# Reappraising Penny Fiction

**Stephen Basdeo and Rebecca Nesvet**

**Abstract**
This Introduction to the Special Volume of *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal* titled "Reappraising Penny Fiction" defines penny fiction, surveys its prehistory, and reconstructs its emergence in the nineteenth-century British media and globally. The article then engages with the ongoing scholarly debate about "penny dreadfuls" and theorises how misconceptions about the genre developed and were circulated by critics and scholars. Finally, the article introduces the central questions and themes of the special issue, as well as the individual articles. Victorian penny fiction has long been considered disturbing yet compelling; we hope that our volume reveals why that is so.

**Keywords**
penny fiction; penny bloods; penny dreadfuls; G.W.M. Reynolds; Eugene Sue; James Malcolm Rymer; Pierce Egan; periodicals; serialisation dime novels; world literature

**Date of Acceptance**: 31 December 2022
**Date of Publication**: 13 January 2023
**Double Blind Peer Reviewed**

**Recommended Citation:**
Basdeo Stephen and Rebecca Nesvet. 2022. "Reappraising Penny Fiction: Introduction." *Victorian Popular Fictions*, 4.2: 1-17. ISSN: 2632-4253 (online) DOI: https://doi.org/10.46911/DHBV6145

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

# Reappraising Penny Fiction

## Stephen Basdeo and Rebecca Nesvet

Early in the twentieth century, A.E. Waite (1857–1942) struggled to write one of the earliest bibliographies of penny fiction – that is, the Victorian fiction published in penny-a-number periodicals and pamphlet-style penny parts and meant largely for the entertainment of working-class readers in Britain and in cities throughout the Empire. A self-appointed scholar of the occult who was fascinated by Arthur Machen and befriended Aleister Crowley, Waite decided that no arcana were more obscure than the secret canon of "penny bloods" and "dreadfuls," as his generation called penny fiction. "It may sound inconceivable," he wrote:

> … and yet is of literal fact, that for a century past at least a multifarious literature … has been circulating in England, above all in London, by its thousands and myriads, its constituents dissolving almost at their birth and leaving so few traces behind that it is comparable to a realm of hiddenness, a world almost unknown.
>
> (Waite 1997: 1)

It is not surprising that, as late as the 1930s, Waite described this bibliographic endeavour in terms drawn from the discourse of (imperial) exploration because, for seventy or eighty years previously, the middle-class press had represented penny fiction and its working-class readership as hidden entities. Waite aimed to become the penny press's Mayhew or Greenwood, infiltrating it and revealing its secrets to middle-class readers.

Similar imagery already pervaded Margaret Oliphant's "The Byways of Literature: Reading for the Million" (1858). Though giving "the masses all credit for their gift of reading" Oliphant proposed that "before we glorify ourselves over the march of intelligence, let us pause first to look into their books" (King and Plunkett 2005: 197). Critiquing the naïveté of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, she mentioned "that unknown intelligence," "the working man" (198). Having "invested a sixpence" in penny literature, she decided to find out what the million read (196). Wilkie Collins explored similar materials in his article "The Unknown Public" (1858), in which, unlike the voice of the Oliphant, he went (fictionally) undercover to obtain and study fifteen samples of penny fiction. He called penny fiction "these mysterious publications," and claimed "the discovery of an Unknown Public, a public to be counted by millions;

the mysterious, the unfathomable, the universal public of the penny-novel journals" (208-9). Moving from the rhetoric of discovery to that of colonisation, Collins located this public "right out of the pale of literary civilisation" (209). He declared that, in the penny papers, "[a]n immense public has been discovered: the next thing to be done is, in a literary sense, to teach that public how to read" (1858, quoted in King and Plunkett 2005: 216). That, in Collins's mind, meant how to read *better* material than the penny press provides them.[1] However, the penny press, which mixed fiction with other genres in its pages, was by that point an important fixture in literary culture, and imbued with its own aesthetics, politics, and culture.

## What is Penny Fiction?

In Victorian Britain, popular literature, briefly put, was a heterogenous form of mass reading entertainment which included prose fiction, poetry, ballads and satires which were cheaply printed and retailed usually for the price of one or two pennies (or less, if second-hand). Since it was cheap it was considered disposable or recyclable, unlike expensive volume form fiction. Within this very broad category of ephemeral literature were several formats of literature which included broadsides – usually a single printed page containing a poem or short story – as well as chapbooks, small books containing eight duodecimo-sized pages. These chronicled a variety of fantastic tales in prose and rhyme. In addition, there were the more recognisable – for Victorianists at least – penny magazines, and 16-page "bloods" and "dreadfuls."

Penny fiction, in our understanding, is a distinct form of popular literature and a distinctly Victorian phenomenon. Such a demarcation is necessary because any definition of popular and indeed penny fiction will always be imperfect, and what is applicable to the Victorian era may not be applicable to the literature in the centuries preceding it. The medieval era had popular literature, for instance; *escrowez* or *schedulae* – which Steven Justice translates as 'broadsides' – were handwritten single sheets of parchment that contained poetry, news, and satires and were pinned up in village, town squares, and on church doors (Justice 1994: 28-9). Neuburg (1964) and Shepard (1977) see the beginnings of cheap literature in the early modern broadsides that retailed at a low price and contained ballads or told stories of strange and fantastical occurrences. Poetry and ballads are a different genre to prose fiction, and in terms of genre they can be more easily separated from the serialised prose fiction that dominated in the Victorian era. Yet when it comes to cheap, fictional prose from before the Victorian era, our definition encounters further problems. For example, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's weekly *Spectator* (1711–15) retailed for the majority of its run at one penny (and, after the stamp tax was imposed, two pence), and a critique of society was offered through the eyes of fictional correspondents relating contrived stories of life in Augustan London (Mr. Spectator, Sir Roger de Coverley, Will Honeycomb, and the

[1] Andrew King identifies the respective rhetorical goals of Oliphant and Collins's investigations of the penny fiction of 1858. Oliphant, struggling to articulate her own politics while adhering to *Blackwood's* conservative outlook, finds penny fiction an update of medieval romance, inhabiting what King calls a "stereotypical and chivalrous imaginative world" in contrast with which middle-class literature does not represent progress, but decay (King 2004: 35). Her analysis is ultimately "profoundly material" (35). Collins's "The Unknown Public" has been read as a response to Oliphant but is more likely a justification of Collins's friend Mark Lemon's editorial practices at the *London Journal,* which Lemon had taken over in 1857 and which in 1858 was facing a commercial downturn (36). In "The Unknown Public," Collins "ventriloquis[es]" Lemon's "desperation" (36).

"Lawyer of the Inner Temple"). Yet categorising Steele and Addison's serial and largely fictional *Spectator* as a forerunner of the penny fiction of George W.M. Reynolds (1814–79), James Malcolm Rymer (1814–84), J.F. Smith (1806-90), M.E. Braddon (1835-1915) and others would probably sit uneasily with most scholars of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, even if its traces are clear in penny publications that aimed at (even if they did not succeed in obtaining) some form of respectability. Andrew King for example has traced what he calls "the parergic" ("a system whereby texts are based on originals that are invested with greater symbolic capital and authority." 2004: 27) in the mass-market penny fiction magazine, the *London Journal* (1845-1927), edited (1845-6) by Reynolds: even though its status was low, the *London Journal* explicitly emulated Addison and Steele in the late 1840s (King 2004: 57-9). Many Victorianists will associate Reynolds with the so-called "penny blood."

