse in Rhyme' (*CW*, pp. 745–46), and 'The Double Knock' (*CW*, pp. 259–60), which was a part of a text titled 'Rhyme and Reason' (*CW*, p. 747). The poems are presented as experimental innovations in rhyme and foreground Hood's production of a theatrical poetry through a focus of attention on the mechanically crafted surface of poetry. 'A Nocturnal Sketch' is prefaced by a letter from the fictive author to the editor where he claims to have discovered a revolutionary principle of imparting rhyme to blank verse by making one line rhyme with itself. Thus, in the poem the final three words in a single line rhyme: for instance, 'dark Park hark' (l. 1), or 'chime, prime time' (l. 3), leading to the extreme final line, 'goes shows Rose knows those bows' woes' (l. 34). The effect is humorous—almost ludicrous—and the radical foregrounding of sound effects renders the poem virtually unreadable in terms of semantic meaning (it verges on nonsense verse), meaning simply that it has realised its goal as periodical poetry: to call attention to itself; to make some noise and 'go off' like a 'poetical *devil*'.

In 'The Double Knock', another imaginary correspondent (John Dryden Grubb) addresses Hood and presents another 'novelty' (*CW*, p. 747) in rhyme technique. The problem he has solved concerns the situation where a poet ends a line on a word he can not find a rhyme word to match:

> I have an ingenious medical friend, who might have been an eminent poet by this time, but the first line he wrote ended in ipecacuanha, and with all his physical and mental power, he has never yet been able to find a rhyme for it.

As he puts it, his new

> system is […] to try at first what words will chime, before you go farther and fare worse. To say nothing of other advantages, it will at least have one good effect,—and that is, to correct the erroneous notion of would-be poets and poetesses of the present day, that the great *end* of poetry is rhyme. I beg leave to present a specimen of worse [*sic*], which proves quite the reverse, and am, Sir, Your most obedient servant.

The new 'system' is exemplified in 'The Double Knock' by making rhyming couplets from the initial words of each line (a reversed verse, as it were), such as:

> Rat-tat it went on the lion's chin,
> 'That hat, I know it!' cried the youthful girl;
> 'Summer's it is, I know him by his knock,
> Comers like him are welcome as the day!   (*CW*, p. 259, ll. 1–4)

This reversed verse is matched by the reversal of the poem's content at the end, when the double knock that sets off the daydreams of the 'youthful girl' of which the poem consists turns out not to be made by her lover (Summer), but by the tax-collector, who provides comic relief even as he represents hard reality. This rhyme 'system' implements Hood's materialist poetic, insofar as it gives priority to the mechanical craft of verse-making, makes composition assume primacy over inspiration, and foregrounds the palpable product of the writing hand, while the thinking head and the level of ideational sense are put into the background. To the extent that this experiment is rather silly and superficial in its blatant verbal pyrotechnics, it may be said to give eloquent articulation to what the poem is about—that is, a teenager's fantasy of being taken to the theatre by her lover who she hopes is at the door: 'Sure he has brought me tickets for the play—/ Drury—or Covent Garden—darling man!—' (ll. 11–12). The superficial mode of representation matches the represented world of fancy and reverie, which again seems to match the expectations of the readership of Hood's *Comic Annual*.

Hood is not necessarily raising his finger to denounce such dreamily escapist behaviour as idle and shallow, and not only because his livelihood depended on it. He often seemed to indulge in it, in fact, and to have theorised the value and function of literature to be a means of temporary escape from the reality of tax-collectors and, paradoxically, the pressure of deadlines. In a letter from early January 1844, Hood wrote to encourage a friend and contributor to his new struggling periodical, *Hood's Monthly Magazine*, to persist in writing literature despite the decease of his wife, saying:

> I have had my share of the troubles of this world, as well as of the
> calamities of authors, and have found it to be a very great blessing
> to be able to carry my thoughts into the ideal, from the too strong
> real. (*LTH*, p. 583)

Hood's 'share of the troubles of this world, as well as of the calamities of
authors' refers among other things to the preceding fifteen-odd years of hard
work of writing always faced with having to publish or perish, and always
feeling cheated and exploited by his publishers. Through all these years, his
health had been failing and his nerves had been steadily deteriorating after
the profound psychological crisis and breakdown in 1834/35, which coincided
with a personal bankruptcy that forced him to live in exile on the Continent
for five years. With a few strokes of luck that he was incapable of taking full
advantage of, owing to a lethal mix of bad business talent and what seems a
well-developed talent for living above his means, Hood's working conditions
became increasingly desperate.

   Although there is a strong desire for some form of escape in Hood's work,
which may readily be explained by reference to his biography, as well as to his
need to appease and give instant pleasure to his audience, his poems often cri-
tique and expose escapist dreams as illusory, thus acknowledging and articulat-
ing 'the too strong real'. They do so by simply thematising the impossibility of
escape, as in the sentimental 'A Retrospective Review' (1827), which conjures a
present moment informed by the loss of the plenitude of childhood ('Oh, when
I was a tiny boy/ My days and nights were full of joy' [*CW*, p. 176, ll. 1–2]), a
loss inadequately compensated for by the alienating work of writing:

> My authorship's an endless task
> […]
> My heart is pain'd with scorn and slight,
> I have too many foes to fight,
> And friends grown strangely cool. (ll. 38–42).

Or they do so by foregrounding grotesque scenes of dismemberment and ac-
cident, as in the comic-grotesque masterpiece, *Miss Killmansegg her Precious
Leg* (1840–41), or by ending on an unsettling, ironic note of sudden reversal,
as in 'The Double Knock' or the curious 'Stanzas to Tom Woodgate of Hast-
ings' (1828).

