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**Pedagogy, Prejudice, and Pleasure: Extramural Instruction in English
Literature, 1885-1910**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Alexandra P. D. Lawrie

21 May 2012

Abstract

This thesis considers the teaching of English literature within extramural organisations for adults in England between 1885 and 1910. This challenges the assumption that the beginnings of English as a tertiary-level academic subject can be traced back only as far as the foundation of the Oxford English School at the end of the nineteenth century; in fact extramural English courses had been flourishing for decades before this, and these reached their zenith in the final years before it was introduced at Oxbridge.

Oxford created an Honours School of English in 1894, and the Cambridge English Tripos was established in 1917; in ideological terms, such developments were of course crucial, yet it has too often been the case that the extramural literary teaching being conducted contemporaneously has been sidelined in studies of the period. My first chapter will consider the development of English in various institutional and non-institutional environments before 1885, including Edinburgh University, Dissenting Academies, and Mechanics' Institutes. Thereafter I will explore the campaign, led by University Extension lecturer John Churton Collins, to incorporate English literature as an honours degree at Oxford. Focusing on the period between 1885 and 1891, this second chapter will assess the veracity of some of Collins's most vehement claims regarding the apparently low critical and pedagogical standards in existence at the time, which he felt could only be improved if Oxford would agree to institutionalise the subject, and thereby raise the standard of teaching more generally.

Collins's campaign enjoyed more success when he drew attention to the scholarly teaching available within the University Extension Movement; my third chapter is underpinned by research and analysis of previously unexplored material at the archives of London University, such as syllabuses, examination papers, and lecturers' reports. I examine the way in which English literature, the most popular subject among Extension students, was actually being taught outside the universities while still excluded from Oxbridge. Thereafter my penultimate chapter focuses on an extramural reading group formed by Cambridge Extension lecturer Richard G. Moulton. This section considers Moulton's formulation of an innovative mode of literary interpretation, tailored specifically to suit the abilities of extramural students, and which also lent itself particularly to the study of novels.

Uncollected *T. P.'s Weekly* articles written by Arnold Bennett highlight the emphasis that he placed on pleasure, rather than scholarship. My final chapter considers Bennett's self-imposed demarcation from the more serious extramural pedagogues of literature, such as Collins and Moulton, and his extraordinary impact on Edwardian reading habits. A brief coda will compare the findings of the 1921 "Newbolt Report" with my own assessment of *fin-de-siècle* extramural education.

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Beyond Edinburgh, numerous academics with similar research interests have been very generous with their advice; I owe thanks in particular to Jonathan Rose, whose encouraging remarks regarding the University Extension Movement were enough to persuade me that the rather daunting task of delving into these archives would prove to be a worthwhile endeavour.

The nature of this project has meant spending substantial periods of time in various different libraries. My thanks go to the staff at the National Library of Scotland, the Centre for Special Collections at Edinburgh University Library, Cambridge University Library, British Library Newspapers, and Senate House Library at the University of London. I am also incredibly grateful for the College Scholarship that enabled me to study for a PhD at Edinburgh.

Note on Referencing

The archives for the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, which I draw on in my third and fourth chapters, are housed in Senate House Library, at the University of London. It will prove constructive to explain how I have referenced this material. A form was filled in by the lecturer at the end of each Extension course. The completed forms provide information regarding lecture attendance, class size, and the number of examination entrants for each course; they also include reports from both the lecturer and the examiner, which discuss the work undertaken by students, and often more general reflections on their experience of teaching and marking that particular course. These forms have been bound together as a single volume for each term of teaching.

In order to reference statistics and handwritten reports that relate to individual courses as clearly and unobtrusively as possible, and because these have no page numbers, I make it clear, from the context, which specific course I am discussing. The in-text citation then identifies in which volume of MS. London Society forms these appear. Each of these volumes is listed under the entry “London Society” in the works cited list.

Printed syllabuses were sold to students at the start of each course; these, together with the examination papers, have also been bound in large single volumes for each term of London Extension work. When I refer to, or quote from, printed syllabuses and examination papers, the in-text citation gives the name of the lecturer, a shortened version of the course title, and the page number from the syllabus. Full archive references to these are listed under the lecturer’s name in the works cited list.

