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WHEN IS A BOOK NOT A BOOK?

Within a print culture, many forms of communication may not be constructed for or produced in book format. Private letters, state documents, manuscript poetry circulated within a coterie as John Donne's poetry was,¹ and dramatic scripts, are some instances of writing not designed for book publication. Another non-book publication format is the periodical – magazines and newspapers. The fiction issued in nineteenth-century periodicals provides a complex and interesting case where privileging the volume edition over periodical issue distorts the nature of the fiction and the history of the book. And the case is an important exception to the primacy of book publication throughout the century, for, as the eminent literary historian George Saintsbury has said, 'there is no single feature of the English literary history of the nineteenth century . . . which is so distinctive and characteristic as the development in it of periodical literature.'²

What is a book? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a book is a 'printed treatise or series of treatises, occupying several sheets of paper or other substance fastened together so as to compose a material whole'.³ Books are sheets of paper on which something self-contained and internally coherent has been printed; all the printed material relates in some way to the book's title and 'treatise'. The contents of books are fixed in space – 'fastened together so as to compose a material whole', and they are also fixed in time – to a date of completion or publication at which copyright protection commences. Finally, many books are defined by being authored, or edited, by one or more than one person. Indeed, marketing a book by the author's name has been a commercial strategy for centuries: John Grisham's name is probably more important to most customers than the title of his newest book, and when *I Am Charlotte Simmons* was released in paperback after lukewarm reviews of the hard cover edition, Tom Wolfe's name was pasted over the title in hopes of increasing sales.

When, around 1700, magazines were invented in England, the designers started out by creating a character, a persona whose observations constituted the 'printed treatise' of the publication. Thus Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, the editors of the first major eighteenth-century magazine, the *Spectator*, developed the persona of 'Mr. Spectator'. In 1731, the first periodical with the word magazine in the title appeared; its persona was also announced in the title, the *Gentleman's Magazine*. A century later, the proprietors and editors of *Punch* created Mr. Punch, who never quite qualified as a gentleman. Magazines aim to develop their own distinctive personality; editors, designers, writers, and artists all direct their efforts toward that end. For instance, the *New Yorker* has

a distinctive personality, complete with a character, Eustace Tilley, who at the end of February every year examines a butterfly through his monocle, and whose portrait, presumably as proprietor, appears on the journal's paychecks. This magazine prints only certain kinds of prose and poetry and cartoons, only certain kinds of 'Talk of the Town'. Magazines, then, like books, often market themselves as coherent texts 'fastened together so as to compose a material whole' and authored by an individual. But magazines are in other ways very different from books.

To illustrate one aspect of the stake our society has in preferring the book, consider this entry in a 1993 bookseller's catalogue: 'AN EXCEPTIONALLY FINE COPY. REMARKABLY CLEAN. DICKENS (Charles) *Oliver Twist*, . . . 3 volumes, FIRST EDITION. First issue, . . . choicely bound for Hatchards, . . . £1500.'⁴ This notice is misleading in fundamental ways. The 'material whole' for sale for £1500 is not the first issue or first edition of most of the text of the novel now known as *Oliver Twist*. It does not print the title by which the story was first identified; it is not a book whose author was named Charles Dickens; and it is not even the 'material whole' it was when it first appeared. This three-volume edition, authored by 'Boz', was originally published in cloth covers by Richard Bentley on 9 November 1838, six months before *Oliver Twist* finished its serialized run in the pages of *Bentley's Miscellany* where it began [see Figure 27.1]. This bookseller's copy has been

