Moving Pictures and Moving People: The Aesthetics of ‘Mass Success’
Juliet John
in Dickens and Mass Culture
Published in print: 2010 Published Online: January 2011
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199257928.003.0007
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the role of Dickens's aesthetics works in enabling Dickens to become the author most adapted for the screen. It is an exploration, through Dickens's relationship with film, of the ideology of the aesthetic in relation to the mass market, a topic famously addressed by Sergei Eisenstein in his essay ‘Dickens, Griffith and Ourselves’. The chapter argues that the ‘structures of feeling’ in Dickens's art enabled it to function as a bridge between the most popular form of entertainment in his own day (stage melodrama) and the most popular form of entertainment in the age that followed (the screen). While Dickens's influence on film and the influence of nineteenth-century stage melodrama on Dickens is well known, this chapter maintains that it is the ability of Dickens's novels to ‘sit astride’ melodramatic and realist aesthetics that is the key to their capacity to function as a bridge between stage melodrama and the new medium of the cinema. The history of Dickens on screen makes clear that aesthetic forms, especially when transported across historical periods and cultures, do not carry with them unchanging or consistent ideological baggage.

Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel
Michiel Heyns
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Item type: book

This book examines the notion that the realist novel reinforces existing social structures through its techniques of representation. It depicts the 19th-century literary scapegoat — the ostensible victim of the
expulsive pressure of plot — as begetter of an alternative vision, questioning the values apparently upheld by the novel as a whole. Novels, like communities, need scapegoats to rid them of their unexpressed anxieties. This has placed the realist novel under suspicion of collaborating with established authority, by reproducing the very structures it often seeks to criticise. This book investigates this charge through close and illuminating readings of five realist novels of the 19th century: Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Charles Dickens's Our Mutual Friend, George Eliot's Daniel Deronda, Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim, and Henry James's The Golden Bowl. The book looks at these works in relation to one another, to their literary and social contexts, and to modern critical thinking. Sceptical of unexamined abstractions, but appreciative of the acumen of much recent criticism, this book places the realist novel at the centre of current debates, while respecting the power of literature to anticipate the insights of its critics.

Alternative Empires? Englishness and Christianity in Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland
Laura Chrisman

in Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner, and Plaatje
Published in print: 2000 Published Online: October 2011
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Item type: chapter

Oliver Schreiner's novella is distinguished by not only its radical representation of colonialism but also by its equally radical reformulation of the two institutions to which she makes her appeal against Cecil Rhodes: Britain and Christianity. In focusing on the British people, her primary concern is not to save the moral soul of the British empire; Schreiner is not motivated by the desire to uphold the British as the vanguard race in charge of conferring subject status on Africans. What Schreiner is concerned with is social mobilization, derived from a pragmatic apprehension of the material power of Britain versus white South African political structures. Likewise, Schreiner's deployment of the figure of Christ and the values of Christianity is as tactical as it is ideological. Christianity is used as a name for a transcendental humanism capable of commanding recognition and affiliation from across the globe; it is harnessed as a viable source of ideological, subjective, and material opposition to imperialism.
This chapter focuses on the subjects and styles of Gothic itself, interpreting Gothic in a way which establishes parameters for the analysis of the narrative and historiographical techniques of the Waverley Novels. It brings together Gothic's dual preoccupation with history and narrative, relating both to anxieties of literary origin by way of the figure of the recess. The frame narrative of The Monastery, which describes the search for the lost heart of the Abbot Ambrosius in the ruins of St Mary's at Kennaquhair, makes architecture the focus of a search which is really about ways of telling, or narrating. So, too, in Gothic, narrative and historical processes are repeatedly figured as tortuous approaches through hidden subterranea / passageways to a secret which may finally be revealed, but which can never be an adequate recompense for the terrors of the quest. The interpretation of Gothic in the chapter is allusive rather than exhaustive, and it does not engage in the kind of comparative analysis which would allow it to claim that the techniques and preoccupations which it highlights in late 18th-century Gothic are exclusive to that form. It does, however, emphasize certain matters rather more than has been done in previous criticism, paying particularly close attention to devices of historical authentication in Gothic, to questions of literary and historical origin, and to the problems which arise when Gothic conventions intrude into non-Gothic works.

