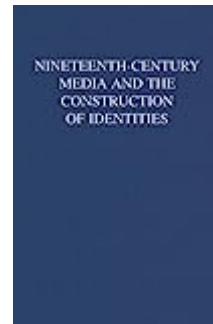




Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, David Finkelstein, eds. *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. 408 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-333-68151-0; \$110.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-23215-3.



Reviewed by Eugenia M. Palmegiano (St. Peter's College)

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Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities contains twenty-two essays in 361 pages of text, along with notes and a bibliography. These articles, which scrutinize the format and contents of several British and a few U.S. serials, reveal the multitude of directions that Victorian periodicals took. Their voices were not in harmony, which might have troubled contemporaries, who equated stability with homogeneity, or might have enthralled those who delighted in diversity. This book would support both responses. It has a theme, namely the development of identities, of readers and of writers, some set within a framework of gender or national/ethnic considerations, but it celebrates discordance. Because the introduction classifies research on media as part of cultural studies, it is logical that many contributions reflect the field's analytical methodology and post-structural focus.

The essays are grouped in five sections. The first, "Discourses of Journalism," opens with Kate Jackson's discussion of the efforts of George Newnes in the wildly successful *Tit-Bits* to shape an image of the editor as advisor and as advisee. She shows that Newnes, by answering readers' correspondence and seeking their counsel, linked them in a "secular" bond of fellowship akin to a religious one (p. 18). Richard Salmon then offers an interpretation of the "New Journalism" in which personal

could mean spotlighting people or rejecting anonymity. He points out that the interview eroded a masculine construct while signature connoted individual responsibility, ironically paralleling a trend toward corporatism in the press. Kate Campbell titles her study "Journalistic Discourses and Constructions of Modern Knowledge." She investigates the attempts of Victorians, notably Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold, to differentiate between high and low knowledge. She traces with sophistication the nexus between the conceptions of modern knowledge and modernist writing and the consequences for journalistic form by late century. Margaret Linley places annuals, popular in the early decades, in class and gender, and national and racial frames. In so doing, she demonstrates how these barometers of taste spawned a "cultural democracy" (p. 54).

The succeeding section, "The Reader in Text and Image," begins with Andrew King's telling commentary on the often overlooked subject of reader response to illustrations. Centering on some, not sequentially, in the *London Journal*, he discerns a communal feeling among its buyers and, not incidentally, restores periodicity to the study of serials. Michael Hancher moves from street ballads to penny magazines as he follows reactions to the early Victorian notion of a "March of Intellect." He embeds it in class configurations, but distinguishes shifts

in purchasers' perceptions, chiefly because of gender. Brian E. Maidment continues this theme by reviewing the tie between the "March" and satiric images in cheap weeklies of the 1830s. Based on portrayals of the dustman, he concludes that they symbolized both disquiet about status and worry about taint, because of the association of social pretension with physical dirt. Lynne Warren concentrates on how a gendered title, *Woman*, provided something of an opportunity for its audience to achieve identity by reading or writing to correspondence columns. Yet, as she notes, their original location at the end of an issue, the small type, and the use of pseudonyms—all tactics designed to limit the loss of editorial control unacceptable to a business—might have reduced the chance for readers to formulate a sense of self.

"Writers/Authors/Journalists" initially features Robert L. Patten's work on Charles Dickens as a "serial author" (p. 137). Patten considers matters that arose in the context of publishing a novel in a periodical, such as responding to reader requests for changes or incorporating immediate external references, of time and space, values and style. His innovative essay sharpens the distinctions between three-decker and serialized novels, and between novels and other fiction in the press. Alexis Easley highlights how Harriet Martineau, as journalist, used anonymity to escape the constraints on female writers. As Easley observes, this device, together with Martineau's frequent adoption of a male tone, allowed her to pen articles on topics supposedly beyond female competency, often in journals that doubted it. Joanne Shattock's assessment of Margaret Oliphant reinforces the model of the woman journalist employing a masculine voice and a mask for her own purposes, financial and professional. More than Martineau, Oliphant was a continuous serialist committed, as Shattock recognizes, to the validity of such labor. Meri-Jane Rochelson presents another aspect of identity in her probe of the career of Israel Zangwill, columnist for the weekly *Jewish Standard* and editor of the comic paper *Ariel*. In both serials she finds that he dealt with Jewish concerns, but that in the *Standard* he prioritized urbanity and in *Ariel*, ethnicity.

