The Library of Fiction, volume 1, in monthly installment form

INTRODUCTION

The Library of Fiction, Or Family Story-Teller

History of the Volume, by Payton Andreadakis and Kate Eliason

One of the most important aspects of nineteenth-century periodical literature is the environment in which it was born. After the invention of the steam press in 1814, the cost of printing dropped and the amount of printing material skyrocketed. This created one of the most interesting literary moments in British literary history as the sheer amount of periodical literature exploded and the ranks of middle-class readers swelled. It was here, in the early months of 1836, that the The Library of Fiction, or Family Story-teller first appeared, published by Chapman and Hall.
Charles Whiting was a popular printer who produced most of his work in the 1830s and '40s and who later became instrumental in the introduction of postage stamps to England (Green).

Chapman and Hall (founded by Edward Chapman and William Hall) were a publishing team operating at 186 Strand in London as early as 1830, first as booksellers and then as publishers (as it became clear that most of the proceeds from their sales were going back to the publishers) (Vann 1). Their first two publications were both periodicals: Chat of the Week, and The Christian Register, both released in 1830, apparently aiming to serve the rapidly growing periodical market (Vann 1). They relied heavily on advertising, quickly publishing relatively cheap material, with most publications costing a few pence at most. Some of their most successful publications were comic, and advertisements often highlighted the illustrations included in many of their publications. Robert Seymour was frequently employed by Chapman and Hall as an engraver, and this is the case with The Library of Fiction, which contains illustrations by Seymour, along with illustrator Robert Buss (Vann 1).

Edited by Charles Whitehead, The Library of Fiction, or Family Story-teller, was published in fourteen monthly parts from April 1836 to July 1837, and printed by Charles Whiting, also located on the Strand.¹ Each monthly installment was released on the last day of the month prior (i.e. the first issue, April 1836, was released on 31 March) and contained four or five stories written by authors whose popularity varied widely. An advertisement from March 1836 describes the first monthly installment as follows: “On the 31st of March will be published, price One Shilling, to be continued monthly, containing 56 pages of Letterpress, 8vo [octavo] and two Illustrations, No. 1 of the Library of Fiction” (“Cheap” 104). The advertisement also describes the collection of stories as a “cheap and entertaining periodical” (“Cheap” 104). This advertisement fits the Chapman and Hall brand: cheap and entertaining literature that could be printed and sold quickly and in regular installments. This first installment featured five stories, including “Ginevra” and “Mr. Firedrake Fidget.” This first issue, however, leads with “The Tuggs's at Ramsgate,” a story published under Charles Dickens’s pseudonym “Boz,” and a later installment includes a second story by Boz, “A Little Talk About Spring and the Sweeps.”

The publication of The Library of Fiction should be considered in its social context. Many of the writers, editors, publishers, printers, and illustrators involved in this publication ran in the same circles and worked together on multiple projects. For example, Robert Seymour, whose engravings appear in the The Library of Fiction, asked Charles Whitehead to collaborate on a comic project with him (Whitehead writing the story and Seymour illustrating it). Whitehead, however, was too busy working on the The Library of Fiction and recommended Dickens to work on the project instead. The two would go on to produce the now-famous Pickwick Papers (Vann 1). The Pickwick Papers did not initially sell well, however; the first installment sold only about four hundred copies. It wasn’t until almost a year later, when Dickens introduced the character of Sam Weller into the story, that sales began to skyrocket; the tenth installment (in February 1837) sold fourteen thousand copies. The eighteenth installment (in November 1837) sold forty thousand copies (Vann 2). It may be that Chapman and Hall included the two stories by Boz in The Library of Fiction on a whim and because they saw some merit for entertainment in his stories. But by the time they chose to compile the periodical into an edited volume, they may have begun to realize the selling power of Dickens’s pseudonym.²

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¹ Charles Whiting was a popular printer who produced most of his work in the 1830s and '40s and who later became instrumental in the introduction of postage stamps to England (Green).
The two volumes of *The Library of Fiction* are currently estimated to be worth between $2,000-3,000 bound and between $8,000-9,000 loose. The appreciation in price is most likely largely due to the career Dickens would go on to have and the branding associated with his name. Dickens's notoriety—as well as other popular authors published in *The Library of Fiction*—often led to their stories being republished multiple times in multiple places.

In the mid-nineteenth century, this popularity, along with the reputation and notoriety of numerous English authors, began to expand overseas, creating a “tremendous, even exponential, growth in international trade over the period” (Winship 148). However, foreign tariffs often made it difficult to publish and distribute these works cheaply and accessibly. So some American publishers turned to less honest reprinting and redistribution routes to bypass these costs and obstacles, and because international copyright was not recognized in the U.S. until 1891 (Groves 139), this was easy to get away with and had few repercussions from the law. For example, employees of American publishers would often keep track of the most popular works from England via periodicals, particularly trade journals and publishers' catalogs, and through a network of acquaintanceships in London (Winship 151). They also used a system of credit transfer to help them pay the tariffs on bulk purchases of overseas books. All of this culminated in American publishers being able to distribute foreign works at the prices they chose, but mostly without giving any of the proceeds to the original British authors and publishers.

However, other American publishers sought to cooperate with the original authors and publishers in order to ensure they still received a fair share of the profits and thus created a system called the “courtesy of trade” which was meant to lay out a series of regulations that helped keep competition and profits from reprints of foreign works in check (Groves 140). These regulations were never explicitly defined, but they nonetheless became an important staple of trade publishing and were generally successful in their intended function. It was through trade courtesy that the American publishers Ticknor and Fields established an agreement with Chapman and Hall, and began republishing authors whose work was included in *The Library of Fiction*, such as Charles Dickens and Mary Russell Mitford. One volume that appeared during this time was *Midshipman's Expedients*, published by Carey, Lea & Blanchard in 1837, which was nearly identical to *The Library of Fiction*, though it's unknown if it was a piracy or compiled through a trade courtesy agreement.

A subsequent effort made by Chapman and Hall to reprint and republish fiction like that contained in *The Library of Fiction* came several decades later in the form of *The Select Library of Fiction*. According to Stephen Colclough, they began in May 1854 and ended up with a single volume comprised of several contemporary novels, each published with a glazed illustrated board (Colclough 1). Chapman and Hall initially stopped adding to
the collection in 1859 but resumed publication of the series in the early 1860s after their company was absorbed by another publisher called W. H. Smith and Son. Smith acquired multiple copyrights from Chapman and Hall in October 1860, but it wasn’t until April 1862 that the next volume in the newly revived *Select Library of Fiction* was published. *The Select Library of Fiction* was primarily released in the form of cheap yellowbacks sold at Smith’s railway stalls. These books quickly became one of their most popular products. Smith also continued to publish *Select Library of Fiction* volumes with the Chapman and Hall imprint, despite the acquisition.

Overall, *The Library of Fiction* was truly one of the most influential collections of its time. It helped to expand the popularity of English literature overseas, to the point that some publishers were even willing to resort to piracy. And it even inspired its publisher to try to repeat its success with a similar volume.

**Material Description**, by Ariel Hochstrasser and Elyse Kunzler

The 1836 *The Library of Fiction* edition owned by the Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections is in two octavo volumes (it was originally published in fourteen monthly installments before being bound together). Each volume is small, around twenty centimeters long, and bound half in red leather and half red cloth, with a vertical cut differentiating the two fabrics on the front and back. Volume 1 contains 384 printed pages, and Volume 2 has 350 pages. There are gilded arabesque designs on the spine, gilding on the edges, gold stamped lettering, and cloth accents on the front and back covers. Each spine has five raised bands with stamped designs, the title *Library of Fiction*, “Boz 1” and “Boz 2” for the respective edition, and the years 1836 or 1837 at the bottom of the spines. Because Boz, also known as Charles Dickens, is referenced directly on the spines, this edition was marketed for collectors of Dickens. The endpapers are marbled in red, yellow and blue. The title page alternates between typefaces, including serif and blackletter, while the rest of the book is printed in a serif font. The paper inside the book is acidic and the type small, insinuating the installments weren’t made to last. These “cheap” installments were then bound with quality leather and embellishments, however, contrasting the affordability with grandeur.

Many of the markings within our edition characterize its physical state and provenance, making it a one-of-a-kind edition. Minor pencil writings on the first blank leaves say “1st edition,” “Eckel 137,” and “Pb.0359.” which appear to be library signs. A black stamp of the letters “UPB” and the phrase, and "bound by Zaehnsdorf, London, England" is on the bottom corners of the page before the “Address.” Zaehnsdorf was a bookbinder in London who originally worked with Wesley and Co. before opening his own business in 1842, so this edition wasn’t likely bound until the 1840s. Zaehnsdorf often bound collectors’ editions as this set appears to be.

The pages of this edition are yellowing with some minor foxing around the edges, including mold spots around the interior binding, light rubbing and damp staining on the exterior edges of the spine and cover, and occasional bleeding from the ink to the other side of the leaves.
In addition, there are fourteen engraved illustrations from various artists, including Hablot K. Browne, Robert Seymour, and Robert William Buss. Both Seymour and Buss were hired artists from Dickens’ publishers, Chapman and Hall, and Buss was hired only after Seymour committed suicide. The publishers were disappointed with the illustrations provided by Buss, so they eventually hired Browne to replace him (Perdue). Each illustration appears to coincide with a story directly attached to them and helps break up the bulk of the text, including people interacting within the adjacent scenes on pages labeled directly under the picture. The engravings are in the same black ink as the type. The verso sides of the illustrations are intentionally left blank so they could be removed and displayed as artwork in the homes of readers.

In many ways, this edition is standard for the genre and period, but in one respect it’s unique: the cover. The cover is an 1840s style bound several years after the original publication. The “Address,” a preface written by editor Charles Whitehead, states that the collection, “is to put its readers in possession, at a moderate price, of a series of ORIGINAL Tales and Sketches” (v). The original installments were praised for being affordable and available for all audiences to enjoy selections of high-quality literature. They were printed cheaply at one shilling a piece for mass consumption, but the cover juxtaposes expense with this affordability. The mystery as to why remains open, although one can speculate.

It could be a popular decoration. Having ornately bound books on display is something low-class readers couldn’t afford. This would allow for the decoration aesthetic but would be impractical for daily reading. Another reason could be for collectors who wanted to preserve the entire set, allowing the issues to maintain their bibliographic integrity better than if they were handled individually throughout time. Then again, because there are many publications by “Boz,” or Charles Dickens, as well as other notable authors of the time, it could be that the quality binding was for collectors who specifically enjoyed preserving as many stories told by their favorite authors as they could. Because Zaehnsdorf was the binder, this further implies that our edition is a collector’s piece. This could double the value of the basic installments if bound as “Boz” originals, and kept on the shelf as a point of pride by the collector.

Regardless of the reason, the paradox as to why the “cheap” installments have been expensively bound remains open for interpretation. If not for the binding, however, The Library of Fiction’s installments would have degraded faster over time. Being used by the middle-income worker when out traveling or the woman reading in a sunny garden, they were not made to last but to be enjoyed briefly.

Many of the stories that appeared in The Library of Fiction didn’t just show up in a cheap and affordable compilation. In fact, many were republished before and after The Library of Fiction. The stories that had been printed beforehand were noted in the table of contents with an asterisk, informing readers that they might have seen this work of fiction and its author in a different location before. Seven of the thirty-two stories appeared in previous printings, so roughly twenty-two percent of the contents was unoriginal. Of these stories, many appeared in small compilations, periodicals or magazines, such as The Englishman’s Magazine and The National Recorder. Despite these publications, none of the stories appeared in anything high-scale or incredibly popular.
Excepting these seven stories, twenty-five of the fictional literary pieces appeared here for the first time in print. This first debut, in *The Library of Fiction*, opened doors for many of the selected stories in some fascinating ways. Obviously, the two stories written by “Boz” were republished again; hence the historical author’s steady rise to fame. However, many of these stories and authors were lost to time and popular knowledge soon after their appearance in *The Library of Fiction*.

Despite the stories’ different literary tracks, a large number of the selected stories appeared again in a peculiar place: women’s magazines and periodicals. Although *The Library of Fiction* was originally published as a collection of stories geared toward families, the stories from *The Library of Fiction* often later found themselves reprinted in places such as *The Ladies’ Repository* and *The Beau Monde*. These publications were geared toward women, in both their titles and their ads. This is quite an intriguing place for these short stories to appear, as the vast majority of the authors from *The Library of Fiction* were men. Not only were the reprint venues feminine in nature, but there were even changes made to the stories themselves to make them more geared toward women. For instance, in 1842, the story “Mr. Firedrake Fidget” was republished in *The Beau Monde* as “Mrs. Firedrake Fidget,” centering the story more on the wife to target women readers.

Several of the *Library of Fiction* republications were organized by the authors themselves, appearing in compilations of their works. This is the case with “Jesse Cliffe” by Mary Russell Mitford and “The Convict” by Charles Ollier. Some of these reprinted stories also appear in volumes similar to *The Library of Fiction* in the fact that they contained collected stories. These include *The Novel Newspaper, The Fireside Journal, Midshipman’s Expedients*, and *Smiles and Tears*. These collections held many other works of fiction in the same vein as *The Library of Fiction*; however, they promote the narrative aspect of the works rather than the morals, which was Charles Whitehead’s supposed focus. These publication venues tend to rely on whimsy and entertainment value.