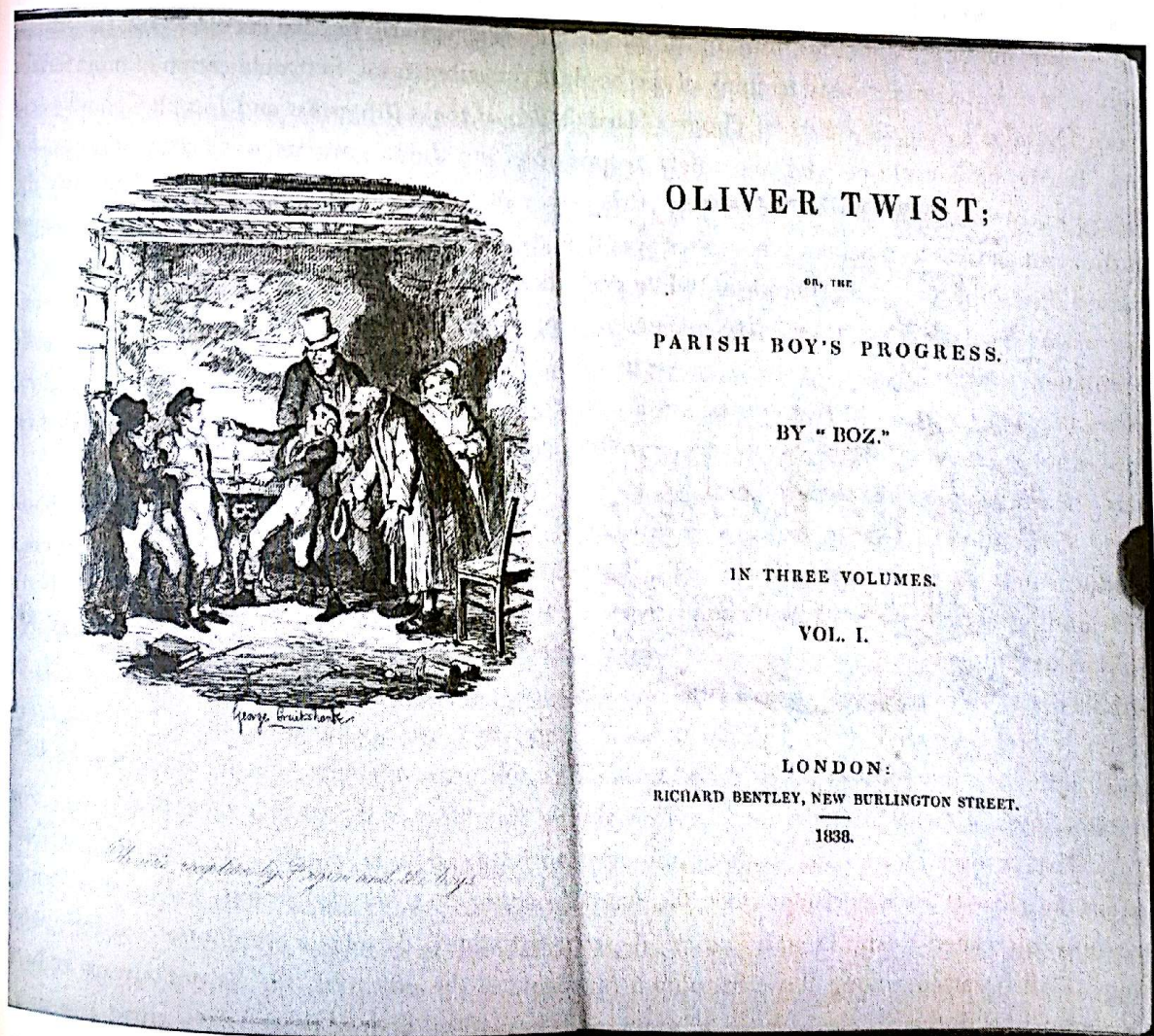


Figure 27.1 Six months before *Oliver Twist* finished its serial run in *Bentley's Miscellany*, the publisher Richard Bentley brought out the completed text, with all the illustrations, as a three-volume novel. Although Dickens was known to be the author, the book was still published under the name of 'Boz'. At Dickens's request, a new title page, giving his real name, was substituted within a week of publication day, November 9, 1838. Cruikshank's frontispiece illustrates 'Oliver's reception by Fagin and the boys'. — Berg Collection

rebound in half red morocco with gilt tops and gilt letters: the cloth covers have been stripped off, leather covers substituted, the edges of the pages trimmed, and the tops of the pages gilded to protect them from dust. So this is not 'an exceptionally fine copy' of the first three-volume book edition of the novel, but rather a copy that has been made finer by an expensive bookbinder and book dealer. This copy sells for fifteen hundred pounds because it contains early state title pages, a suppressed plate, and three leaves of publishers' advertisements that have nothing to do with the text of the 'treatise'.

By contrast, battered copies of the monthly numbers or half-yearly volumes of *Bentley's Miscellany* containing the serialized version of *Oliver Twist* could be found on bookstalls for much less. And for a little over half of the £1500 that in 1993 would buy a single novel, the same dealer a year later offered twenty-eight volumes of the *Cornhill Magazine*, 1860–1873, whose first editor was William Makepeace Thackeray, Dickens's great rival as journalist and novelist. Within those twenty-eight volumes are hundreds of stories and articles and the first issue of four serial fictions by Anthony Trollope, two by Thackeray, and one each by Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, and George Eliot.⁵ For even less money, \$1200, an antiquarian bookseller offered ten volumes of *Bentley's Miscellany*, 1837–1841, containing as the dealer correctly says 'the true first version of *Oliver Twist*'.⁶ In addition, these ten volumes contain a half dozen other significant novels, scores of poems and articles, and over a hundred first-issue etchings by George Cruikshank.

But dealers, collectors, museums, libraries, bibliographers, textual scholars, and the general public have been conditioned to think of the book as the substantial, first publication of most serials, from Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* to Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. Books have authors who are solely responsible for their contents – Charles Dickens, for example, even though those 'early state' title pages of the 'exceptionally fine copy' identify the author not as Charles Dickens but as what was then a well-known pseudonym, 'Boz'. And books get passed down through the generations, while periodicals are tossed out by families or broken up for the prints by dealers or reduced to microfilm, -form, or -fiche by librarians. The book is semi-permanent and simply displaces the format in which the text first appears. This is true for virtually every magazine serial, not just fiction, but also history, theology, biography, philosophy, criticism, and other genres which, as Saintsbury reminds us, were often in the nineteenth century first published in installments in periodicals.⁷

Over the last twenty years we have learned a lot about what this preference for the book produces in the way of copytext distortions. But I'm interested here, not in the textual controversies surrounding serialized, machine-printed works, but in the distortions that preferring the book version has imposed on our very conception of periodical fiction. Defining the text as identifiably authored and self-contained obscures the ways in which fiction was affected by the periodicals in which it first appeared. Four aspects of book fiction that are significantly altered by magazine serialization are the convention of single authorship, the genre of fiction itself, the apparent self-containedness of the 'material whole', and the timing and effect of the story's reception.

That magazines are collaborations among proprietors, editors, writers, and sometimes illustrators should not be surprising, since the word 'magazine', from the Arabic *makhazin* meaning storehouses (related to the French *magasin*, department store), denotes a warehouse storing many things. Collaboration among those running a magazine – the editorial 'we' is not always only a convention – is the norm even for the production of periodical fiction. Some of the most amusing, and possibly accurate, accounts of proprietors' constructing their publications are contained in Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* and George Gissing's *New Grub Street*. But though we have biographies of publishers and publishing houses, and narratives of publishers' interventions in the works of such famous authors as Sir Walter Scott and Dickens, little work has been done on the theory or general practice of proprietorial intervention in periodical texts. However, recently some

scholars have studied the kinds of effects editors may have on the medley of materials they assemble and publish. Mark Parker has shown how John Scott, editor of the *London Review* in the 1820s, transmitted Romantic ideology by manipulating the style, tone, subject, and placement of Charles Lamb's and William Hazlitt's essays and by framing them with surrounding essays in each issue so that their political implications were highlighted.⁸ Laurel Brake has demonstrated the influence of the differing editorial practices at the *Westminster Review* and the *Fortnightly Review* on the separately published essays that make up Walter Pater's *Renaissance*.⁹

To assess proprietorial and editorial interventions in *Oliver Twist*, we need first to recall that the proprietor, Richard Bentley, had started up his magazine as a rival to his former partner, Henry Colburn's, successful *New Monthly Magazine*. Bentley, determined to outdo the competition, aimed at capturing the market for humor: the *Wit's Miscellany*, he intended to call it at first. Then he changed to a name that links his own to that of the magazine's persona: *Bentley's Miscellany*. (One wag said the title was ominous – Miss Sell Any.) Humor, not politics, was as the 'Prologue' announced the keynote of the venture.¹⁰

For contributors to this miscellany of papers melded together into 'Bentley's', Richard Bentley bought up the team who were making a decided hit with their humorous pen and pencil sketches of lower-middle-class urban life: Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank. Their success was in the sketch, something either visual or verbal that was quickly executed and quickly absorbed, and that recorded the evanescent and fugitive detail of modern life.