   This latter poem explicitly points to the conditions of the professional
periodical poet navigating the literary marketplace as the context that both
generated Hood's desire for escape and denied its realisation. The poem centres
on a flight of fancy, which is halted abruptly by the intrusion of the printer's
devil demanding that the writer hand in the sheet to meet the deadline. The
poet–speaker dreams of going sailing with an old friend yet recognises that
it will only occur through the medium of writing: 'as we have erst braved the
weather,/ Still may we float awhile together,/ As comrades on this ink!' (*CW*,
p. 430, ll. 58–60). The poet's desire 'for that brisk spray' and 'To feel the wave

from stem to stern' (ll. 85–86) increases through the poem until the illusion is almost perfect and he is on the brink of achieving a visionary state of full presence: 'Methinks I see the shining beach;/ The merry waves, each after each,/ Rebounding o'er the flints' (*CW*, p. 431, ll. 103–05):

> And there they float—the sailing craft!
> The sail is up—the wind abaft—
>   The ballast trim and neat.
> Alas! 'tis all a dream—a lie!
> A printer's imp is standing by,
>   To haul my mizen sheet!
>
> My tiller dwindles to a pen—
> My craft is that of bookish men—
>   My sale—let Longman tell!
> Adieu the wave! the wind! the spray!
> Men—maidens—chintzes—fade away!
>   Tom Woodgate, fare thee well!   (ll. 109–20)

Hood is here torn out of his escapist reverie by the 'calamities' of authorship. The 'sail' that was 'up' and ready to carry him away is punningly transformed into his 'sale', which he has no control over, but from which he may wish to be carried away as we may assume it is 'down' (Longmans were the publishers of *The Midsummer Fairies*, which appeared around the time of composition—the only time Hood published with the firm).

The poem was first published in Alaric Watts' *Literary Souvenir* for 1828. In letters to Watts, we gain a keen sense of the pressure Hood wrote under. On 18 July 1827, Hood stated to Watts that he 'will write something (good I hope) certainly, for your next volume. Only give me as much time as you can, for both our sakes' (*LTH*, p. 80). A little later, he wrote both to apologise for not having delivered the work owing to having to meet other deadlines, and to express hope that he had not 'put you to any inconvenience by waiting for me—for I certainly will do my best as soon as I can hit on a subject' (*LTH*, p. 85). The inspiration for the poem did not arise from nothing but was actively sought, and there is a real sense in which the lack of inspiration and the guilty fear of not being able to meet the deadline (Watts' Preface to the *Literary Souvenir* was signed 15 October and the volume was published 1 November) in the end became the subject of the poem. Around the final deadline on 18 September 1827, Hood, having submitted a draft, wrote again: 'I am waiting for your answer to my last, that I may know how to proceed,—for time now is precious' (*LTH*, p. 86).

The force with which the constant pressure to meet deadlines registers in Hood's later work may be measured if we read it as the subtext of the Gothic short story, 'A Tale of Terror' (1841), which was apparently conceived and composed in order to fill out a blank space in the *New Monthly Magazine*, which

Hood edited at the time. According to Hood's son, 'This paper was really written under circumstances often spoken of as happening to authors. The printer's devil was really waiting for copy down-stairs while it was done,—an unexpected gap appearing in the Magazine'.[35] The story returns to the motif of the balloon ascent with which Hood had opened the *Odes and Addresses* in 1825, but now the narrator is in the basket with what turns out to be a lunatic wanting to fly to the moon. The story ends in mid-air, as it were, with the lunatic saying he wants to go to the moon, and the narrator responding, 'I heard no more, for suddenly approaching me, and throwing his arms around my body——'.[36] As Hood's son remarked, 'My father received frequent letters requesting him to finish the sketch, and put his readers out of suspense'.[37] Indeed, the story is irresolvable and profoundly unsettling, insofar as it is told by a first-person narrator who must have survived events that the story strongly suggests have killed him. This story lends itself to being read as a parable of the author working under stressful conditions—desirous of escape yet strangulated by the 'too strong real' in the form of the very medium that promised escape.

IV

In his last years, from at least late 1843, Hood was beginning to envision his poetry as a means of intervention in, rather than temporary escape from, the world of the 'too strong real'. The extent to which this, more than anything, was the result of his accumulating experiences as a pressured man of letters has been neglected by the critical tradition, yet I wish to argue that Hood's material conditions of production were generative of both the form and the content of one of his most serious and powerful poems, 'The Song of the Shirt'. To argue thus is to argue that the rampant commercialisation of literature in the periodicals did not necessarily signal the death of serious poetry but in certain instances in fact released a valuable creative potential and critical insight.

On 14 August 1843, a few months prior to the composition of 'The Song of the Shirt', Hood wrote to a German friend, Philip de Franck, and described his working conditions as editor of *The New Monthly Magazine*: 'I have to write, till I am sick of the sight of pen, ink and paper […]. For one half month I have hardly time to eat, drink, or sleep' (*LTH*, p. 549). Hood went on to contrast his correspondent's imagined pace of life with his own:

> [Y]ou travel through life in slow coaches, with the wheels locked, and have no notion of the railway pace at which we wear ourselves here in England. […] you cannot imagine the hurry I live in like most of my contemporaries, but aggravated in my case by frequent illness, which makes me get into arrears of business, and then, as the sailors say, I have to work double tides to fetch my lee-way […]. Sometimes at the end of the month, I sit up three nights successively.   (*LTH*, pp. 549–50)

We have come a long way from the romancing of composition and proof-reading as labours of love at the *London Magazine* in the early 1820s. This description of Hood's deadly working conditions mirrors his description of the working conditions of the seamstress in 'The Song of the Shirt' (*CW*, pp. 625–26). Published in the recently founded (1841) and still struggling periodical *Punch*, the poem allegedly trebled its circulation. As William Michael Rossetti said, 'The "Song of the Shirt", which it would be futile to praise, or even to characterise, came out […] in the Christmas number of *Punch* for 1843; it ran like wildfire, and rang like tocsin, through the land'.[38] The poem saved both the periodical and Hood's career, becoming one of the best-known poems in the nineteenth century.