This leads us into a discussion of two of this issue's key questions: what do we mean by "penny blood," "dreadful," and, indeed, "awful" and what is the history of those terms? We must bear in mind that not every sensational literary work that sold for a penny was a penny blood; the "blood" writer Pierce Egan the Younger's *Home Circle* magazine contained several thrilling stories, yet anyone who looks at its contents – which included works by Nathaniel Hawthorne and George Otway – could not class this magazine as containing anything resembling a "blood" story (Basdeo 2020). This perhaps raises another question: to what extent does a story's appearance in a journal such as the *London Journal* demarcate it as not respectable? To take an example from Reynolds again, the famous author's *Faust: A Romance of the Secret Tribunals* (1845–6) first appeared in the *London Journal* and thereafter was sold in standalone serialised instalments as well as collected in a volume form in 1847. As a text it appears in multiple forms, each with distinct paratextual features and this suggesting different reading strategies that will make links to differing corpora of texts: in magazine form it will link most easily to other parts of the magazine; in standalone serial forms to other standalone serials (especially to what we think of as the core meaning of "penny bloods"), in volume form to other volume-form fiction (which will include the more expensive and more respectable fiction). Such brief considerations might suggest that penny fiction was as much an "idea" as a genre and, second, just because something was sold for a penny does not mean that it was necessarily "sensational," gory, or a "blood."

Further questions related not only to format and dissemination considered in this special issue include how illustration, translation and transatlantic (re)publication of penny fiction, *feuilleton* novels, and dime novels illuminate the history of penny fiction. For example, many scholars of "Victorian Popular Fiction" will know that the *roman feuilleton* (newspaper-published fiction serial) paved the way for British serial fiction and that, among *feuilleton* authors, Eugène Sue had a significant influence on the popularity of penny fiction in Britain (Chevasco 2003), and that transatlantic publication of popular fiction was a "two-way" phenomenon (King 2004: 9). However, as one article in this issue shows, there is an entire world of cheap fiction beyond the Francophone and Anglophone. The Portuguese-speaking world, in particular, was ripe for the reception of penny fiction with European authors such as Sue and Reynolds directly referenced by authors in Brazil (see Basdeo and Guerra's article in this volume). Comparably, in Portugal, where Camilo Branco continued the "mysteries" novel tradition with his *Misterios de Lisboa*, its sequel *O Livro Negro de Padre Diniz* – in which the mysterious priest from *Misterios de Lisboa* continues his campaign of writing wrongs in Lisbon's high society – and *Misterios de Fafe*. Sue and Reynolds had their own, often not very favourable, reputations in France and Britain and there was, in the public mind at least, a clear demarcation between their works which were written

for the "lower orders" and those of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray. The Portuguese and Spanish worlds, however, saw no such line demarcating the literature of Britain and France. This has obvious implications for scholars who seek to incorporate discussions of decolonisation and the decentring of European literary modes and canon into their discussions: penny fiction was not insular and confined solely to the Anglosphere but had a reach much broader than was previously known.

Another question that some of the articles contained in this issue seek to grapple with is the following: What links penny fiction with other literary genres and phenomena? Many scholars cite the genres of crime and gothic fiction as major influences upon penny fiction and, in particular, penny bloods. Many mid-century penny bloods did indeed contain murders and robberies in stories written in the style of the Newgate novel of the 1830s while gothic influences are clearly detectable in close readings and analyses. Yet these focuses – which confine penny fiction inside the neat confines of crime and gothic – arguably do a disservice to a corpus of literature which was just as varied as "mainstream" literature. For an example one may turn, once more, to the works of Pierce Egan the Younger. They sold for a penny yet there was very little in them that modern scholars, were they to read his works, would classify as proper to a penny blood. Egan's *Robin Hood and Little John* (1838–40), *Wat Tyler* (1840–1), *Adam Bell* (1842), and *Edward the Black Prince* (1850) mark him out as a skilled historical novelist not prone to sensationalism or violence for violence's sake. His later novel *Clifton Grey* (1856) was a tale of the Crimean War which offered a critique of contemporary events, while his 1860s novels serialised in the *London Journal* such as *The Poor Girl*, *The Flower of the Flock*, and *The Wonder of Kingswood Chace* would sit easily alongside any silver fork or sensation novel (see King, 2004: 126).

Further complications arise when we consider the republication of expensive literary works in penny format. The publisher John Dicks did this frequently in his *Library of Standard English Works* later in the century (Humpherys 2016: 94). In this long-running series, the works of W.M. Thackeray and William Harrison Ainsworth stand alongside Reynolds; James Fenimore Cooper is printed in the same volume as Sue, as is Henry Fielding. When the series was published in the 1880s, Victorian readers would have encountered such mainstream works and literary classics alongside penny bloods and penny fiction. In such a series, does mainstream literature become penny literature, or does penny literature enter the mainstream? John Dicks's sons further complicated the Victorian "canon" when the firm began publishing sixpenny "People's Editions" of major English novelists' works. An advertisement for this series includes the works of Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, Ainsworth, Reynolds, Egan the Younger, along with a host of other writers whose names have now been largely forgotten ("Advertisement" 1885). There are no straightforward answers here but they are questions that are worth thinking about if scholars are ever to meaningfully reappraise penny fiction in the Victorian world. The seven essays that comprise this special issue will start to respond to some of those important questions.

## "Bloods and Dreadfuls"

Perhaps one of the only definitive answers we can arrive at is to say that prose fiction selling at a low price was popular with the Victorian reading public. "Mainstream" novels being expensive and retailing at a declared price of 31 shillings for their three-volume form, it is no wonder that many of them were imitated by writers eking out a living for the various penny publishers and later

reprinted. Today, critics tend to assume that the terms "penny dreadful" and "penny blood" have always been in use. "Throughout the history of cheap popular fiction marketed for the working-class," one scholar claims, "the term 'Penny Dreadful' was the blanket title for all inexpensive, serialised tales of sensation fiction sold on London's streets in penny parts," while "due to the excessive amount of blood, gore, and hellish woodcuts each tale contained," these works were also "labeled Penny Bloods" (Herr 2008: 11). However, much of this "history" is myth. It took some decades after penny fiction's 1830s inception for critics to recognise it as a distinct literary entity, separate from cheap literature, penny papers, and crime fiction. As late as 1857, an editorial on "Cheap Literature as it Effects Authors and Publishers" in *The London Miscellany* struggled to define the contents – fictional and otherwise – of penny papers. The editorial ultimately settled upon "literature (the cost of which is within the reach of the poorest) available to the knowledge and understanding of the least educated of those who have lately learned the art of reading" ("Cheap Literature" 1857: 376). It took even longer for penny fiction to be explicitly demonised as the "penny blood" and "penny dreadful."