The text of *Oliver Twist*, a long novel that is seldom humorous and that from the beginning attacks political measures, should be understood as a contribution that contrasts to the ostensible purpose and tone of *Bentley's Miscellany* and to the previous publication, *Sketches by Boz*, written by Dickens and illustrated by Cruikshank. The magazine's purpose and tone, in turn, are defined against the competition, archly described in the 'Prologue':

We do not envy the fame or glory of other monthly publications. Let them all have their room . . . One may revel in the unmastered fun and the soul-touching feeling of Wilson, the humour of Hamilton . . . and the Tory brilliancy of half a hundred contributors zealous in the cause of Conservatism . . . Elsewhere, what can be better than Marryat, Peter Simple, Jacob Faithful, Midshipman Easy, or whatever other title pleases his ear . . . In short, to all our periodical contemporaries we wish every happiness and success . . . We wish that we could catch them all . . .

But, the unsigned 'Prologue' continues, using the editorial first-person plural in this case probably because Dickens and Bentley were agreed about the policy, 'Our path is single and distinct. In the first place, we have nothing to do with politics.'¹¹

Out of the context of a magazine promising 'wit' and eschewing 'politics', *Oliver Twist* loses some of its shock value.¹² And unless we keep in mind the opening announcement that this will be a witty non-political miscellany, we may miss some of the underlying tension that surfaced in Richard Bentley's quarrels with Dickens about his contribution to the *Miscellany*.¹³ Moreover, proprietor and editor further shaped the contents of the journal by attempting to buy up the writers then making *Fraser's Magazine* so popular. They succeeded in hiring many of the contributors to *Fraser's*, including its outstanding editor William Maginn. And they signaled their intentions in the 'Prologue', hailing 'the wit of our contributor Theodore Hook', 'the fascinating prose or delicious verse of our fairest of collaborateuses Miss Landon', and 'the polyglot facetiae of our own Father Prout'. The contents of any issue of *Bentley's*, and of its serial fiction from Samuel Lover's *Handy Andy* to Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, should be understood in the context of what other journals were publishing and what other writers and illustrators were available. To some extent authors and artists had their

own styles, but to some extent too they were melded collectively into a house style, the polyphonic 'miscellany' unifying into a 'material whole'.¹⁴ The best serial fiction in or out of magazines, such as Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, exploits that verbal and visual polyphony.

Dickens both edited and supplied text for *Bentley's* under the pseudonym 'Boz', the author of *Sketches by Boz* [see Figure 27.2]. At the conclusion of Boz's first story, about the Mayor of the



Figure 27.2 In April of 1837, Dickens posed for Cruikshank. 'I was sitting for my portrait to George Cruikshank . . . to-day,' Dickens told a friend, 'and George being a ticklish subject [I] could not leave him.' – Berg Collection

provincial town of 'Mudfog', Boz explains that 'this is the first time we have published any of our gleanings from this particular source', that is, the Mudfog papers. He also suggests that 'at some future period, we may venture to open the chronicles of Mudfog.'¹⁵ This fiction of a manuscript source resembles that preserved through the first numbers of Dickens's concurrent monthly-parts serial, *The Pickwick Papers*. *Oliver Twist* commences in the February number of *Bentley's*, under the title of *Oliver Twist, or, the Parish Boy's Progress*, by 'Boz'. As the first sentence of the story makes clear, this is a continuation of the Mudfog Papers: Oliver is born in the Mudfog workhouse. Thus naming Dickens as the author of *Oliver Twist*, as the first volume publication and the book dealers' catalogues do, not only distorts the textual record but more importantly obscures the ways in which the narratorial voice, Boz, is constructed out of those voices that precede and surround it.¹⁶

That distortion was compounded when Dickens's authorized biographer, John Forster, made *Oliver Twist* into the first of three versions of Dickens's own childhood hardships, as if the story had its only origin in Dickens's own life. In fact there were other claimants for the originator of the story. Dickens's 'coadjutor' on *Sketches by Boz*, George Cruikshank, may indeed, as he later said, have suggested to Dickens that they collaborate on a story about the rise of 'a boy from a most humble position up to a high and respectable one'.¹⁷ For fifteen years, Cruikshank had wanted to illustrate a contemporary version of Hogarth's narrative series of twelve pictures, *Industry and Idleness*. Hogarth's pictures track the parallel but contrasted fortunes of two apprentices, one, Francis Goodchild, who through industry rises to 'a high and respectable' position as Lord Mayor of London, and the other, Tom Idle, who through idleness falls into bad company and is eventually sentenced by his former fellow apprentice Goodchild and hanged on Tyburn Hill. A successful recent exhibition of Hogarth's work had made such a project more viable.

If Dickens did adopt Cruikshank's suggestion, which chimed with some of his own ideas for what he told Richard Bentley was 'a capital notion for myself, and one which will bring Cruikshank out',¹⁸ then that resulting story has wider contexts than Dickens's own life. But those wider contexts and those other contributors were deliberately effaced. Charles Dickens constructed himself over the decades as a separable and distinct, unique, author. The promulgation of the figure of the writer Dickens became an immensely powerful merchandising ploy, selling not only his books but also political programs, charitable causes, wines and teas, and hundreds of manufactured products, from printed handkerchiefs to china, deriving from Dickens's work. Dickens's biographers, following John Forster's lead, reinforced the notoriety and singularity of Charles Dickens, author, rather than 'Boz', the editor and collaborator. Severing Dickens's periodical fictions from their magazine contexts allowed them to be reinterpreted as self-referential biographical disclosures. Largely a marketing strategy that made Dickens a household name, a fortune, and a model of a genius generating text out of trauma, this elevation of the book over the serial and its consequences persuaded even George Cruikshank's biographer to say in 1882 that 'In all the range of Dickens's work, there is nothing more essentially his own than "Oliver Twist".'¹⁹ But writers closer to the initial context within *Bentley's*, knowing both Dickens and Cruikshank, were of a different opinion. Samuel Warren, one of the most successful authors of the day, said that the illustrations influenced Dickens, and 'thus the writer follows the caricaturist, instead of the caricaturist following the writer.'²⁰