Inspired by horrifying newspaper reports of seamstresses' working conditions, as well as an emerging literature of protest, Hood's poem was reformist rather than revolutionary, inasmuch as it did not envision radical changes in the social fabric but aimed to generate sympathy for the poor. How much impact it had on the reform movement is hard to tell. A scathing footnote to Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) suggests little: 'a fine poem […] which wrung many compassionate but ineffectual tears from the daughters of the bourgeoisie', is how Engels characterised the poem in reference to the last sentences of his description of the proletariat:

> These poverty-stricken needlewomen usually live in attics, where as many herd together as space will permit. In winter they crowd together for warmth, as they have no other source for heat. There they sit bent over their work and sew from four or five in the morning until midnight. Their health is ruined in a few years and they sink into an early grave, without having been able to earn the barest necessities of life. In the streets below the gleaming carriages of the wealthy middle class rattle past, and close at hand some wretched dandy is gambling away at faro in a single evening as much money as a needlewoman could hope to earn in a year.[39]

The seamstress had been a feature of a few literary descriptions by John Galt and Dickens in the 1830s, but not until 1842 did writers begin to pay attention to her as a subject of real suffering. This happened in Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's novel, *The Perils of the Nation* (1842), which 'sounded the first warnings about the abuses of the dress trade', as Lynn Alexander puts it.[40] In 1843, the governmental *Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission* more fully documented the appalling working conditions of seamstresses. This provoked widespread discussion and public outrage as extracts were circulated in the periodical press and inspired Hood to take up the pen to produce what John Dodds, at variance with Engels, calls 'perhaps of all poems in the decade the one to make the deepest impact on the largest number of people'.[41] The poem's impact was stimulated by the many paintings and engravings it inspired, such as Richard Redgrave's *The Sempstress* (1844).[42] It was also to some extent 'scripted'

by Hood himself in a follow-up poems, such as 'The Lady's Dream', which was published in February 1844 in *Hood's Own*, and presents in a vivid, even lurid, manner an upper-class lady's Gothic nightmare vision of the starving poor, among them seamstresses (*CW*, pp. 641–42).

While 'The Song of the Shirt' was by no means Hood's first or last poem of social awareness and protest, it arguably represents the one instance he found a perfectly suitable style of writing and an adequately dramatic form to match the topic making him, as Isobel Armstrong has noted, a 'ventriloquist' for the working class.[43] Yet, a surprising number of the poem's critics have been dismissive of its style. For George Saintsbury, Hood 'occasionally loses sight of strict meaning in producing metrical and other effects',[44] while for John Heath-Stubbs the poem does not have sufficient 'strength of style nor adequate social insight to justify the very high praise that has sometimes been given [it]'.[45] Finally, James Reeves finds that although the poem shows 'a new power in Hood's work' insofar as 'a genuine social concern emerges', it is blemished by 'the unintentional humour [that arises] from the excessive use of repetition'.[46] Repetition *is* the primary stylistic marker of the poem. Prominent examples are the almost identical first and last stanzas which present the working seamstress in a melodramatic *tableau* as she sings 'The Song of the Shirt' 'with a voice of dolorous pitch' (ll. 7, 95), the repetitive and cumulative phrases 'Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!' (ll. 5, 29, 93), 'In poverty, hunger and dirt' (ll. 6, 30, 94), 'Work! Work! Work!' (ll. 9, 11, 17, 19, 41, 49, 51, 57, 59, 82), the identical lines, 'It seems so like my own—/ It seems so like my own' (ll. 36–37), and particularly the powerful chiasmus, 'Seam, and gusset, and band,/ Band, and gusset, and seam' (ll. 21–22, 53–54, 81–82) repeated a number of times to function as a formulaic refrain.

We should not be surprised to find refrain-like and almost incantatory patterns of repetition in poetry that purports to be imitative of a work song, one of whose generic traits is indeed a foregrounding of repetition (hence also its proliferation of alliteration and internal rhyme). Nevertheless, a supplementary explanation of the meaning of these patterns of repetition (which are equally present in Hood's framing stanzas and in the framed work-song) may be sketched: one that sees them as examples of Hood's radical artifice—his extreme foregrounding of the poetic sign—and therefore as similar in nature to the examples noted above in the typical periodical poems. However, rather than being unintentionally humorous and thus sounding insincere they powerfully enact the mechanical repetition which informs both the nature of the seamstress' labour and that of the professional poet working to meet deadlines. They are not excessive superficial surface effects that disrupt the poem's meaning, but the very opposite.

The chiasmus, 'Seam, and gusset, and band,/ Band, and gusset, and seam', for instance, almost physically embodies and figures in an iconic manner the endlessly circular and repetitive needlework it is about; a circularity emphasised by its second appearance in reversed form:

> Work—work—work!
>   From weary chime to chime,
>   Work—work—work—
>   As prisoners work for crime!
>   Band, and gusset, and seam,
>   Seam, and gusset, and band,
>   Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
>   As well as the weary hand.   (ll. 49–56)

The identical repetitions of 'work' and 'stitch' in addition seem to empty the words of their semantic meaning in a manner suggestive of the empty and meaningless work and life of the seamstress. In the middle of stanza five, the identical lines thematically dramatise and formally enact the recognition of the similarity between the 'terrible shape' of death and the physical appearance of the seamstress:

> But why do I talk of Death?
>   That Phantom of grisly bone,
> I hardly fear his terrible shape,
>   It seems so like my own—
>   It seems so like my own,
>   Because of the fasts I keep,
> Oh! God! that bread should be so dear,
>   And flesh and blood so cheap!   (ll. 33–40)

This repetition stages the dehumanising effects of this kind of repetitious work—its way of taking a subject out of herself, splitting or dividing her from herself—which was also noted in one of the first literary accounts of seamstresses' conditions, the anonymous *A London Dressmaker's Diary* (1842). Here, the seamstress herself speaks:

> I am weak to such a degree as to be always tired […]. Sewing stitch after stitch is not work for the mind; yet whenever it goes away, it is called back to attend to the everlasting repetition of the same.[47]

The effects of repetition and rhyme that Hood used playfully in the poems discussed earlier, and that he had cultivated in his humorous periodical poetry for theatrical purposes to meet the demands of a thoroughly commercialised system of commodity production, are used again in 'The Song of the Shirt'. But this time, they articulate a very different world, and support a loud and effective poetry of protest against the exploitation of workers in a commercial, capitalist system: a protest-poetry which only works through the rhetoric of excessive repetition and by calling attention to itself in a powerful—indeed theatrical—manner, instanced by the numerous exclamation marks that dominate the poem. Hood's poem was written by someone intensely aware of the hard times of labour, whether as seamstress or as man of letters—someone who did not contemplate physical labour at a distance, but who participated directly in it and from that perspective transformed it into an engaging and

stirring work. Hood's empathetic identification with the seamstress—his use of her as an Other to talk among other things about himself—is brought out by biographical circumstances in the sense that they are *makers* of in many ways similar products (with the shared etymological derivation of *text* and *textile* from *textere*, to weave, being merely one connecting thread), who use rhythmic language as a means to transcend momentarily the 'too strong real' that informs their immediate situation. It is further established by the use of 'chime' in 'Work—work—work!/ From weary chime to chime', to suggest the sound of a bell to tell the time of the day and the working hours, but also to call attention to the extreme chiming of the poem. 'Work—work—work!/ From weary chime to chime' is both the woman's needlework and Hood's working his way through the poem from rhyme-word to rhyme-word. In the last stanza, the poem breaks the formal symmetry of identical and (by-now monotonous and deadly) stultifying repetition by adding an extra, penultimate line: 'Would that its tone could reach the Rich!' This wish and appeal to the reader can be interpreted both as a wish that the seamstress' song 'could' find a specific audience and work to raise consciousness of the inhuman working conditions of seamstresses, and as Hood's own desperate wish for a paying audience to secure his livelihood.

