



second edition

English Fiction of the Victorian Period

Michael Wheeler

ROUTLEDGE

English Fiction of the Victorian Period

Longman Literature in English Series

General Editors: David Carroll and Michael Wheeler
Lancaster University

For a complete list of titles see pages viii-ix

English Fiction
of the
Victorian Period
1830–1890

Second Edition

Michael Wheeler

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1985 by Pearson Education Limited
Second edition 1994
Third impression 1999

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 1985, 1994, Taylor & Francis.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notices

Knowledge and best practice in this field are constantly changing. As new research and experience broaden our understanding, changes in research methods, professional practices, or medical treatment may become necessary.

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

To the fullest extent of the law, neither the Publisher nor the authors, contributors, or editors, assume any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions, or ideas contained in the material herein.

ISBN 13: 978-0-582-08843-6 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wheeler, Michael, 1947–

English fiction of the Victorian period : 1830–1890 / Michael

Wheeler. — 2nd ed.

p. cm. — (Longman literature in English series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-582-08843-7

1. English fiction—19th century—History and criticism.

I. Title. II. Series.

PR871.W49 1992

823'.809—dc20

92-40534
CIP

Set by 5 in 9½ on 11pt Bembo

Contents

Editors' Preface vii

Longman Literature in English Series viii

Author's Preface to the First Edition x

Author's Preface to the Second Edition xiii

Introduction 1

1 Pre-Victorian and Early Victorian Fiction 15

Fads and fashions: historical, silver-fork, Newgate and social-problem novels 15

Gamblers and speculators: early Thackeray 22

The privilege of chroniclers: early Dickens 25

2 Mid-Century Fiction 35

A Victorian identity: social-problem, religious and historical novels 35

No new thing under the sun: Thackeray's major novels 46

Souls enslaved: the Brontës 62

An environment of circumstances: Elizabeth Gaskell 75

Themes and variations: Dickens at mid-century 82

3 High Victorian Fiction 100

Retrospect and prospect: sensational, historical, school and religious novels, fantasy 100

The mysteries of identity: late Dickens 110

Truth and a high but gentle spirit: Anthony Trollope 121

Incarnate history and unhistoric acts: George Eliot 132

Those high notes and condensings: Meredith 154

4 Late Victorian Fiction 171

Explorations: the new realists and the romance revival, Utopian
and religious novels 171

Circles of hell: Gissing 187

Significant simplicity: Stevenson 192

Art is a disproportioning: Hardy 198

Chronology 217

General Bibliographies 237

(i) English fiction: history and criticism 237

(ii) Victorian background: historical, intellectual, cultural 238

(iii) Victorian fiction 240

Individual Authors 250

Notes on biography, major works and criticism 250

Index 286

Editors' Preface

The multi-volume Longman Literature in English Series provides students of literature with a critical introduction to the major genres in their historical and cultural context. Each volume gives a coherent account of a clearly defined area, and the series, when complete, will offer a practical and comprehensive guide to literature written in English from Anglo-Saxon times to the present. The aim of the series as a whole is to show that the most valuable and stimulating approach to the study of literature is that based upon an awareness of the relations between literary forms and their historical contexts. Thus the areas covered by most of the separate volumes are defined by period and genre. Each volume offers new and informed ways of reading literary works, and provides guidance for further reading in an extensive reference section.

In recent years, the nature of English studies has been questioned in a number of increasingly radical ways. The very terms employed to define a series of this kind – period, genre, history, context, canon – have become the focus of extensive critical debate, which has necessarily influenced in varying degrees the successive volumes published since 1985. But however fierce the debate, it rages around the traditional terms and concepts.

As well as studies on all periods of English and American literature, the series includes books on criticism and literary theory and on the intellectual and cultural context. A comprehensive series of this kind must of course include other literatures written in English, and therefore a group of volumes deals with Irish and Scottish literature, and the literatures of India, Africa, the Caribbean, Australia and Canada. The forty-seven volumes of the series cover the following areas: Pre-Renaissance English Literature, English Poetry, English Drama, English Fiction, English Prose, Criticism and Literary Theory, Intellectual and Cultural Context, American Literature, Other Literatures in English.

David Carroll
Michael Wheeler

Longman Literature in English Series

General Editors: David Carroll and Michael Wheeler
Lancaster University

Pre-Renaissance English Literature

- ★ English Literature before Chaucer *Michael Swanton*
- English Literature in the Age of Chaucer
- ★ English Medieval Romance *W. R. J. Barron*

English Poetry

- ★ English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century *Gary Waller*
- ★ English Poetry of the Seventeenth Century *George Parfitt (Second Edition)*
- English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700–1789
- ★ English Poetry of the Romantic Period, 1789–1830 *J. R. Watson (Second Edition)*
- ★ English Poetry of the Victorian Period, 1830–1890 *Bernard Richards*
- English Poetry of the Early Modern Period, 1890–1940
- ★ English Poetry since 1940 *Neil Corcoran*

English Drama

- English Drama before Shakespeare
- ★ English Drama: Shakespeare to the Restoration, 1590–1660
Alexander Leggatt
- ★ English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660–1789
Richard W. Bevis
- English Drama: Romantic and Victorian, 1789–1890
- English Drama of the Early Modern Period, 1890–1940
- English Drama since 1940

English Fiction

- ★ English Fiction of the Eighteenth Century, 1700–1789 *Clive T. Probyn*
- ★ English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789–1830 *Gary Kelly*
- ★ English Fiction of the Victorian Period, 1830–1890 *Michael Wheeler (Second Edition)*
- ★ English Fiction of the Early Modern Period, 1890–1940 *Douglas Hewitt*
- English Fiction since 1940

English Prose

- ★ English Prose of the Seventeenth Century, 1590–1700 *Roger Pooley*
- English Prose of the Eighteenth Century
- English Prose of the Nineteenth Century

Criticism and Literary Theory

- Criticism and Literary Theory from Sidney to Johnson
- Criticism and Literary Theory from Wordsworth to Arnold
- Criticism and Literary Theory from 1890 to the Present

The Intellectual and Cultural Context

- The Sixteenth Century
- ★ The Seventeenth Century, 1603–1700 *Graham Parry*
- ★ The Eighteenth Century, 1700–1789 *James Sambrook (Second Edition)*
- The Romantic Period, 1789–1830
- ★ The Victorian Period, 1830–1890 *Robin Gilmour*
- The Twentieth Century: 1890 to the Present

American Literature

- American Literature before 1880
- ★ American Poetry of the Twentieth Century *Richard Gray*
- ★ American Drama of the Twentieth Century *Gerald M. Berkowitz*
- ★ American Fiction 1865–1940 *Brian Lee*
- ★ American Fiction since 1940 *Tony Hilfer*
- ★ Twentieth-Century America *Douglas Tallack*

Other Literatures

- Irish Literature since 1800
- Scottish Literature since 1700
- Australian Literature
- ★ Indian Literature in English *William Walsh*
- African Literature in English: East and West
- Southern African Literature in English
- Caribbean Literature in English
- ★ Canadian Literature in English *W. J. Keith*
- ★ *Already published*

Author's Preface to the First Edition

Thirty years ago Kathleen Tillotson introduced her pioneering study on *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* by announcing that it was too late to talk about 'Victorian novels', and that the time had surely come to 'break up "the Victorian novel" into manageable segments; not by novelists, or categories, or phases, but simply by concentrating upon a decade or so at a time'. Although most academic specialists have followed Professor Tillotson's lead in breaking up the subject into segments, more has been written since 1954 on individual novelists, categories and phases than on single decades. A flood of books and articles on almost every conceivable 'aspect' of Victorian fiction has, however, reinforced one's sense of what Tillotson calls 'the insuperable difficulty of doing critical justice to the novels of sixty-three years in a single book'. Why, then, a single book on English fiction of the Victorian period, 1830–1890?