To be sure, cheap literature had always posed real threats to the status quo. As the Chartist writer Thomas Frost recalled, "[t]he first locomotive was not viewed with more fear and distrust than the first elementary school and the first penny periodical" (Frost 1880: 7). Initially, a major target of this fear was political radicalism. In an 1838 *Fraser's* essay, a young Thackeray accused penny papers of luring working-class men into ginshops and brothels, and also of introducing them to the "cant … of the Radical spouters," which he labels "hatred" (Thackeray 1838: 290). Yet one of the most successful publishers of penny newspapers and penny fiction in other formats, Edward Lloyd, denounced violent political action and promoted liberalism, thereby helping to build a mass liberal consensus (McWilliam 2019: 209-11). *The London Journal,* from the 1860s onwards "perceived as part of the 'purified penny press" (King 2004: 29) became the indicative penny fiction weekly, "a metonym for the whole genre" (141). While the penny press acclimated people to news and pleasure reading during the growth of what Ian Haywood has called a radical "counter-public sphere," this was deeply unsettling to the gatekeepers of British culture (Haywood 2004: 2-4).

The middle-class reaction to this development was to blame cheap literature, crime news, and outlaw fiction for the crimes committed by working-class people, particularly after the 1840 execution of the valet Benjamin Courvoisier for the murder of his aristocratic employer. Infamously, Courvoisier had owned a copy of William Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard,* which proved suggested a cause and effect relationship between reading and action (Haugtvedt 2021: 78-9). *Jack Sheppard* was not a penny publication in itself, having debuted in the more expensive *Bentley's Miscellany,* but it was frequently imitated in the penny press. Examples include Thomas White's twelve-part version (c.1840) and Edward Leman Blanchard's inventive *Jack Sheppard; or, London in the Last Century, a Romance of Reality* (c.1847). As we have seen, criticism such as Collins's "The Unknown Public" and Oliphant's "The Byways of Literature: Reading for the Million," both published in 1858, exploited anxieties about the growth of a working-class reading nation, just as Thackeray had done two decades earlier. Meanwhile, penny fiction itself dramatically evolved, becoming, for a variety of reasons, less lurid, more adventurous, and geared explicitly towards boy readers (Springhall 1998: 41).

This development did not alleviate the moral panic. In fact, the panic increased. The passage of the 1870 Education Act, which promised to increase the size of the working-class reading public, provoked further anxiety and saw the advent of the terms "penny blood" and

"penny dreadful." As John Springhall notes, an early instance of "penny dreadful" appears in John Camden Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* of 1874 (Springhall 1998: 38). Hotten defines the "penny dreadful" as "a penny publication" that "depend[s] more upon sensationalism than upon merit, artistic or literary, for success" (Hotten 1874: 250). Primary source databases reveal that "penny blood" and "penny dreadful" both emerged slightly earlier (around 1870) and that "penny dreadful" was consistently the more popular term. ProQuest's British Periodicals collection contains twelve periodical pieces that include the term "penny blood." These are dated 1869–1933, but the earliest date is an outlier, accounting for only one article, which calls Reynolds a "penny blood-and-thunder novelist" ("Mr. Charles Lever" 1869: 301), referring to the sort of "vulgar oath" that Byron employs in *Childe Harold* (Byron 317 [Canto 8, line 1]). ProQuest British Periodicals also incorporates 465 mentions of "penny dreadful" dating between 1870 and 1926. The earliest appears in an 1870 editorial by Antony Trollope in *St. Paul's Magazine,*. Trollope purports to reveal the despair of a writer employed at several "penny dreadful papers" ([Trollope] 1870: 669). Google NGram, which generates data visualisations of word frequencies in the Google Books corpus, produces similar results. According to Google NGram, "penny blood" and "penny dreadful" both appear *circa* 1870, with "penny dreadful" considerably outstripping the term "penny blood" (Fig. 1). In British Periodicals and Google NGram results, both "penny blood" and "penny dreadful" appear most frequently in content from the 1890s, a decade which, as Springhall documents, saw sensational court cases in which boy defendants were identified as readers of penny fiction (Springhall 1998: 10).

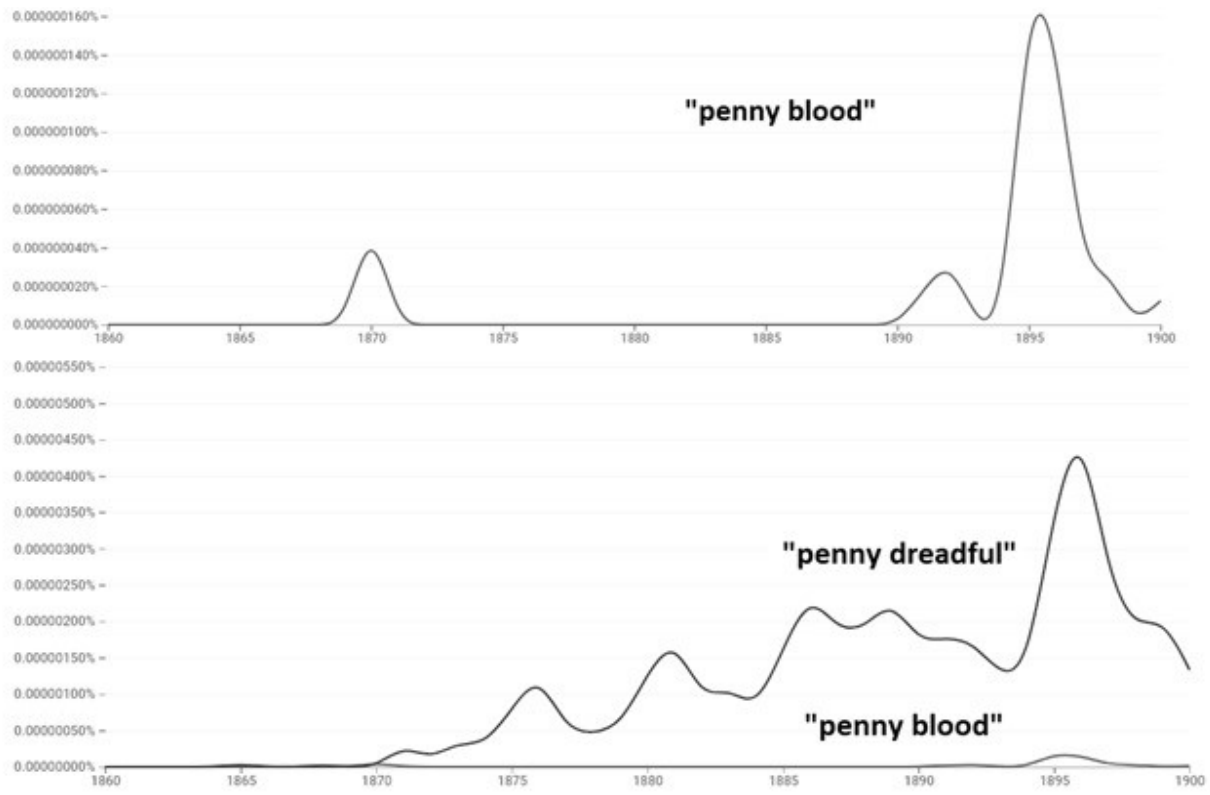


Fig. 1: Google NGram Viewer, 2022.