The commercialism that energised the literary periodicals certainly brought about enough ephemeral and seemingly worthless hack-work to partly justify John Stuart Mill's diatribe. Yet, we must study this material to fully understand 'The Song of the Shirt', and we must situate both in the enabling context they shared. Hood's 'Song of the Shirt' and other poems of social awareness and humanitarian protest from late 1843 until his death in March 1845 secured his fame and canonised him as a memorable poet and artist. Still, he could not have written this poem and articulated its world-view without his previous experiences as a hard-working, to some extent exploited, and alienated man of letters operating on the periodical market. Thus, to understand and appreciate the poem fully, we must take these experiences into account. This is not to suggest that the context fully explains the poem and stabilises its meaning, but rather that the context enriches the poem by revealing it as a more resonant, complex, and layered work than typically allowed by the critical tradition. Insofar as 'The Song of the Shirt' played an important role in ushering in a characteristic interventionist poetry of public, social protest that reflects the Victorian world, it must be understood in terms of its author's experiences on the late-Romantic marketplace for periodical poetry, which in the end opened his eyes to the subject matter and provided him with an answerable style of writing. By attending to Hood's periodical poetry, we obtain a better understanding of the cultural products made in the 1820s and 1830s, and of the importance of these years as a zone of transformation that vitally connects and co-implicates the Romantic and Victorian periods in British literary history.

Notes

1. *Poems of Hood*, edited by William Michael Rossetti (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1872), p. xxxi.

2. John Stuart Mill, 'The Present State of Literature' in *Collected Works*, edited by F. L. L. Priestly and John M. Robson, 33 vols (London: Routledge, 1964–91), XXVI, 410.

3. Virgil Nemoianu, *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier* (London: Harvard University Press, 1984); Herbert F. Tucker, 'House Arrest: The Domestication of Poetry in the 1820s', *New Literary History*, 25 (1994), 521–48; Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Patrick H. Vincent, *The Romantic Poetess: European Culture, Politics and Gender 1820–1840* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2004); Peter Simonsen, 'Late Romantic Ekphrasis: Felicia Hemans, Leigh Hunt and the Return of the Visible', *Orbis Litterarum*, 60 (2005), 317–43; Paul Schlicke, 'Hazlitt, Horne, and the Spirit of the Age', *Studies in English Literature*, 45.4 (Autumn 2005), 829–51; Virgil Nemoianu, *The Triumph of Imperfection: The Silver Age of Sociocultural Moderation in Europe, 1815–1848* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

4. The neglect of Hood has to a large extent been due to his gender and class status as well as the idea that he was a writer of 'mere' comic verse. Roger B. Henkle addresses the problem of the value of Hood's comic verse in 'Comedy as Commodity: Thomas Hood's Poetry of Class Desire', *Victorian Poetry*, 26 (1988), 301–18. For reflections on problems concerning the attempt to republish and recanonise a middle class male poet, see Susan Wolfson, 'Representing some Late Romantic-Era, Non-Canonical Male Poets: Thomas Hood, Winthrop Mackworth Praed, Thomas Lovell Beddoes', *Romanticism on the Net*, 19 (August 2000), Online: Internet [2 Aug 2006], <*http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2000/v/n19/005932ar.html*>.

5. Kim Wheatley, 'Introduction', *Romantic Periodicals and Print Culture* (London: Frank Cass), p. 1.

6. See Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 12, and John Boening, 'The Unending Conversation: The Role of Periodicals in England and on the Continent during the Romantic Age', in *Nonfictional Romantic Prose: Expanding Borders*, edited by Steven P. Sondrup, Virgil Nemoianu, and Gerald Gillespie (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 285–301.

7. John Clubbe, *Victorian Forerunner: The Later Career of Thomas Hood* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968).

8. *Thomas Hood & Charles Lamb: The Story of a Friendship being the Literary Reminiscences of Thomas Hood*, edited by Walter Jerrold (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1930), p. 100.

9. J. C. Reid, *Thomas Hood* (London: Routledge, 1963), p. 35.

10. Thomas Hood, *The Complete Poetical Works*, edited by Walter Jerrold (London: OUP, 1906), p. 736 (hereafter cited as *CW*). This is the only readily available complete edition of Hood's poetry. See also the annotated selections in *Selected Poems of Thomas Hood*, edited by John Clubbe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) and *Selected Poems of Thomas Hood, Winthrop Mackworth*

Praed and Thomas Lovell Beddoes, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Peter Manning (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

11. Reid, *Thomas Hood*, pp. 78 and 92.

12. *The Letters of Thomas Hood*, edited by Peter F. Morgan (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 80 (hereafter cited as *LTH*).

13. Quoted in Reid, *Thomas Hood*, p. 93.

14. Tennyson was nonetheless reliant on the commercial market for periodicals, as Kathryn Ledbetter has shown in a series of articles, most recently in 'Protesting Success: Tennyson's "Indecent Exposure" in the Periodicals', *Victorian Poetry*, 43.1 (Spring 2005), 53–73. As Ledbetter argues, 'Tennyson's entire career is inseparable from a dependence on the very format he supposedly hated' (p. 54).

15. Reid, *Thomas Hood*, p. 94.

16. Ibid., p. 95.

17. Thomas Hood, *The Works*, edited by Thomas Hood, Jr and Frances Feeling Broderip, 11 vols (1882–84). Reprinted in *Anglistica and Americana: A Series of Reprints Selected by Bernhard Fabian, Edgar Mertner, Karl Schneider and Marvin Soevack* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), i, 19.

18. Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 13.

19. Ibid., p. 13.

20. [Anon.], 'Printed by Mistake', *New Monthly Magazine*, 5 (1823), 529–32 (p. 530).