Whatever the case, *The Library of Fiction*, for the most part, tended to be the most popular among the places where these stories were republished. The reasoning behind this might be because of the number of republications of the stories that came after, or possibly because of the inclusion of Dickens’s works in this collection. Another big reason could be the savvy of Charles Whitehead and his marketing. Whitehead tends to appear sporadically in the nineteenth-century, both as a publisher and an author. Whitehead’s growing popularity and strength in selling books made him an asset to *The Library of Fiction* and all of the stories’ futures, as did the heavy marketing done by Chapman and Hall.

**Charles Whitehead’s “Address,”** by Marissa Fuller and Hope Jones

While some of the stories from *The Library of Fiction* were eventually republished around the world, they were originally brought together by one man: Charles Whitehead. As the editor of *The Library of Fiction* and the author of two of its featured stories, Whitehead plays a unique role in this collection as the curator of what he called “a companion to the family circle” (vi). Born in London in 1804, Whitehead was the oldest of six children, having two younger brothers and three sisters (Bell 6-7). He married Mary Anne Loomes in 1833, during which time he also experienced some decent successes with his writing, including recognition in 1831 for his poem “The Solitary,” and then, in 1836, the publication of *The Library of Fiction* (Turnbull). The publishers of *The Library of Fiction*, Chapman and Hall, offered to publish more of Whitehead’s works, but he declined and instead directed them towards Charles Dickens, who then published *The Pickwick Papers*. Sometime during the 1840s, Whitehead was elected a member of the Mulberry Club, which put him in connection with the publishing world of the time.
with other writers (Bell 19-20). Turnbull records that over time, Whitehead grew to be a heavy drinker, pushing away many of his friends. On 17 March 1857, he and his wife arrived in Melbourne, Australia, where they lived the remainder of their lives. He continued to write, but alcoholism still plagued him, as well as increasing poverty. He passed away at the age of 58 on 5 July 1862.

As the editor of The Library of Fiction, Whitehead penned a preface titled “Address,” which is found at the very beginning of the first volume just before the table of contents, like a host announcing the honored guests. The “Address” is brief, taking up only two pages. Whitehead thanks those who have read the installments of The Library of Fiction as it was released in periodical format for their positive audience reception which lead to the book’s publication. He states that the purpose of the book is to give readers a series of original works from aspiring authors "at a moderate price" (v).

Next, he addresses his intended audience, which includes casual readers who need a book that is easy to peruse yet still satisfies the imagination. He also states that the book is suitable for families, who will enjoy the “careful inculcation of the purest principles of morality” (vi). Finally, the last paragraph of Whitehead's "Address" ends on a flourish of prose and hope for the success of the work. Quoting Shakespeare, he states that the reasoning for compiling a collection of short stories is that the “most exquisite” works of literature are the most brief (vi). He hopes that people will find themselves touched by the words within.

One of Whitehead’s main goals in the “Address” is to make the literature seem classy and high-end. He states that the audience might be made up of “desultory reader[s],” yet he promises these readers that the authors inside are “distinguished” and “of the very loftiest pretensions” (v-vi). With these somewhat contrasting statements, Whitehead may be trying to create a middle ground; he gives the authors credibility for their work, while convincing his target audience that the literature inside isn't too high-end for a casual read, which is all they might have time for. In addition, Whitehead’s inclusion of a well-known Shakespeare quote, “brevity is the soul of wit,” also seems to be an attempt at giving just enough class to the literature in The Library of Fiction (vi). Although Whitehead claims that the pieces are “the most exquisite, [and] most celebrated works of fiction” (vi), from a current perspective, this isn’t the case. Most of the stories and authors in The Library of Fiction have been forgotten with the passage of time.

Whitehead’s diction in the “Address” indicates that he is also trying to reach a moral, middle-class audience with his collection of stories. He writes that this collection contains the “careful inculcation of the purest principles of morality” (vi). Later in the “Address,” he adds that “[t]he Novelette has . . . been the favourite medium with gifted writers of pouring forth the spirit of passion, or striking out the flashes of mirth” (vi). Words such as “family,” “morality,” “passion,” and “mirth” show a range of ways in which people can experience these stories, and while these words aren't exclusively religious, they lean towards a morally uplifting Christian tone that would have made the stories appealing to a conventional, middle-class audience.
Advertisements and reviews for The Library of Fiction picked up on Whitehead's claim that his book was “moral” and designed for “families” (vi). One example, found in the Metropolitan Magazine in the same year The Library of Fiction first appeared, states that there is not one story “that has contained aught that might shock the purity of the most rigid moralist, or wound the feelings of the most serious Christian.” This writer concludes that Whitehead’s collection “may be safely admitted into families” (“Notice” 80). Another advertisement is found in a book titled Sunday, Under Three Heads, a book in which Dickens discusses how the working classes observed the sabbath. This further denotes this collection’s focus on moral and Christian values (Sparks 52). Most other advertisements and reviews also point out that The Library of Fiction contains work by “the most celebrated and popular writers” and that it has conveniently been “placed within the easy reach of all classes” (“The Cheapest” 51). These ads and reviews serve to amplify Whitehead’s own message in his “Address”: The Library of Fiction is a well written, entertaining, and reasonably priced piece of family-friendly fiction.

However, actually reading The Library of Fiction’s tales brings Whitehead’s claims into question. One is quickly led to ask, are these stories really “family-friendly,” or was Whitehead delusional about what should be defined as moral? Most of the short stories contain rather gruesome and gory details or endings; they aren’t exactly filled with the “mirth” and “morality” that Whitehead promises in his “Address.” “Monkwynd” for example, is about an unhinged monk who murders his brother and his brother’s wife in an act of revenge. “The Alchemyst” ends with an execution followed by a murder/suicide. “The Convict” also ends with an execution that is thwarted only by a stroke brought on when an imprisoned man is so moved by his daughter’s song that he has a fit in his cell. “The Old Farm-house” reveals that a young man whom a couple murder in the hopes of saving their farm is actually their long-lost son. These shockingly mature stories might come as a surprise to twenty-first-century readers, especially when they consider Whitehead’s previous promise of “moral” content. Few positive encounters or happy endings are anywhere to be found here.

One explanation for this might be that, as Jarlath Killeen explains, British readers were used to violent “public displays” like executions and bear-baiting and even enjoyed them or went for entertainment. Over time, these events were eliminated, and “the masses had to resort to private consumption of violent literature to get their bloody fill” (45-46). Another article by Ian Wilkinson invites us to consider the carnivalesque fascination provided by off-color literature that existed during this time, specifically in the work of Charles Dickens. Wilkinson goes on to explain how many of Dickens’s characters are “always found performing a role,” and he further argues that the “carnivalesque” emerges when such characters try to break out of their original or “true” roles (3). With these sources in mind, it becomes apparent that our modern standards of what it means for literature to be considered “moral” or “family-friendly” must differ considerably from what Whitehead and other nineteenth-century authors and reviewers considered appropriate.
For modern readers, stories of murder and family destruction are not typically thought of as appropriate for children, and they are rarely considered morally exemplary. But for Whitehead and readers in 1836, the stories contained in the volume posed no threat to young or sensitive readers when compared with the world they knew. In fact, Whitehead claims these stories are lit by “the sunlight of fancy and invention” (vi).

Authors and Authorship in The Library of Fiction, by Joslyn Bishop and Addi Schenk

The concept of authorship has changed throughout history. It is a fairly recent development that writing is seen as a “creative activity that could lead to individual fame and some fortune” (Finkelstein 67). Authors and professional writers for most of history acted in a scribal role—which means they mostly compiled manuscripts, only adding minor annotations or comments. In the Renaissance, printed texts increased in circulation which led to the recognition of individual authors for the first time. Writing became “a potential source for recognition and social advancement” (Finkelstein 71). But starting in the eighteenth century, and even more so in the nineteenth, authorship was redefined. The development of periodicals, subscriptions, and the serialization of texts changed what it meant to be a professional author.

By the nineteenth century, writers could make a living off of writing. Joanne Shattock claims that “professional writing life . . . which brought with it respectability and some financial security, was owing to the emergence of a periodical press of unprecedented magnitude and diversity” (65). In addition to the periodical, literary circles helped to expand the idea of an author. Literary circles worked together to publish, and republish, each other’s works in order to make more money and circulate authors and their works.

Even with all the redefining and expansion of being an author, authorship wasn’t always clear. Repeated publications of serialized stories led to confusion. “[S]ome stories were attributed to specific authors and others were not, but a spectrum of possibilities between these two poles” (Bode 292). Sometimes authors would be wrongly attributed. Some authors stole stories and attached their names to it. The Library of Fiction has these authorial problems and more, but they only occur with the smaller authors. The biggest names in The Library of Fiction, like Dickens and Blessington, are attributed and repeatedly mentioned in advertisements.
Advertisements for The Library of Fiction focused more on the publishers and the included illustrations rather than the authors themselves. “Boz” was one of the few exceptions, as his name was beginning to attract Victorian readers. In fact, many of the ads for The Library of Fiction were found in Dickens’s other works. Aside from the few recognizable authors, the rest of the stories had to live up to the lofty introduction from the editor’s “Address” as “a companion to the family circle” (Whitehead vi). Overall, reviewers were at least lukewarm towards the collection. A few heavily criticized a certain story, such as “Destiny” which The Metropolitan Magazine believed should never have been published, while others focused on their favorite works, which were most often in line with what the advertisers had believed would be the selling points.

These well-advertised authors are perfect examples of a trend found in the research process: authors’ marketing and connections were an important factor during the Victorian period. The Countess of Blessington, for example, who edited “The Old Farm-house,” was well known for marketing herself effectively and for grasping the attention of male critics without receiving the same backlash that many female authors experienced at this time, allowing her to write more of the popular fiction instead of constantly striving for literary genius (Schmid 90). Other women writers banded together as their own literary club, as Mary Russell Mitford, author of “Jesse Cliffe,” did with writers such as Joanna Bailie and Fanny Trollope. Their group focused on supporting each other by reviewing works, sending recommendations of “worthwhile literature,” and facilitating debates on what literature should be and how women fit into the literary world (Halsey 133). However, not every connection was a good one. Charles Ollier was wonderfully described as “a slippery fellow” due to his dealings in publishing (Lau 188). Yet many still continued business with him which may show just how ironically sociable the world of books can be. An author’s success in the world of serialization—in terms of whether or not they were promoted or printed in a bound collection—might have been dependent on their connections.

The second discovery was that several of the authors included in The Library of Fiction did not live off of their writing. Two in particular stood out: Edward Mayhew and Samuel Warren. Warren’s career was entirely grounded in law; he was both a practitioner and a legal writer/philosopher. His creative works would at times both reflect and contradict his day to day career. For example, Warren would often write fiction in which the English legal system is a perfect system, and yet several other creative works feature characters who seemingly suffer because of the law. This is evident in his story “Monkwynd” in The Library of Fiction. In “Monkwynd,” the main character feels that he must seek out his own revenge for the murder of his brother, since no one else has punished the man who had committed the murder. Mayhew, on the other hand, began his career by writing short fiction and plays but eventually went to veterinarian school in the late 1830s. He wrote medical treatises about dogs and horses which were well respected in the veterinary community. The mixture of both amateur writers and more intentional or prolific writers—and some in between—is yet another interesting part of this collection of short stories.

Probably the most prolific writer in The Library of Fiction is Charles Dickens. He was one of the most popular authors at the time and certainly is the most well-
known by modern readers. Modern collectors and people in the 1830s both desired a copy of The Library of Fiction because it has a story from Dickens. We can tell that he is the selling point of the collection because his pseudonym “Boz” is on the spine of our edition in the HBLL. A minor author wouldn't be featured on the spine. The person who bound the edition thought Boz was an important feature of the book. Additionally, Dickens was a selling point because of his reputation. In the Quarterly Review, the popular Pickwick Papers are advertised right before an ad for The Library of Fiction. It seems like an advertising technique to say, “If you like Dickens’s Pickwick Papers, you’ll love his story in The Library of Fiction.” His reputation is used to sell the latter.

Readers are faced, then, with the question whether The Library of Fiction helped Charles Dickens become the famous Dickens we now know, or whether the name “Boz” helped to sell the collection. Chapman and Hall sought Dickens out, soliciting a story for The Library of Fiction, rather than the other way around. Dickens was already a popular short story writer in 1836 and was beginning to become the novelist as we know him today. Dickens took the opportunity to publish in The Library of Fiction to get another publication under his belt and probably for monetary compensation as well. In turn, Chapman and Hall got to put his name on their book, which helped to sell the lesser-known authors in the collection. Thus, while Dickens's stories in The Library of Fiction aren't his best, he did a favor to Chapman and Hall. And in turn, they published Dickens's first novels, like Oliver Twist and A Christmas Carol when he switched from writing short stories. It's safe to say that both Dickens and Chapman and Hall mutually benefited from Dickens being included in The Library of Fiction.