Another writer with a claim on Oliver's paternity is the novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, who was from the 1830s through the end of the century a very popular writer, especially of fiction for boys. Dickens's closest friend, Ainsworth had put Boz in touch with the publishers, artists, and journalists who helped to make Dickens's early reputation. By 1836 Ainsworth had embarked on a series of novels exploring the lives of thieves. The first, *Rookwood*, about the famous highwayman Dick Turpin, had been reissued with illustrations by Cruikshank, who had also been interested for seventeen years in collaborating with some writer on an illustrated life of a thief. The

second, *Jack Sheppard*, about a romantic young burglar, overlapped *Oliver Twist* in *Bentley's Miscellany*. Ainsworth collected a lot of written and pictorial material about eighteenth-century miscreants, including James Sykes, a companion of Jack Sheppard and a possible inspiration for Bill Sikes. Dickens and Ainsworth were together frequently, discussing a slew of present and future projects. Yet Ainsworth's contribution to *Oliver Twist* usually goes unnoticed.

The point of all this is that in the magazine context *Oliver Twist*'s authorship is a multiple thing – the proprietor Richard Bentley; the editor Charles Dickens; other journals such as the *New Monthly* and *Fraser's Magazine*; other contributors of articles such as the stable of *Fraser's* writers and those already being published by Bentley; the pseudonymous author 'Boz', known for his 'sketches' of metropolitan scenes, characters, and tales; the illustrator George Cruikshank; pictorial progresses by Hogarth and his successors; and a close friend (and future editor of the *Miscellany*) Harrison Ainsworth, all influenced the subject, style, tone, and content of the serialized fiction. Serialization deconstructs the single author as sole creator, and does so as part of a larger collaborative project within which the serial is framed. Conversely, prioritizing the book as a single-authored material object over the multiply authored serial deconstructs the periodical, erasing all the extratextual influences, turning the voice from polyphonic to monophonic, and connecting the text to one author's imagination rather than to the culture of a magazine and of a historical moment.

Serialization also tends to deconstruct the genre of fiction. *Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress*, beginning as a Mudfog paper, starts as a further instance of the articles and tales Dickens had written for the *Morning and Evening Chronicle* and which in turn were partly based on sketches of the city by other journalists and graphic artists. Like the *Old Curiosity Shop*, it begins more as a short story than an extended fiction. Like *Pickwick*, the first Mudfog paper claims affinity with Parliamentary reports, memoirs, and posthumous papers. In *Bentley's Miscellany*, the installments of *Oliver Twist* are interspersed with other serials and with essays and poems about everything from angling in the days of Isaac Walton to an ode upon the birthday of Princess Victoria. It was not unusual for periodical stories to incorporate poems, criticism, philosophy, history, travelogues, or even musical scores.

Most notably, many magazine fictions articulate an affinity with drama. *Oliver Twist* is confessedly constructed according to melodramatic principles: 'It is the custom on the stage,' Boz the narrator tells us, 'in all good, murderous melodramas, to present the tragic and the comic scenes in as regular alternation as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky, well-cured bacon.'²¹ The story is situated among many articles about the theater: the very first number of *Bentley's Miscellany* starts with an essay by Theodore Hook on George Colman the Younger. The novel employs a great deal of theatrical characterization and dialogue, such as Sikes's stagy 'Wolves tear your throats!'²² Like other serials, *Oliver Twist* was on the boards before it was in boards, even before it was completely written: the first dramatization, by Gilbert A'Beckett, appeared after only half the installments had been composed. Cruikshank increasingly directed the illustrations toward their theatrical realization;²³ and for Dickens the prospects, and retrospects, of dramatizing the story significantly affected the text's design [see Figures 27.3 and 27.4]. Knowing, as he did about half the way through composition and publication, that the actor-manager Frederick Yates wanted to stage the story before it was completed in print, Dickens may have enhanced the role of Fagin in the concluding chapters in anticipation of the dramatization. Certainly Dickens wanted his serial readers to respond viscerally, as if in a theater.²⁴ Further, *Bentley's Miscellany* is itself refigured as a stage rather than a magazine or sheets of printed paper bound up as a 'material whole': the 'Editor's Address' on the completion of the first half-year – bound up as a volume – is couched as the manager's stage address at the end of a theatrical season.

Nor is this the end of the generic ambiguities of serials. As in *Oliver Twist*'s case, the graphic tradition often played a prominent role; this story is sub-titled a 'progress', a term denoting the sort of life-contour, physical and moral, often told through a series of pictures. And mid-way through the