21. Jerrold (ed.), *Hood & Lamb*, pp. 86–87.

22. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford: OUP, 1970), pp. 14–15.

23. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, edited by R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 288.

24. As Peter Manning has demonstrated on several occasions, however, Wordsworth did not maintain his haughty disdain for Scott or the annuals, but was in fact to some extent inspired by them and sought to emulate them in his own manner—see *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: OUP, 1990), pp. 165–94; 'Wordsworth in *The Keepsake*', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, edited by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 44–73; and 'The Other Scene of Travel: Wordsworth's "Musings Near Aquapendente" ', in *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading*, edited by Helen Regueiro Elam and Frances Ferguson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 191–211. Wordsworth's paradoxical relationship to the popular market dominated by Scott and by periodicals (Scott was an important force behind the establishment of the *Quarterly Review* in 1807) was thus in certain ways similar to Tennyson's (see n. 14, above).

25. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Prose: Or the Trumpet of a Prophecy*, edited by David Lee Clark (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966), p. 294.

26. *Trelawny's Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, edited by Edward Dowden (London: Humphrey Milford, 1931), p. 49.

27. Ibid., pp. 49–50.

28. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by James Engell and Walter Jackson Bates, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), i, 39. Coleridge's later career was invigorated by the literary annuals. He was thus in the same position as Tennyson and Wordsworth, both attracted to and repelled by

the medium. See Morton D. Paley, 'Coleridge and the Annuals', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 57.1 (Winter 1994), pp. 1–24.

29. Charles Lamb, 'Oxford in the Vacation', *London Magazine*, 2 (1820), pp. 365–69 (p. 367).

30. Anon., 'The Proof-Sheet', *New Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1821), 232–36 (pp. 233–34).

31. Ibid., p. 234.

32. Mill, 'Present State of Literature', p. 415.

33. William Wordsworth to Eliza Hamilton, 26 Feb 1833. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Second Edition. The Later Years, Part II: 1829–1834*, edited by Ernest de Selincourt and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 597.

34. Nemoianu, *Taming of Romanticism*, p. 72.

35. Hood, *Works*, v, 382.

36. Ibid., p. 386.

37. Ibid., p. 382.

38. *Poems of Hood*, p. xxvi.

39. Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, translated and edited by W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pp. 239–40.

40. Lynn M. Alexander, *Women, Work, and Representation: Needlewomen in Victorian Art and Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. 6.

41. John W. Dodds, *The Age of Paradox: A Biography of England, 1841–1851* (New York: Victor Gollancz, 1952), p. 210.

42. See Susan P. Casteras, ' "Weary Stitches": Illustrations and Paintings for Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" and Other Poems', in *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Beth Harris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 13–39.

43. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 239.

44. George Saintsbury, *Essays in English Literature, 1780–1860* (1895; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p. 120.

45. John Heath-Stubbs, *The Darkling Plain: A Study of the Later Fortunes of Romanticism in English Poetry from George Darley to W. B. Yeats* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950), p. 51.

46. *Five Late Romantic Poets: George Darley, Hartley Coleridge, Thomas Hood, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Emily Brontë*, edited by James Reeves (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 149.

47. Quoted in Alexander, *Women, Work, and Representation*, p. 42.

Copyright Information

Referring to this Article

❧⁂☙

Reviews

❦

Michael Eberle-Sinatra, *Leigh Hunt and the London Literary Scene: A Reception History of his Major Works* (London: Routledge, 2005), ix + 169pp. ISBN 0-415-31676-6; £70 (hb).

Michael Eberle-Sinatra's highly accessible study is a worthy contribution to the recent rise of interest in the work of Leigh Hunt. Focusing on 1805–1828, the study aims to regain a sense of Hunt as a prolific and influential writer through an exploration of his originality as a poet and critic. Eberle-Sinatra reads these innovations in the context of Hunt's public life and reputation, and it is helpful to have his work placed in this way alongside the reviews it generated. The book is not intended as a literary–critical biography, however, but as a reassessment of Hunt's work that acknowledges the need to give it a status independent of that of Percy Shelley, John Keats, William Hazlitt, and Charles Lamb, with which it is often compared. The temptation to contextualize using these writers, and to see Hunt as less good, is not always resisted, however. We are told that Hunt's style, for instance, 'often anticipates Hazlitt (though it does not quite rise to the level of Hazlitt's brilliant prose)' (p. 17).

The first chapter (1805–1811) establishes Hunt as 'the first major Romantic theater critic' (p. 10) and as a reviewer of poetry. Eberle-Sinatra demonstrates that Hunt's innovations as a theatre critic lie in his emphasis on describing the style of the acting in particular performances, his comment on direction, and his development of the concept of 'mental theater' (p. 10). Long reviews of individual performances were, Eberle-Sinatra suggests, unusual, and the strength and originality of Hunt's contribution to theatre criticism lie in the close attention he pays to detail, and in his insistence on critical independence. Much of this chapter is a useful summary of Hunt's thought on the suitability of certain plays for the stage, on the role of the actor's imagination in informing a performance, and on the need for imagination on the part of the audience. Here, Eberle-Sinatra stresses that Hunt is different from the other Romantics and 'from Coleridge in particular' (p. 24) in that he is interested in specific performances rather than the general portraits of theatrical figures preferred by his contemporaries. The conclusion of the chapter sets out to consider the 'socio-political implications' (p. 27) of Hunt's theatrical criticism, but, disappointingly, offers instead merely a brief summary of Hunt's political involvement.

The next chapter (1811–1816) is devoted to Hunt's criticism of the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, centring on a reading of *The Feast of the Poets*. Eberle-Sinatra observes that Hunt was initially hostile to Coleridge's poetry; Hunt came to appreciate it in 1818 in the preface to *Foliage*, where he suggests that it is superior to that of Wordsworth, whose poetry he had long admired. Eberle-Sinatra notes that like others of his time, Hunt was critical of Southey after Southey accepted the laureateship in 1813. Eberle-Sinatra shows that Hunt, nevertheless, gave Southey's poetry favourable reviews after this date, seeing him, in *The Feast of the Poets*, as the leader of the Lake poets. This chapter seems more focused on the reception history of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey than on the reception of Hunt's work. While Hunt's views on Coleridge and Southey are typical of the time, Eberle-Sinatra stresses that Hunt's early appreciation of Wordsworth 'is the most relevant for a summary of Hunt's innovative approach toward some of his contemporary writers' (p. 49), though, as Eberle-Sinatra points out, from 1818 onward Hunt is ambivalent towards Wordsworth.