First, the aim of this as of all volumes in the Longman Literature in English Series is to provide a critical *introduction*. I cannot hope to do critical justice to any one novel in a book of this kind, let alone to the *œuvres* of the major and minor novelists, or to specific sub-genres and phases of Victorian fiction. I can, however, attempt to provide the reader who is fairly new to the study of the fiction with critical guidelines, and offer suggestions for further reading. Secondly, there is still a need for a study which, while not attempting 'coverage' of such a large subject, introduces its salient features – methods of publication, forms and sub-genres, themes, motifs and conventions – and tries to relate the fiction to its nineteenth-century context.

This study, then, is everywhere selective; and selection has been made with students in higher education in mind. The main body of the book is divided into four distinct chronological phases, each of fifteen years, the first beginning seven years before Victoria ascended the throne and the last ending eleven years before her death. Although these divisions are clearly more arbitrary in the case of some writers and traditions than of others, they represent distinct phases in the development of the novel, and the advantages of following such a scheme in my view outweigh the disadvantages. Each of the four chapters which follow the general introduction begins with a discussion of developments in the

novel form and of the particular sub-genres – social-problem novels, sensation novels, and so on – which flourished at the time. Major novelists are then treated in more detail in separate sections of each chapter.

In the process of selecting individual authors, novels and themes for more detailed discussion, there are bound to be some major omissions. I particularly regret not being able to say more about George Eliot's early work and the later novels of Trollope and Meredith. Henry James is to be treated as an American novelist in another volume in the series, but his absence from this book may seem a glaring omission. F. R. Leavis made James one of his great triumvirate of George Eliot, James and Conrad in his highly influential book on *The Great Tradition* (1948), thus establishing a canon of English fiction which excluded most major Victorian novelists. The absence of James from my study allows more space for these other Victorian writers, some of whose reputations have not yet fully recovered from the stigma of a dismissive Leavisite footnote or aside.

No critical work can be totally objective and perfectly balanced in its emphasis, of course; and my own is no exception to this rule. A large selection of critical studies which offer alternative readings and approaches is therefore included in the *General Bibliographies*. These comprise three sections – (i) English fiction: history and criticism; (ii) Victorian background: historical, intellectual, cultural; (iii) Victorian fiction (further divided into five sub-sections). Each of the fifty entries in the notes on *Individual Authors* includes a summary of an author's career, with titles and dates of major novels, and a list of biographical and critical works on that author. Bibliographies in these appendices are limited almost exclusively to printed books rather than articles in scholarly journals. The *Chronology* sets out works of fiction, other works (literary and non-literary), and historical events in three parallel columns, offering a reference guide to the context in which individual works of fiction were published.

As in the appendices, dates given for novels in the text refer to first publication in volume(s) or in serial form: e.g. *Vanity Fair* (1847–48). References to specific passages in novels, and some other works such as novelists' autobiographies, are by chapter numbers in parentheses (16), or, where appropriate, by book and chapter numbers (v. 2). Where the first reference to a novel includes a reference to a chapter number, it is given thus: (*Adventures of Philip*, 1861–62; 23). Raised numerals in the text refer to the notes at the end of each chapter.

Finally, I would like to thank the University of Lancaster for granting me a term's sabbatical leave during the preparation of this book; staff of the University of Lancaster library, and especially Thelma Goodman, for much patient assistance; Anne Dalton, Maureen Jex and Joan Chesters for their skilful typing; the many undergraduate and post-

graduate students with whom I have discussed Victorian fiction over the past eleven years, and especially Shirley Bradshaw and Brenda Abercrombie; Christopher Walsh for his valuable comments on early drafts; David Carroll for his advice and encouragement at every stage of the project; my wife Vivienne for understanding, and my children Joshua, Charlotte and Emily for not understanding.

MDW
December 1983

Author's Preface to the Second Edition

In the Author's Preface to the first edition of this book, I explained that one of my aims was to introduce the reader to the great variety of novelists, genres and sub-genres that characterize Victorian fiction – a variety that had been undervalued in earlier generations, partly through the lasting influence of Dr Leavis. Many reviewers and readers of the book have welcomed this contribution to the opening up of Victorian fiction, and it is encouraging to see in more recent critical writing a greater awareness of the fiction's richness and variety.

A great deal of new critical work on Victorian fiction and Victorian cultural history has been published over the past ten years, the most significant of which is included in the updated and expanded General Bibliographies and Individual Authors sections at the back of the book. (Here I would like to thank Dr Christopher Walsh of Chester College for his help and scholarly advice in the process of revising these bibliographies.) There are several new general introductions (Horsman, Skilton, and Gilmour, who has also written an important new introduction to the intellectual and culture context of the literature, in this Longman series), the most comprehensive guide ever produced (Sutherland), and numerous studies of particular themes – from work to the police (Danon, Miller), and from the Lady of Shalott to terrorism (Gribble, Melchiori) – as explored in the work of a select number of Victorian novelists. Various modes and genres are being identified or reassessed – idyllic fiction, the silver-fork novel, the short story (Hunter, Adburgham, Orel). Work on novel production (Dooley, Feltes, Vann) and on its reception, consumption and ideological context (Blake, Lovell) reflects a growing interest in the power relations between author, publisher, printer and reading public. Feminist studies have proliferated, and include studies which carefully reassess some of the cruder assumptions of earlier work (Milbank).

Some of these critics use methodologies which have been developed during the so-called 'crisis in English studies', although they generally do so with more tact than one finds in some other areas of literary study. Most Victorian scholars are still interested in reading Victorian criticism of the novel, of which there are new collections (Eigner and Worth, Nadel), and still engage in close historical contextualization (Altick). In

our great age of biography, new lives of the major novelists continue to attract reviews in the national broadsheets (four new biographical studies of Trollope have recently appeared in as many years). This is partly because publishers can sell biographies, and it is both sad and troubling to note that comparatively little work has been published on the lesser known figures, whose fiction is crying out for further study. Senior Victorian scholars sometimes lament the fact that their younger colleagues only know about the novel, so great is its pre-eminence today. There is, however, another worry: that with so much work being done at the doctoral level on gender, ideology and the body in Victorian fiction, we could be in danger of losing a whole generation of editors, bibliographers and wide-ranging literary historians.

I hope that this critical introduction to Victorian fiction, with its extensive and updated end-matter, will continue to serve its purpose for students and their teachers working in this rewarding and absorbing field. In order to avoid the tedium of the survey, I offer my own critical readings of the fiction rather than straight documentary accounts of it. In order to avoid the strictures of a 'great tradition', I offer commentary (sometimes brief) on the work of over fifty novelists – about fifteen women and thirty-eight men, for those interested in statistics. (Women's writing was high on the agenda for students of Victorian fiction long before it was for their colleagues working on other forms in earlier periods.) Above all, I hope that this book is useful.

MDW

September 1992

For my parents,
David and Hilda Wheeler

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

The Victorian Age was not only the longest but also the greatest in the history of English fiction. It was an age of the novel in the same sense that the Restoration was an age of drama and the Romantic period an age of poetry. The past tense seems inappropriate, however, when one considers how much Victorian fiction is still in print and is still read by the general reading public. The richness and variety of the fiction is well represented in the writers to whom I devote separate sections in this book: Dickens, perhaps the greatest novelist in the language, whose contribution merits treatment in three chapters; Thackeray, a brilliant satirist and realist; Charlotte and Emily Brontë, who wrote the two most famous modern romances in English; George Eliot, whose work marks the high point of an English realist tradition in which Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Gissing also figure; Meredith, the writer who extended the intellectual range of the novel through innovation and experiment; Hardy, a challenging and often controversial novelist in his own time, whose critical reputation has risen steadily in ours; and Stevenson, the leading figure in the late nineteenth-century revival of romance.