Content, Reviews, and Reception, by Anna Lamb and Rebekah Olsen

It is not surprising that a book featuring stories by Charles Dickens was marketed to the Victorian reading public as morally-uplifting and cheap. Each installment of The Library of Fiction sold for one shilling, and the entire volume sold for eight shillings, making it a relatively inexpensive literary investment. The stories cater to both young and old, male and female, and are described as “fire-side reading” (“The Library” 123). The Metropolitan Magazine evaluated the stories in The Library of Fiction, stating, “there is not one that has contained aught that might shock the purity of the most rigid moralist, or wound the feelings of the most serious Christian. It may be safely admitted into families” (“Library” 80). This cheap and family-oriented collection may easily be described as “lowbrow,” which makes sense, seeing as it was marketed to the middle and lower classes.

However, readers should note that lowbrow literature—which is typically defined as anything “of, relating to, or suitable for a person with little taste or intellectual interest” (“Lowbrow”)—had an important place in Victorian society. During the Victorian era, the Industrial Revolution brought higher literacy levels and increased leisure time, meaning that a larger amount of lower-class people were reading than ever before. With this came “the establishment of the practices of popular reading, closely tied to seriality” (King 166). The Library of Fiction's main selling point was that it was “placed within the easy reach of all classes--a feature calculated to ensure the widest popularity and patronage” (“The Library” 48).

This attempt to appeal to a wider range of readers means that The Library of Fiction is crammed with an overabundance of lowbrow literature, and the contents of this volume sit comfortably in many of the tropes of the Victorian era. The
stories in The Library of Fiction display a variety of genres that were popular at the time: carnivalesque stories, gothic stories, ghost stories, and detective stories all make an appearance. All of these have their own generic expectations, and all of those expectations make an appearance in these stories, making The Library of Fiction a phenomenal cross-section of Victorian lowbrow literary tropes.

For example, one of the stories in The Library of Fiction, “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate,” is worth studying to understand conventions of a popular lowbrow literary motif, the carnivalesque. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the carnivalesque is “life itself, but shaped according to a certain manner of play” (Wilkinson 2). Ian Wilkinson argues that Dickens does an exceptional job of addressing the unearned vanity of the rising merchant class in “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate, writing, “The Tuggses inherit money, attempt to play the parts of genteel types, and fail miserably. Their fate is typical of that of many of their kind in Sketches by Boz” (Wilkinson 6). As an example of Dickens’s manipulation of this “play” that Bakhtin is talking about, “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate” emphasizes the topsy-turvyness of new money, and the ways in which fortunes can outstrip manners, creating a family that the reader can laugh at, but also a family that we have some sympathy for, because of their complete inadequacy for the task at hand.

Another story in The Library of Fiction that serves as emblematic of these popular genres is “The Rival Houses” by G. P. R. James. James was a popular fiction writer, creating stories and novels that serve as early examples of detective fiction. Although almost all of the stories in The Library of Fiction feature plot devices like murder, foul play, bizarre coincidences, and unexpected twists, according to Alison Matthews David, “the now almost forgotten George Payne Rainsford James . . . [was] one of the first [authors] to feature actual named London police officers in fiction” (51). This places James at the forefront of developing new elements that in detective fiction today are taken for granted. By using actual burgeoning police techniques like footprint detection and other elements of the forensic process forty years before Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes series, James blazed a trail that detective fiction (which is often considered lowbrow even today) still follows (David 51).

The Library of Fiction wasn’t just full of cutting-edge literary tropes, however; it was also interested in narrative holdovers from the past. Gothic novels had been around for decades at the point of The Library of Fiction’s publication, but the Victorian Gothic was a slightly different brand of Gothic literature. Almost exclusively written by women, the Gothic is represented admirably in Mary Russell Mitford’s contribution to The Library of Fiction, a short story called “Jesse Cliffe.” “Jesse Cliffe” contains a half-wild poor child, plenty of moor-wandering, a dramatic house fire, and the reward of a sweet young lady whom the protagonist consistently calls “Miss Phoebe.” This dynamic, similar to the one between Heathcliff and Cathy in another classic Gothic novel, Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights, ends positively. According to Carol Margaret Davison, that happy ending is a shield for Mitford to address Victorian England’s “ongoing fixation with issues of sexuality and gender, extending that genre’s range . . . to an interrogation of the patriarchal social structures that shaped Britain’s political and domestic life” (125). Through her manipulation of Victorian Gothic literature, Mitford is able to question default gender constructions, while still offering her readers something very palatable and familiar.
Perhaps this is one reason why *The Library of Fiction* was consistently described in contemporary ads and reviews as “family friendly.” However, according to modern standards, all of the stories have mature themes and challenging concepts that would easily make publishers today consider it adult fiction. Few today, for example, would feel that murder, alcoholism, and pacts with the devil are appropriate for children, but in 1836, reviewers of *The Library of Fiction* saw only the (admittedly vague) morals being taught in familiar literary ways and decided that these tales were safe for consumption by readers of all ages. We should keep in mind, too, that literature specifically written for children was a relatively new genre at the time, and very little was published specifically for children (though this market was about to explode with the mid-nineteenth-century writers who ushered in a Golden Age of children’s literature). And when one considers that many Victorian children, especially lower-class children, were working long hours, earning money to support their families, and shouldering many of the same burdens as the adults around them, this seems almost to invalidate the claim that the material in *The Library of Fiction* was too old for them. Many of them were old in experience, if not years—old before they ever got a chance to be young. So lowbrow literature that would help everyone laugh and gasp at the tragedies of fiction might have been a welcome distraction from the banal tragedy of everyday Victorian life.

Throughout *The Library of Fiction*, various trends and genres of Victorian writing appear, and they become early examples of the ways in which these tropes were taking on a life of their own. While *The Library of Fiction* could be perceived as just one more example of mediocre writing and fantastical plots from the era in which professional writing took off and lowbrow fiction needed to be readily accessible to the masses, *The Library of Fiction* contains “original tales, essays, and sketches of character” that tell scholars today much about early contributions to styles like the carnivalesque and the Gothic, as well as budding genres like detective fiction (*Metropolitan* 80). Although there are many pieces of *The Library of Fiction* that feel incongruous with its projected goals, it is useful to the study of Victorian literary styles, children’s and family literature, and the development of popular fiction in the Victorian era.
"The Tuggs's at Ramsgate"

By Charles Dickens

By Hope Jones

Background

“The Tuggs's at Ramsgate” is published under the pseudonym of “Boz,” which is none other than Charles Dickens. Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in 1812 and throughout his life, he is said to have fawned over the books in his father’s little library. In a biography written by Michael Slater, we learn that the books Robinson Crusoe, The Vicar of Wakefield, and Don Quixote (among others) “kept alive his fancy” during the harder times of his life (Slater). In 1822, due to his father’s financial struggles, Dickens was unable to continue his schooling. After his father’s arrest for debt in 1824, Dickens worked at a factory where he pasted labels on bottles in order to provide for his family. This caused him to feel a sense of “parental betrayal” which he eventually channeled into his writings (Slater). It was during 1828 when Dickens began to work as a reporter for The Mirror of Parliament and then in 1833, at the young age of 21, he became a published writer with his first short story, “A Dinner at Poplar Walk.”

From there, Dickens became an unstoppable writer and a man who had found his passion and purpose in life. In 1836, Dickens wrote and published “The Tuggs's at Ramsgate” and “A Little Talk about Spring and the Sweeps” in The Library of Fiction. The Pickwick Papers was soon to follow, and according to Peter Bowen, the monthly installments of this novel became “a publishing phenomenon, going from selling 500 copies of the first installment to 40,000 of the last one in 1847” (Bowen). In the next year of 1837, Dickens's first child was born, whom he names Charles Culliford Boz, and soon after, Oliver Twist was published, one of Dickens's most popular and well-known novels. In just the
span of five years, Dickens was able to become one of Britain’s most popular writers. And his fame wouldn’t end there. Throughout his lifetime, he would go on to publish thirteen more novels and hundreds more short stories before dying from a stroke in 1870.

Charles Dickens's life is truly a rags-to-riches story, where he was able to go from a child raised in poverty by a bankrupt father, to a successful, wealthy, and famous writer. Even today, Dickens's stories are still read, well-known and well-loved “for their vivid characterization, poignant drama, and moral insight,” and Dickens himself remains among the “most beloved writers in the world” (“Charles”).

Summary of "The Tuggs's at Ramsgate"

"The Tuggs's at Ramsgate" by Boz, the opening piece in The Library of Fiction, is a story about the Tuggs family who, when they inherit wealth and riches from a family will, decide to visit the wealthy town of Ramsgate as “an indispensable preliminary to being genteel” (3). With their newfound wealth going straight to their heads (they even go so far as to change the spelling of their names), they board a steamboat to Ramsgate and soon become acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Captain Waters. Simon/Cymon Tuggs, the only son in the Tuggs family, becomes infatuated with Mrs. Waters but knows that she is out of his reach. After being reminded that she is a married woman, he even complains, “Why am I to be reminded of that blight of my happiness, and ruin of my hopes!” (8).

After they arrive in town, Mr. Waters is sent away on business, allowing Cymon and Mrs. Waters to form a platonic relationship, one that Cymon claims is “harmless, that even your husband can never object to” (16). But one evening, as Cymon escorts the lady Waters to her home after a walk along the seashore, she invites him inside. As Cymon says goodnight and makes his way to leave, they hear Mr. Waters coming. Pressured to hide behind the curtain by Mrs. Waters, Cymon does so, even though he knows he has “done nothing wrong” (16). Mr. Waters and the rest of the Tuggs family enter the room, and they sit down to chat and smoke. But due to the smoke from their cigars, Cymon starts coughing, and he is discovered and nearly killed by the jealous Mr. Waters. To cover up the scandal, Mr. Joseph Tuggs (Cymon's father) pays £1500 to Mr. Waters. Nonetheless, word of the matter gets out, and the Tuggs's are left embarrassed and penniless.

To make their situation even worse, it's revealed that Mr. and Mrs. Waters are nothing more than imposters who “never found more easy dupes” than the Tuggs's at Ramsgate (18). The whole situation, it turns out, was nothing more than a plot to extort money from the Tuggs's. Though it was a devious plan, it worked perfectly, with the Tuggs's being conned out of their money and humiliated.

Literary Context

"The Tuggs's at Ramsgate" is a humorous or satirical piece of short fiction. This story, as well as many other works by Dickens, is centered on social issues and inequalities, and we also see the idea of mobility between social classes. If we look at how the Tuggs's behavior changes after they accrue their wealth, we can get a sense of how wealth was viewed and sought after in Dickens's society. The family decides to change the spelling of their names (Simon to Cymon and
Charlotte to Charlotta), to change how they refer to each other (from mother to Ma and from father to Pa), to change their “vulgar” habits (like “eating pickled salmon with a pocket-knife”) and to completely change their scenery (by going to Ramsgate). This suggests that they imagine there to be a huge disconnect between how middle-class families behave and how wealthy families behave. Even though their reaction to their sudden wealth is hyperbolic in order to increase the story’s satirical effect, it still shows how “other-worldly” and “exotic” wealthy life was thought to be.

With the depiction of the Tuggs’s social class mobility, we are allowed a glimpse into Charles Dickens’s life. As a young boy trapped in a factory, pasting labels onto bottles, it’s easy to picture Dickens daydreaming during his mundane work; he probably thought about how different his life would have been had his father not gone bankrupt and about all the places he would visit and the people he would meet if he were wealthy. Perhaps Dickens projected these fantasies onto the Tuggs’s, a family who happens upon riches and are able to live out all of their fantasies.

But true to its satirical genre, “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate” doesn’t have a happy ending. The use of satire here reflects Dickens’s fascination with the carnivalesque, where routines and boundaries are broken, and the normal world is seemingly turned upside down (Wilkinson). This perfectly describes what happens to the Tuggs’s. Their story is meant to poke fun at how different and unsuspecting different social classes were perceived in those times. It can also be seen as a cautionary tale to those who lose their heads in the clouds or who try to reach upward beyond their “true status” in life. This suggests that unlike Dickens himself, the attempt made by many Victorians to climb up the social ladder was not always looked upon with approval or acceptance.

Publication History
The first publication of this short story is found in The Library of Fiction published in 1836. Later the same year, it was published in Sketches by Boz, and shortly after that, the hugely popular Pickwick Papers appeared in full. Despite being written by Charles Dickens during a relatively successful year of his life, “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate” didn’t necessarily share the same success. This story wasn’t republished in any other books or collections besides “Dickens-exclusive” collections, such as Sketches by Boz: Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People (there are many different editions and republications of this book, but one example which contains “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate” was published in 1874). In this edition, Charles Dickens writes in the preface:

“The whole of these sketches were written and published, one by one, when I was a very young man. They were collected and republished while I was still a very young man; and sent into the world with all their imperfections (a good many) on their heads. They comprise my first attempts at authorship” (7).