Chapter 3 (1816–1821) centres on Hunt's poem *The Story of Rimini* (1816), which Eberle-Sinatra calls the 'founding document of the Cockney School' (p. 69). Avoiding the usual strategy of linking this poem to Keats ('in its style and content' [p. 66]) and Wordsworth (in its use of 'simple colloquial language' [p. 69]), Eberle-Sinatra makes an interesting case for Hunt's following Dante in an attempt to bring 'the language of the poet even closer to the language spoken by the readers' (p. 68). There are detailed accounts in this chapter of the negative impact on Hunt's reputation of the dedication of the poem to Byron—Hunt was unjustly accused of presuming to use a familiar tone. The quality of the poem, Eberle-Sinatra argues, was almost universally recognised, as was Hunt's use of a 'new vocabulary and linguistic inventions' (p. 69), though the poem was criticised extensively for its neologisms. It is a shame that Eberle-Sinatra touches only very briefly here on Hunt's attitude to women. He suggests in passing that the poem, which elaborates on Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca from Dante's *Inferno*, characterizes Francesca's 'status as a commodity' (p. 63). Gender issues are presumably omitted from deeper consideration in the study as a whole because Hunt was not an innovator in this area. If there is a weakness in this book, it is that the focus on originality does not generate the complete picture of Hunt which one might expect from a survey book of this kind.

Chapter 4 (1821–1828) deals with Hunt's editorship of the *Liberal*, a periodical proposed by Byron, who contributed poetry to it. Eberle-Sinatra seems a little uncertain of his conclusions on the reception of this journal, calling it an 'ultimately unsuccessful' collaboration (p. 95) that 'did not make him [Hunt] a more popular writer or editor' (p. 95), but goes on to describe 'the huge popularity of the *Liberal* in its time' (p. 114). Eberle-Sinatra makes a case for the originality of Hunt's travel-writing on Italy, published in the *Liberal*,

asserting that Hunt differs from his contemporaries in his 'frankness about his feelings' (p. 104), his 'conversational tone' (p. 111), in the way that he neither uses 'his observations of Italy to reveal his superior taste and education in a self-congratulatory fashion' (p. 107) nor 'indulge[s] in criticism of previous contributors to the genre' (p. 114), and in the manner in which he relates his experiences abroad to his experiences 'as an Englishmen, more particularly as a Londoner' (p. 107). Eberle-Sinatra regards these innovations as superior even to Hunt's theatrical criticism and his writing on poetic language. To assert that it is a novelty to present travel literature as informal letters to be 'read as if they were addressed to a friend rather than an impersonal reader' overlooks many examples of the genre from the eighteenth century. Patrick Brydone's *Tour Through Sicily and Malta* (1773) and Helen Maria Williams's *Letters Written in France in the Summer 1790, to A Friend in England* (1790) are two such examples. Eberle-Sinatra's claims for Hunt's originality in theatre criticism are much more convincing. The final section of this chapter looks at the reviews of Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* (1828). Henry Colburn, who published the book, also praised it in his periodical *New Monthly Magazine*. Eberle-Sinatra comments that 'this specific review is really only a puffing piece designed to promote the sales of Hunt's work' (p. 119). Eberle-Sinatra does not explore how Hunt may have reconciled this endorsement with his views on critical independence, or whether Hunt may have felt his independence in any way compromised in writing on an acquaintance.

Eberle-Sinatra is devoted to detail in this book, and there is something of the indulgence of the editorial note in much of the writing. The book seems a little uncertain about its readership, too. It is an introductory overview that synthesizes the work of other critics, but it is also interested in the minutiae of publication expenses, the critical implications of multiple versions of the same texts, and the complexities of hostilities between various literary figures.

Essaka Joshua
University of Birmingham

Dino Francis Felluga, *The Perversity of Poetry: Romantic Ideology and the Popular Male Poet of Genius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), xi + 208pp. ISBN 0-791-46299-4; $70 (hb).

DINO FRANCIS FELLUGA'S WELL ARGUED AND THOROUGHLY RESEARCHED STUDY explores the reception history of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, and connects their popular critical reception in the nineteenth century to the ultimate dismissal of poetry as a pertinent political force. Over the course of the book, Felluga contends that a variety of critics and reviewers throughout the Romantic period systematically marginalised poetry and, moreover, the figure

of the popular male poet of genius by actively engaging a decidedly new rhetoric of health and healthiness in their critiques of popular verse, positioning both popular poetry and poets as being either, as in the case of Byron, symptoms of social illness or, as in the case of Scott, possible panaceas for a diseased society. Felluga focuses on the crucial role contemporary periodicals, student manuals, and medical journals played in pathologising Byron and the figure of the popular male poet of genius. Felluga posits that there were two primary claims surrounding poetry and the popular poet in the Romantic period. The poetry of Scott was widely considered to be a panacea for nineteenth-century Britain, capable of reinvigorating a society driven into seeming idleness and depravity by capitalist culture and supposed effeminacy, not to mention utilitarianism and industrialism. Owing to his political radicalism, Byron was positioned counter to Scott and considered to be a contagious disease threatening to undermine society. According to Felluga, the employment of a rhetoric of health and manliness in the various periodicals of the Romantic period provided critics with the conceptual framework to oppose the force of poetry, considered dangerous simply because of what was recognised then as its unique ability to entice political revolution and actually make something happen.

Felluga establishes the historical context for his claims by opening with a painstaking consideration of the various medical discourses that surrounded the popular male poet of genius in the early nineteenth century. He contends that due to 'new ways of thinking about the human and social being' during the Romantic period, 'civilization itself was seen as a sign of ill health […] and learning of all sorts was thus characterized as a potentially unhealthy pursuit' (p. 13). According to Felluga, those in the medical professions felt a pertinent need to distinguish themselves from the sort of 'diseased' geniuses who created imaginary literature, in order to 'separate their own endeavors from the very disease they attributed to scholarly pursuits' (p. 20) and carve a place for themselves in the popular marketplace.