The greatness of this age of fiction is not only qualitative, however – a matter of a galaxy of major talent – but also quantitative. For the work of a host of other writers, ranging from Wilkie Collins to Rider Haggard, from Disraeli to George Moore and from Charles Kingsley to Mrs Humphry Ward, still lives in the sense that it is still read and is also the subject of closer critical attention today than at any time since its publication – particularly the work of women writers who have been reassessed by feminist critics and biographers, as well as by other scholars. Quantity in this context has another, negative side to it, of course, and most of the tens of thousands of novels published during Victoria's reign (an estimate of forty thousand is sometimes quoted) are

unquestionably buried, if not dead and quite beyond recall. They lie in the catacombs of the major libraries, to be disturbed perhaps once or twice a century by scholars who seek more representative views of the age than the most original creative writers generally offer or more representative examples of specific sub-genres. These forgotten novels have gone the way of all minor examples of popular literature written to pass the reader's time and keep the writer's pot boiling or to instruct the reader and get the writer's pet theory into print. In an age which delighted in the clutter of Gothic architecture and heavily ornamental interior design, novels were all too often not so much 'baggy monsters' as monstrous bags, into which almost anything could be crammed. Given that some kind of love interest was virtually a *sine qua non*, whether as the main theme or as a side issue introduced for light relief or, more interestingly, as a means whereby other themes – political, social, religious – could be domesticated, hundreds of minor writers published rambling novels in which every conceivable topic of the day was treated. Significantly, some of the writers of novels discussed in this book would not have described themselves as novelists, but turned naturally to the most popular literary vehicle available.

Under what conditions, then, were novels – major works of literature and pot-boilers alike – published in the nineteenth century? The fact that the Victorian novelist wrote for the reading public rather than for a patron meant in effect that he or she had several masters rather than one. These might include the publisher and his professional 'reader', the editor of a magazine, the proprietor of a circulating library, the bookseller and, directly or indirectly, the reading public itself. An accurate picture of the complex relationship between Victorian novelists and the book trade has now been drawn.¹ Here I can only sketch in the outline. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, when Scott and Jane Austen were writing, novels were generally published in three or four volumes. Although three-volume novels, or 'three-deckers', sold at a standard price of half a guinea a volume, which put them beyond the means of most middle-class readers, they remained the staple form throughout our period. The remarkable staying power of the three-decker has been attributed to the fact that it was commercially safe. Its success, however, and eventual demise also coincided with the rise and fall of Charles Edward Mudie, the mogul of the Victorian circulating libraries.

Mudie started lending books in a shop in Bloomsbury in 1842 and rapidly expanded his empire into the country and abroad. Books were lent a volume at a time for a fee of a guinea a year per reader. Voracious readers who could not afford expensive three-deckers could borrow them for a fraction of the retail price, bound in Mudie's own boards. Many aspiring writers also benefited, in that Mudie's order of a couple of hundred copies often represented the difference between

the launching of a literary career and oblivion. Furthermore, if a novel was particularly successful with the reading public, Mudie would buy in more from the publisher and reserve a large stock of the author's next work. Usurping some of the publisher's power. Mudie also acted as an unofficial defender of public morals, a spokesman for the mythical 'Mrs Grundy', the epitome of English propriety.² Mudie's own scrutiny of novels – a first level of screening – was supplemented by letters received from irate fathers and anxious clergymen complaining about books borrowed from his libraries, mainly by women, who made up the majority of the novel-reading public. The consequent withdrawal of titles sometimes had disastrous results for their authors.

Before the advent of radio and television, novel-reading and reading aloud in the family circle were of course, common middle-class leisure activities. That new titles were sometimes keenly sought after in the circulating libraries throughout the period is confirmed in anecdotes such as Mary (Mrs Humphry) Ward's in her *A Writer's Recollections* (1918; 12). One day in 1888 a lady jumped into Mary Ward's compartment in a train about to leave Waterloo station, delighted to have got hold of the first volume of *Robert Elsmere*. Mrs Ward's most famous novel. Breathlessly she informed a friend seeing her off that she would have been forced to wait for several weeks had she not seized a copy from somebody returning it to the library, even though it was promised to other readers. (Mary Ward recalls that she did not reveal her identity to the lady, but left her to plunge into the much-sought-after novel.) The story illustrates an obvious point which is nevertheless sometimes forgotten: that novels are written to be read when new.

Although cheap reprints of novels often came out some years after the first edition, and 'collective editions' of established novelists such as Dickens and Bulwer were to be among the reasonably priced 'railway' novels sold by W. H. Smith from mid-century, new fiction was not read by anything like its potential readership in the 1830s until the revival of the monthly part novel, initiated by the publication of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37). An improvised miscellany which later turned into a novel, and which sold in huge numbers after the introduction of Sam Weller, *Pickwick* set the pattern for most of Dickens's later novels, as well as for those of some of his rivals. Due to appear on the first day of every month, but in practice coming out the day before, each number was a slim paper-bound booklet, containing advertisements inside both covers and on the first and last of the thirty-two pages. Two expensively produced plates illustrated each number which, at the price of a shilling, reached a wider readership than had been dreamt of before. Whereas readers of *Jane Eyre* could devour the whole novel on the day that they purchased it (and several literary figures recorded that they could not put it down), readers of twenty-part monthly serials usually had to wait for nineteen months to find out how they ended, the last issue being

a double number. Each number had to end at a moment of tension or of rest, and in Dickens's case an idiosyncrasy or exaggerated physical feature of a minor character served partly as an *aide-mémoire*, often months after the character's previous appearance in a novel. Monthly publication of their early novels also allowed Dickens and Thackeray to keep just ahead of printers' deadlines and to respond to the criticisms and suggestions of readers and critics as they wrote.

Monthly part publication was gradually superseded by serial publication in family and literary magazines (both weekly and monthly) as a major outlet for novelists, who sometimes had to respond to a hard-pressed editor's sudden demand to round off a story which was depressing the circulation figures. Weekly serialization in magazines such as Dickens's own *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* caused problems of compression which Dickens himself once described as 'crushing', while Hardy's dealings with the censorious editors of family weeklies contributed to his disaffection with the constraints of the Victorian novel. The Brontës, the only major Victorian novelists who never ventured into serial publication of any kind, were brought up on the prestigious monthly, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and made tiny versions of 'Maga' as children. The most successful monthly magazine, however, was the *Cornhill*, launched in 1860 under the editorship of Thackeray. The fact that the first issue, priced at a shilling, contained the opening chapters of novels by both Trollope and Thackeray himself helps to explain the sale of 110,000 copies. As in the case of monthly part novels, successful magazine serials were later published in volumes, often at a large profit and usually by the publisher who owned the magazine.

Clearly, then, we have to pay attention to the form or forms in which Victorian novels were published. For although serial novels were reprinted in volumes, and, in Hardy's case, were sometimes revised at that stage, the fact remains that most Victorian fiction was not originally written to be read throughout over a short space of time. Novelists' decisions on such matters as pace and the introduction of new characters were dictated partly by the demands of the specific form in which their work was to be serialized. The same is true for the writer of modern television drama. The Duke of Omnium's garden party in the first episode of Simon Raven's dramatization of the Palliser novels (BBC TV, 1974) provided a good televisual means of both showing off the new marvels of colour and bringing together and introducing the numerous characters who were to figure in later episodes. (No such party exists in the novels themselves.) In contrast, Trollope himself could afford to begin slowly in the first monthly part of *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-65), gradually unfolding the major *secondary* plot. The wedding of Plantagenet and Lady Glencora (a big event in the television version) is referred to only briefly and retrospectively in later numbers. In each case the material is adapted to the medium.