This cultural history shapes the earliest scholarly studies of Victorian penny fiction, studies that assume that this literature is gratuitously sanguinary and associated with sexual transgression. An early bibliography of popular literature including "bloods" and "dreadfuls," Montague Summers's *Gothic Bibliography* (1940), found a printer only in London's Fortune Press, which in 1934 had been subjected to an Obscenity Act police raid that turned up erotica misattributed to the still-notorious Oscar Wilde (Ladenson 2013: 125). In 1948, E.S. Turner (born 1909), a proud collector of penny fiction and of later-Victorian boys' adventure books, called penny periodicals "the journals" that boys' "parents did not want them to read." He pronounced them to be typically consumed "in the privacy of bed" and "associated with a feeling of guilt" (Turner 1975: 11-16). Turner boasts that "[p]robably there is no product of the human brain which has been the object of such remorseless and misconceived abuse as the boy's thriller," for "on no theme have magistrates, clergymen and schoolmasters talked more prejudice to the reported inch" (11). This hyperbole makes penny fiction sound very much like erotica.

It is no wonder, then, that from the late Victorian era until today, critics and scholars have characterised the authors of penny fiction as mysterious men confined to the shadows. In Trollope's 1870 *St. Paul's* piece, the supposed "penny dreadful" author had been rusticated from a Cambridge college for insubordinating a tutor. He lived in "dirty lodging" and abandoned his wife and children ("An Editor's Tales" 1870: 670). "My life, of course, is a mistake," he concluded (670). Turner calls Frank Richards/Charles Hamilton, "the creator of Billy Bunter … something of an enigma" and "the first man to have achieved an entry in *Who's Who* under an alias" (Turner 1975: 8). Turner's contemporary Arthur Waite recycled Oliphant's 1858 terminology and declared in his unpublished bibliography *The Quest for Bloods* (abandoned c.1940) that "penny bloods" occupy the "byways" of literature (Waite 1997: 1). While his self-aggrandising explorationist hyperbole is demonstrably untrue, it reinforces the idea that penny fiction is not respectable. The belief that penny fiction was produced by seedy recluses persisted, for instance in the catalogue of a 1998 British Library exhibit showcasing the Barry Ono Collection of popular fiction. "At all periods" of the Victorian era, this catalogue claims, "the writers of penny fiction have tended to lead Bohemian lives which are difficult to chart accurately," and "only a few" of them "seem to have been, or have become, conventional respectable citizens" (James and Smith 1995: xiv). The truth of this claim depends upon the meaning of "respectable:" Reynolds was a radical but also a public figure with a well-documented life. As Basdeo observes, penny fiction writer Pierce Egan the Younger, son of Pierce Egan the author of the comic bestseller *Life in London* (1822), also had radical political leanings, but was hardly obscure and generally considered a pillar of society.

## The Critical Tradition

A paradigm shift in Victorian penny fiction scholarship occurred in the mid-twentieth century, led by British scholars of the New Left tradition. In this era, Britain saw intense debates about the nature of literature, the remit of literary studies, and the value of popular culture. T.S. Eliot presented a particularly limiting theory of literary value in his *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* (1948), which maintained that "culture" excludes "the less developed culture of mass society," and that organised religion constitutes the most robust "frame-work for a culture, and protects the mass of humanity from boredom and despair" (Eliot 1948: 60, 121, 34).

Echoing Arnold almost a century earlier, Eliot defended class hierarchy as a safeguard of "culture" and insisted that "if Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes" (1948: 126). Vociferously disagreeing with every point of Eliot's manifesto, Raymond Williams, having newly graduated from Cambridge and teaching adult education modules for Oxford University, came up with a competing, Marxist-derived, theory of culture that seeded the movement that shortly thereafter came to be known as "cultural materialism." "Culture is ordinary," Williams insisted: popular culture was as worthy of study as the literary canon, which, in any case, was a subjective, constantly evolving entity (Williams 1989: 1). In 1963, the historian E.P. Thompson published *The Making of the English Working Class,* which, though many of its points have since been qualified and refined, remains a vital survey of Chartist and other radical movements that shaped the civic world of penny fiction's readers, writers, and publishers. Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannell expanded upon Williams in *The Popular Arts* (1964). Here they argued – in what would come to be known as cultural studies – that popular art, ranging from music to movies, also deserved analysis as it could illuminate past and present cultural values and processes. In short, what the people read matters as much as what the elites read, as do genres of popular entertainment and information that do not fit easily into the major categories of poetry, stage drama, and literary fiction.

From the same intellectual perspective, Louis James published his monograph *Fiction for the Working Man: 1830-1850* in 1963. This study established for the first time that penny fiction was a fit subject for academic literary criticism, that its authors' and editors' aesthetics, ethics and economics were complex and well-thought-out, and that without knowledge of penny fiction, we really cannot claim to understand the Victorian imagination or the Victorian reading community. Written with a deep understanding of social history and a great respect for the eccentric collectors of penny literature who shared their libraries and homes with him, James writes of the "penny issue" novel and the "domestic[ity]" of much penny fiction, which, due to its hitherto sensationalist reputation, seemed a "paradox" at the time (James [1963] 2017: 114, 120-1).

Since James's study, more and more critics have begun to study penny fiction, and even teach it. A later seminal work is John Springhall's *Youth, Popular Culture, and Moral Panics* (1998) which examines the moral panics about popular culture's impact on youth, beginning with "penny dreadfuls" and the "penny gaffs" (minor theatre shows) often adapted from them, and tracing the phenomenon through the 1990s racist panics about "gangsta rap.". Individual figures in Victorian penny fiction have attracted attention. For us the most significant is G.W.M. Reynolds, a figure of astonishing radical convictions and foresight. Reynolds features in anthologies, critical editions, research monographs and even blogs and popular articles. Other widely studied figures of the period include the publisher Edward Lloyd and the novelist James Malcolm Rymer. The two penny serials that have attracted the most critical attention were both written by Rymer in the 1840s for Lloyd: *Varney the Vampyre* and *The String of Pearls.* This was facilitated by two facsimile editions of *Varney* that made that text more accessible than it had been since the 1850s: one in a beautiful three-volume quarto edition by Devendra P. Varma (originally 1970, reprinted 1998) and a cheap set of two paperback volumes edited by E.F. Bleiler that came out in the same year.

