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***Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, by Graham Law. Houndmills and New York: Palgrave, 2000.**

Asked to list the most popular mid-nineteenth-century English novelists, few Victorianists are likely to name David Pae alongside obvious candidates such as Charles Dickens, Mary Braddon and Wilkie Collins. That Pae, a Scot, is now generally unknown is unsurprising: much of his work was anonymous, little appeared in volume form, and its artistic interest is apparently minimal. His fifty-plus novels, however, were widely serialised in weekly newspapers in Scotland and England over many years from the mid-1850s. His genius, if one can call it that, was to recognise very early the potentially symbiotic relationship between newspapers and serial fiction: that each could help to sell the other. As the newspaper market burgeoned after 1855, fiction, first in Scotland, then in the Northern provinces, finally in the emerging nationals, became a major weapon in the battle for circulation, featuring by the end of the century in virtually every weekly paper. For authors, whether they were happy, like Pae, to regard their work as a commodity or affected to despise the mass reading public, the financial rewards were irresistible. Almost all at some point succumbed. How this happened and its implications for the development of the novel and for cultural history more broadly are the questions Graham Law sets out to explore in *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*.

As his title indicates, Law is interested as much in the material processes of serialisation as in what was serialised. The main focus of his study is the activities of the provincial syndication agencies that sprang up in the 1870s to organise the purchase and distribution of fiction to newspapers. The best known of these, Tillotson's Fiction Bureau (whose archives fortunately survive), was founded by a Lancashire family, initially to serve their own chain of local papers. Pae was their first author, Braddon their most famous. Tillotson's was rapidly followed by others, serving rival newspaper groups and competing for custom further afield, and their success, in turn, prompted competition from the new literary agents and the fast-growing national press. Almost from the start, the syndicates looked abroad also, to America (which soon developed its own) and to the colonies. The market for fiction, one might say, was becoming global, with all the consequences that implied for newspapers, for authors and for the fiction they produced. The first half of Law's book, after a brief historical and contextual survey, traces the history of the syndication agencies; the second examines the "causes, consequences and implications" of the newspaper-fiction phenomenon.

The story is a complex one, intersecting as it does with so many aspects of publishing and general history. At heart it has elements of high drama: family sagas; professional friendships and feuds; political, religious and geographical rivalries; class and gender conflicts; triumphs and tragedies; and all to the swelling accompaniment of late nineteenth-century imperialism. In less scrupulous hands it could lend itself to a telling as melodramatic or ideologically driven as was some of the serialised fiction itself. Law, who defines his approach as non-ideologically "cultural materialist," is cautious, dogged, and meticulously concerned to report every possible fact and to document every assertion with multiple examples. He has trawled through vast tracts of primary and secondary material for his evidence, an effort which anyone who has worked with newspapers can only admire, appreciate, and be very thankful that someone else has undertaken. The text bristles with names and facts and dates, and the narrative is copiously supported by charts and tables, illustrating such things as "Taxes on Knowledge' imposed in Great Britain, 1712-1861," "Major Victorian metropolitan weeklies carrying serial fiction," "Crude profit margins on certain Tillotson's serials," "Syndication of the novels of M. E. Braddon and Wilkie Collins."

It is for factual information of this kind that most readers will welcome Law's study. He covers a huge amount of ground about serialisation and the middlemen who increasingly, as the century advanced, intervened between the author and the eventual publishers. He challenges some of Norman Feltes's arguments about commodification and production; he confirms Gaye Tuchmann's contention that women writers were "edged out" in the later nineteenth century (without endorsing her conspiracy theories); but his whole approach precludes over-arching theoretical explanations. Indeed, much of the value of the second half of his work lies in his determination to resist generalisations. He asks the questions most readers will have been asking – about the audiences, whether the political and religious affiliations of the papers affected their choice of fiction, the pressures imposed by this form of publication on authors – and his answers always make due allowance for exceptions and qualifications. He is useful for adding the fine detail that can alter familiar pictures of topics as varied as the fluctuating fortunes of individual authors, Tillotson's rejection *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and the collapse of the three-decker. Different readers will find different points of interest; and most will find something that increases their knowledge or slightly changes their interpretation of the period.

Some problems, such as repetition, seem inseparable from the virtues of Law's approach: typically, a check of references to one little-known author found essentially the same statement in three places and also useful leads for further research. Despite careful introductions and frequent summaries, it is easy to get lost in the dense detail. The proofreading and copy-editing could be better. Nonetheless, in opening up this vast hinterland of Victorian fiction Law fully justifies his assertion of its significance. We might not find there many new and exciting "lost geniuses" but we will think again about the impact of the market economy on the development of fiction in this period. Given Law's acute awareness of how much remains to be done on this topic, he would presumably be happy that his book prompts as many questions as it has

endeavoured to answer. Among them, just what did the readers of the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* make of George Meredith's *The Egoist*?

Helen Debenham

***The Trauma of Gender: A Feminist Theory of the English Novel*, by Helene Moglen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.**

The characteristic of literary criticism which has most powerfully enabled its continuation is perhaps its ability to adopt tools of analysis from other fields of study. Aspects of such disciplines as economics, psychology, sociology and history have been seized upon by critics who see fruitful possibilities for the analysis of literature. With the diminution of the theory wars of the 80s, however, critics have tended not to set up their tents in opposing camps, but rather to take tools from different stalls in a kind of critical bazaar. Instead of trying to argue that a Marxist or historicist or queer reading can explain a text, critics increasingly tend to be occupied in synthesising useful approaches, adjusting and taking account, for a longer view.

Helene Moglen's latest book enacts this impulse of critical synthesis. While it is most heavily informed by psychoanalytic argument, it also uses Marxist, feminist and narratological criticism. It tends, too, towards the refinement of, rather than disagreement with, previous arguments. Moglen opens *The Trauma of Gender* by stating her intention to challenge two assumptions: that the ascension of capitalism and the bourgeoisie were responsible for the development of the novel, and that realism is the novel's dominant tradition. But she does not want completely to deny these contentions. Rather, she tempers them, arguing that the modern sex-gender system was an equal influence with the rise of capitalism, and that the novel has not one but two "mutually defining traditions," the fantastic and the realistic. Moglen argues that bimodal novels – those containing fantastic and realistic narratives – reflect the tensions generated by a particular psychic and social process: the imposition of the modern sex-gender system. This imposition instigated the "trauma" of gender.

Moglen argues that all the texts she examines are shaped by loss, conscious and unconscious, much of which is the psychic cost of the repressive sex-gender system. When these losses are not properly acknowledged, they are not mourned and are therefore experienced as melancholia. She defines realism as a fundamentally social form, "shaped by the consciousness of the self in its moral, ethical, and psychological relationships with others," while fantastic narratives map interiority and, particularly, expose "the anxious melancholy that the modern order of social differences induced." In the interaction between the fantastic and the realistic may be seen the propagation of and resistance to gender categories. To expose the submerged fantastic narratives in realistic texts, as Moglen aims to do, is to facilitate the "productive, recuperative work" of mourning.