Conditions were right for the production of large numbers of novels in the Victorian Age, not least because the Industrial Revolution had expanded and strengthened the position of the middle-classes, who made up the majority of the novel-reading public.³ Urban growth had been rapid in the early decades of the century and by 1841, 48.3 per cent of the population of England and Wales lived in towns and cities.⁴ By 1881 the figure had risen to 70.2 per cent. The combined effects of expansion in manufacture, commerce and overseas trade, increased movement of population, and improvements in transport systems led to a broadening of the middle classes, which now ranged from the lowly clerk to the captain of industry, and to consider upward and downward social mobility, itself a favourite theme of the novelists. A vigorous working-class sub-culture, also the product of urbanization, supplied the needs of a social group which was less illiterate than is often imagined.⁵ It was not, however, until Forster's Education Act of 1870 had produced a more ambitious generation among the 'lower orders' that novelists complained of the over-production of fiction to cater for this new readership. Broadly speaking, the English novel of the period everywhere reflects, while often also challenging, middle-class values.

The values, prejudices and assumptions of the middle classes are often reflected more clearly in the specialized sub-genres of Victorian fiction, such as sensation novels, school stories and Utopian fiction, than in the work of the major novelists. In each of the following chapters I will discuss these sub-genres first. They are of special interest because their emergence and (often rapid) demise reflect broad cultural changes in the period. They also embodied the more extreme literary fashions and explored in detail the most contentious contemporary issues. Conventions and ideas worked out in the various sub-genres provided the leading novelists with material with which to experiment. One definition of major fiction in the period is that which transcends the categories of the sub-genres while treating similar themes, such as social issues, religion and history. This period of crisis, for example, threw up a sub-genre which has come to be known as the 'social-problem novel', in which conflicts between the classes, between master and man, or between male seducer and female victim, are dramatized. In a century in which the population of Britain almost quadrupled, and political thinkers became increasingly fearful that individual freedom might be sacrificed in the name of public opinion or of the growing number of the unrepresented masses, the major novelists also examined the shifting relationship between the individual and society, often adopting the themes, motifs and symbols of the social-problem novel.

Many of the most burning issues in Victorian Britain were religious controversies, and again it is in the comparatively minor sub-genre of religious fiction – often narrow in focus and hortatory in style – that these issues were most directly addressed. Sectarian strife or the

challenge to orthodox belief of biblical criticism, materialist philosophy and science were also recurrent themes of leading writers from Dickens to Hardy, who adapted the stereotypes of the period's religious fiction, such as the portly rector, the thin, hypocritical dissenter and the female philanthropist of High Church persuasion, to their own broader purposes. Social-problem and religious fiction reflect the seriousness with which mid-Victorian writers and readers approached the most pressing questions of the day. We will see that the characteristic role of the authorial narrator in these novels is similar to that of the sage or prophet figures of Victorian non-fictional prose. Many novelists also rivalled historians like Carlyle and Macaulay, in the hugely popular historical novel, tending to see history either in terms of its great heroes or of its broadly progressive sweep towards an enlightened present. In either case the Victorian historical novelist examines the past in order both to entertain and teach his or her own generation.

It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the idea that fiction should embody some kind of moral teaching was seriously challenged by the comparatively amoral novel of ideas and by the documentary fiction of the new realists which shocked Victorian sensibilities in its frankness. Early in our period, however, all varieties of fiction – including the so-called 'silver-fork' novel of fashionable life, the 'Newgate' novel which made the criminal its hero, marine, sporting and Irish rogue novels – were all broadly described as 'romances', reflecting their lowly status as a literary form identified with escapism. The use of the word 'romance' also reflects the extremes of this early fiction. Wildly improbable plots, exaggerated social contrasts, glamorized villains and recklessly brave heroes all indicate the distance which separates romance (meaning, simply, fiction) from reality. By the mid-century, however, distinctions between the romance and the novel became the subject of critical debate and an aspect of a broader discussion concerning romance and 'realism'. As in all such discussions, critics found that the most original literature resisted categorization. Indeed, even the minor social-problem novelists of the period whose stated aim was accurate realistic description conveyed their ideas through romance plots. It is time, however, to look more closely at some Victorian definitions of these notoriously slippery terms.

In 1859 we find the critic David Masson discussing 'romance' and 'novel' as terms which had come to be used for convenience, to distinguish between two broad categories of fictitious narrative:

A Romance originally meant anything in prose or in verse written in any of the Romance languages; a Novel meant a new tale, a tale of fresh interest . . . now, when we speak of a Romance, we generally mean 'a fictitious narrative, in prose or verse, the interest of which turns upon marvellous

and uncommon incidents'; and, when we speak of a Novel, we generally mean 'a fictitious narrative differing from the Romance, inasmuch as the incidents are accommodated to the ordinary train of events and the modern state of society.' If we adopt this distinction, we make the prose Romance and the Novel the two highest varieties of prose fiction, and we allow in the prose Romance a greater ideality of incident than in the Novel.⁶

Masson later uses two other terms which are related to the novel/romance distinction and to the subject of realism:

Thackeray is a novelist of what is called the Real school; Dickens is a novelist of the Ideal or Romantic school. (The terms Real and Ideal have been so run upon of late, that their repetition begins to nauseate; but they must be kept, for all that, till better equivalents are provided.) It is Thackeray's aim to represent life as it is actually and historically . . . He will have no faultless characters, no demigods . . . Dickens, on the other hand, . . . has characters of ideal perfection and beauty, as well as of ideal ugliness and brutality . . .⁷

Masson argues, however, that the 'Ideal or Romantic artist must be true to nature as well as the Real artist, but he may be true in a different fashion'.⁸ We will see later (in Ch. 2) that Dickens is the best illustration of this point. Creative writers are more wary than critics of labels, and Trollope's comment that 'a good novel should be both [sensational and realistic], and both in the highest degree' (*Autobiography*, 1883; 12) can be compared with Meredith's equally bluff statement of 1862: 'Between realism and idealism, there is no natural conflict. This completes that' (see p. 156 below).

Trollope's and Meredith's comments are useful reminders of the dangers of the kind of categorizing in which Victorian critics delighted. Yet although Victorian fiction is characteristically a mixed genre – and Masson acknowledges this even in the process of defining his terms – the specific convention of realism, in which writers attempt to engage directly and consistently with the complexities of human experience in the real world, is at the centre of all nineteenth- and twentieth-century critical discussion of English fiction. The rise of the novel in the eighteenth century was closely related to the emergence of a prosperous urban middle class, as Ian Watt has shown,⁹ and the heroes and heroines of the English realist tradition are not kings and queens, or knights and ladies of the court, but ordinary people, often of middle and sometimes of lower rank, whose literary antecedents include *Everyman* and Bunyan's Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Although all plots are

variations on only a small number of archetypal stories, the very name of the novel asserts its newness, one aspect of which is its generating of numberless new characters who, whether major or minor, are thought worthy of our attention. The novel which adopts and secularizes many of the conventions of Puritan spiritual autobiographies and exemplary 'lives' of the seventeenth century also treats the individual 'soul', of whatever rank, as being inherently significant.