Here, we see Dickens himself admitting that a lot of his stories, especially his earlier ones, are imperfect and can be found lacking. An article written by Philip V. Allingham explains that, by reading letters Dickens wrote to his fiancée Catherine in February of 1836, we learn that “Dickens struggled to produce the delightful prose farce “The Tuggs’s at Ramsgate”’ (Allingham). These sources offer insight into why this particular story of Dickens’s is so seldom re-published: it wasn’t his best work, and it would appear that Dickens knew it, too. The only literary merit this story truly has, and the only reason it has survived so long, is that a great and popular author signed his name at the bottom of it.
“Esteemed by all ranks, only a few months a bride, her supposed fate drew tears from many eyes: yet only a few hours of that fatal night had elapsed, when, awaking out of her lethargic slumber, the poor young creature opened her eyes.”

"GINEVRA"
BY DOMENICO MARIA MANNI

By Addi Schenk

Background
“Ginevra” is an Italian folktale about a woman named Ginevra who dies, comes back to life, and reunites with her true love. This story has been retold many times by many people. The earliest authorial accreditation of the story, however, is to the Italian scholar and publisher Domenico Maria Manni.

Manni was born in 1690 in Florence, Italy, and died in 1788. He was an author, editor, archivist, scholar, and an expert in antiques. He worked in his father's print shop until he was commissioned to edit the Vocabulary of the Accademia della Crusca. Manni was not a surprising choice for this commission due to his lexical fixation on the Tuscan language. This also led him to publish philological texts like The Florentine History of Dino Compagni from the year 1280 to 1312 and the Ancient Chronicles of Various Writers of the Good Century, in the Tuscan Language.

While doing his scholarly work, like his still respected annotation of Boccaccio, Manni became the librarian for the Strozzi collection. Later in his life, Manni became mayor in, and the next year he took over his father's printing house. Soon he sold the printing houses and dedicated his time solely to studying and researching.

Manni is most known for writing, editing, and publishing a variety of genres. His most famous works include The History of Boccaccio's Decameron, Of the Nose Glasses Invented by Salvino Armati, Florentine Gentleman, and The Life of Aldo Pio Manuzio. “Ginevra” isn't typically listed as one Manni's known works, but it is likely one of the books he wrote or edited.
Manni died about forty years before the fourth Roscoe volume (to which The Library of Fiction credits the story) was published, so there could be a paper trail linking him to “Ginevra” that Roscoe found. Or maybe Roscoe just chose a prolific Italian scholar to credit the story to.

Summary of “Ginevra”
“Ginevra,” the fifth story in The Library of Fiction, begins with Antonio Rondinelli and Lady Ginevra living in Florence in the fourteenth century. The couple is in love and plan to get married, but Ginevra’s parents arrange for her to marry a rich suitor. Distraught, Antonio “vow[s] never to bestow his hand upon another” (“Ginevra” 52). Four years later, “the great plague” comes to Italy, and Ginevra becomes very sick and appears to die (“Ginevra” 52). She is buried in the family tomb and mourned by her family, her husband, and Antonio.

Whether a fever broke, or she regained some strength, the story isn’t clear, but Ginevra awakens from “her lethargic slumber” and removes some of her restrictive burial clothing (“Ginevra” 53). Ginevra escapes the tomb with difficulty—because she is still sick—and sets off in the streets of Florence to find warmth. She goes first to her husband’s house, but he thinks she is a spirit. He bids her to leave and not bother him again. Next, she tries her father’s home, but her mom tells her to leave and not haunt the home. She even tries her uncle’s home, but he also dismisses her.

Ginevra, cold and weak from sickness, goes to Antonio’s house in a last effort. He is shocked when she knocks, but he welcomes her inside the warm home. He, his mother, and a female servant nurse her back to health. When she’s healed, she cries at Antonio’s feet, thanking him for his care. Ginevra says that she will not deny him anything but asks him not to take her virtue or take her back to her husband. He kneels with her and explains he won’t do either. Both overcome with joy, they kiss and decide to “unite their fate everlastingly in one” through marriage, despite the fact that she is still technically married to her husband (“Ginevra” 55).

On the way to the church for the marriage ceremony, Ginevra and Antonio run into her family, friends, and husband. They can’t believe she is alive, but seeing her healthy in the daylight, they can’t deny it. She rebukes them for not taking her in when she escaped the tomb. “Then, taking a hasty farewell of her mother and her friends,” Antonio and Ginevra proceed to get married (“Ginevra” 56). At the end of the story, the couple receives a messenger from the bishop who tells them that the bishop sanctions their marriage. He orders that Ginevra’s ex-husband has to repay the dowry. The bishop decrees that Ginevra died “but, to the glory of the church, had been miraculously restored” (“Ginevra” 56).
Literary Context
One wouldn't necessarily find “Ginevra” on any nineteenth-century Victorian reading lists. It's sensational and can be read as a shallow story. But there are several characteristics of this piece that scholars of Victorian literature would be interested in.

First, “Ginevra” has gothic settings and supernatural imagery popular in many Victorian stories. The setting of the story is gloomy. Ginevra wakes up in a vault and Manni writes, “The moon shone brightly, when, shivering with the cold damp air of the vault (it being the month of October), she attempted to raise herself up” from her tomb ("Ginevra" 53). It is a dark, cold night in October—all perfect Gothic setting elements. In addition to a Gothic setting, it also has fantastical, supernatural elements popular in Gothic stories. When Ginevra knocks on the doors of her husband, her mother, and her uncle, she is turned away because they think she is a ghost. It is no wonder. Ginevra is still wearing most of her burial clothes. She was able to remove “a portion of the covering least secured, through which she had observed the light” ("Ginevra" 53). But every other item of burial clothing is still on. She must have looked like a zombie or a mummy, very Gothic characters, indeed.

The other way in which “Ginevra” would appeal to a Victorian scholar is through its treatment of romance, despite the moral questions it raises. The story's two lovers are honorable young adults who want to be together but are stopped because of Ginevra's parents. Through radical events (even miraculous), they are reunited. Love conquers all for Ginevra and Antonio. It even wins over death. “Ginevra” could be used to teach children to be honorable like Antonio and Ginevra so that their love could prevail. Perhaps this quality led to the Victorian interest in “Ginevra.”

A scholar in British Victorian literature would find interest in “Ginevra” because of its Gothic elements and its celebration of romantic love. The story is different enough for intrigue but has enough similarities to other Victorian literature to be popular and thus selected in The Library of Fiction.

Publication History
“Ginevra” is attributed to Domenico Manni in the fourth volume of Roscoe’s 1825 Italian Novelists under the title “Novella I.” This is the earliest publication of the story I could find. I doubt that it is the original source because “Ginevra” is an Italian folktale. I also doubt that the originator of the tale wrote it down. It was most likely an oral story until someone recorded it. The recorder could have been Manni because he was an Italian scholar, but it also might have been randomly attributed to him.

Next, “Ginevra” was published in The Library of Fiction. The editor left the story unattributed. Then Thomas Trollope (an English author who spent most of his life in Florence) published a version of “Ginevra” under the title “A Romance of Florence” three times in 1869: once in July, once in August, and once in November. All three were in different magazines: Every Saturday, The Eclectic Magazine, and Temple Bar. The story must have appealed to readers for periodicals to keep publishing it. Trollope’s “A Romance of Florence” is slightly different from “Ginevra” in The Library of Fiction and from “Novella I” in Roscoe’s version of the tale. Trollope made changes in diction and syntax, but the content is the same.

The last publication I found of “Ginevra” is in 1876 in The Ladies’ Repository, where it is attributed to Elvira Caorsi. The title is changed to “Dead But Alive. An Italian Legend.” The Ladies’ Repository was an American magazine based out of Cincinnati targeting Methodist women. It published a mix of short stories and religious messages. Like Trollope’s version, the diction and syntax are slightly different than “Ginevra,” but the plot and characters are the same.
"MONKWYND: A LEGENDARY FRAGMENT"
BY SAMUEL WARREN

By Joslyn Bishop

Background
The author of “Monkwynd: A Legendary Fragment” is Samuel Warren, a lawyer and a writer. He was born on May 23, 1807 to Dr. Samuel Warren and Anne Warren near the town of Wrexham in Wales, but there is little known of his upbringing and childhood besides his father being a clergyman. Some suspect he might have been apothecary apprentice in his youth (Dunlop).

Warren eventually attended the University of Edinburgh from 1826-1828. Although he did not graduate with degree, he won awards for both his poetry writing and his writings in law theory. Through these competitions he made connections with Thomas DeQuincy and Christopher North—otherwise known as John Wilson—from Blackwood’s Magazine, in which he would eventually begin publishing his works (Dunlop). He married Eliza Ballinger in 1831 while he was working in the Inner Temple from 1828-37. Together, the couple had a daughter and two sons.

Warren’s writing career began with short, serialized stories published in Blackwood’s Magazine. These stories were then collected to be published in larger works such as Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician in 1832 and The Library of Fiction in 1836. Aside from his creative writing, he also worked in legal writing. These included the first edition of his textbook A Popular Introduction to Law Studies in 1835 and a collaboration project with John William Smith entitled Select Extracts from Blackstone’s Commentaries from 1837 (Dunlop). Warren’s first novel, Ten Thousand a Year, was first serialized from 1839 to 1841 and then published as a full volume due to its popularity among British readers.
Now and Then, Samuel's second and final novel, was published in 1847 and focused heavily on the legal system. Warren continued his insistence that the legal system was close to perfect even while writing about an innocent man falsely charged with murder. It was after this that he began to focus more fully on his legal writings, publishing four lectures—entitled The Moral, Social, and Professional Duties of Attorneys and Solicitors—in 1848 and new editions of Law Studies in 1845 and 1863. His last three works—The Lily and the Bee: An Apologue of the Crystal Palace of 1851, The Intellectual and Moral Development of the Present Age (1853), and “Speculators among the Stars” (1854)—were more religious and philosophical in nature (Dunlop).

Warren's wife Eliza died on August 29, 1868, and just about three years later he remarried to Louisa Beaumont. He died in July of 1877 and was buried in Esher, Surrey (Dunlop). He is remembered mostly for his contributions to the Law through his writings but also for his two most popular works: Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician and Ten Thousand a Year.

Summary of "Monkwynd: A Legendary Fragment"
"Monkwynd: A Legendary Fragment" starts in the forest in Monkwynd in about the year 1399. As a storm rages over the forest, a lone monk stands atop a hill reminiscing on the powers he wishes he could have over the Earth. A friar, and an old friend of the monk's, looks on and then invites the monk into his home to take refuge. Through a brief conversation, the friar becomes frightened of his friend's mental state as the monk shatters a crucifix. The monk leaves—threatening the friar with death if he should follow him—to reclaim his lookout spot.

Davie Monkwynd, the lord of the land, passes by while out for a horse ride, and the monk follows asking for an offering. Monkwynd refuses, but the monk does not give up. Eventually, the conversation turns sinister as the monk accuses him of murdering his elder brother. The monk believes that Monkwynd staged his death as an accident in the war so that he could inherit the estate and the title instead of his brother. Shaken by this, Monkwynd swiftly returns to his manor and, in a state of shock, looks for his wife. He finds her lying in a pool of her own blood with the monk standing over her, knife out. By this point, they both know that she is already dead. It is at that moment that the monk reveals to Davie Monkwynd that he is the older brother that Davie had supposedly murdered. In revenge, the monk murders Monkwynd as well.

The friar, after drinking some liquid courage, runs for help from the constable. They intercept the monk as he rides away from the murder scene. The constable and his lackeys struggle to subdue the monk, as he is thrown into a rage after seeing the friar. In the process of trying to arrest the monk, he leads them off the cliff causing them all to fall and drown in the river below. The reinforcements who witnessed the final moments were shocked by the monk's impressive struggle and lament about their fallen brethren. The Monkwynd grounds are now avoided due to the monk's ghost haunting the premises.

Literary Context
In “Monkwynd,” a section of the conversation between Davie Monkwynd and the monk—found on pages 127 to 128—summarizes the entire main conflict which
drives the plot. Without it, we would not understand why the monk wants to kill Davie or how these characters are connected to each other at all. It is essentially the meat of the story, especially since the story is entirely plot driven.

The characters of “Monkwynd” are relatively flat as their motives and desires remain the same throughout the novel. In fact, the least static character might arguably be the friar since he overcame a fear and therefore became the reason the murderer was known and stopped. The unnamed monk would also be an interesting character to study namely to because of how readers unreal he seems. Are readers able to connect with him? Or is he there to solely be the villain and a caution of what not to do? Perhaps he is not even meant to be seen as a real human being considering his odd nature. The illustration included between pages 128 and 129 adds to this idea as the monk looks more like a phantom or monster in his pose than a cold-blooded murderer. The appearance of apparent supernatural strength in the final struggle also adds to the mystery and otherworldly vibes (130–31). Was it truly just for convenience to the plot? Or was the author intentionally asking his readers to question who or what exactly the monk was?

With this in mind, “Monkwynd” feels like Warren’s attempt to write an exciting—and perhaps overly dramatic—gothic story. However, literary critics and scholars could certainly use this piece to study what pulp fiction was like in nineteenth-century Britain, especially since this story contains many of the common tropes of the genre such as ghosts, less than friendly church characters, the use of dues ex machina, murder, and the lack of a truly happy ending. This story might best be studied in comparison to Warren’s other works and short stories to measure how contrived this gothic pulp fiction story is for the Victorian period.