Experiencing Childhood
Rosemary Lloyd

Looking into a number of fictional writings wherein children are given secondary roles and examining how childhood was noted in some autobiographies will help us recognize some of the narrative and
Mallarmé and Circumstance
Roger Pearson

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This book is the second in the two-volume study of the work of Stéphanie Mallarmé (1842–1898). For Mallarmé, in a world without God, the role of the poet is to break the silence with language and to confer upon the contingency of circumstance a therapeutic semblance of formal and semantic pattern. Literature provides a ‘translation of silence’, ‘intimate galas’ in which the mysterious drama of the human condition is performed for and by the reader on the stage of the verse poem, the prose poem, and what Mallarmé calls the ‘poême critique’. In Part 1, the book examines the prose poems within the context of Mallarmé's writing about the theatre. In Part II, the book focuses on the ‘circumstanzas’ —, the famous ‘Tombeaux’, ‘Hommages’, ‘Eventails’, and ‘vers de circonstance’ —, in which Mallarmé invests the quotidian with the ‘glorious lie’ of poetry. In a series of close readings the book demonstrates how complex poetic structures, and especially the sonnet, may serve to guide the human search for meaning and shape our anguish in a ‘ceremony of the Book’.

THE SCOPE OF NARRATIVE: AURORA LEIGH
Matthew Reynolds

in The Realms of Verse 1830-1870: English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building

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This chapter begins by discussing that the Brownings felt a diffuse similarity between the ‘liberty...through union’ which they have achieved in marriage, and the liberty through union which they have will be the end of political developments in Italy. It explains that Aurora Leigh has an unusual, perhaps unique narrative structure which distinguishes it from contemporary works narrated in the first person such as The Prelude, Great Expectations, and Villette. It clarifies that the novel-poem Aurora Leigh has a similarly liberal and nation-building purpose, although a less secret and more tentative one: to pass from hand to hand and voice to voice, drawing reader after reader into its embrace.

Move to Fable, 1891–1900
David Sergeant

in Kipling’s Art of Fiction 1884-1901
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Item type: chapter

This chapter explores Kipling’s navigation of visualized, embodied structures in Many Inventions, and shows how these were informed by his Anglo-Indian experience but are also eloquent within the broader context of the Western imagination of space. This aspect of Kipling’s fiction has affinities with the romance, as described by Stevenson and contrasting with Henry James, and possesses suggestive links with discoveries in cognitive science. The chapter shows how the Mowgli stories of The Jungle Books are split between authoritarian and complex works, and relates this division to two different ways of thinking and writing, mythos and logos. It traces the consolidation of Kipling’s narrative developments in this period in The Day’s Work, before examining the neglected tale ‘The Disturber of Traffic’. This is exceptional for combining realist and non-realist modes in a subtle interplay, and for eliding rather than enforcing the demarcated structures Kipling was so fond of imagining.

Form and Structure
Stephanie Kuduk Weiner

in Clare's Lyric: John Clare and Three Modern Poets
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Item type: chapter
Chapter 2 explores Clare’s middle-period sonnets, some of which develop original methods for generating unity and integrity while others embrace disunity and unboundedness. It examines how patterns lend coherence to relatively unified poems and how other sonnets undermine terminal closure and resist both internal order and external boundedness. It argues that the effect of disintegration of individual poems is accompanied by larger effects of integration: of a single sonnet into related or adjacent poems, variants, or fragments; of the sonnets as a group; of the manuscripts; and of his writing as a corpus. In different ways, all these structures correspond to aspects of the natural world, which to human experience is by turns unified and disordered, bounded and infinite. These formal techniques mirror the dominant themes of the poems Clare wrote at Helpston and Northborough: time, space, and the movement of people, birds, and animals through the landscape.