The philosophical roots of eighteenth-century realism are Lockean, and in one of the most important studies on the realistic imagination in the nineteenth century George Levine reminds us that realism is 'a mode that depends heavily on our commonsense expectation that there are direct connections between word and thing'.¹⁰ The several different uses of the word 'realism' in mid-Victorian criticism, however, apply to a variety of literary categories.¹¹ In terms of subject-matter, for example, realism could mean simply the depiction of modern life (for Masson one defining characteristic of the novel itself). More specifically, and particularly later in the nineteenth century, realist novelists were those whose subject-matter was offensive. Alternatively realism meant a type of minute description or simply the dull opposite of the imaginative in fiction. All these definitions are related to the writer's (impossible) attempt to depict everyday things as they are 'actually and historically', in Masson's terms – a concept which itself begs several philosophical questions.

David Masson's book, in which he contrasted the Real school and the Ideal school of nineteenth-century fiction, was published in the same year as George Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede* (1859), so he could not include in his discussion the writer whose work represents the high point of Victorian realistic fiction. G. H. Lewes claimed that realism ennobled a low subject and best treated a high one. In George Eliot's fiction the mundane is raised to a high level of sanctity, but – crucially – without reference to the supernatural. Her fiction investigates the problem of moral choice in a world without God and the kinds of *selection* from 'reality' – now a more elusive concept – made by herself as author and by her characters, reflect the nature of that problem. Following her death, however, the so-called 'new realists' of the 1880s shifted the argument away from morality. Gissing and George Moore, literary artists whose primary concerns were aesthetic, emphasized the need for minute accuracy of detail and a willingness to portray the ugly in their defence of realism, while for the most part rejecting what they considered to be the brutalism of Zola's naturalism.

It was also in the 1880s that the romance revival, led by R. L. Stevenson, challenged the assumptions of the new realists, substituting vision (which George Eliot's realism had formerly preserved) for their observation and, in tales of adventure, turning its back on modern life in Europe and setting sail for foreign parts. The critical debate between realism

and romance in the Victorian period (the main subject of my last chapter) revives the issues discussed in the early years of the Victorian period (the subject of Ch. 1). For example, the honorific terms of the writers of romance in the 1880s – romanticism, idealism, imagination, wonder, vision – are strongly reminiscent of Carlyle's key words in his critique of Utilitarianism in the early 1830s, when he argued that the 'dynamical' in thought, religion and education must be developed, thus redressing the current imbalance towards the 'mechanical' in human life and institutions, and that the 'unconscious' must be nurtured in a too conscious age. Behind Carlyle, and equally influential upon Victorian fiction, was Sir Walter Scott, the first fully professional British novelist and the first to be honoured with a title. Scott is the prime example of a writer whose realism 'completes' his romance, in the presentation of both Highland individualism and Lowland law-abiding attitudes or in the tension in his work between disruptive and restraining forces.¹² Certainly his central concern is with the moral decisions of individual members of a complex society, and in this he prepared the ground for Victorian realism. (The reader of Victorian fiction should also be a reader of Scott.)

Like Jane Austen's social comedies, which were to influence Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot later in the century, Scott's finest Waverley novels were published in the post-Revolutionary era of the Regency. The 'Romantic impulse' in Victorian fiction¹³ is rooted not only in the prose of Scott and Carlyle, however, but also in the Romantic poetry of the first two decades of the century. John Speirs argues that the 'poetic imaginativeness' which distinguishes nineteenth-century novelists from those of the eighteenth century reflects the response of Victorian writers to Shakespeare and to Romantic poetry.¹⁴ Moreover, the realism/romance bifurcation we find in Scott and Victorian fiction is also present in some of the seminal works of English Romantic poetry. Coleridge's account, for example, of his and Wordsworth's intentions in writing the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), suggests more interesting parallels with Victorian fiction than with Victorian poetry: 'The thought suggested itself . . . that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one [Coleridge's], the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural . . . For the second class [Wordsworth's], subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life, (*Biographia Literaria*, 1817; 14). Wordsworth, the poet of common or ordinary life and of domestic realism (as in 'Michael'), did not share Coleridge's enthusiasm for German supernatural tales and even thought of removing his friend's 'Ancient Mariner' from the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, believing that it had adversely affected the reception of the first. At the heart of Romantic poetry's most famous collaborative experiment, then, is the dichotomy between realism and romance, between a poetic of common life and the Gothic,¹⁵ which was also to characterize the fiction of the Victorian age.

Fiction, however, has always been a more popular form than poetry, and in the nineteenth century the novel was generally considered to be primarily for entertainment.¹⁶ This helps to explain the opposition of Evangelicalism to the novel early in the century and the slowness with which it was accepted as a serious literary genre. A second function – the novel as a vehicle for moral teaching – to some extent answered the Evangelical critics of the genre and became the primary critical touchstone in the third quarter of the century. Moralism in Victorian fiction is conveyed largely through the commentary of authorial narrators and through judgements enacted in the plot, particularly in the endings of novels. It is typified in Thackeray's and Trollope's descriptions of themselves as preachers to their own generation and of their novels as (entertaining) sermons. In a period which produced its own prophets or sages, such as Carlyle and J. S. Mill, Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, George Eliot's own *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings* (1872) were published during her lifetime, and the intrusive authorial voice in fiction, which directly addressed the 'dear reader', was the subject of much critical controversy. The more astringent moralists among the novelists, such as Thackeray and Meredith, adopt Carlylean metaphors of stripping and laying bare in their judgements upon hypocrisy and corruption, and all three writers draw upon eighteenth-century satirical traditions in their writing. It is significant that actual trials in courts of law figure in many nineteenth-century novels, including *Paul Clifford*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Bleak House*, *Mary Barton*, *Alton Locke* and *Felix Holt*. In his description of Magwitch's trial in *Great Expectations* (1860–61), Pip places the judge's death sentence in a larger perspective by invoking the Last Judgement (see p. 113 below). In Pip's very act, however, of handing judgement of Magwitch over to the highest authority, Dickens still exercises authorial control over both his fictional narrator and Magwitch. In other words, he plays God in relation to his own creatures, a feature of Victorian fiction on which John Fowles comments in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969; 12–13). I will return to this theme when I contrast novelists of the same period within the Victorian age – *Wuthering Heights* is anarchically non-judgemental in contrast to *Jane Eyre*, for example – and when tracing the gradual shift later in the century away from George Eliot's higher morality and towards the comparative neutrality of R. L. Stevenson as authorial narrator. For by the 1880s the third broad concept of the novel's function – as a vehicle for ideas – had gained ground on earlier emphases upon entertainment and moral improvement.

The didacticism of earlier Victorian fiction was not simply moral and dogmatic, and here it is worth citing a critic whose statement in the *Prospective Review* of April 1853 also suggests further continuities between Romantic poetry and the nineteenth-century novel. Fiction, he writes, 'conjures up an ideal world in the midst of our prosaic realities,

and men, absorbed in selfish interests, are awakened to more generous sympathies, and their hearts, severed in the turmoil of the world, find a bond of fellowship by the creation of the *poet*' (my emphasis).¹⁷ Both Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot consciously aimed to awaken their readers to more generous sympathies and both believed in what Keats described as 'the holiness of the heart's affections'. The critic's words, however, apply most suggestively to Dickens, whose ideal women, for example, are often hard to stomach for the twentieth-century reader. What we must remember is that like many other novelists of his time, Dickens portrayed not only the kind of fallen human beings we know in ourselves and in those with whom we live, but also the kind of human beings we might ideally be.