As for Sweeney Todd in *The String of Pearls*, Robert Mack's *The Wonderful History of Sweeney Todd: The Life and Times of an Urban Legend* (2007) is a magisterial study of the urban mythological tradition that incorporates Rymer's invention of the Barber of Fleet-street. Several editions of *The String of Pearls* (1846–7 serial version) exist, edited by Mack (2007), Dick Collins (2005, helpfully updated 2010), and Rohan McWilliam (2015).[2] Scholarship on Chartism, beginning with the British Marxist classics of the late twentieth century, has enabled fascinating work on the intersections between Chartism, other forms of radicalism, and Victorian penny fiction. Troy Boone correctly identifies Chartism as a major topic of Rymer's *Varney, the Vampyre's* political vision. Like some Chartist leaders, Boone argues, *Varney* promotes nonviolent political agitation to working-class readers, especially children. A more recent high contribution is Rohan McWilliam's article "Sweeney Todd and the Chartist Gothic: Politics and Print Culture in Early Victorian Britain" (2019). McWilliam usefully distinguishes the "Chartist Gothic" (his coinage) ideology of Reynolds's romances from Lloyd's far more conciliatory liberalism. Pointing out the middle-class heroes of *The String of Pearls* and its refusal to demand political change, McWilliam persuasively contends that unlike Reynolds's Chartist Gothic works, it is no radical text. Taking this idea further, Rob Breton's monograph *The Penny Politics of Popular Fiction* (2021), significantly informed by Gregory Vargo's *An Underground History of Victorian Popular Fiction* (2018), persuasively contends that the palpably radicalised public sphere of the Chartist era forced penny publishers including Lloyd and Reynolds to engage with radical culture, in a diverse array of manners.[3]

The exciting critical renaissance in penny fiction studies is indebted to the Victorian Popular Fiction Association and the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals, both of which have expanded the field of Victorian literary studies to incorporate multimodal, non-elite penny fiction. Meanwhile, independent presses such as Victorian Secrets, Valancourt, and Edwin Everett Root are introducing penny literature to a new generation of readers. Databases such as Nineteenth Century Collections Online and ProQuest British Periodicals have made many of the primary sources newly accessible to members of institutions with the funds to subscribe to them. Meanwhile, the open access bibliographic database Price One Penny (www.priceonepenny.info) has achieved its tenth anniversary and is still being expanded. What Earhart calls the New Historicist inflected "Era of the Archive." whereby multimodal archives of disparate materials have, from the 1990s onwards, displaced linear, text-based editions, become the

[2] In 2002, Smith disambiguated Rymer and Prest's writings in a pamphlet for the London antiquarian bookseller Jarndyce, establishing rudimentary Rymer and Prest canons and clarifying that Rymer was responsible for *The String of Pearls (Sweeney Todd*). In 2020, Nesvet further clarified the attribution question, documenting George Augustus Sala's 1892 introduction of the Prest attribution by way of a gossip column never intended to be read as literary history. Criticism of *The String of Pearls* is growing at a rate that precludes comprehensive survey, but an important contribution is Maisha Wester's "Text as Gothic Murder Machine: The Cannibalism of Sawney Beane and Sweeney Todd." Wester argues that Todd and the *Newgate Calendar* villain Beane both function as Gothic "meaning machines," articulating popular anxieties about racial, ethnic, and geographic others as well as ambivalence about the figuratively cannibalistic nature of urban English society during what the 20th century came to call "the Hungry Forties." Anna Gasperini's 2019 monograph on medical and anatomical controversies in Victorian popular fiction focuses with unusual depth and breadth on Rymer, considering the impact of the 1832 Anatomy Act and going beyond *The String of Pearls* and *Varney* to consider more obscure texts.

[3] See also in this journal, Nesvet (2019).

dominant means by which American digital humanities scholars encounter material (Earhart 2015: 38-9). One example of this kind of curated archive relevant to Victorian Popular Fictions publishes both criticism and rare images of illustrated penny fiction in their original publishing contexts: John Adcock's personal blog *Yesterday's Papers,* which commenced in 2008, draws extensively upon Adcock's personal collection to cover penny fiction from the 1840s through the turn of the century. More recently, the blog *Reynolds's News and Miscellany* by Basdeo and his collaborators explores and meticulously contextualises radical culture, journalism, and penny fiction from the 1840s-1890s. Again, this offers invaluable facsimiles of items from the author's extensive personal library as well as public-domain source (Basdeo and Thomas 2021). Resources such as these open access private enterprises, along with the larger subscription-based archives, will facilitate further work on penny fiction – a grass roots addition to outputs from multinational publishers that needs to be done in part because the myths about penny fiction, begun in the nineteenth century, linger in critical discourse. This special issue of *Victorian Popular Fictions* aims to perform a small part of that much-needed reappraisal and to inspire more to come.

## New Readings

The seven articles that follow reappraise penny fiction in ways that both expand upon the critical tradition and challenge or refine it. To begin with, penny fiction is fiction: this is what distinguishes it from the other offerings of the Victorian penny press, including news serials and other kinds of periodic columns. The fictional nature of penny romances and tales might cause us to forget that they very often promised to reveal the real or *actuelle:* in other words, history or news. Sophie Raine's "'Founded on Fact': Paratextual Politics in the Penny Dreadful" recentres penny fiction's facticity. Pointing out that Rymer observed that apparent "truthfulness" makes fiction popular, Rymer documents the marketing of penny fiction via paratexts which emphasise how a text is "founded on fact," thus transforming fiction into an apparent truth. Raine finds that what Gary Kelly refers to as the "footnote novel" – a form used by Romantic-period writers which incorporated "factual, public, and political material" (1993, 157) – resurfaces in penny fiction. Raine argues that the penny novelists used apparently scholarly references to create authorial credibility and reinforced it by establishing a meaningful relationship between the author and the reader.

Moving from aesthetics to ethics, this special issue explores penny fiction's politics as advanced by writers including James, Humpherys, McWilliam, and Breton. The same authors who strove to describe the world as it was also wished to change some aspects of it, a wish they shared with the palpably radicalised working-class audience of the Chartist era. Readings of the political contexts of penny fiction have been plentiful in recent years, helpfully establishing that penny fiction was neither escapist nor apolitical. However, no attention has been paid to the name-dropping of a major Chartist figure, William Lovett, author of the Charter, in the most famous penny serial. In "What's in a Name? Mr. and Mrs. Lovett and *The String of Pearls,*" Rebecca Nesvet considers what this name's invocation as that of the villainous yet nonviolent Mrs. Lovett might have meant to its primary author, Rymer, and its original audience.

Political readings of penny fiction often evade questions of gender, such as those explored by Anna Clark in *The Struggle for the Breeches* (2005). Brooke Cameron's article "Domestic Plots and Class Reform in *Varney the Vampire*" fills that gap, by reading *Varney's* serial marriage plots as a critique of bourgeois models of marriage promoted in the 1840s via controversial public health campaigns. Building upon research on marital, sexual, and sanitary rhetoric in Victorian urban life, Cameron shows that *Varney* resists the marriage plots that the Victorian establishment tried to foist upon working-class people in fiction and real life. Cameron's article not only questions how we read *Varney*'s numerous marriage plots but also complicates the history of the novel. Read in relation to Edwin Chadwick's 1842 sanitary report, *Varney* offers refreshing pushback to authoritarian attempts to legislate working-class mores.