There are two other points of study that would be of interest to a scholar. The first is the role—or rather, the lack of a role—that Davie’s wife Jeanet played. We hear her name once and are never even introduced to her while she is alive which follows another common trope of gothic literature: women are introduced solely so they can die dramatically (128–29). This story severely lacks any female presence. This is intriguing knowing that women were avid readers and writers during the Victorian era and yet the fictional space seemed to still be dominated by men. Was this an intentional choice by authors, including Warren? Or did it have more to do with subject matter and the time period that “Monkwynd” itself takes place in?

Lastly, The Library of Fiction claims to include stories of morals appropriate for families (vi). So what is the moral or lesson that families and children would learn from this? There are many possible speculations to be made such as to love your siblings, to avoid greed, or to not seek revenge. However, the moral is not given to readers in an obvious way like modern readers of children’s literature are used to. The reception of this story, along with the other stories in The Library of Fiction would be well worth studying due to the differences of what modern readers have come to expect from the genre of “family-friendly.”
Another difference between the Victorian period and now is how often stories were republished. Within the first few years of its life, “Monkwynd” was republished in several different collections with several different publishers. The first time it was given life in print was during its time being serialized in Blackwood’s Magazine from 1831 to 1836. “Monkwynd” was then first printed in its full version in The Library of Fiction in April of 1836. Just a few months later, in September of 1836, Samuel Warren published his own collection of short stories--The Merchant’s Clerk and Other Tales--which included “Monkwynd.” This may be a testament to just how much more control an author had over their work at this time as Samuel Warren and other Victorian authors were not tied down to one publisher.

Authors at this time were also exploring the trans-continental market. “Monkwynd” was republished in Midshipman’s Expedients to reach an American audience in 1837. This collection not only includes another work by Warren but two other stories from The Library of Fiction, “The Convict” and “The Image-Man.” Edward Mayhew also has a story published in this collection. These connections point to either some sort of partnership or friendship between several of these authors. Perhaps this means that republication has much less to do with the popularity of a work—-as modern readers might expect—and more to do with connections within the writing and publishing community.
"In his early career, Mayhew explored journalism and fiction writing, which Hodder suggests brought Mayhew some significant success (59)."

"SANDIE SANDEMAN THE PIPER"

BY EDWARD MAYHEW

By Marissa Fuller

Background

Edward Mayhew, one of the contributing authors of The Library of Fiction, was born on 19 October 1808, to Joshua Joseph Mayhew and Mary Anne Mayhew ("Baptisms"). He was baptized over two years later on 1 March 1811. According to George Hodder’s Memories of my Time, Edward was the oldest of four brothers, one of whom was the writer Henry Mayhew (58–59). In his early career, Mayhew explored journalism and fiction writing, which Hodder suggests brought Mayhew some significant success (59). During his early writing years, he wrote “Sandie Sandeman the Piper.” Later on, he wrote Make Your Wills! A Farce, In One Act (an 1838 publication co-authored with G. Smith), and Stage Effect, published in 1840. A review of Stage Effect, found in the back of a book by R. H. Horne, claims that “authors and actors will equally derive benefit from an attentive perusal of this little volume” (Horne 66).

Eventually Mayhew decided that a career in narrative fiction wasn’t sustainable, and he made veterinary studies and practice his focus (Hodder 59). According to his obituary in a periodical called The Veterinarian, “Mr. Mayhew obtained his [veterinary] diploma in February 1845, and was elected a Member of Council in May 1846” ("Obituary" 810). He was responsible, either in full or in part, for books such as The Dog, Dogs: Their Management, The Illustrated Horse Management, and more. According to the editor of The Dog, Frank Forester, “Mayhew’s pages are the ne plus ultra of canine pathology” (Hutchinson, et al. iii), essentially meaning that Mayhew was producing the best work in this area of study. Along with publishing his veterinary studies, Mayhew also contributed many illustrations.
Mayhew was paralyzed for about the last fifteen years of his life, during which time he continued to illustrate and write (Hodder 60–61). The previously mentioned obituary states that Mayhew passed away in September of 1868 (“Obituary” 810).

**Summary of “Sandie Sandeman the Piper”**

Edward Mayhew contributed two stories to *The Library of Fiction*: “John Smith” and “Sandie Sandeman the Piper.” This summary and analysis will explore the latter. “Sandie Sandeman the Piper” is an odd story, with intense tavern storytellers and drunken, cursed men. It starts off in the tavern of Bauldy Cochrane, with a conversation between the narrator and a man named Willie Gordon. Gordon unravels a tale of a piper named Sandie Sandeman. One night, after drinking himself into a barely functioning physical state, Sandie’s friend, Rory, begins to walk him home. Not long later, they reach the middle of a field, where strange things begin to happen. Torrential rain comes down, and an odd person appears and walks with them, who eventually comes to be identified as the devil. Sandie drinks from the devil’s flask not once, but twice, cursing himself in a devilish dance and resulting in his death (though no body is found), which Rory is blamed and executed for.

Down the road of time, another family finds themselves cursed after the wife turns away a supposed stranger seeking food. While the husband, Donald Christie, is out looking for food, he wanders into the middle of the same field where Sandie’s last moments took place. As he enters the field, torrential rain begins to come down. He suddenly spots a large deer dancing in the middle of the field, but as he raises his gun to kill it, it changes into an old man. The figure keeps going back and forth between deer and man until Donald is driven to shoot it, at which point an old man’s body falls to the ground. Frightened, Donald runs home, not yet knowing he is cursed. Upon returning, he and his wife discover a bullet wound in his shoulder, yet doctors were never able to recover a bullet. Donald dies a year later.

The end of the story reverts back to the conversation between Gordon and the narrator, the latter being skeptical of what he has just been told. The night ends with more drinks and food.

**Literary Context**

On a larger scale, this story could be reflecting growing religious tensions and shifting of beliefs during the Victorian era. With expanding interest in science and conversations about evolution, religious beliefs were waning (“Victorians: Religion” 12-13). Mayhew’s short story conveys his message by blending literary styles of the time, especially didacticism and Gothic literature. In the sense of the didactic, Mayhew’s story is similar to other didactic literature of the time, like Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. Both stories teach a moral lesson, Mayhew’s having to do with religiosity and the influence of the devil, as well as the importance of hospitality and generosity. One example of this type of didacticism is seen when Rory pleads with Sandie to leave the devil’s tunes behind and makes this cryptic statement: “It’s ill dancing when the deil [devil] pipes” (Mayhew 186). As for how “Sandie Sandeman the Piper” reflects elements of Gothic literature, this passage intersects with themes and elements such as strange places in nature (the field where Sandie dies), powerful beings (the devil), and the incorporation of the supernatural in this story (the devil, and later on, Sandie’s ghost) (“The Gothic” 3–4, 9).
“Sandie Sandeman” would be important in studying nineteenth century literature in large part because of the way it blends religion with supernatural elements. Whatever interpretation the reader may retain from the story, Mayhew seems to be criticizing those in society who are departing from religion. Sandie, the non-religious character in this story, is doomed to eternal punishment because he is lax in his religious duties and thus is susceptible to the tricks of the devil (Mayhew 183-87). Religion meets the supernatural in this story with devil's appearance and disappearance and his lasting effect on Sandie. It almost seems as though Sandie, in being cursed, takes the devil's place as the spirit that haunts and punishes the sinner who treads across that land. Such a punishment might make a reader pause and question whether they want to depart from their relationship with God.

Ultimately, it seems that Mayhew is taking on the shift in religious devotion with the character of Sandie Sandeman and taking the side of the church.

Publication History
This story, as far as could be gathered, was only reprinted once, in Midshipman’s Expedients, a book printed by American publishing company Carey, Lea, and Blanchard. Based on when Mayhew published this story and knowing that he soon after shifted to veterinary studies, it may be that his lack of success with writing fiction kept him from seeking further republications of this story.
"The Romans must have been great fools!" observed Miss Jones. 'Only think of their believing that an old woman, shut up in a cave, could tell them what was to happen in the world.'

"THE SYBIL’S STONE"

BY JAMES FORBES DALTON

By Kate Eliason

Background

James Forbes Dalton, the author of “The Sibyl's Stone,” was born on 25 April 1785 near Great Stanmore, Middlesex. His father was William Edward Dalton. He was named after his godfather, James Forbes, who was also an author. His family initially set him up to work for the church, and he subsequently attended Oxford before moving to the Continent for several years. He spent time in Rome and Bordeaux, France, as well as several other cities, before returning to England. He settled near London, where he participated in literary circles and wrote political pamphlets, poetry, short stories, and short novels (“James”). His works appeared in several leading periodicals, almost always anonymously, including the Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine. His stories and poetry often took place in foreign settings, usually continental Europe, or featured foreign protagonists and perspectives. This is probably a result of his time living on the Continent, an influence he apparently carried into the remainder of his life (“James”).

In 1836, “The Sibyl's Stone”—attributed to the author of one of Dalton’s most successful novels, The Gentleman in Black—was published by Chapman and Hall in The Library of Fiction. That same year, Dalton also published Peter Snook, a Tale of the City, which received a lengthy (and quite positive) review from Edgar Allen Poe, who praised it by stating that “its author is one of the best of the English Magazinists” (Poe 730) and also speculated that the author may be “Boz” (who we now know as Charles Dickens). Dalton achieved modest literary success throughout his life, which reflects the rise of authorship as a viable profession in the mid-nineteenth century, but very little now remains of his works.
Dalton was never married and had no children. He died on 26 October 1862, age 77, at Tottenham, in what is now north London, just two years after publishing his final book: *Some of my Contributions in Rhyme to Periodicals in Bygone Days, by a Septuagenarian*.

**Summary of "The Sibyl's Stone"**

"The Sibyl's Stone," which appears as the sixteenth story in *The Library of Fiction*, is a quirky tale of a woman seeking marriage, a man scamming her, and a questionably supernatural stone that first brings them together and then tears them apart.

Miss Wilhelmina Jones is on vacation in Naples, waiting for her friends to arrive and idling away the days as an English tourist when she meets a French gentleman who introduces him as Le Baron Alphonse de Shachabach (Dalton 194). Miss Jones and the Baron quickly establish a friendship that turns to a romance and then a sort of quasi-engagement. But Miss Jones insists on waiting for her friends' arrival before any serious action is taken, and so the two go on seeing the sights together.

One day, they visit the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl, a priestess famous in the legends of early Rome. Miss Jones mocks the idea that a sibyl could predict anything, shut up as she is in the cave, when suddenly an old woman approaches them and throws a small stone at their feet. The old woman then explains that if they remain unmarried for the next nine days but keep the stone in possession, they will be granted a wish each day, but with a catch—if either “lose the stone before the expiration of that time, you will both be compelled to speak the truth at your next subsequent interview” (196). The old lady immediately walks away, disappearing into the cave.

Miss Jones and the Baron Alphonse express their doubts about the validity of the wishes, but the Baron is the first to give in and wishes for Miss Jones to have more beauty. While walking home, the Baron mentions that his agent has not sent him his remittance in time but tries to quickly brush it off. Miss Jones presses the point and eventually offers him a £25 note to cover his expenses. The Baron accepts the gift, promising to give back in jewelry and presents. Later that day, Tom Blunt, Miss Jones's footman, expresses doubt about the Baron's intentions, but he is ignored.

Miss Jones wakes up the next day, looks in the mirror, and believes herself to be a little bit prettier. She then wishes for the Baron to be a bit handsomer. The two continue, with Tom Blunt and the Baron still at odds, to exchange wishes each day. Miss Jones wishes for the Baron to have a better temper. The Baron wishes Miss Jones to be more generous. Miss Jones wishes that the Baron will never lose his affection for her. The Baron wishes that Miss Jones could have black eyes, rather than gray. She subsequently wakes up the next morning with two black eyes, looking like she lost a street fight, “as though she had been under the hands of a regular prize-fighter” (202).

Miss Jones's friends are getting closer now, and the Baron more fidgety and anxious to marry, but they press on, as they still have three more wishes that they don't want to throw away. They go on with their wishes: Miss Jones wishes that the Baron's vineyards will have double the output this year. The Baron wishes that Miss Jones could speak fluent French.

"'The Sibyl's Stone' is a quirky tale of a woman seeking marriage, a man scamming her, and a questionably supernatural stone that first brings them together and then tears them apart."
On the final morning, however, the stone is nowhere to be seen. Miss Jones has an argument with Tom Blunt about her engagement with the temperamental Baron before leaving to go in search of him. He asks her to lend him a little more money, which she immediately declines—she gave him everything she could spare already. They argue, and he eventually confesses that he does not have a castle, and is not actually a baron, and has no property and very little money. He had taken her for an English tourist he had meant to scam, but due to some unfortunate mistranslations, had ended up with Wilhelmina Jones instead of William.

Miss Jones and the Baron Alphonse have a nasty fight and break up. Both forget about the stone, and Tom Blunt accepts Miss Jones’s apologies for siding with the false Baron. Miss Jones continues on in her travels, and we never find out if the magic stone was real or not.

**Literary Context**

“The Sibyl's Stone” is closely entwined in several nineteenth-century literary trends. The treatment of gender relations, the supernatural, and foreign characters and location reinforce this story's place as lowbrow Victorian periodical literature.