The severing of men's hearts in the turmoil of the world was a central Victorian theme and, as I suggested earlier, successive generations of novelists addressed themselves to the changing relationship between the inner life of feeling and the outer world of action in society. In a newly industrialized age novelists examined the growing conflicts between the individual human will and socially determining factors such as heredity, class and environment – the circumstances which modify the development of a single life.¹⁸ Among early Victorian novelists, for example, Thackeray and Edward Bulwer argue that respectable law-abiding behaviour is the privilege only of those born into certain social classes. Dickens's social vision becomes increasingly deterministic. Whereas Mr Pickwick moves freely between towns and villages which are quite separate communities, and which together make up no identifiable society, the various settings in Dickens's novels of mid-career, although distant from each other topographically, are closely linked or even 'chained' together through symbolism and plot. In *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), for example, it is as if the nation itself is enchained and imprisoned, and the space in which the hero and heroine must attempt to live is terribly constricted.

Imprisonment – physical, psychological or spiritual – is a central metaphor not only in Dickens's novels but in Victorian fiction generally. It is applied not only to social problems but also to personal relationships, in courtship, marriage and family life. In the Brontës' novels the physical confinement of the heroine often reflects her sense of spiritual imprisonment in a hostile environment which is shaped and controlled by men. Whereas Charlotte Brontë's female pilgrims in a barren land seek a limited freedom within the bounds of Christian doctrine and ethics, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* represents a more radical attempt to achieve liberation from a confining and (in Joseph's case) vindictively judgemental religious scheme. The ideals of George Eliot's heroines, on the other hand, are hampered by the accumulated constraints of the real, as they attempt either to redeem or to escape from the oppressive narrowness of the domestic environment

which imprisons them. The characteristic pilgrim figure of Dickens, the Brontës and George Eliot gives way in late Victorian fiction to the explorer figure, in a more dangerous and uncertain world. Gissing, for example, is a social explorer in the hell-on-earth that is the East End, where his characters are caught in a vicious circle or downward spiral of poverty from which there can be no escape. Gissing's grim determinism can be compared to that of Hardy, whose tragic vision in his later novels is mediated through repetitive plots and images of confinement and enclosure, suggesting that the trapped protagonists inhabit a universe which is not neutral, but actively malevolent.

Whereas Dickens and the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot offer different and often extremely limited degrees of freedom and hope of transcendence, Gissing and Hardy are deeply pessimistic writers, working in a later period in which nations, social groups and centres of power within nations, seemed increasingly intransigent in their antagonisms. The movement in Victorian fiction away from the mediation of social reality through the consciousness of a hero or heroine, whose fate is ultimately secure in the hands of a God-like author-narrator, and towards tragic schemes in which the universe is either neutral or hostile reflects a decline in both individualism and the possibility of social salvation. Dickens's ironic treatment of Pip's social advancement in *Great Expectations* can be read as a critique of his own *David Copperfield*, in which the hero's apotheosis was blissful married life with a saint. Darwin's observations on the determining influence of environment on plants and animals had a profoundly disturbing effect upon later Victorian writers. In an age in which the word 'progress' encapsulated the secular teleology of historians such as Macaulay, of populist biographers such as Samuel Smiles and of philosophers and social scientists such as the social Darwinists, the Victorian novelists' treatment of the individual and society constantly reopened the question: Progress towards what and measured by whom?

This change from a providential scheme in a world of shared values, where the central character undergoes some kind of pilgrimage,¹⁹ to a less stable world in which explorers venture into darkest Africa or darkest London, is reflected in the use of allusion and received literary and biblical models in the fiction. The linear plotting of *Jane Eyre*, for example, suggests parallels with Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*; and the title of *Vanity Fair* is drawn from Bunyan's classic work, although the end of Thackeray's novel holds out no hope of a Celestial City as the destination for his puppets. Others Christian concepts and models, such as conversion, confession and transcendence, are also adopted in both secular and religious fiction. Drawing upon the familiar texts of a shared Christian culture – the Book of Common Prayer, the Authorized Version of the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the better known passages in *Paradise Lost* – as well as Shakespeare's plays,

Wordsworth's poetry and translations of the *Arabian Nights*, most Victorian novelists before George Eliot and Meredith wrote for the many rather than the few. But whereas the earlier novelists quoted or referred to works which were familiar to a wide range of readers, later novelists used allusion more self-consciously and uncertainly, and less directly.²⁰ Thus changes in the cultural, thematic and structural uses of allusion reflect some of the changes in both the novel and the age which I have outlined in this introduction. In its many types and varieties, as well as in its greatest practitioners, the Victorian novel reflects the energy and vitality of an age that witnessed more rapid and disturbing social and intellectual change than any other period before or since, as I hope to show in the following chapters.

Notes

1. See J. A. Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists and Publishers* (London, 1976), to which I am indebted. This and other studies on readership, publication, and reception are listed on pp. 241–2 below.
2. In Thomas Morton's play *Speed the Plough* (1798), reference is often made to Mrs Grundy's views, although she herself never appears on stage.
3. Politically, the position of the middle classes in the nineteenth century is complex. Drawing on recent research, Andrew Blake writes: 'it can be argued that after [the] ostensible "triumph of the middle classes" between 1832 and 1851, the process of the transfer of power at least slowed down considerably, and perhaps went into reverse': *Reading Victorian Fiction: The Cultural Context and Ideological Content of the Nineteenth-century Novel* (Basingstoke and London, 1989), p. 45.
4. C. M. Law's figures, quoted in Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851–1875* (1971; repr. Frogmore, 1973), p. 24.
5. See, for example, R. K. Webb, 'The Victorian Reading Public', in *From Dickens to Hardy*, edited by Boris Ford, New Pelican Guide to English Literature, vol. 6 (Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 206.
6. See David Masson, *British Novelists and their Styles: Being a Critical Sketch of the History of British Prose Fiction* (Cambridge, 1859), pp. 26–7.
7. Masson, pp. 248–9.
8. Masson, p. 250.
9. See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957; repr. Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 42–51. But also see Andrew Blake, cited in note 3 above.
10. George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago and London, 1981), p. 9.
11. David Skilton assembles a list of eight uses in *Anthony Trollope and his Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of Mid-Victorian Fiction* (London, 1972), pp. 149–52.

12. See Donald D. Stone, *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1980), p. 12; Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p. 151.
13. See Stone, *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction*.
14. John Spiers, *Poetry Towards Novel* (London, 1971), p. 11.
15. For George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell, Wordsworth was the great Romantic precursor. Yet both novelists refer to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* at crucial points in their fiction, and Levine makes this seminal Gothic novel the starting-point for his study of nineteenth-century realism (*The Realistic Imagination*, p. 24).
16. When examining the new seriousness and the emphasis on 'thought' in late Victorian fiction of the 1880s, Kenneth Graham adds: 'The idea of the novel as pure entertainment died hard, nevertheless.' *English Criticism of the Novel, 1865-1900* (Oxford, 1965), p. 10.
17. See Richard Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870* (New York and London, 1959), pp. 65-6.
18. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (1970; repr. Frogmore, 1974) and Maurice Larkin, *Man and Society in Nineteenth-Century Realism: Determinism and Literature* (London and Basingstoke, 1977). See also p. 76 below, on 'environment'.
19. See Barry V. Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The Novel as Book of Life* (Cambridge, 1982), and M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York and London, 1971).
20. See Michael Wheeler, *The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction* (London and Basingstoke, 1979).