This is only one of the ways in which close reading and the recontextualising of penny fiction can lead us to reconsider both popular fiction more broadly and the history of the novel itself. Sara Hackenberg participates in a similar process of reconsideration and reappraisal in her article "The Magician of Civilised Life": The Literary Detective in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Early Penny Fiction." As she points out, penny fiction is the precursor of the later detective novel. In Rymer's *Ada the Betrayed* and *The String of Pearls,* magistrates collaborate with heroines to conduct investigations that ultimately uncover conspiracy and murder. The pseudonymous 'Edward Ellis's' serial *Ruth the Betrayer, or, the Female Spy,* printed in 1862–3 by Reynolds's publisher John Dicks, imagined a woman police detective long before the London Metropolitan Police ever hired such a person (Bredesen 2019). Braddon is now acknowledged as a forerunner of crime fiction, though not as consistently as she might be. Hackenberg observes Braddon's characterisation of the nascent figure of the "detective police officer" and, reading Braddon's corpus longitudinally, shows how she reinvents the City Mysteries genre popularised by Sue and Reynolds to "personify" as the central "mystery" the figure of the "most powerful plotter." In the process she elevates his nemesis, the police detective. We need not wonder why in *A Study in Scarlet,* Sherlock Holmes, an adolescent in the 1860s, was particularly drawn to 'sensational literature' (Doyle 1898: 91).

By the following decade, well into the era of the boys' adventure periodical, British children had a wealth of penny fiction from which to choose their reading. Competition between publishers of penny papers that targeted children became intense. Madeline P. Gangnes examines this exigency in her article 'Editor, Reader, and Value for Money in Young Folks'. In one of the most successful boys' papers, *Young Folks*, which introduced readers to Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped,* the editorial team of James Henderson and his staff constantly revised their rhetorical strategies in order to remain appealing to his boy audience. Gangnes traces the evolution of *Young Folks* as its editor pursues a delicate balance of "value for money" in the eyes of children over more than a decade of the fin-de-siècle.Equally drawn to penny fiction were writers and readers from well beyond Britain Scholars such as Rebecca S. Wingo (2017), Pamela Bedore (2013), and Yu-Fang Cho (2007) have done important work on the "dime novels" of late nineteenth-century America; especially on dime fiction's complicity with myth-building about the phantasmic "American West" and the indigenous people(s) whom myths of the West in the era of Wounded Knee marginalised and misrepresented. In "Young America: Dime Novels and Juvenile Authorship," Laurie Langbauer in the present issue goes back to the 1830s and 1840s to demonstrate that dime novels incorporated nationalist narratives and projects that scholars have traditionally associated only with adult-literature, or, to put it another way, so-called "serious" fiction. Langbauer grounds the emergence of the dime novel in the "Young America" movement

galvanised by the New York publishing baron Evert Duyckinck. Although Duyckinck died before the dime novel's heyday, his influence endured. "Wide-awake" youth – supposedly revolutionary young thinkers, revolutionary *because* they were young – contributed to the dime papers, which were highly interactive in ways not yet acknowledged by scholars. They invented a new mode of authorship that encapsulated what Duyckinck thought it meant to be American. This aspect of dime fiction's origins-story shifts both that body of literature and youth authorship from the margins of American literature to the forefront. Additional instalments of Langbauer's larger project, on youth, agency, race, nation, and nationalism in American dime novels, are scheduled to appear in *The Journal of Juvenilia Studies* in 2023 and 2024, so, as so much penny fiction has said, this investigation is "to be continued in our next."

Stephen Basdeo and Luiz F.A. Guerra's article takes us to the Empire of Brazil. The nineteenth-century British and Brazilian empires were in many ways similar in that they were constitutional monarchies with a parliamentary system dominated by Liberal and Conservative parties. Both boasted a thriving literary culture comprising periodicals, newspapers, chapbooks, and books, and there was a distinction between "cheap" books and expensive ones. Unsurprisingly there was some cultural exchange between the two empires. The British had a significant presence in Rio de Janeiro, while one of Brazil's most prominent Romantic poets, Álvares de Azevedo, looked to the likes of Lord Byron, Walter Scott, and Percy Shelley as examples of artistic brilliance and admired British statesmen such as Robert Peel for their political brilliance (de Azevedo 1849/ 1942: 406). It is in this cultural context that Basdeo and Guerra investigate the reach of Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* and Sue's *Mysteres de Paris*, in the form of what might be called a loose adaptation and extension of the mysteries tradition by Juana Manso titled *Misterios del Plata* (1852). Serialised in the women's periodical *O Jornal das Senhoras* and paying homage to Sue and Reynolds in the introduction, Manso's tale is a radical story of female agency which sees a young woman fight against the despotic regime of the Argentine dictator Juan Rosas. Basdeo and Guerra show how an understanding of Manso's text, and a discussion of the several Latin American mysteries novels that were published around the same time, has implications for the study of Victorian popular literature as a whole. As several previously published pieces in this journal have shown, it is now time for Victorian Popular Literature to join the discussion of 'global' world literatures and across languages.

Once more voyaging to the USA, we conclude our reappraisal of penny, dime, and other cheap fiction with a very personal account: a miniature memoir of sorts. Fans of Sweeney Todd, in any of his kaleidoscopic array of transmedia forms, will know Robert L. Mack's edition of *The String of Pearls* – the first critical edition of that important work of penny fiction – and his interdisciplinary – and diabolically fun – excavation of the Sweeney Todd phenomenon, *The Wonderful History of Sweeney Todd: The Life and Times of an Urban Legend* (2007). In this issue's "coda" entitled "Confronting the 'Real' Sweeney Todd: A Journey of Discovery," Mack returns to his personal introduction to the legend. Like so many Victorians, he first met Todd in the live theatre, though, in his case, he met Todd in Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's musical *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet-Street: A Musical Thriller,* when it premiered at Broadway's Uris Theatre in 1979. The musical was not an immediate hit and Mack documents the critical confusion that it met before charting how, via this particular adaptation, Sweeney Todd garnered a truly global audience for the first time and began to be reinvented as a historical figure, which he most decidedly was not.

## "Such Style, Such Flair"

In the *Dr. Who* episode "Shada," written in 1979 by cult novelist Douglas Adams but never broadcast in full, the Doctor and his companion Romana visit a time-traveling Cambridge don. In Professor Chronotis's rooms at St. Cedd's College, the adventurers search for a dangerous book. Rumoured to have the power to destroy the world, it must never be read. The Doctor and Romana frantically rifle through Chronotis's shelves. They do not find this book, but instead they discover a copy of "Sweeney Todd." The Doctor reflects on his childhood adoration: "He was a boyhood hero of mine," the Doctor reflects. The demure Romana is surprised: "A great criminal, your hero?" "Oh yes," the Doctor confesses, "But he had such style, such flair … Like me." This space-age Jack Sheppard's appeal to Time Lords and humans alike reveals why penny fiction has proved compelling to generations: always disreputable, its instantly recognisable aesthetic has "a flair" that we would like to think we continue to emulate.