Gender relations are an integral aspect of Dalton’s story. The Baron Alphonse naturally holds power over the main character, Miss Jones, from very early in the story. He reinforces this by offering marriage, and the impending marriage is the driving force of the narrative. Without the inevitable marriage waiting at the end of the ten days, much of the plot become irrelevant and uninteresting. But the two characters maintain such an interesting dynamic because of their gendered differences and their desire to get married. For Miss Jones, the prospect of a man—especially a man with money and title, and willing to sacrifice for her—is life-changing to the degree that she doesn’t think to question the Baron’s attentions. For the era and for the genre, Dalton uses known gender dynamics and expectations to craft the ultimate too-good-to-be-true scam.

Dalton also introduces a supernatural element to the story that plays into these deeply gendered interactions: the titular sibyl’s stone. The sibyl's stone is never fully explained, and the reader never gets to know if it really was a stone that grants wishes. The language of the story seems to imply that the stone wasn't necessarily magical but that the situation created a sort of comedy between the two characters. Miss Jones, superstitious and eager to avoid bad luck and gain good fortune, readily agrees to the idea of the stone. The Baron Alphonse, desperate to complete his scheme and disappear with the lady's money, will agree to anything she says. It creates an interesting dynamic between the characters—the Baron, eager to please and distract Miss Jones, and Miss Jones eager to marry and increase her reputation and status. Perhaps the presence of the stone—a slightly out of place, unexplained piece of the supernatural—is what reveals to us the true motives of both parties and the fact that neither are truly motivated by love or affection. In the end, Dalton chooses to leave the question of the stone's power up to the audience; if the stone really does grant wishes, it doesn't particularly matter. The story works just as well as if it didn't, and that's the genius of this little domestic comedy.
The treatment of foreign countries and cultures in “The Sibyl's Stone” is also important to note. Dalton, who spent several years living on the Continent before returning to live in London, would have experienced firsthand the French and Italian cultures that he writes about here. However, the French main character--Miss Jones's beau, the Baron Alphonse--is little more than a French caricature, with his dialogue always rendered in heavy accent: “I am so happy as if I vas no vere It is arranged; you vill be ma cherre Baronne” (Dalton 195). He is also, as was common at the time, rendered as the ultimate villain, a villain that the audience would have recognized immediately because of how incredibly foreign and French and conspiring he is. On the other hand, the trusty English servant, despite being described as “an old crabbed-looking footman” (Dalton 194), is the eventual and inevitable hero of the story—putting things to right, all while speaking in the common English accent (also rendered in dialogue). This stifled view of foreign countries and foreign characters reflects the time period and view and reinforces the fact that this was written for the very British, very middle-class, and newly literate masses of London.

Publication History
"The Sibyl's Stone" was never published before or after it appeared in The Library of Fiction.

The Sibyl's Stone," p. 194-95, vol. 1 of The Library of Fiction
"Godwin sought to have Ollier publish his daughter's (Mary Godwin Shelley's) works. However, Ollier rejected Mary's *Frankenstein*, even though it obtained later success."

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"THE CONVICT"
BY CHARLES OLLIER

By Elyse Kunzler

Background
C. Ollier, or Charles Ollier, was not only a writer, but an editor and publisher as well. Ollier was born on 4 May 1788 in St. James, Bath, to Charles Ollier, Sr. and Sarah Tuttell, as the second of six sons (Robinson). Ollier dabbled in banking for some time but was drawn into a more creative circle as he grew up. Ollier's first publication was written in 1810 for his good friend Leigh Hunt's journal, *The Examiner*. Through Hunt, Ollier became more acquainted with the literary and creative members of the British publishing world. In 1814, Ollier married a woman by the name of Maria Gattie, and they had six children together. Of these six children, Ollier's youngest son, Edmund, would later become a journalist and historian in his own right, following in his father's footsteps.

Between the years of 1817 and 1823 Ollier and his brother James worked together in such jobs as stationer, publisher, and bookseller (Robinson). The two brothers formed a publishing agency and compiled *Ollier's Literary Miscellany*, where the piece "The Convict" first appeared. The brothers also published notable authors such as John Keats and Percy B. Shelley. Charles Ollier specifically belonged to a rather distinguished literary circle and interacted frequently with William Godwin. Godwin sought to have Ollier publish his daughter's (Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley's) works. However, Ollier rejected Mary's piece *Frankenstein*, even though it obtained later success.

Even in Ollier's social circles, however, Ollier wasn't very well thought of. In an article by Beth Lau discussing publishing circles that William Godwin was associated with, Lau brings forth Percy Shelley's complaints against Ollier as a publisher, citing how Godwin called Ollier “a slippery fellow” (Lau 188).
Despite his unpopularity in some circles, Ollier continued to publish and write, but he fell into bankruptcy in 1822. Not daunted, Ollier started another publishing company and began writing and publishing a number of his own works. This is around the time when Ollier republished his story “The Convict” in The Library of Fiction, despite having published it before in his own Miscellany and a few other periodicals. Unfortunately, Ollier’s second business attempt failed in 1849 when he went bankrupt yet again and had to depend on grants from friends. Ollier later died of a respiratory illness in June of 1859 at the age of 71.

Summary of “The Convict”

One of Ollier’s better known literary pieces, “The Convict” is a story told from the point of view of one Mr. Saville, who is staying with his friend, Mr. Robert Wilson. Mr. Saville describes Robert Wilson as a kind and loving father, saying, “No man on earth could be fonder of his little offspring than Wilson; and they, on the other hand, almost worshiped their father, taking delight in nothing so much as in doing what he wished” (Ollier 221). Despite his happy home life, however, Robert is a man down on his luck, who struggles constantly to make enough money to provide for his family. Stressed and pressured, Mr. Wilson decides he has no other option than to steal in order to provide for his family.

At first, after the robbery, things seem to look up for the little Wilson family, although Mr. Saville is hesitant to describe them as stable. After only a few days, unfortunately, Mr. Wilson’s crimes catch up with him, and he is arrested and sentenced to death. Mr. Saville reflects on these unfortunate circumstances, stating, “The laws in their justice condemned him to be hanged, and the laws in their justice had enforced the taxation, the hard pressure of which had so mainly assisted to drive him into crime” (Ollier 223).

Mr. Wilson’s sentence sets off a chain reaction of unfortunate events. When hearing of her husband’s impending death, Mrs. Wilson faints and grows incredibly sick, eventually dying from heartbreak. After Mrs. Wilson’s death, Mr. Saville visits his friend and agrees to bring Robert’s eldest daughter, Betsy, to visit Mr. Wilson before his death. When the pair enters the prison, Mr. Saville remarks, “As we walked along the gloomy passages to his cell, she clung close to me, and did not say a word. It was very different, poor thing, to the open and gay garden about which she was used to run” (Ollier 224). When the little girl is in his cell, Mr. Wilson asks her to sing for him a song about a better, idyllic life (“In My Cottage Near a Wood”). As Betsy sings, Mr. Wilson is caught up in the fantasy, and when Betsy eventually stops singing, the shock of his reality causes Mr. Wilson to die before his impending hanging. When he runs into the room and finds his friend’s body on the floor, Mr. Saville states, “I suppose she had sung him into a temporary forgetfulness of his situation; that she had conjured into his mind with her innocent voice, a blessed dream of past days and enjoyments, and that the spell ceasing when her melody had ceased, the truth of things had beat upon his heart with too stunning a contrast, and it had burst” (Ollier 224).

Although a sorrowful tale, “The Convict” holds more meaning than just a warning about stealing. “The Convict,” and more specifically its ending, depicts the hard truth of the world and the utter destruction of the simple dream of the everyday man.
Literary Context

Ollier's "The Convict" isn't just an entertaining tale about a man sentenced to death for stealing but rather is a propaganda piece. This story, republished several times, was written by Ollier (a proclaimed Charist) as Chartist propaganda.

Making the most progress in 1838-57, Chartism was all about political reformation. Chartism was geared at the working class, and Chartists battled against politicians, hoping to establish fairness and open votes to all, seeing the working class as being left behind and forgotten. Ollier was an established Chartist who was against political corruption and all for democracy. In “The Convict,” Ollier certainly does not hide his ideals. Used consistently for Chartist propaganda, “The Convict” lays out Chartist beliefs in story form. The unfairness of how Mr. Wilson’s story ends points toward the Chartists beliefs of how the government was targeting the little man and how no working-class man could ever succeed in the current political environment.

Ollier’s first publishing of “The Convict” was in 1820, before the subsequent rise of Chartism. Despite this, the republishing of "The Convict" in The Library of Fiction was in 1836, when the Chartist movement was building momentum. This publishing of the story came at a crucial time for Ollier and Chartists like him, to bring attention to the movement and their beliefs in a way subtle enough to not feel forced, but obvious enough to get the point across. The main character of “The Convict” struggles against the laws that seem to condemn him and his family. The unfairness of the law is what causes Wilson to break it, leading to the ruin of his family. This theme of unfairness points toward Chartist belief that the government pushes down the working man.

Chartism was at its peak during the republishing of “The Convict,” but even after the movement’s eventual failure it continued to affect the social, political, and economical atmospheres. Because of its large effect on Britain as a whole, Chartism is certainly something that shouldn’t be missed on a study of nineteenth-century Britain, and by extension neither should “The Convict.”

Ollier’s story was impactful at the beginning of its printing, yes, but when included in a collection made for the everyday family, “The Convict” held a lot more weight. “The Convict” had enough subtlety needed to make the moral the focus. The Chartist themes were, of course, still relevant and noticeable, but the moral took the spotlight, which is likely why Whitehead accepted the piece in The Library of Fiction. In a movement that required large groups of people to come together, literature like “The Convict” would be a key way to do so, inspiring people to take a stand as they studied the tragic fiction, the message of which rang all too true for many people in the working class.
“The Convict” first appeared in Ollier’s Literary Miscellany, which was published by Charles Ollier with his brother James in 1820. This is interesting, because the height of the Chartist Movement happened in 1832, well after “The Convict” was first published. This makes “The Convict” an example of early Chartist Literature. Ollier’s Literary Miscellany also contained works by notable authors such as Julius Hare and Thomas Love Peacock.

On 23 September of the same year, “The Convict” was republished in The Ladies’ Literary Cabinet, being a Repository of Miscellaneous Literary Productions, both Original and Selected in Prose and Verse. This is quite an interesting place to find the piece, seeing as it is a piece of Chartist fiction. This rendition of “The Convict” was also the first recorded piece in which Ollier used the letters “M.L.C.” at the end of the story. These letters remain a mystery, although it is theorized that they reference an original publication or story not written by Ollier (McFarland 410).

On 7 October 1820, the story was republished again in The National Recorder. All three publications happened in the same year and within a short time frame. That implies that the story was reasonably popular when it was first published. This popularity was perhaps the reason it was included in The Library of Fiction in 1836. This version also included the letters M.L.C. just like The Ladies’ Literary Cabinet version, with no clear clue of what they mean.

On 28 December 1839, “The Convict” was published in The Chartist Circular. The Chartist Circular was a Chartist magazine filled with propaganda pieces and information. “The Convict” fits right at home here, situated between two other propaganda pieces. Once again, the mystery initials pop up at the end of the article.

The last version found was in 1850, after the Chartist Movement had largely died down. This version was published in The National Instructor under a different name: “A Tale of the World’s Justice.” This title is much more upfront with its content then the previous title, perhaps trying to draw attention back to the Chartist Movement. The National Instructor compiled Chartist literature, making this another perfect place for Ollier’s piece. However, it is interesting that despite its popularity, Ollier chose to publish it under a different title.

"JESSE CLIFFE"
BY MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

By Payton Andreadakis

Background
The author of "Jesse Cliffe," Mary Russell Mitford, was born on December 16, 1787 in Alresford, England to George Mitford and Mary Russell. Although her mother had been given a large inheritance, her family periodically experienced periods of financial hardship due to her father's gambling addiction and reckless spending. From the ages of ten to fourteen, she attended the M. de St. Quentin's School in Chelsea, England, where she became fluent in French and Latin and developed a lifelong love of French literature. After finishing school, she began writing poetry for fun and even published two collections and two narrative poems over the next few years. None of them were particularly well received critically, but they still garnered some commercial success.

When legal troubles from her father's spending forced her family to move into a modest cottage, Mitford took responsibility as her family's primary breadwinner and turned to her newfound literary career to help pay the bills. On the advice of a couple writer friends, she began writing plays, but wasn't overly successful in theatre during this time due to disputes with a theatre director. Two of her plays, Julian and Foscari, however, were successfully approved for theatre runs and enjoyed some success, especially after the latter's script was published in print.

During this time, she also turned to writing short stories out of financial necessity and published some of her work in Lady's Magazine. This gained her a much wider audience than she'd ever had before, and soon after she released her first short story collection, Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and
Scenery, which was a massive success almost immediately and went on to become her most well-known publication. The collection’s popularity also temporarily reignited her theatre career, with Rienzi proving to be the most successful and popular of her plays.