References

General Bibliographies

- B. Readership J publication and reception Altick, R. D.
Cruse, A. Dooley, A. C. Feltes, N. N. Graham, K. Griest, G.
L. Harvey, J. R. James, L. The English Common Reader: A
Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900
(Chicago and London, 1957). (Standard work.) The Victorians
and their Books (1935). (Covers a wide field.) Author and
Printer in Victorian England (1992). Modes of Production of
Victorian Novels (Chicago, 1986). (Marxist study of text as
product.) English Criticism on the Novel, 1865-1900
(Oxford, 1965). (Incisive on major literary debates of
period.) Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian
Novel (Newton Abbot, 1970). (On the mogul of Victorian
lending libraries.) Victorian Novelists and their
Illustrators (1970). Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-50: A
Study of the Literature Produced for the Working Classes OF
in Early Victorian Urban England (1963; repr.
Harmondsworth, 1974). (Good on popular publishing.)
Leavis, Q. D. Fiction and the Reading Public (1932; repro
1965). (Pioneering study; from sixteenth to twentieth
century.) Nadel, I. B., ed. Victorian Fiction: A Collection
of Essays From the Period (New York and London, 1986).
(Garland 'Victorian Muse' series; 22 essays.) Olmsted, J.
C., ed. A Victorian Art of Fiction: Essays on the Novel in
British Periodicals, 1830-1850, Garland Reference Library
of the Humanities, 100 (New York and London, 1979).
(Reprints contemporary reviews and essays.) Sutherland, J.
A. Victorian Novelists and Publishers (1976). (Excellent
study on period 1830-70, with general chapters and chapters
on individual novelists.) 'Victorian Novelists: A Survey',
Critical Quarterly, 30 (Spring, 1988), 50-61. (Crisp
account of Victorian fiction industry; incorporates
statistical analysis.) c. History and criticism (general)
Blake, A. David, D. Eigner, E. M. and G. J. Worth, eds
- Engel, E. and M. F. King Ford, B., ed. Gilmour, R. Reading
Victorian Fiction: The Cultural Context and the Ideological
Content of the Nineteenth-Century Novel (New York, 1989).
(Ambitious, radical theoretical study; revises received
view of dominant middle classes.) Fictions of Resolution in
Three Victorian Novels: {North and South', 'Our Mutual
Friend', 'Daniel Deronda' (New York, 1981). (Informative
readings of novels in their contexts.) Victorian Criticism
of the Novel (Cambridge, 1985). (Thirteen pieces of
Victorian criticism.) The Victorian Novel before Victoria
(New York, 1984). (Potted history of 1830s novelists,
including Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli, Marryat.) From Dickens

to Hardy, *New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. VI (Harmondsworth, 1982). (Includes chapters on novelists; author bibliographies of original Guide updated.) *The Novel in the Victorian Age: A Modern Introduction* (1986). (Emphasizes ways in which novelists were influenced by the age's social and cultural pressures.) Gregor, I., ed. *Reading the Victorian Novel: Detail into Form* (1980). (Chapters on major novels.) Hardy, B. *Forms of Feeling in Victorian Fiction* (Athens, Ohio and London, 1985). (Argues that novels of the period 'use emotion to investigate emotion'.) Hawthorn, J., ed. *The Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (1986). (Theory-based reassessments of major novelists.) Horsman, A. *The Victorian Novel*, *Oxford History of English Literature*, vol. XIII (Oxford, 1990). (Chapters on Thackeray, Dickens, the Brontes, Gaskell, Eliot, Trollope, Meredith and minors.) Karl, F. R. *An Age of Fiction: The Nineteenth Century British Novel* (New York, 1965). (Critical survey; mainly on major novelists.) Lovell, T. *Consuming Fiction* (London and New York, 1987). (Feminist-Marxist analysis of class, gender and literary production.) Miller, J. H. *The Form of Victorian Fiction: Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, Meredith, and Hardy* (Notre Dame and London, 1968). (On novel as a 'structure of interpenetrating minds'.) Pollard, A., ed. *The Victorians*, *Sphere History of Literature in the English Language*, vol. VI (1969). (Includes helpful introductory chapters on novelists, with short bibliographies.) Skilton, D. *The Early and Mid-Victorian Novel* (1992). (Critical Approaches series.) Stone, D. D. *Novelists in a Changing World: Meredith, James and the Transformation of English Fiction in the 1880s* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972). (Argues that decade witnessed ending of the Victorian era and beginning of the modern era.) Tillotson, K. *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Oxford, 1954). (Brought new scholarly rigour to the study of Victorian fiction by focusing on major and minor works published in single decade.) Vargish, T. *The Providential Aesthetic in Victorian Fiction* (Charlottesville, Va., 1985). (Discusses novels by C. Bronte, Dickens, Eliot.) Williams, R. *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (1970; repr. Frogmore, 1974). (Argues convincingly that society is main subject of English novel.) OF D. *Forms and sub-genres* Adburgham, A. Anderson, R. Bratton, J. S. Buckley, J. H. Carpenter, H. Cazamian, L. Fleishman, A. Flint, K., ed. Garrett, P. K. Gilbert, S. M. and S. Gubar Haining, P., ed. Hollingsworth, K. Hughes, W. Hunter, S. Silver-Fork Society: *Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840* (1983). (Assesses fidelity of novels.) *The Purple Heart Throbs: The Sub-Literature of Love* (1974). (Includes discussion on Braddon, Corelli, Ouida, Yonge.) *The Impact of Victorian*

Children's Fiction (London and Totowa, NJ, 1981). (Covers large field, including writers such as 'ALOE' and 'Hesba Stretton'.) Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (Cambridge, Mass., 1974). (Other Victorian writers discussed include Meredith, George Eliot, Butler, Pater, Hardy.) Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature (1985). (Chapters on Kingsley, Carroll, MacDonald.) The Social Novel in England, 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley (1903), trans. M. Fido (1973). (Pioneering study.) The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf (Baltimore and London, 1971). (Includes discussion on Dickens, Thackeray, C. Reade, George Eliot, Shorthouse, Pater, Hardy.) The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change (1987). (Extracts by Victorian writers on industrialization, London and the agricultural poor.) The Victorian Multiplot Novel: Studies in Dialogical Form (New Haven and London, 1980). (Focuses on Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope.) The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven and London, 1979). (Massive, fascinating, hyperbolic.) The Penny Dreadful; or, Strange, Horrid & Sensational Tales! (1975). (Anthology, with introductions and original illustrations.) The Newgate Novel, 1830-47: Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens, & Thackeray (Detroit, 1963). The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s (Princeton, 1980). (Important study, though overestimates significance of the sub-genre.) Victorian Idyllic Fiction: Pastoral Strategies (1984). (Includes chapters on Gaskell, Eliot and Hardy.) Kiely, R. The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Mass., 1972). (From The Castle of Otranto to Wuthering Heights.) King, J. Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James (Cambridge, 1978). (Argues that Victorian novels created a 'total and new version of tragedy'.) Levine, G. The Boundaries of Fiction: Carlyle, Macaulay, Newman (Princeton, 1968). ('As writers of history and autobiography and social analysis their proximity to the writers of nineteenth-century fiction can be seen clearly.')