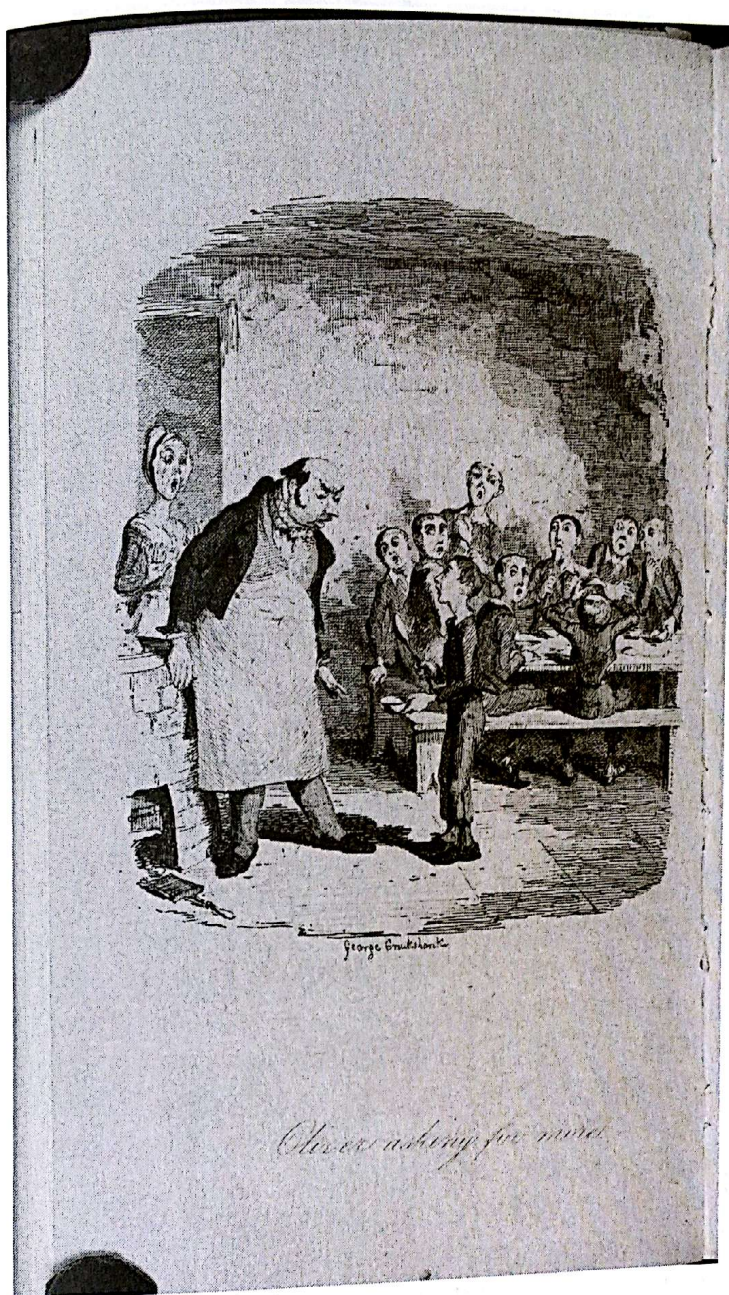


Figure 27.3 'Oliver asking for more', the first Cruikshank illustration to *Oliver Twist*, stands facing the first chapter in the February 1837 number of *Bentley's Miscellany*. The title (which recalls a Hogarth 'progress'), the name of the author ('Boz'), and the reference to 'the town of Mudfog', which relates this story to one that appeared in the January number, were changed in later editions so that the novel would stand on its own as the work of Charles Dickens.

text's composition Dickens renegotiated his author's contracts with Richard Bentley, who was not only the proprietor of the magazine but also the stipulated publisher of Dickens's next two novels. That renegotiation changed the serialized fiction *Oliver Twist* from fulfilling a contractual monthly contribution of sixteen pages for the *Miscellany* into a novel, to be released in three volumes half a year before the serial dragged to a close in the magazine. So even in format *Oliver Twist* was neither conceived of nor produced as a novel for much of its initial appearance. Its affinities with theater, pictures, sketches, journalism, short stories, and Parliamentary proceedings are at least as influential in its initial stages as the generic protocols of the novel. Serial fictions interweave with other genres in immediate, material ways that their later repackaging into self-contained novels conceals.

My third concern is the way serial fictions, not being self-contained, incorporate the times.



Figure 27.4 George Cruikshank's pencil, pen, and watercolor sketch for 'The Last Chance' shows Bill Sikes attempting to escape from the angry mob surrounding a thieves' hideout on Jacob's Island. Charles Dickens told Cruikshank it would be impossible to illustrate this scene, as it 'is so very complicated, with such a multitude of figures, such violent action, and torch-light to boot, that a small plate could not take in the slightest idea of it'. The illustration – pasted into a copy of volume 3 of the 1838 book edition – was translated into set designs for theatrical adaptations of the novel. – Berg Collection

Eminent scholars have identified many topics of the day to which serials make reference.²⁵ The topicalities of periodical fiction tend to be journalistic, metropolitan, sensational, and narratable. For instance, the gradual spread of a mysterious form of equine hoof-disease might throw the countryside into a panic, but though topical it probably wouldn't become the subject of a successful serial fiction: it wouldn't make the daily newspapers, wouldn't appeal to city dwellers, wouldn't accelerate the pulses of readers seeking sensation, and couldn't be cast as an enthralling narrative.

Murder, on the other hand, fulfills all these requirements, and by the 1850s was a leading subject of periodical fiction.

Magazine serials also circulate references of a more general character than local, topical, and timely ones. Two categories of fundamental referentiality are ideology and aesthetics. (Each of these kinds of reference involves the other, but for present purposes I have separated them.) By ideology, I mean those clusters of ideas, abstract or pragmatic, that issue in the mythologies and expressions of an era.²⁶ Scholars have studied the political ideology of selected nineteenth-century British journals, from the Whig quarterlies in the first decades of the century to John Stuart Mill's Utilitarian *London Magazine* at mid-century and the imperialism fostered by *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in the last decade. But little has been done about more diffuse ideological concerns. In the case of *Oliver Twist*, Richard Stein has demonstrated that the story participates in widespread writing about orphanhood and lost identities surfacing at the beginning of Victoria's reign.²⁷ A population that was becoming more mobile across spaces and classes had vested its proofs of identity in detachable and forgeable adjuncts such as birth and marriage certificates, names, and other tokens. These may fail to confirm identity, legitimacy, property, class, status, rights, and name, as they failed for Oliver and his mother.

There are other anxieties of the late Regency and early Victorian period that ally with this fear of alienable identity. Cruikshank and the *Fraser's* crowd, especially Ainsworth, were as we have seen interested in the lives of thieves [see Figure 27.5]. 'Crime', Martin Wiener recently noted, 'was a central metaphor of disorder and loss of control in all spheres of life.'²⁸ This interest in crime related to perennial debates about nature versus nurture, that is, whether bad was innate like a bad seed or produced by a bad environment. A related issue vexed Dickens for decades: did parental neglect foster in the child a determination to succeed in respectable society (Charles Dickens) or did it lead to criminality (the Artful Dodger) and/or death (Oliver's orphan friend Dick)? The early Victorian cultural fascination with criminality seemed to find expression particularly in the dramas of incarceration and excarceration. Many critics have noted the cramped, confined world of Dickens's and Cruikshank's collaborations – the sense of structures, persons, environments, laws, and fortune closing down, cramping, deforming the individual.²⁹ Such paradigms do seem to reflect the cultural emphasis on policing the self that bourgeois industrial capitalism emphasized.