Waite saw its storytelling surviving in the movies and he was certainly correct with regard to adaptations of Reynolds in his own era; a silent film produced in 1915 – the only surviving copy of which has Dutch subtitles – was titled *The Mysteries of London* and related a scene from Reynolds's *Mysteries of the Court of London* (Coleby 1915). In India, where Reynolds garnered great respect (Bhattacharya 2008), an adaptation of his novel *Leila: The Star of Mingrelia* was, on its release in 1931, the most expensive Indian movie produced at the time. Quite pertinently for the point about moving pictures as successors to serialised penny fiction, the poster for this movie advertised it as "a serial in 20 reels" over "2 chapters."

Given penny fiction's seriality, television and podcasts are more likely successors. John Logan, screenwriter of the 2007 Hollywood film *Sweeney Todd*, created the Showtime and Sky television show *Penny Dreadful* (2014-17). This award-winning show takes place in 1890s London and features well-known characters from the nineteenth century literary canon, including Frankenstein and his Creature, a vampire, and *Dracula*'s Mina Harker. These characters interact with updates of other pop cultural icons such American werewolf Ethan Lawrence Talbot, borrowed from Universal Studios' 1941 film *The Wolf Man* (Manea 12). None of *Penny Dreadful*'s principal characters derive directly from penny fiction texts, but some aspects of the penny fiction phenomenon feature prominently. One example is the show's "plunder[ing]" of London's "popular culture archive" (Louttit 3). Another is *Penny Dreadful*'s continual insistence that "the social life of the city is a performance and that those around us may be harbouring mysterious inner lives" (8), which is obviously indebted to the urban mysteries genre. Also perhaps reminiscent of Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* is *Penny Dreadful'*s exploration of "dual social realities" (Akilli and Öz 18) by contrasting elite and "impoverished and the marginalized" Londoners' life experiences (Manea 44). Scholars observe that *Penny Dreadful* inhabits (Louttit 3) yet "historicises" (Manea 44) the cinematic setting "Horror London," to which the *Sweeney Todd* transmedia phenomenon has contributed. In 2020, Logan and his co-producers created the show *Penny Dreadful: City of Angels,* a "spiritual descendant" of the original *Penny Dreadful* (Horton). *Penny Dreadful: City of Angels* takes place in 1938 Los Angeles and depicts such actual evils as racist policing and the proliferation of Fascism. Like penny fiction, *Penny Dreadful* found

new life across the Atlantic. However, even this spinoff is riddled with tropes drawn from Victorian penny fiction. The hero, Los Angeles Police Detective Santiago Vega, the force's first Chicano detective, struggles with his brother, a labour organiser. The antagonistic brothers' duality recalls that of the brothers Markham and Montague in Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London.* Additionally, in a situation anticipated in many examples of Victorian penny fiction, the Nazi physician Dr. Craft schemes to have his perfectly sane wife committed to a mental asylum.

The success of the *Penny Dreadful* television franchise demonstrates that a Victorian mode of popular storytelling can be appropriated to realise any imaginable chronotrope and can resonate powerfully with audiences around the world. Clearly, penny fiction should be more central to Victorian studies than historically it has been. In any case, now that we know what the vast majority of Victorian readers enjoyed reading, we can no longer shut the door and pretend that it is an undiscoverable arcana. Sweeney Todd and his ilk are here to stay.

## Bibliography


Adams, Douglas. 2013. *Doctor Who: Shada.* [DVD.] BBC Video.

Adcock, John. *Yesterday's Papers.* 2008–. http://john-adcock.blogspot.com/2017/08/three-centuries-of-penny-dreadfuls.html

"Advertisement." In Olivia Serres. 1885 [1832]. *The Secret History of the Court of England. "People's Edition."* London: John Dicks.

Ainsworth, William Harrison. c.1840. *The Eventful Life and Unparalleled Exploits of the Notorious Jack Sheppard, the Housebreaker.* London: Thomas White.

Akilli, Sinan and Seda Öz. 2016. "'No More Let Life Divide': Victorian Metropolitan Confluence in *Penny Dreadful.*" *Critical Survey* 28.1: 15-29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2016.280103

Autrey, Max L. 1975. "A Source for Roger Chillingworth." *American Transcendental Quarterly,* 26: 24-6.

Basdeo, Stephen, and Jessica Elizabeth Thomas. 2021. "British Library Selects Reynolds's News and Miscellany for Inclusion in Digital Archive." *Reynolds's News and Miscellany: History, Literature, Poetry, and Literary Criticism*, https://reynolds-news.com/2021/08/11/reynolds-news-british-library-stephen-basdeo

Basdeo, Stephen. 2018-. *Reynolds's News and Miscellany: History, Literature, Poetry, and Literary Criticism.* https://reynolds-news.com/

Basdeo, Stephen. 2020. "The First British Edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Feathertop" in Home Circle," *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, 46.2: 207-12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5325/nathhawtrevi.46.2.0207

Bhattacharya, Sucheta. 2008. "G.W.M. Reynolds: Rewritten in Nineteenth Century Bengal." *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, edited by Anne Humpherys and Louis James, 249-60. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bedore, Pamela S. 2012. *Dime Novels and the Roots of American Detective Fiction.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Blanchard, Edward Litt Leman. c.1847. *Jack Sheppard; or, London in the Last Century, a Romance of Reality*. London: G. Mansell.

Bleiler, E.F., ed. 1970. *Varney, the Vampyre, or, the Feast of Blood*. 2 vols. London: Dover.

Boone, Troy. 2004. *Youth of Darkest England: Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire*. New York: Routledge.

Bredesen, Dagni, ed. 2019. *Ruth the Betrayer, or, the Female Spy.* London: Valancourt Books.

Breton, Rob. 2021. *The Penny Politics of Popular Fiction.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Byron, George Gordon, Lord. 1977. *Don Juan,* edited by T.G. Steffan, E. Steffan, and W.W. Pratt. London: Penguin.

"Cheap Literature, as it Effects Authors and Publishers." 1857. *The London Miscellany*, 14.1: 376.

Chevasco, Berry Palmer. 2003. *Mysterymania: The Reception of Eugène Sue in Britain, 1838–1860*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Cho, Yu- Fang. 2007. "A Romance of (Miscege)Nations: Ann Sophia Stephens' Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter (1839, 1860)." *Arizona Quarterly,* 63.1: 1-25.

Clark, Anna. 1997. *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Coleby, A. E. dir. N.d. [1915]. *The Mysteries of London.* United Kingdom: Martin's Exclusives. The British Film Institute BFI Player. https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-mysteries-of-london-1915-online

Collins, Dick, ed. 2010. *Sweeney Todd (The String of Pearls).* Ware: Wordsworth.

Collins, Wilkie. 1858. "The Unknown Public." *Household Words*, 18.439, 217-22, extracted in *Victorian Print Media: a Reader*, edited by Andrew King and John Plunkett, 207-216. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

de Azevedo, Álvares. [1849] 1942. 'Discurso: Recitado no dia 11 de agosto de 1849 na sessão academica, commemoradora do anniversario da criação dos cursos juridicos do Brasil'. In *Obras completas de Álvares de Azevedo,* ed. Homero Pires, 2 vols, 399-416. Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Editora Nacional.