) The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley (Chicago and London, 1981). (Significant study on elusiveness of realism as an idea and 'literary practice' of realism in the fiction.) Lucas, J. The Literature of Change: Studies in the Nineteenth-Century Provincial Novel (Hassocks and New York, 1977). (Includes chapters on Gaskell, Mark Rutherford and Hardy.) MacKay, C. H. Soliloquy in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (1987). (Argues an interesting case.) Maison, M. M. Search Your Soul, Eustace: A Survey of the Religious Novel in the Victorian

Age (London and New York, 1961). (Less facetious than it sounds; opens up large tract of minor fiction.) Milbank, A. *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (1992). (Subtly revises feminist orthodoxies; focuses on Dickens, Brontes, Collins, Le Fanu.) Orel, H. *The Victorian Short Story: Development and Triumph of a Literary Genre* (Cambridge, 1987). (Surveys careers of various short-story writers.) Prickett, S. *Victorian Fantasy* (Hassocks, 1979). (Includes discussion on Dickens, Lear, Carroll, Kingsley, MacDonald.) Punter, D. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London and New York, 1980). (Includes chapters on the nineteenth-century historical novel and the sensation novel.) Rosa, M. W. *The Silver-Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding Vanity Fair* (1936; repro Port Washington, NY, 1964). (Includes chapters on Bulwer and Disraeli.) Sanders, A. *The Victorian Historical Novel, 1840-1880* (1978). (Critical accounts of selected novels.) Showalter, E. *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (Princeton, 1977). (Major feminist study.) OF Squires, M. Terry, R. C. Tomlinson, T. B. Williams, I. *The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and D. H. Lawrence* (Charlottesville, 1974). (Focuses on seven major novels.) *Victorian Popular Fiction, 1860-80* (1983). (On fiction as entertainment for 'middle-brow' readership, with special reference to Oliphant, Broughton and Payn.) *The English Middle-Class Novel* (1976). (From Austen to Lawrence.) *The Realist Novel in England: A Study in Development* (1974). (From Austen to H. James.) E. Themes, motifs, and conventions Altick, R. D. Auerbach, N. Barickman, R., S. MacDonald and M. Stark Basch, F. Beer, G. Beer, P. Bernstein, C. L. Blake, K. *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus, 1991). *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1982). (Examines paradigms of the angel/demon, the old maid and the fallen woman.) *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins, and the Victorian Sexual System* (New York, 1982). (Argues that these novelists offer radical but 'unwitting, often reluctant' exposures of the Victorian sexual system.) *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel, 1837-67* (1974). *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983). (Fascinating analysis of Darwin's language and 'plots' in relation to nineteenth-century literature and thought; followed by detailed treatment of George Eliot and Hardy.) Reader, I. *Married Him: A Study of the Women Characters of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte', Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot* (1974). *The Celebration of*

Scandal: Toward the Sublime in Victorian Urban Fiction (University Park, Penn., 1991). (Post-structuralist analysis; includes silverfork novel.) Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-Postponement (Brighton, 1984). (Stresses the relation between 'erotic renunciation' and creative achievement in women's writing of the period.) Bodenheimer, R. The Politics of Story in Victorian Fiction (Ithaca, NY and London, 1988). (Narrative ideology in a fair range of novels.) Calder, J. Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction, World of Literature series (1976). Chase, K. Eros and Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot (New York, 1984). (Investigates how mind and emotion find expression in structures of selected novels.) Colby, V. Yesterday's Women: Domestic Realism in the English Novel (Princeton, 1974). (Includes treatment of several minor figures.) Cunningham, G. The New Woman and the Victorian Novel (1978). ('New Woman' fiction discussed in relation to Meredith, Hardy and Gissing.) Cunningham, V. Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel (Oxford, 1975). (Individual chapters on Brontes, Gaskell, George Eliot, Dickens, Oliphant, Mark Rutherford; the sympathetic treatment of dissent is main touchstone of judgement.) Danon, R. Work in the English Novel: The Myth of Vocation (1985). (On 'middle-class myth' of work as main source of self-definition and psychic integration in Victorian novel.) Faber, R. Proper Stations: Class in Victorian Fiction (1971). (Concentrates on period c. 1830-80.) Gibson, C., ed. Art and Society in the Victorian Novel (1989). (Miscellany of thirteen essays.) Gilmour, R. The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel (1981). (Interesting on eighteenth-century legacy; chapters on Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope.) Gribble, J. The Lady of Shalott in the Victorian Novel (1983). (Theorized readings of novels by Dickens, C. Bronte, Eliot, Hardy.) Grylls, D. Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature (London and Boston, 1978). (Defines 'Puritan' and 'Romantic' ideals and applies them mainly to Austen, Dickens, Butler, Gosse.) Jay, E. The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel (Oxford, 1979). (Thorough treatment of Evangelicalism, followed by analysis of novels by George Eliot, Mrs Worboise and Butler.) Keating, P. J. The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction (1971). (Emphasis falls mainly on Gissing and the 1880s.) THE Kestner, J.

Knoepflmacher, U. C. Kovacevic, I., ed. Kucich, J.
 Lefkowitz, L. H. Melchiori, B. A. Miller, D. A.
 Musselwhite, D. Ousby, I. Praz, M. Qualls, B. V. Reed, J.

R. Reed, W. L. Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women, 1827-1867 (London and Madison, 1985). (Discusses fiction of Frances Trollope, Charlotte Tonna, Dinah Craik and Harriet Martineau, among others.) Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler (Princeton, 1965). (Good treatment of relationship between literature and history of ideas.) Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene, 1750-1850 (Leicester, 1975). (Introduction followed by anthology; includes passages from works by Harriet Martineau and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna.) Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens (Berkeley, Calif., 1987). (Demanding theoretical study.) The Character of Beauty in the Victorian Novel (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1987). Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel (1985). (Relates newspaper/periodical debates about terrorism to fictional portrayals of it.) The Novel and the Police (Berkeley, Calif., 1988). (Chapters on Dickens, Collins and Trollope.) Partings Welded Together: Politics and Desire in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel (London and New York, 1988). (On the Oedipus complex as an internalization of the 'idea of the state'.) Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle (Cambridge, Mass., 1976). The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, trans. Angus Davidson (1956). (Relates 'decline of the hero' to Romanticism turned bourgeois.) The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fictiotz: The Novel as Book of Life (Cambridge, 1982). (Takes seventeenth-century religious writings and Romantic 'revisionings' as context in which Carlyle, Charlotte Bronte, Dickens and George Eliot worked.) Victorian Conventions (Athens, Ohio, 1975). (Conventions range from marriage to duelling, from swindles to the occult; illustrated mainly through the fiction.) Mediations on the Hero: A Study of the Romantic Hero in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New Haven and London, 1974). (Includes Charlotte Bronte in selected examples of European and American literature.) Russell, N. The Novelist and Mammon: Literary Responses to the World of Commerce in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1986). (On fictional responses to the 'development of capitalism and its institutions'.) Sadoff, D. F. Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot and Bronte on Fatherhood (Baltimore and London, 1982). (Freudian.) Sandison, A. The Wheel of Empire: A Study of the Imperial Idea in Some Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Fiction (London and New York, 1967). (Focuses on Haggard, Kipling, Conrad, Buchan.) Smith, S. M. The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s (Oxford, 1980). (Organized by theme; illustrated.) Stone, D. D. The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1980).

(Major work on the Romantic heritage.) Swindells, J. *Victorian Writing and Working Women* (Oxford, 1985). (Polemical account of relations between gender, class and labour in Victorian writing.) Thomson, P. *The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal* (1956: repr. Westport, Conn., 1978). (Important study on subject which has since been discussed exhaustively.) Trodd, A. *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* (1989). (Crime as metaphor for relationships in middle-class Victorian society.) Watt, G. *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (1984). (Discusses novels by Dickens, Gaskell, Collins, Trollope, Gissing, Hardy, Moore.) Webb, I. *From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution* (New York, 1981). (Considers 'non-industrial' novels.) Weiss, B. *The Hell of the English: Bankruptcy and the Victorian Novel* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1986). (Well-researched, interesting study.) Wheeler, M. *The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction* (1979). (On the convention of religious and secular allusion and its use in selected novels.) Williams, M. *Women in the English Novel, 1800-1900* (1984). (Reasonably full, conventional treatment.) Wolff, R. L. *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (New York and London, 1977). (Survey of novels published in large Garland reprint series; limited critically and prone to inaccuracy, but an invaluable point of departure.) Yeazell, R. B. *Sex, Politics, and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Baltimore, Md., 1986). (Cultural history.)