Conversely, and less often noticed, there is in the 1830s an equal interest in escape, excarceration, in how individuals might defy those pressures that could identify and fix them. Nowhere is that escapism more celebrated than in *Jack Sheppard*. This was the serial Harrison Ainsworth wrote, and that began to appear at the front of each issue of *Bentley's Miscellany* after *Oliver Twist* had been published in three volumes but while it was still running in installments in the periodical. The letterpress by Ainsworth and the illustrations by Cruikshank celebrate the eighteenth-century prison escapist Jack Sheppard, who, though an idle and foolish apprentice, is unfairly bedeviled by the law and repeatedly foils its attempts to imprison him. His famous escapes from Newgate prison stage, in the text and pictures and later in the theater, his eel-like ability to slip out of shackles and cells. They also dramatize the site of the old Newgate prison, as Fagin's time in the condemned cell, like the earlier sketch 'A Visit to Newgate' in *Sketches by Boz* brings to life the modern prison.

Had Dickens continued as editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, and Cruikshank continued as illustrator, their next collaborative serial fiction, following *Jack Sheppard* in the magazine, would have been about the burning of the old Newgate prison, *Barnaby Rudge*. The original title Dickens assigned to that work was *Gabriel Vardon, the Locksmith of London*, a title that again plays on the theme of incarceration and excarceration, since a locksmith can lock or unlock doors. And so, within the pages of *Bentley's Miscellany*, all illustrated by Cruikshank, would have appeared three serial fictions

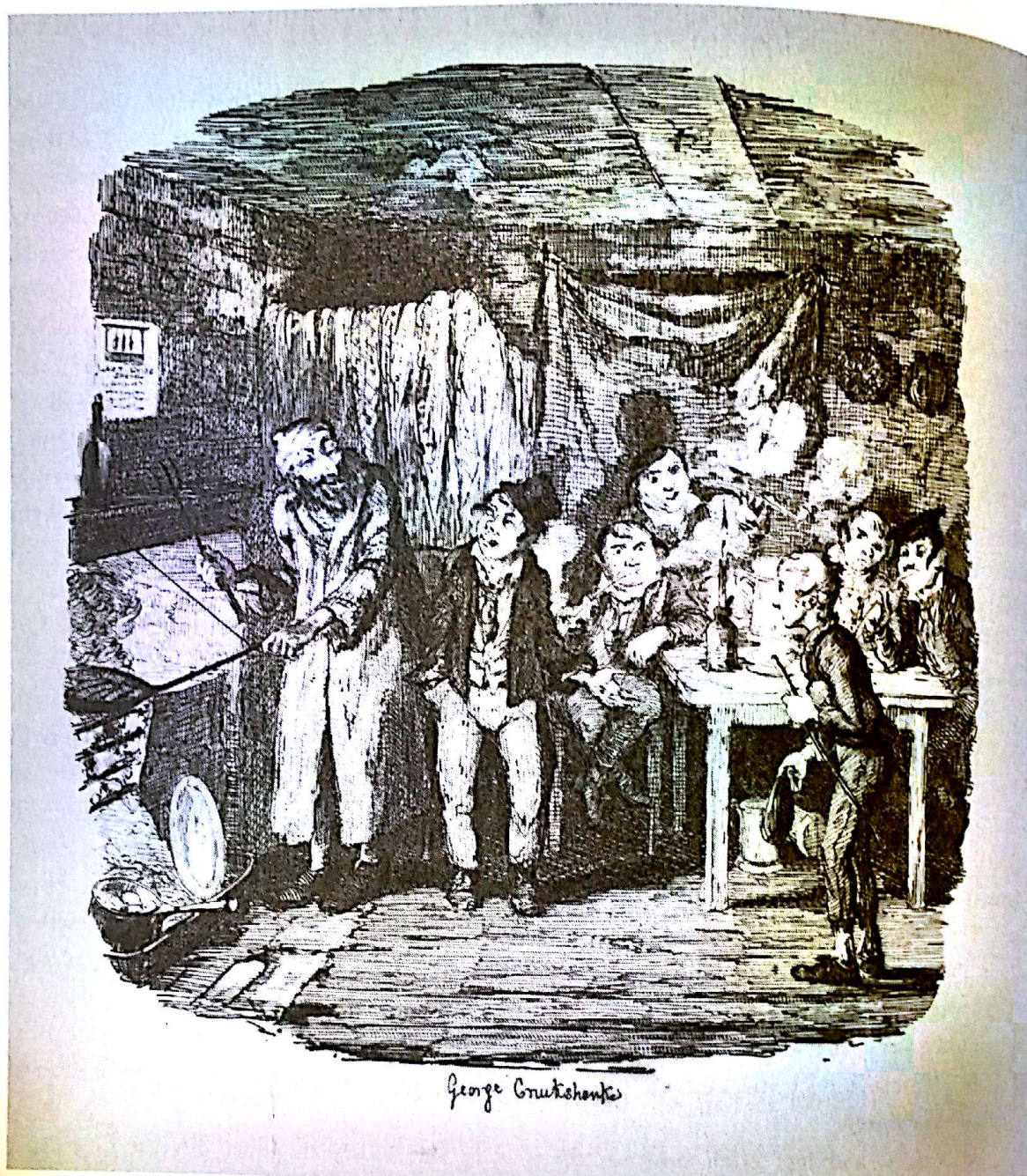


Figure 27.5 'Oliver introduced to the respectable Old Gentleman', an original etching by George Cruikshank, appeared first in the May 1837 number of *Bentley's Miscellany*. It was reissued in volume one (January–June 1837) of the collected numbers of the *Miscellany* and reprinted in November 1838 opposite page 132 in volume one of the first three-volume edition of the novel. — Berg Collection

about crime, dealing in sequence with the modern Newgate, the eighteenth-century prison, and its destruction during the Gordon Riots. These unrealized plans for a triple serial on prisons illustrate one way in which magazine publication shows deep ideological currents that separate book publication obscures.³⁰

Victorian periodicals were also much occupied with aesthetic issues. The idea of the aesthetic comprises a great range of topics, from the typographic design of the journal and the accuracy, beauty, and instructiveness of its 'illuminations' to debates about the moral (or immoral) functions of literature and the appropriate conduct of readers. As Kelly Mays shows, by mid-century periodicals regularly instructed their customers in the proper — that is, moral — way to read. Critics denounced desultory, casual, random, escapist, and sensationalistic reading practices; they condemned short attention spans, skimming, and flitting from topic to topic, and they criticized

mothers for reading while minding their children because the children would grow up to associate reading with surveillance.³¹