Following Our Village’s success, Mitford subsequently released two more short story collections, Belford Regis and Country Stories (the first of her self-edited collections to contain “Jesse Cliffe”) and helped co-edit several American collections. She likely would’ve enjoyed even more success had her parents’ declining health not increasingly forced her to balance her time between her writing and taking care of them, though she still managed to co-write and co-edit works like Findens’ Tableaux and Schloss’s English Bijou Almanack during this time. After her parents passed away and she fully paid off her father’s gambling debts with help from her friends, she returned to writing full time, but not at the same pace as before due to deteriorations in her health from years of overworking and an incident in which a fall from a carriage left her partially paralyzed. She died on January 11, 1855 at the age of sixty-seven.

Summary of "Jesse Cliffe"

"Jesse Cliffe" follows the life and escapades of its titular protagonist in the nineteenth-century English countryside. Born to a roving father who was out of the picture before he was even born and a sickly mother who died a year after his birth, Jesse develops a mischievous and cunning nature from a young age and regularly runs away from home, only to be identified, returned, and severely punished. At the age of twelve, the local police remove him from his childhood home and toss him between various masters before finally settling on a cattle dealer. However, he escapes yet again and manages to evade capture, eventually taking up residence at a rural property called the Moors, where he primarily survives by eating local plants and hunting wild game and occasionally by stealing food from neighboring farmers.

Over time, his hunting becomes a very impressive self-taught skill and earns him a reputation throughout the countryside. The Moors’s owner, John Cobham, is initially displeased by Jesse squatting on his property but eventually accepts it after becoming impressed with Jesse’s hunting prowess as well as some persuasion from his granddaughter Phoebe. Jesse is deeply moved by Phoebe’s act of kindness, and the two begin to fall in love and exchange gifts.

Unfortunately for the young lovers, John and the property caretaker, Daniel Thorpe, do not approve of their relationship and try to keep them from seeing each other. But they eventually come around after Jesse saves John’s family and staff from a house fire. Gradually, under Phoebe’s influence, Jesse learns to abandon his “uncouth” ways and becomes a gifted gardener, which earns him an employment offer in London that he accepts after some convincing. Several years later, he returns to the Moors an accomplished and experienced businessman and asks for Phoebe’s hand in marriage, which she accepts.
Literary Context
Mitford’s specialty was writing simple realistic fiction stories set in rural England. Her stories often depicted simple characters going about their everyday lives in the English countryside. She also seemed to enjoy incorporating references and allusions to her own life into her works. In “Jesse Cliffe” alone, she includes several anecdotal references to London and even has inserts where she reminisces about visiting them in her own spare time. There are also slightly more subtle allusions to her own life. For example, one of Mitford’s favorite hobbies was gardening, and Jesse and Phoebe are both avid gardeners. Her father also often gambled their family fortune on greyhounds, and Phoebe’s grandfather owns a pet greyhound.

Publication History
The Library of Fiction from 1836 was the earliest instance I was able to find of “Jesse Cliffe” being published, though I don’t entirely know if this was its debut. The first time the story appeared in one of her own publications was in 1837’s Country Stories, Mitford’s third short story collection after Our Village and Belford Regis. The only other instance I was able to find was from 1841 in The Works of Mary Russell Mitford, a compilation of most of her well-known works, including all three of her best known story collections and even a few of her plays, such as Rienzi.
"THE ALCHYMIST"
BY T. K. HERVEY

By Ariel Hochstrasser

Background
Thomas Kibble Hervey, according to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, was a Scottish writer, poet, and journalist who was born in Paisley, Renfrewshire to James Hervie and Isobella Kibble and lived from 1799 until 1859. Hervey first attended a Manchester grammar school, then worked for a firm of solicitors in Manchester and later London. After those jobs, he read law in the chambers of a barrister for two years at Trinity College, Cambridge. His most famous work was a two-part poem called Australia written in 1819 while he was attending his second year at Trinity, from which he eventually left without graduating. Australia is a whimsical poem with little concrete research that was written based on what Hervey gleaned from newspapers and pseudo-scholarly books. Another poem of his, called “The Devil’s Progress,” was published in 1830, and some of his other works found within literary annuals include “The Convict Ship,” “Floranthe,” and “Illustrations of Modern Sculpture” in 1832.

Hervey published regularly within two literary annuals, Friendship’s Offerings (1826 and 1827), and The Amaranth in 1839, and from 1831 to 1853 he submitted numerous reviews to The Athenaeum. On one occasion in 1836, he also published an article in the Dublin Review. Hervey’s reviews covered the works of Browning, Tennyson, Dickens, and various pieces of French literature, although his obituarist in the Gentleman’s Magazine in 1859 claims his reviews were quick to scorn the subjects of his critiques and slow to praise.
When he became editor of The Athenaeum in 1846, Hervey began to incorporate more humanitarian subjects in the periodical, such as prison reform. Sales increased, but supposedly the quality of his reviews decreased in his last three years at the paper’s editor. He retired from The Athenaeum in 1853 and began submitting frequently to the Art Journal. After his death, his wife Edith completed a collection of his poems that she published in 1866, titled The Poems of T. K. Hervey. “The Alchymist” is his only published work within The Library of Fiction.

Summary of "The Alchymist"  
“The Alchymist” the twentieth story in The Library of Fiction, features a man named Grimaldi who flees from Genoa to Pisa as a refugee during the Middle Ages. Grimaldi’s “idol, from his youth upward, had been gold,” the tale explains (240). Although he is rich, he tries to pass himself off as a beggar, but the more he attempts to hide his wealth, the more people begin to assume he has something of worth. One night, a man attempts to steal from him, and Grimaldi flees after being stabbed in the heart. He finds himself in the house of a goldsmith and would-be alchemist. The goldsmith, named Ricciardo, became a goldsmith in hopes of saving his family from poverty and was “like Grimaldi, a seeker after fortune, but by far other means and with far other success” (241). Ricciardo tries to heal Grimaldi, but he dies shortly after telling Ricciardo (who is very concerned about his children having to beg on the streets to support themselves) of the money he had secreted away. Ricciardo searches Grimaldi’s body for anything of value but finds nothing except a set of keys, which he takes. He temporarily worries that he might be seen as Grimaldi’s murderer, but then he realizes he could take the treasure from Grimaldi’s house before anyone goes searching for the dead man. Keys in hand, he goes out to Grimaldi’s house, believing it’s his destiny to find the dead man’s treasure.

Grimaldi’s house is bare except for elaborate locks and key-puzzles that reveal a treasure trove of golden items. Ricciardo forces himself to take only some sealed bags containing gold and returns home to dispose of Grimaldi’s body. Eventually, the authorities are alerted of Grimaldi’s disappearance, find his treasure trove, and assume it hasn’t been touched. They seize everything inside, and people begin to forget about Grimaldi.

After a short amount of time, the goldsmith claims he has discovered a breakthrough in his alchemy, and he begins presenting the stolen gold as proof. Many people (including Ricciardo’s own wife) mistrust this sudden appearance of wealth. Still, Ricciardo sells some of the gold ingots in France, and the rumors of his ingenious success in making gold spread to Pisa. He becomes a wealthy man, apparently through the success of his “alchemy.”

When Ricciardo returns home to his wife in Italy, however, he begins to brood about how he secretly became wealthy and changes in character, deciding to become a better man and thereby atone for his theft. He adopts an orphan girl named Irene into his family, but this turns sour when his wife, Beatrice, begins to resent Ricciardo’s attention to the girl. His love for Beatrice was the only treasure she had had, but this seems to her to be lost through his wealth accumulation. Beatrice becomes outraged and drives out Irene from their home. Ricciardo shrinks away from her fury, but still tries to support Irene. Beatrice blames the gold for ruining her marriage.
Beatrice finally reports to the authorities that her husband stole the gold from Grimaldi, and helps the authorities find Grimaldi’s body. The authorities remove the remaining money and confiscate all the purchased items. Ricciardo is arrested in front of Irene. He is charged as a robber and murderer. However, Beatrice doesn’t want Ricciardo arrested--she simply wants the gold gone, but it is too late. Ricciardo is executed remembering his love for Beatrice before the gold consumed him. Beatrice takes her children to see his body, where--consumed by grief--she stabs them and herself in the heart.

Literary Context
“The Alchymist” offers readers a blend of both morality and tragedy typically in many Victorian stories. Hervey’s story ties into many principles taught in the Bible regarding the dangers of materialism, which draws parallels with puritanical teachings of morality. By beginning with Grimaldi's greed being compared to an idolatrous devotion and the unholy actions Ricciardo participates in---hiding a body, theft, adultery, lying, etc.---Hervey consistently drives home the Christian values behind the wickedness of greed. For example, in Matthew 6:19, Jesus commands, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6.19); not surprisingly, Grimaldi's earthly treasures are stolen. In 1 Timothy 6:9, it says, “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6.9). Ricciardo falls for a young woman named Irene, which breaks his wife’s heart, and because of his sins she rats him out to the authorities, has him executed, then murders her children before committing suicide. Another example of scripture is in Luke 12:15, which states, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12.15). Christian theology often teaches in other ways how Christ wants His disciples and followers to give to the poor, to live in contentment, and that being consumed by greed distracts people from attaining eternal treasures after death. Hervey appears to be using this story of the alchemist as an instrument to teach families and children that they could lose everything they have if they set their sights on prosperity--a fear tactic that many other sermons and Christian authors used in the nineteenth century.

“The Alchymist” also appears to follow a story of hubris, as in Greek plays and in Shakespeare’s tragedies. Ricciardo gets to the highest point in his life and obtains what he thinks he wants, only to fall to the very bottom and drag everyone down with him, similar to Hamlet or Macbeth in their attempts to kill the king. And even though Grimaldi's accumulation of wealth isn't illustrated in depth, and the audience never gets to see what he loses in his riches, considering the parallel to how he and Ricciardo's family dies, the cycle continues with Riccardo's family. Hervey's goal is to tell the story as a parable of what not to do in a way that entertains and demonstrates--albeit an extreme example of--a moral issue always present in a society.

Publication History
“The Alchymist” was popular enough to appear twice after The Library of Fiction’s first publication. One republication of appears in a periodical called The Novel Newspaper published by J. Cunningham in London and known for being an affordable source of literature. In the 1840 rebound edition of The Novel
Newspaper, “The Alchymist” follows a long story called “Seventy-Six” by John Neal and appears alongside another story from The Library of Fiction, “The Old Farm-house.” The typeface in this edition is small and broken into two columns. One would need adequate light and a fairly good literary education to read it, as it can be difficult to read such small, cheap print.

While there are few republications of “The Alchymist,” Hervey claims he found inspiration for his story from “an undated manuscript, in the library of the French nobleman” (240). But the story also happens to be the basis of a play called Fazio, or, The Italian Wife, written by Henry Hart Milman. The play was published in 1815 before being presented on the stage. It is the standalone play sold by J. Parker and J. Murray in London. The story is printed in single columns of text and is bound with an advertisement by Milman making his case for printing a play before it is performed on stage and explaining how he found inspiration from an anonymous manuscript that was published in The Annual Register.

Both Hervey’s and Milman’s works bear a striking resemblance to this anonymous manuscript, which was published in the 1795 edition of The Annual Register under the title, “Grimaldi; a true Story.” It is published within the periodical among other works of history, politics, and literature. This edition of the story was later reprinted in London in 1800 and bound in a marbled cover.

Because the anonymous writer, Milman, and Hervey were all able to publish versions of “The Alchymist” in many different formats, it can be assumed that the tale was seen as cheap yet entertaining, meant for middle-income people. However, this peculiar story was so entertaining and popular, multiple authors were able to republish the fundamentals with their own creative liberties and still have each story sell. The Milman version is bound, suggesting the intention of its being kept as a standalone play, but the Hervey and Annual Register versions are taken from periodicals and miscellanies and rebound into more preserved forms of texts. This indicates that there was some sense of value behind each edition and that the stories were enjoyed enough to be collected in protected editions.

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**ANNUAL REGISTER, 1793.**

begun. I believe that my acquaintance’s ill will come to a good bound for extolling the effects of the stuff of life.

I do not mention this to my wife, nor to the box sent to me by our next and good friend, whom I verily do believe the best of all writers. Several times he has seen my work, and that seems to have all writers.

The next we had a mixture of sour and bitter, and that goes on all the time. The next we have had a mixture of spirit, and that has gone on all the time. The next we have had a mixture of spirit, and that has gone on all the time. The next we have had a mixture of spirit, and that has gone on all the time.

Miszellaneous Essays.

**Grimaldi; a story from Fazio, or, The Italian Wife.**

DURING the civil war in France, as it happened in that country, there was a stay in the state of affairs that could not be continued.

Fazio, at this accident, found himself at the gendarme’s house. The whole neighborhood was affected, and a number of men, who were not in sympathy with the rebels, were quite alone in the house, which was a

Grimaldi; a story from Fazio, or, The Italian Wife.