Arnold Bennett’s articles for *T. P.’s Weekly*, which he wrote under the pseudonym “The Man Who Does”, are all listed individually under “Bennett, Arnold” in the works cited list. The in-text citation gives a shortened title of the particular article under discussion. When I quote from readers’ letters, published in the paper, my in-text citation gives the (often purely descriptive) name under which the letter was printed, along with the *T. P.’s Weekly* page number. The works cited list gives full publication details for each letter.

Introduction

This thesis will examine some of the innovative, scholarly English literature courses that were taught across the spectrum of institutional and non-institutional environments between 1885 and 1910. Extramural teaching and discussion groups tend to be sidelined in studies of this particular period, as critics overlook the fact that English literature existed as an academically challenging and systematically-taught subject of study both before and during its institutionalisation at Oxford and Cambridge, in 1894 and 1917 respectively.¹ Irrespective of academy approval,² alternative educational organisations such as the University Extension Movement, along with less formal discussion groups including the Backworth and District Classical Novel-Reading Union, and, later, newspaper articles offering hints for greater reading fulfillment, written by Arnold Bennett for Edwardian publication *T. P.'s Weekly*, created an effective, and also varied, apparatus for studying literary texts in the provinces. These assorted endeavours were pioneering in terms both of material, and of pedagogical method. Thus it was that University Extension lecturers, confident that the standard of teaching they provided within the Movement qualified them to speak authoritatively about the value of English literature and its status as a scholarly subject, placed pressure on Oxford and Cambridge, urging them to include

¹ Stephen Potter, for instance, wrote of the late 1880s that ‘There were still ... two enormous and very obvious absentees from the Lit. Ang. world; the two biggest guns were still silent, still disdainful. And until they relented, until Oxford and Cambridge, Oxford especially, saluted the New Subject, the various movements in its early history seemed preparatory only’ (156-57). Terry Eagleton and Chris Baldick both also offer some rather reductive, yet very influential, assessments of extramural endeavours at this time; I will discuss their comments in detail later on in this thesis.

² I use the terms “educational establishment”, “the ancient English universities”, and “the academy” interchangeably throughout this thesis to refer to Oxford and Cambridge, unless otherwise stated. I do acknowledge Carol Atherton’s point that ‘there has never been such a thing as “the academy”, a single, all-powerful institution, within the English educational system’, and therefore ‘The use of this term as shorthand for such an institution can ... carry no currency’ (14); nevertheless it is the case that many educational institutions sought either to associate themselves with, or define themselves against, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge at this time. However, my reason for employing these alternative terms is not, in fact, political; it is primarily to avoid wearisome repetition of these two university names.

English literature on their list of honours courses, and thereby provide establishment-level support for this academic discipline.

It would, however, be staking a mendacious claim to suggest that literary courses, extramural or otherwise, only came to fruition within my ostensibly somewhat arbitrary time frame of 1885 until 1910.³ In fact it is more constructive to view these twenty-five years as a crystallisation of earlier developments, because, as the brief opening chapter that follows this introduction will demonstrate, English literature as a subject of study had existed in higher education beyond Oxbridge for centuries. My first chapter provides an historical overview of various institutional and non-institutional environments where English texts were taught and discussed before 1885. This will provide the necessary context for exploring the controversy surrounding Oxbridge's refusal to offer honours-level teaching in the subject, as well as the diverse educational opportunities that developed contemporaneously, from 1885 until 1910. Thomas P. Miller's *The Formation of College English* (1997) has highlighted the origins of the subject in what he terms the British 'cultural provinces' (259). The curriculum in Dissenting Academies, Miller argues, was 'shaped by the practical needs of the middle classes', and they were 'the first to teach English literature, composition, and rhetoric to college-level students in any systematic and concerted fashion' (282, 87). Thereafter Scottish, civic universities introduced the subject in part because their curricula were affected by the need to attract revenue: lectures given by Hugh Blair to the city of Edinburgh proved very popular, and were