At the time of *Oliver Twist*, William Maginn was producing for *Bentley's Miscellany* a series of articles on character in Shakespeare that are, in Kathryn Chittick's judgment, 'of impressive acuteness'.³² His was another way of directing reading, writing, social, and punitive practices, as well as commenting on theatricality – all themes touched on in this essay. One of Maginn's papers, on the villain Iago in the tragedy of *Othello*, appears in a crucial spot in the journal: between the first chapters of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, about an eighteenth-century boy thief, and the last chapters of Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, about nineteenth-century boy thieves.³³ In this paper Maginn implicitly argues against Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion that Iago's actions can only be explained as the product of 'motiveless malignity'. All Shakespeare's characters, he says, 'are real men and women, not mere abstractions'. Their virtues and vices are compounded 'and are not unfrequently blended'. Maginn maintains that wickedness is prompted by the same impulses that stimulate persons 'to the noblest actions – ambition, love of adventure, passion, necessity'. Thus, in an article printed between the opening of *Jack Sheppard* and the chapters of *Oliver Twist* recounting Sikes's last day and Monks's capture, Maginn ventures to say that 'the creatures of Boz's fancy, Fagin or Sikes, did not appear in every circle as the unmitigated scoundrels we see them in *Oliver Twist*.' It is due to the exigencies of the story, Maginn reasons, that readers see only one side of their characters. 'But, after all, the Jew [Fagin] only carries the commercial, and the housebreaker [Sikes] the military principle to an extent which society cannot tolerate.'³⁴

Maginn uncovers an aesthetic that appeals more to empathy and capitalistic entrepreneurship than to social control: the feeling that covers the globe with shipping also animates the breast of thieves and highwaymen. 'Robber, soldier, thief, merchant, are all equally men,' he reasons.³⁵ (No wonder archconservative Mary Russell Mitford hated the idea of making law-breakers so attractive and the police so venal.) In conclusion Maginn calls for yet another inscription of the Hogarthian 'progress' contrasting industry and idleness: 'It would not be an unamusing task to analyze the career of two persons starting under similar circumstances, and placed in situations not in essence materially different, one ending at the debtors' door of Newgate amid hootings and execrations, and the other borne to his final resting-place in Westminster Abbey, graced by all the pomps that heraldry can bestow.'³⁶

Thus Maginn's serial criticism of Shakespeare's characters accomplishes five things. It establishes an aesthetic principle – successfully drawn characters are compounded of good and evil. Second, it derives reading practices from that principle – readers should recognize and empathize with motives that lead to bad actions as well as to good ones. Third, it declares a moral order – 'robber, . . . merchant, are all equally men.' Fourth, it relates dramatic criticism to the magazine's current serial fictions – Fagin and Bill Sikes are also 'equally men', appearing much more lovable and redeemable off-stage, out of the plot. And fifth, Maginn's essay sets an agenda for future writings – another fiction contrasting the industrious and idle apprentice. In such ways this and the many other articles interspersed with poetry and serialized fiction collectively articulate the aesthetic presumptions and reading practices that inform the journal and affect its contributions.

With regard to the last of my concerns, reception, the difference is obvious: novels issued in book form as 'material wholes' on a single publication date get reviewed after the text has been written and printed; serial fictions, which appear periodically in small sections over months or years, tend to get reviewed as each installment is published. Thus amateur and professional readers of serial fiction are encouraged to speculate about the story and the characters, to project the future, and to offer the writer advice. Moreover, magazine fictions are, as we have seen in the case of *Oliver Twist*, frequently dramatized before completion. Readers often bombarded the producers of the periodical or the serial with suggestions for changes, some of which might be adopted, others resisted, so that

the narrative, by a kind of back-formation, could revise its own previous trajectory in the course of subsequent installments. (A good example of this back-formation is Dickens's making amends in *David Copperfield* to the outraged original of Miss Mowcher by changing the character in the middle of serialization from a procuress into a nemesis; another proof of Maginn's thesis that outside the plot a villain may be exemplary.) Thus readers of serial fiction could exert influence on the narrative as it was being composed, something readers of books cannot usually do.

There is another way that serial fictions can be affected by serial responses. When a magazine serial becomes popular, it gets copied, imitated, pirated, plagiarized, often before the story has been completed in manuscript, much less in print. Such imitations and anticipations rob the original producers of the story of some of their revenue and some of their options, both for the story and for merchandising the product. Hence Dickens and others were deeply concerned, when *Oliver Twist* was being published, about passing legislation to strengthen copyright. Mark Rose reminds us that *plagiarism* is Latin for kidnapped – a plagiarist appropriates the offspring of a creator's body, the text, just as a kidnapper appropriates the offspring of a parent's body, the child.³⁷ Dickens resented the fact that his stories were taken over by others – his publishers, dramatists, rival authors, foreign publishing houses. He objected to losing money, to having his story mangled by incompetents, to finding his climaxes anticipated, and to enriching others by his imagination and industry. Dickens's resentment, which he shared with many authors and publishers, found its way into his story of an orphan boy whose identity is stolen at birth by a legion of kidnappers who take Oliver's story and make it their own. Oliver's half-brother Monks tries to ruin Oliver's mother's reputation by rewriting it, and to invoke those clauses in the paternal will that would disinherit Oliver by rewriting him as a criminal. Nancy stages a public scene in which Oliver is her naughty brother, and more privately tries to make him her son, a reinscription of his identity and relationship to Nancy that drives Sikes mad with jealousy. Giles and Brittles, the Maylies' servants, and the surgeon who attends the wounded boy, aver that Oliver is a thief. Even Mr Brownlow constructs many stories about Oliver, sometimes agreeing with Grimwig and Bumble, before he puts together the true narrative of Oliver's past. The story of *Oliver Twist*, therefore, is not just about the loss of personal and familial identity and legitimacy and inheritance. It also absorbs Dickens's and his age's preoccupation with losing control over one's own story, having it kidnapped – plagiarized – by others. The very popularity of serials made them vulnerable to commercial highwaymen who hijacked them for their own profit.