”Grimaldi” in The Annual Register, vol. 37, 1795
"THE RIVAL HOUSES"
BY G. P. R. JAMES

By Anna Lamb

Background
George Payne Rainsford James (known as G. P. R. James) was born in 1801 in London. He was well-educated as a child, described as “headstrong and adventurous” (Barczewski), and joined the British army in 1815. After his discharge from the army, he began to write stories and eventually novels. His earliest work includes a retelling of Arabian Nights. His first novel was Richelieu: a Tale of France, published in 1829. He continued to write romances for the next eighteen years, relying largely on historical events for inspiration. James even prided himself on the correct portrayal of the histories present in his novels. In fact, history became an important element in his career. Explaining James’s popular status as a historian, Stephanie Barczewski writes, “By modern standards James may have been lacking as a historian, but he took the historical content of his work very seriously and so did his audience, who received much of their knowledge of the past from historical novelists such as James, Sir Walter Scott, Harrison Ainsworth, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton” (Barczewski). James’s most popular novels include The King’s Highway (1840), Arabella Stuart (1844), and A History of Chivalry (1843).

“The Rival Houses,” featured in The Library of Fiction, is a work from the middle of James’s career, published in 1836. The story follows similar stories in James’s canon, being both romantic and tragic. While The Library of Fiction was relatively well-received, “The Rival Houses” did not become a selling point of the publication. In fact, the story is referenced very little and was republished only one time in a collection of James’s works called Eva St. Clair and Other Collected Tales.
Summary of “The Rival Houses”

“The Rival Houses” is a story about two families, the Stuarts and the Guelphs, whose Romeo-and-Juliet-style feud—a “jealous rivalry for extended power”—has continued for generations (James 281). Set in England, a place described as idyllic and full of “aspects to charm the eye and to enchant the ear” (281), the two heirs to the family estates, Louisa and an unnamed man, fall in love and secretly court one another during moonlight walks in the wood. A nobleman, Sir John, wishes to marry Louisa, and her father forces her to accept his proposal, but her servants are wary of Sir John. The day Sir John is meant to meet Louisa’s father to accept the estate, Louisa’s father changes the rendezvous and sends a servant to see if Sir John arrives with his servants or with a militia. Sir John has indeed betrayed Louisa’s father to the other house and has a militia ready to attack Louisa’s estate.

Unbeknownst to Sir John or Louisa’s father, Louisa and her lover are at the rendezvous for a proposal, believing the scene is “sweet and calm” (287). When Sir John’s militia hears them, they assume Louisa and her lover are the militia from the other house, and they shoot. Louisa and her lover die from gunshot wounds, and the servant who was sent to spy on Sir John runs to tell Louisa’s father what has happened. The story concludes with the families moving their children, emphasizing they were “all that remained of the last of the race of the house of those Two Rival Houses” (288).

James’s story is told in three parts, one which sets the stage for the feud, one in which Louisa and her lover discuss their future, and the last scene, in which the tragic ending takes place. Overall, “The Rival Houses” is a short read, full of beautiful description, plot twists, and emotional moments.

Literary Context

“The Rival Houses” is a tragic romance. The plot is similar to that of Romeo and Juliet, but it is less convoluted, and the protagonists do not die from their own blunder. The story brings up themes of hate and love, along with pride. The characters are not three-dimensional, but each brings an important theme into the story. A scholar of Victorian literature would find this story interesting because it embodies the romance genre well. Nearly all of G. P. R. James’s stories fit into the genre of romance. The Victorian era was an important time in developing the romantic genre.

Publication History

“The Rival Houses” was only republished once. In 1843, Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans published a collection of G. P. R. James stories entitled Eva St. Clair and Other Collected Tales. “The Rival Houses” was featured in this collection. It appears James was not fond of this short story because it is not republished again.

Illustration of the dead lovers after p. 242, vol. 1 of The Library of Fiction
"Fairlie began writing to help supplement her husband's income, which was not large--she had married him in opposition to her family's wishes, and his income was decidedly insufficient to finance Fairlie's standard of living."

"THE OLD FARM-HOUSE"

BY LOUISA FAIRLIE

By Rebekah Olsen

Background

“The Old Farm-house” was written by Louisa Fairlie (1811-1843), the niece of Margaret Power, Countess of Blessington (1789-1849). Louisa Fairlie and her aunt were close, and the Countess was devoted to Louisa's daughter, who was born both deaf and dumb, little Isabella. Fairlie began writing to help supplement her husband's income, which was not large--she had married him in opposition to her family's wishes, and his income was decidedly insufficient to finance Fairlie's standard of living, let alone the accommodations for her child's special needs. The Countess of Blessington acted as her literary agent, attaching her name and support to Fairlie's stories (Molloy 378). This support likely shaped Fairlie's opportunities and increased the reach of her story, especially in a time when it was helpful to come highly recommended.

“The Old Farm-house” was never published in one of the Countess's numerous gift-book publications, although many of them contained stories in a similar vein, but in all of the known publications of the story, the Countess of Blessington's name is more linked to the text than Louisa Fairlie's, in part because of the Countess's popularity. Fairlie is always listed as “Mrs. Fairlie” in her bylines, and although there are no other short stories among her known publications, she is known to have edited an annual--Portraits of the Children of the Nobility (1838, 1839, 1841)--which combined poems with engravings from a myriad of creatives (Fairlie 2). While this annual was completely respectable, most Victorian readers (especially the middle-class readers who constituted the primary market for the work) were apparently uninterested in the lives of children of the nobility, and Portraits of the Children of the Nobility was not a resounding success.
In 1843, Fairlie and her daughter died two months apart--Isabella first and then Louisa--devastating the Countess and cutting Mrs. Fairlie's literary career short (Molloy 378). The Countess went on to have a long and storied career, however, using the scandal constantly swirling around herself to boost her own writing career. By managing to straddle the line between sex appeal and erudition, Blessington avoided the censure often imposed on female writers by male critics (that of being a Bluestocking) and even monetized the transgressive nature of her engagement with fiction without alienating the reading public (Schmid 89). Blessington was unusual as a female author who didn't write about female education or women's issues, choosing rather to focus on marketing enjoyable women's fiction and marketing herself, successfully, as an arbiter of taste (Hawkins 229). The periodicals Blessington edited, including Heath's Book on Beauty became important in the history of women's literature, hinting at the later genres of popular and escapist literature.

Summary of "The Old Farm-house"

"The Old Farm-house" is a short story typical of this kind of popular, low-brow fiction--it describes a series of unfortunate events, slowly escalating to a horrifying dramatic conclusion. There's a frame narrative in which a real estate agent is showing cottages to a couple and says of one house, "I do not know if you would like to take that" (Fairlie 337). This enigmatic statement of course leads to a question about why someone wouldn't want to live in the old farmhouse. The house agent starts to spin the tale. A loving family is torn apart when the only son, William Morton, submits to the siren call of being a sailor. William teases his little sister Peggy about getting married before he gets back ("When we meet again . . . you will be married, and I an uncle") but the remark underscores the fact that he is not going to stay in their community, not going to put down roots there (Fairlie 339). The family hears from William for a while, but, eventually, the letters stop, and they give him up for dead, keeping as a memento a parrot he sent them that continually repeats "Where's William?" at strategic moments (Fairlie 340).

Twelve years go by and the whole family falls on hard times. William's sister Peggy marries, has five children, and then her husband dies, and she supports them by being a schoolmistress. William and Peggy's parents, in the meantime, are on the verge of losing their farm. In the midst of these troubles, a stranger shows up and introduces himself to Peggy as William, her long-lost brother, who is back with plenty of money to support his struggling parents. William wants to rush to his parents' home and announce his arrival, but Peggy is positive that the shock of him being back will kill their infirm parents, so she suggests that he keep his identity a secret until she can come the next morning to break it simply. William acquiesces to this plan; he goes to his parents' home, keeps his identity a secret, request lodging for the night, and is welcomed and fed by the struggling farmers. He falls asleep without betraying his secret, and his parents fail to recognize him.

When Peggy comes the next morning with half the village to break the good news to her parents, they inexplicably claim that they have no visitor and did not meet anyone the night before. It's true; the farmhouse is empty. But as Peggy's questioning continues, it rapidly unfolds that, not knowing that the rich stranger who appeared at their door was their long-lost son, the two desperate
farmers murdered the stranger, stole his things to save themselves, and sank his body in the river. As the parrot asks “Where’s William?,” William’s mother, weakened by a ruptured blood vessel, cries, “Murdered! And, by his own parents!” (Fairlie 346). After realizing what they’ve done, both parents die, and Peggy, carrying the burden of such a tragedy, goes insane. Returning to the frame narrative, the story concludes with the couple looking at the house deciding that the real estate agent is correct, saying, “the story we had heard was not such an one as to induce us to become tenants of ‘The Old Farm-house’” (Fairlie 346).

Literary Context
“The Old Farm-house,” which appears near the end of The Library of Fiction, plays with some significant domestic literary tropes. The first trope is that of the boy’s adventure story, and it begins to be subverted right at the beginning of the tale. After William’s exit, rather than following William down the Thames and across the sea for twelve years, the story instead focuses on his family left behind. Thus, this is not a boy’s adventure story at all. It could have been—such stories were numerous, formulaic, and well-received in the early nineteenth century. However, as readers, we follow the Morton family as they descend lower and their prospects bleaken. Louisa Fairlie’s choice to focus on what happens to those abandoned by young men seeking adventure highlights the high cost to families of men leaving the community.

This disappearing act so glamorized in the popular fiction of the time had real repercussions for small farming communities. The fact that “Mrs. Morton had never borne but two children” is an occasion presented in the negative—children help with farming, and Peggy, capable dairywoman though she is, will not be able to stay on the farm forever (Fairlie 339). She will get married and leave, which means that William ought to help his family survive, a fact alluded to when he offers not to go to sea and instead to “remai[n] quietly at home, to assist his father in agriculture,” which may have ultimately protected the whole family from the terrible consequences of his long abandonment (Fairlie 339). But instead, he pursues his “dreams of glory” and when they are finally lived out, his very return to his home destabilizes it so badly that his family is destroyed (Fairlie 339).

In this way, “The Old Farm-house” serves as a reflection of the fear that the British of a previous era would stifle Victorian growth and progress. William is industrious and Peggy is resourceful, but Farmer and Martha Morton just let their farm fall by the wayside as they become too old to care for it. To attempt to save their farm, they murder William, which could be read allegorically as the attempted leeching of the old off the young, which leads to ruin. In an age where everything worth having was new, shiny, and innovative, the old were sometimes seen as a barrier to progress—after all, William’s murder by his aged parents, one of whom is meant to be a “thrifty, prudent helpmate” must have some deeper meaning than a senseless act of violence (Fairlie 339). All of this context serves merely to reinforce the story told by Louisa Fairlie and the Countess of Blessington—one of scandals, stereotypes, and sailors—that was bound to captivate the public’s imagination.
Although “The Old Farm-house” seems to have been based on a play performed in London in the late 1820s or early 1830s, The Library of Fiction is the first known publication of this story (Metropolitan 80). It lists the Countess of Blessington in conjunction with “The Old Farm-house” in the table of contents, although it acknowledges that Blessington is the editor, not the author. The collection, edited by Charles Whitehead, places “The Old Farm-house” in mixed company. The Library of Fiction, released in 1836, includes some works by renowned author “Boz” (Charles Dickens), but it also contains a fair amount of pulp fiction—dramatic, unpredictable, and full of sensibility (Library vii).

In 1837, “The Old Farm-house” was republished in an American collection that cannibalized a lot of The Library of Fiction called the Midshipman’s Expedient. Because copyright laws did not span the Atlantic Ocean, the publishers, Carey, Lea & Blanchard, reappropriated the material Chapman and Hall had published a year earlier for their “Exclusive” and “Original” content (Midshipman’s). This kind of trans-oceanic plagiarism was common, although frustrating to English writers who weren’t making profits from the replications of their stolen stories.

Then, two years later “The Old Farm-house” popped up in a paper in Paris. The 1839 edition of The English Novelist lists the Countess of Blessington as the author of the story in its table of contents. That collection is filled with even more illustrious authors than The Library of Fiction, with stories by Maria Edgeworth and Washington Irving (English). It’s possible that the Countess of Blessington submitted the story because she was publishing other keep-sake books in Paris at the time. She was a consistently savvy marketer. However, it’s also possible that because of the popularity of the Countess of Blessington in Paris, her name was tied closely enough to the popular English and American novelists to be a selling point for the publication, and thus she was selected.

The story was republished for the last time in 1840, in London, in a periodical called The Novel Newspaper. It appears alongside a novella called “Seventy-six, or Love and Battle” from a wildly successful American novelist named John Neal. The Novel Newspaper was a Victorian periodical printed and published by J. Cunningham in London. Cunningham published more than eighty issues and “concentrated on giving as much reading matter as possible in thirty-two pages of double-columned small print” (James 25). It was a remarkably cheap publication and expanded the readership of the authors published in it to the lower classes (LeGette 44). The story itself was rebound into several different collections based on various initial publications. There are no known copies of the story’s original publication in The Novel Newspaper, but a rebounding from this same year (1840) documents its publication and provides context for the story.

“The Old Farm House” in The Novel Newspaper, 1840
"In completing the first Volume of this Work, the Proprietors take the opportunity of expressing their warmest acknowledgments for the great favour with which it has been received."

WORKS CITED


WORKS CITED, CONT.


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Appendix 1: The Library of Fiction Publication Timeline

1795

1820

1825

June 1831

April 1836

1837