The subsequent part, "Negotiating Gender," shifts to the United States in Amy Beth Aronson's work on the *Lily*, edited by Amelia Bloomer in the 1850s. Aronson outlines how this and other feminist periodicals borrowed specific media techniques, such as re-printing copy on important issues, to counter the dominant definitions of women, to gain cachet for women's gazettes, and to sustain a literary sisterhood of writers and read-

ers. Aronson also adds a valuable appendix of mini-biographies of women editors and contributors of the era. Anne Humpherys returns to Britain with a narrative on how the reporting of cases in the *Divorce Court* led, in the twentieth century, to the first restriction on the press. She tracks stories from their mid-nineteenth-century clustering with other law reports to their later summarizing in weekly and Sunday papers. She connects the headlined personal details, in vogue in a competitive market, to the inauguration of a debate over whether the media deterred divorce or extolled (re)marriage and perhaps lessened toleration for domestic abuse. Mark W. Turner describes how Anthony Trollope molded, by caption and commentary, *Saint Pauls Magazine* as masculine. Publishing his novel *Phineas Finn* in the magazine (1867-69) gave Trollope a major venue to broadcast his version of maleness. However, as Turner acknowledges, this emphasis may have deprived the periodical of female readers and hence hastened its demise. Complementing his analysis is one by Margaret Beetham on the intersection of feminist and imperial history in *Woman at Home* and *Longman's Magazine*, both monthly miscellanies. Based on the columns of Annie S. Swan, in the first, and Andrew Lang, in the second, Beetham postulates that by correspondence and causerie, Swan and Lang sculpted identities that were intended to appear catholic but were gendered and racist. Laurel Brake closes this section with an examination of the *Artist* as emblematic of gay discourse during the tenure of Charles Kains-Jackson as editor. Brake demonstrates that in reviews of books and artists, in articles and poems, Kains-Jackson furnished an arena for such a dialogue in the early 1890s.

"National and Ethnic Identity" commences with an assessment by Leslie Williams of how Thomas Campbell Foster covered the Irish famine for the *Times*. Williams gives evidence for not only the bias of Foster, notably against Daniel O'Connell, but also the stereotyping, by others, of the Irish as penurious and mendacious. Aled Jones explores media ideas of the Welch between the Crimean and Great Wars. Prefacing this profile by a short but insightful one of the earlier century, he unveils how the plethora of Welsh papers after 1854 directed their resources and talents to become a forum that nurtured a sense of social and cultural communality, and the English-language papers assisted in this enterprise by delineating what was and what was not Welsh. The result, he concludes, was that the press was a center of nationality before regional divisions undermined that function. David Finkelstein evaluates the writings of Margaret Oliphant insofar as they gave a Scottish identity to

Blackwood's Magazine. He explicates how, in her early paragraphs in the monthly, she gendered Scotland in relation to England, whereas in her later *Annals of a Publishing House* she strove to balance the magazine's Scottish roots and its wider perspective. Looking to France, Dean de la Motte explains how Emile de Girardin pirated theories of utopian socialism for *La Presse*, a newspaper that he claimed was devoid of political context. By proffering news as commodity at the same moment that French readers were seeking more information, the paper seemed to exemplify the utopian ideal of serving the common good while joining that service to making money, thus fostering the incompatible marriage of objectivity and profitability that still survives. Going beyond Europe, Toni Johnson-Woods compares the *London Journal*, the *New York Ledger*, and the *Australian Journal* with respect to sales, appearance, and, most significant, contents. Although she touches on some of the same material as Andrew King and one of the same motifs as Robert L. Patten, her approach is broader. She discovers similarities that confirm a transnational community of readers, albeit one in which publications altered titles at will to conform to gender or imperial bent.

In their introduction, the editors label the popular press a "carnival of life" (p. 2). On the whole this book underscores the phrase's accuracy by displaying the va-

rieties and vagaries that enchanted and dismayed, instructed and amused nineteenth-century readers. Although some may quarrel with the hypothesis that the media fit neatly into cultural studies and so may question the interpretations that apply its techniques, it is well to remember that every methodology expands history and indicates the interests of a generation of historians. Moreover, it is valuable to have sundry approaches to a subject in the same volume for that surely bespeaks how historians operate. Rather more troubling is the unevenness in citations, some entries having extensive bibliographies and/or content footnotes, while others merely have minimal references. Still, the book encourages a rethinking of categories of identity, in terms of gender and race, nationality and ethnicity, metropole and "other," and reminds scholars that the answer to the critical query, who were those readers really, remains debatable. The kinds of precise studies done here build on such seminal works as those by Stephen Koss, Joel Wiener, Alan J. Lee and Lucy Brown, among others, and strengthen the foundation for a broad and broadly reliable account of Victorian serials. As I have contended elsewhere, more research on every aspect of media in this pivotal century for the press may eventually revolutionize the definition of "Victorian" when applied to periodicals.

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