We have looked at four areas of difference between novels designed to be produced as books and serialized fiction. Serials tend to be multiply authored, being written by the producers, editors, and other contributors to the magazine in which they appear. Serials have permeable generic boundaries, incorporating a miscellany of literary genres and appealing to readers in ways more dynamic and theatrical than contemplative. Serial fictions are topical both specifically and more generally; annotated editions for modern classroom use often pick up particular references but neglect the general ideological and aesthetic resonances. And serials interact, during the course of production, with a wide variety of readers whose responses impact successive installments. When magazine fictions are repackaged as books these points are often obscured or denied or canceled. The result, in case after case of which *Oliver Twist* is only one example, is a significant distortion of the history of the book. To respond to the interrogative title, 'When is a book not a book?', one answer is, 'When it is a serial.' And that can make all the difference.

Notes

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Case of Multiple Identities', in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 137–53.

- 1 See Richard B. Wollman, 'The "Press and the Fire": Print and Manuscript Culture in Donne's Circle', *SEL* 33, 1 (Winter 1993): 85–97.
- 2 George Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature (1780–1895)* (New York: Macmillan, 1896; repr. 1913), p. 166; quoted by Laurel Brake in her essay, 'The "wicked Westminster", the *Fortnightly*, and Walter Pater's Renaissance', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 289–305.
- 3 OED, s.v. 'book,' sense 3 *gen*.
- 4 Charles W. Traylen, catalogue 113 (1993), item 185.
- 5 Charles W. Traylen, catalogue 114 (1994), item 203.
- 6 John Windle, list 23, item 96.
- 7 Saintsbury, p. 166.
- 8 Mark Parker, 'The Institutionalization of a Burkean–Coleridgean Literary Culture', *SEL* 31, 4 (Autumn 1991): 693–711.
- 9 Brake, *passim*.
- 10 [Dr. Maginn], 'Prologue', *Bentley's Miscellany* 1 (January 1837): 2–6.
- 11 Kathryn Chittick, *Dickens and the 1830s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 102, says that Dickens may have written the second part of the 'Prologue', although the table of contents to *Bentley's Miscellany*, vol. 1, identifies Maginn as the sole author. Maginn was unquestionably the author of the passages just quoted.
- 12 In the 'Introduction' to his *Companion to 'Oliver Twist'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), David Paroissien establishes the novel's principal ideological contexts and argues that 'a determination to respond to contemporary issues shaped Dickens's writing plans' (p. 5).
- 13 Chittick, pp. 92–113. Her chapter, in a book on all of Dickens's writings in the 1830s, is necessarily brief, but it is the best account of the magazine and of Bentley's proprietorship that we have.
- 14 Dickens's correspondence with Bentley through the first nine months of editing the *Miscellany* indicates some of the decisions he and his publisher made about which pieces to accept or reject, what to rewrite, and how to arrange the contents of numbers. See Charles Dickens, *Letters*, ed. Madeline House and Graham Storey, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).
- 15 Boz, 'Public Life of Mr. Tulrumble, Once Mayor of Mudfog', *Bentley's Miscellany* 1 (January 1837): 49–63, 63.
- 16 For illuminating discussions of the shaping of narratorial voice in Dickens, see Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), and for Dickens's unsuccessful struggle to establish a coherent persona for his miscellany *Master Humphrey's Clock*, see Rosemary Mundhenk, 'Creative Ambivalence in Dickens's *Master Humphrey's Clock*', *SEL* 32, 4 (Autumn 1992): 645–61.
- 17 See Cruikshank's version of the origin of the novel in his letter to *The Times*, 30 December 1871.
- 18 Dickens, *Letters*, 1:224 (Dickens to Bentley, [?18 January 1837]).
- 19 Blanchard Jerrold, *The Life of George Cruikshank*, 2 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1882), 1:223–24.
- 20 Q.Q.Q. [Samuel Warren], 'Dickens's American Notes for General Circulation', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 52, 326 (December 1842): 783–801, 785.
- 21 Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, chapter 17, *Bentley's Miscellany* 2 (November 1837), 437.

- 22 Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Book 2, chapter 6, in *Bentley's Miscellany* 3 (April 1838): 313; chapter 28 in the revised 1846 numbering.
- 23 Jonathan E. Hill, 'Cruikshank, Ainsworth, and Tableau Illustration', *Victorian Studies* 23, 4 (Summer 1980): 429–59.
- 24 In different ways, the following authors have analyzed aspects of Dickens's theatricality: William Axton, *Circle of Fire: Dickens' Vision and Style and the Popular Victorian Theater* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966); Edwin M. Eigner, *The Dickens Pantomime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Robert Garis, *The Dickens Theatre, A Reassessment of the Novels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991); Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).
- 25 See Richard Altick, *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), Rowland McMaster, *Thackeray's Cultural Frame of Reference: Allusion in the Newcomes* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), and numerous articles by K. J. Fielding on Dickens's topicality published in, among other journals, the *Dickensian*.
- 26 Cf. *OED*, s. v. ideology, 2: 'The study of the way in which ideas are expressed in language.' Raymond Williams distinguishes between Napoleonic and Marxist usage, where ideology is abstract or false theory not based on experience and materiality, and a more neutral usage meaning the system of ideas appropriate to a particular class (*Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), s. v. ideology).
- 27 Richard L. Stein, *Victoria's Year: English Literature and Culture, 1837–1838* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 28 Martin J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law, and Policy in England, 1830–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 11.
- 29 See G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1906); J. Hillis Miller, 'The Fiction of Realism: Sketches by Boz, *Oliver Twist*, and Cruikshank's Illustrations', *Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1971); and Stein.
- 30 For more about the connections among these three 'Newgate' novels, see my *George Cruikshank's Life, Times, and Art*, vol. 2 (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press; Cambridge, England: Lutterworth Press, 1996).
- 31 Kelly J. Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in Jordan and Patten, pp. 165–94.
- 32 Chittick, p. 96.
- 33 Dr. Maginn, 'Shakespeare Papers. — No. VIII. Iago', *Bentley's Miscellany* 5 (January 1839): 43–50.
- 34 Maginn, p. 43.
- 35 Maginn, p. 43.
- 36 Maginn, pp. 43–4.
- 37 Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).