In the second chapter, Felluga examines the ways in which Scott engaged in the marketplace and protected himself and his work from the criticism that was being lobbed against poetry and the male poet of genius, a figure which he, along with Byron, exemplified. According to Felluga, Scott countered the new 'rhetoric of nervous sensibility and disease' by 'claiming for himself and for his metrical romances a rhetoric of manly and invigorating health' (p. 33). In effect, Scott provided the British ruling elite with a ready and public ideology of 'self-legitimization though the fetish-logic of medievalism' (p. 9) in his metrical romances, which ultimately would prove to be a crucial component to the development of the underlying ideology of the Victorian period. Scott, as Felluga contends, used Britain's own medieval past and the romance form to reinvigorate the nation, or to at least provide it with the public illusion of invigoration and liveliness. Contemporary reviewers responded by suggesting that Scott and his romances were antidotes to the apparent effeminacy of the

contemporary age exemplified by the verse and character of Byron. Felluga focuses almost exclusively on Byron in the third and fourth chapters, which are certainly the most provocative in the book. With his 'romance' *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Felluga contends that Byron countered the romances of Scott by fusing 'the temporal dynamics of the romance form to an all-encompassing satire of the present' (p. 71) and effectively turning Scott's romances inside out. Byron's political radicalism is not dismissed by Felluga in these chapters, but is instead highlighted and scrutinised. Felluga argues that 'one could […] point directly to Byron's life for evidence of his revolutionary proclivities' (p. 73), not to mention the fact that 'Byron sought, throughout his verse, to establish a consistent philosophy of justice' (p. 73) akin to Derrida's own system of justice. According to Felluga, Byron assumed actual political force because his vision of social–political reality differed so greatly from that of Scott's 'attempted renchantment' (p. 73) of the past in his metrical romances. Felluga also realises Byron's political threat to be intrinsically linked to his ability to recognise 'the tendency to violence in any system, monarchial, capitalist, and revolutionary alike' (p. 73) allowing him to appeal to the political mindset or reality of most every one of his readers.

In giving such close attention to Byron's political ideology as it is presented in his texts and personal political activities, this book represents a decidedly radical departure from the relatively standard critical dismissal, at least in criticism over the last century, of Byron's politics and the focus on his biography. While I wish that Felluga had spent a bit more time flushing out Byron's political ideology and vision of justice (tasks yet to be sufficiently undertaken by any of Byron's contemporary critics), his argument on behalf of Byron as a pertinent political force in the Romantic period is most certainly welcome and appreciated. His positioning of Scott and Byron as opposite, though not entirely disconnected, political and artistic forces during the Romantic period is an intriguing point that reminds us of the crucial role both poets played in both nineteenth century poetry and society.

Felluga concludes the book with a Coda in which he extends his argument into the Victorian period. He argues that Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* was a 'last-ditch effort' (p. 144) to come to terms, however helplessly, with the place of verse in the wake of Byron and Scott and the marginalization of poetry over the previous generation. According to Felluga, after Byron and Scott, Tennyson 'found himself having to negotiate a rather fraught generic form […] the romance' (p. 147) and wrestle with the question of what poetry was, given that it was a genre that had, due to its virtual rejection as a sufficient political activity, become an 'ontological impossibility' (p. 147), emasculated and rendered subservient, if not entirely irrelevant, to 'realistic' novels.

Aside from the genuine novelty and ingenuity of Felluga's various arguments, one of the book's greatest strengths is the accessibility of its structure and the clarity of its style. Felluga's complex and wide-ranging argument is carefully

crafted over the course of each chapter and manages to successfully carry a tremendous number of interconnected arguments to a logical and entirely sufficient conclusion by the end. While Felluga draws quite heavily from the theoretical schools of Marxism and psychoanalysis over the course of the book, he wields these tools reasonably and intelligently, allowing them to illuminate his arguments rather than make his arguments for him. Felluga is also careful to ground his points firmly in history, supporting each and every point he makes with a plethora of textual and historical examples. *The Perversity of Poetry* is an important book that marks a major contribution to criticism of Romantic and Victorian poetry. It deserves be read (and reread, perhaps a couple of times over) not only by critics of Byron and Scott but by any reader interested in the history of English poetry.   ◈

James R. Fleming
University of Florida

Clíona Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), xi + 221pp. ISBN 1-904-55846-1; £39.95 (hb).

In Thomas Flanagan's novel, *The Year of the French* (London, 1980), a young Maria Edgeworth passes close to the scene of a recent massacre of Irish rebels. Unable to see the slaughtered bodies of the rebels pointed out to her, she nevertheless reprimands a young Scottish soldier for not knowing the name of a local hill: 'Things have names, Mr Sinclair, even in this county' (p. 498).

Flanagan's fictional Edgeworth seems to prefigure the Maria Edgeworth who has appeared in some recent accounts of Irish literature. She can seem to be a writer alert to the names of things, capable of giving a superficial account of Ireland, yet fatally short-sighted when it comes to witnessing the larger historical trauma behind the details. Clíona Ó Gallchoir's fine new study of Edgeworth takes issue with recent critics such as Seamus Deane and Kevin Whelan, both of whose assertions that Edgeworth provides illusory accounts of Ireland lead Ó Gallchoir to note that for these critics 'it is a short step from illusion to delusion' (p. 16).

Rather than linking Edgeworth to some constructed national narrative, Ó Gallchoir is more interested in situating her writing in a complex series of negotiations involving women, domesticity, and the public sphere in the Romantic period. As such, this is self-consciously a work of feminist criticism, and this starting point actually allows for a much more liberating reading of Edgeworth, in which the false dichotomy of the 'Irish' Edgeworth (*Castle Rackrent*, *The Absentee*) and the 'English' (*Belinda*, *Patronage*) is erased and replaced with a more straightforward chronological reading. Even Edgeworth's

final novel, *Helen*, so long the Cinderella of her oeuvre, receives a sustained and intelligent analysis.

What Ó Gallchoir says of *Helen* could be used as a summation of her central thesis about Edgeworth's whole canon: '[The novel's] tendency is on the one hand to naturalise established relations of gender and power, but, paradoxically, also to reveal their constructed quality' (p. 163). Her first chapter takes issue with the term 'domesticity', and its imagined opposition to an increasingly masculinised public sphere. Starting with the proposition that the 1790s saw an exponential increase in the number of people entering the modern public sphere in Ireland, Ó Gallchoir argues that Edgeworth was keen on insisting that women had a role to play in that sphere as well. She rightly complicates the notion that there is any simple dichotomy between the public and private, and this allows a reading that opens up the domestic plots of Edgeworth's fiction.