Doyle, Arthur Conan, Sir. [1878] 1898. *A Study in Scarlet*: *A Novel*. New York and London: Street and Smith.

Earhart, Amy L. 2015. *Traces of the Old, Uses of the New: The Emergence of Digital Literary Studies.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Elliott, T.S. 1948. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Frost, Thomas. 1880. Forty Years' Recollections: Literary and Political. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington.

Gasperini, Anna. 2019. *Nineteenth Century Popular Fiction, Medicine and Anatomy: The Victorian Penny Blood and the 1832 Anatomy Act.* London: Palgrave.

Geier, Ted. 2017. *Meat Markets: A Cultural History of Bloody London*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, Stuart and Paddy Whannell. 1964. *The Popular Arts.* London: Hutchinson International.

Haugtvedt, Erica. 2021. "Class and Complex Transmedia Character in Jack Sheppard (1838-9)." *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal*, 3.2: 78-9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.46911/oyym7051

Haywood, Ian. 2004. *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics, and the People*, 1790-1860 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Herr, Curt, ed. 2008. *Varney, the Vampyre, or the Feast of Blood*. Camarillo: Zittaw Press.

Horton, Adrian. 2020. "Penny Dreadful: City of Angels Review: Magnetic but Messy Escapism." *The Guardian* 23 April. https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/apr/23/penny-dreadful-city-of-angels-review-los-angeles

Hotten, John Camden. 1874. *The Slang Dictionary: Etymological, Historical, and Anecdotal.* London: Chatto and Windus.

Humpherys, Anne. 2016. "John Dicks's Cheap Reprint Series, 1850s-1890s: Reading Advertisements." In *Media and Print Culture Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Victorian Reading Experience*, edited by Paul Raphael Rooney and Anna Gasperini, 93-110. London: Palgrave.

James, Elizabeth, and Helen R. Smith. 1998. *Penny Dreadfuls and Boys' Adventures: The Barry Ono Collection of Victorian Popular Literature at the British Library*. London: The British Library.

James, Louis R. [1963] 2017. *Fiction for the Working Man: 1830-1850*: *A Study of the Literature Produced for the Working Classes in Early Victorian Urban England* (3rd edition). Edward Everett Root Publishers Co. Ltd [Oxford: Oxford University Press].

Justice, Steven. 1994. *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381.* Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Kelly, Gary. 1993. *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830*. London: Longman.

King, Andrew. 2004. *The London Journal 1845-1883: Periodicals Production and Gender*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

King, Andrew, and John Plunkett, eds. 2005. *Victorian Print Media: a Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Kirkpatrick, Robert. 2013. *From the Penny Dreadful to the Ha'penny Dreadfuller: A Bibliographic History of the Boys' Periodical in Britain*. London: The British Library.

Knight, Stephen. 2012. *Mysteries of the Cities: Urban Crime Fiction in the Nineteenth Century.* Jefferson, NC: Macfarland.

Ladenson, Elisabeth. 2013. "After Jix (1930-45)." In *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, edited by David Bradshaw and Rachel Potter, 111-37. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199697564.003.0007

Louttitt, Chris. 2016. "Victorian London Redux: Adapting the Gothic Metropolis." *Critical Survey* 28.1: 2-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2016.280102

Shepard, Leslie. [1964] 1973. *The History of Street Literature. The Story of Broadside Ballads, Chapbooks, Proclamations, News-Sheets, Election Bills, Tracts, Pamphlets, Cocks, Catchpennies and other Ephemera.* Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Lill, Sarah Louise and Rohan McWilliam, eds. 2019. *Edward Lloyd and his World: Popular Fiction, Politics, and the Press*. London: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429262548

Mack, Robert L. 2007. *The Wonderful History of Sweeney Todd: The Life and Times of an Urban Legend.* London: Continuum.

Mack, Robert L., ed. 2007. *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Manea, Dragoç. 2016. "A Wolf's Eye View of London: *Dracula, Penny Dreadful,* and the Logic of Repetition." *Critical Survey* 28.1: 48-50. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3167/cs.2016.280105

McWilliam, Rohan, ed. 2015. *The String of Pearls*. London: Dover.

McWilliam, Rohan. 2019. "Sweeney Todd and the Chartist Gothic: Politics and Print Culture in Early Victorian Britain." In *Edward Lloyd and his World: Popular Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, edited by Sarah Louise Lill and Rohan McWilliam, 198-215. London: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429262548

"Mr. Charles Lever." 1869. *The Sphinx,* 2.71: 301.

Nesvet, Rebecca. 2019. "Sweeney Todd's Indian Empire: Mapping the East India Company in The String of Pearls. *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal*, 1.2: 75-90. DOI: https://doi.org/10.46911/gvbl6476

Neuburg, Victor. 1964. *Chapbooks.* London: Vine Press.

Oliphant, Margaret. 1858. "The Byways of Literature: Reading for the Million." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 84 (493): 200-16.

Shannon, Mary L., and Louis R. James, ed. 2012. *G.W.M. Reynolds: The Mysteries of London.* 2 vols. London: Valancourt Books.

Smith, Helen R. 2002. *New Light on Sweeney Todd, Thomas Peckett Prest,James Malcolm Rymer, and Elizabeth Caroline Grey*. London: Jarndyce.

Springhall, John. 1998. *Youth, Popular Culture, and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996*. New York: St. Martin's.

[Thackeray, William Makepeace]. 1838. "Half-a-Crown's Worth of Cheap Knowledge." *Fraser's Magazine*, 17: 279-90.

Thompson, E.P. 1968. *The Making of the English Working Class.* London: Victor Gollancz.

[Trollope, Antony] 1870. "An Editor's Tales: V. The Spotted Dog." *St. Paul's Magazine* 5 (March): 669-70.

Turner, E.S. 1975. *Boys Will Be Boys: The Story of Sweeney Todd, Deadwood Dick, Sexton Blake, Billy Bunter, Dick Barton, et al*. 3rd ed. London: Penguin.

Vargo, Gregory. 2018. *An Underground History of Early Victorian Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Varma, Devendra P., ed. 1970/ 1998. *Varney, the Vampire. The First in a Series of Gothic Novels Under the Editorial Direction of Sir Devendra P. Varma.* 3 vols. North Stratford, NH: Ayer (orig. New York: Arno Press, 1970).

Waite, Arthur E. 1997. "The Bibliography of the Byways." In *The Quest for Bloods: A Study of the Victorian Penny Dreadful*, introduced by R.A. Gilbert, 78-108. London: Privately published by Ayresome John.

Wester, Maisha. 2015. "Text as Gothic Murder Machine: The Cannibalism of Sawney Beane and Sweeney Todd." In *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture,* edited by Justin Edwards, 154-65. New York: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315757339-17

Williams, Raymond. 1989. "Culture is Ordinary." In *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism,* 3-14. London: Verso.

Wingo, Rebecca S. 2017. "The 'Forgotten Era': Race and Gender in Ann Stephens's Dime Novel Frontier." *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman Studies*, 38.3: 121-40. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.38.3.0121