Ó Gallchoir gives due attention to the place of France in Edgeworth's writing as both a source of Enlightened *salon* culture and revolutionary sentiment. The former appears as more of an influence, and Ó Gallchoir rightly spends some time connecting Edgeworth to Madame de Staël. The latter's comments on female writing and its role in relation to public institutions was foundational to Edgeworth's (and Lady Morgan's) self-positioning in a post-revolutionary historical moment. Indeed, it is De Staël who facilitates the thematic continuity Ó Gallchoir finds between the domestic plots of Edgeworth's 'Irish' and 'English' fiction. De Staël's writing (Ó Gallchoir focuses mostly on *De la littérature* and *Corinne*) modified classical Republicanism's insistence on measuring patriotism through public actions, and allowed instead recognition of the role that the domestic setting had in patriotic sentiment (often to the detriment of the 'woman of genius' that is portrayed in her fiction). While De Staël has obvious stylistic and thematic connections with Lady Morgan, it is refreshing to see her taken seriously in a study of Edgeworth. Rather than fall into the trap of allying Edgeworth solely with Burke or the Scottish Enlightenment (both get mentioned of course), Ó Gallchoir covers a lot of useful ground in bringing De Staël into the picture.

There are, of course, problems of space in any survey which tries to deal with so much material. Ironically, Ó Gallchoir's enthusiasm for some of the less well known fiction means that readings of *Belinda* and *Castle Rackrent* can feel somewhat cursory. Given the amount of critical comment these texts have already generated, however, this is not as major a problem as it might seem. By writing on texts such as *Helen*, *Patronage*, *Emilie de Coulanges*, and *Madame de Fleury* (both of which appeared with *Ennui* and *The Absentee* in *Tales of Fashionable Life*), Ó Gallchoir provides a fuller view of Edgeworth's oeuvre. The suggestions provided in this study are sure to provoke further study of Edgeworth's fiction, and the book as a whole suggests that proper accounts

of the role of gender in Irish literature in this period are finally beginning to appear.

Jim Kelly
University College, Dublin

Notes on Contributors

Gavin Edwards is Professor of English Studies at the University of Glamorgan, Wales. His research focuses on Romantic literature and society, and historical applications of narrative theory and semantics. He is the editor of *George Crabbe: Selected Poems* (Penguin, 1991) and *Watkin Tench: Letters from Revolutionary France* (Palgrave, 2001), and *Narrative Order, 1789–1819: Life and Story in an Age of Revolution* (Palgrave, 2005). He is currently working on capital letters in the novels of Dickens.

James R. Fleming is a Kirkland PhD Fellow in Victorian and Folklore Studies at the University of Florida. He is a Review Editor and Co-Managing Editor for *ImageTexT <http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/>*. He is currently working on a dissertation tentaively entitled 'Trauma, Testimony and the English Romantic Movement' and a study focusing on issues of space, place, and temporality in the works of Jane Austen and Lord Byron.

Jonathan Hill is a member of the Department of English, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. His main area of teaching is the British Romantic period, his main research interest Regency culture broadly understood, including graphic satire and book history. This article is part of an ongoing study of books in boards, both British and American.

Essaka Joshua is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Birmingham. She is the author of *Pygmalion and Galatea: The History of a Narrative in English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) and *The Romantics and the May-Day Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming).

Jonathan Kelly is IRCHSS post-doctoral fellow in University College, Dublin, where he is engaged in research on the writings of Charles Robert Maturin (1780–1824).

Peter Simonsen is is Postdoctoral Carlsberg Research Fellow at the University of Southern Denmark. His research project concerns British poetry of the 1820s and 1830s. He has published articles on frontispiece portraiture, problems of literary historical periodisation, the aesthetics of typography, and ekphrasis.

His monograph entitled *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts* is forthcoming from Palgrave.

❧

Instructions for Authors

Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840 is only as substantial as the material it attracts: therefore, we more than welcome any contributions that members of the academic community might wish to make. Articles and reports we would be most interested in publishing include those addressing Romantic literary studies with an especial slant on book history, textual and bibliographical studies, the literary marketplace and the publishing world, and so forth.

Contributors should note that material submitted to the journal should represent original work previously unpublished elsewhere, and must not be submitted elsewhere for publication while under consideration by *Romantic Textualities*. Material can be submitted in either print (3 copies, single sided) or electronic versions, and should be double spaced; any of the usual electronic formats (e.g. RTF, Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, HTML) are acceptable. Authors will be contacted about editorial decisions by Anthony Mandal. The final, revised version of an accepted manuscript must adhere to the MHRA style. Authors are advised to consult both previous issues of the journal for examples and the MHRA style guide, which is available online @ *http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml*.

Articles: All article submissions are subject to the normal process of anonymous peer review; authors are advised to put include their names and contact details on separate cover sheets attached to copies of their manuscripts. Papers of 5–8,000 words should be submitted in either print (3 copies) or electronic versions.

Reports: *Romantic Textualities* also publishes reports on individual/group projects, along with accompanying bibliographic (or similar) material, in order to publicise and disseminate relevant research in the discipline. Reports are generally *not* subject to peer review, but their suitability for publication will be assessed by the Editors and Chair of Advisory Editors. Reports can take a variety of formats, and the final presentation of material is usually a result of discussions between authors and editors.

Article/report submissions should be sent to Dr Anthony Mandal, Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research, ENCAP, Cardiff University, Humanties Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU. Wales (UK), *mandal@cardiff.ac.uk*.

Book Reviews: Communications regarding reviews should be addressed to Dr Tim Killick (at the same address), *killickpt@cardiff.ac.uk*.

Proofs will be sent to authors if the production cycle of the journal allows sufficient time; in the first instance, these will be in the form of electronic PDF files. They should be corrected and returned to the Editor within one week. Only minor alterations to the text will be accepted.

Copyright: It is a condition of publication that authors vest or license copyright in their articles, in the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research (CEIR), who will then ensure full copyright protection (according to the terms of 'fair use') in disseminating materials to the widest possible audience. Of course, authors may use their article elsewhere after publication, provided that prior permission is obtainted from CEIR. Authors are themselves responsible for obtaining permission to cite/reproduce copyright material from other sources.