³ This specific time frame has been chosen because it was in 1885 that the Oxford Merton Professorship of English Language and Literature was created, and as my second chapter will address in detail, this triggered a backlash, led by London Extension lecturer John Churton Collins, against the philological bias of English studies at Oxford. These debates rumbled on for the next twenty years. The main body of my thesis ends in 1910 because Arnold Bennett's *Literary Taste: How to Form It* had been published the previous year. Ending the thesis in 1910 allows me to focus exclusively on the literary advice Bennett offered to Edwardian readers.

introduced into the university in a bid to draw in fee-paying students who perceived that knowledge of the ‘classics of “English” literature’ offered them access to a ‘cultural heritage’ that would facilitate their ‘advance in British society’ (Miller 146). This latter point accords with the thesis governing Robert Crawford’s *Devolving English Literature* (1992). Crawford is a vociferous advocate for tracing the beginnings of English as a subject of study to Scotland, and he argues that ‘social and economic motivations ... governed the emergence of university-level English Literature studies’, as instruction on literary texts allowed post-Union Scots ‘to Anglicize their tongues’, and thereby play a more active role in eighteenth-century Anglo-British society (20, 24). My first chapter offers a much more detailed discussion of pedagogical activity than has been attempted by Crawford, as I delve into students’ and lecturers’ notes in order to draw conclusions about exactly which texts were being taught, and for what reason they were chosen. My subsequent chapters, when I explore late-nineteenth century and Edwardian extramural endeavours, move away from Crawford’s work altogether, and the main body of my thesis takes a different direction from that of Miller, too, as much of his book examines the development of English studies within English, Irish, and Scottish universities, rather than outside them.

The Scottish Invention of English Literature (1998), edited by Crawford, also contributes greatly to our understanding of Scottish cultural activity and its broader influence particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Within this volume, for instance, Paul G. Bator’s essay, ‘The Entrance of the Novel into the Scottish Universities’ draws on library records, minutes of Edinburgh societies, lecture notes, and the actual lectures of (among others) Hugh Blair, in order to demonstrate that

discussion of the novel among students quickly infiltrated the university walls, and was 'accorded direct attention' by eighteenth-century academics (89). In doing so, Bator highlights the fluid and also progressive nature of the Scottish university curriculum in the eighteenth century; this underpins my own position regarding non-Oxbridge educational provisions at this time, although by examining the lectures of Smith and Blair, I can offer a much more cohesive understanding of Edinburgh University literary teaching, rather than focusing on the activities of a single discussion group. In terms of nineteenth-century English departments, John Sutherland's essay 'Journalism, Scholarship, and the University College London English Department' (within a 1998 collection edited by Jeremy Treglown and Bridget Bennett, *Grub Street and the Ivory Tower*) presents a valuable overview of this particular institution's contribution to teaching English, and the permeable boundaries that existed, this time between journalism and academia. My first chapter benefits from its useful discussion of some key nineteenth-century English professors, including Thomas Dale, David Masson, and Henry Morley.

Stephen Potter's *The Muse in Chains* (1937) is a rather gossipy account of the rise of 'Lit. Ang.' (87); D. J. Palmer's *The Rise of English Studies* (1965), which is among the most prominent studies in this field, is a much more valuable resource. Palmer provides a chronological overview of the numerous institutions where English was taught in England from the sixteenth-century onwards; this includes Dissenting Academies, London University, and provincial university colleges, some of which my first chapter will also consider. Palmer's main interest, however, clearly lies with the introduction of English at Oxford: the construction of the English School, the debates in the 1880s and '90s that preceded its foundation, and the period

of Walter Raleigh's professorship, take up a large section of the book, and the sometimes dry administrative details testify to Palmer's insider knowledge of the department. E. M. W. Tillyard, on the other hand, was an early lecturer in English at Cambridge; his *The Muse Unchained* (1958) is a personal account of the subject at that university from the 1870s until around 1930. Early sections of this book are useful for what they can tell us about the (fairly limited) provisions for the study of literature in the years before the English Tripos. My primary focus remains with developments beyond each of these university's walls before and during this time, but I do also share Palmer's conviction that the eventual creation of an Oxford English School signalled an important victory for English studies. My second chapter therefore unpacks the nature of opposition to the subject within the most influential educational circles between 1885 and 1891, when these debates were pushed onto the front pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

University Extension lecturer John Churton Collins was the leading campaigner for the introduction of English literature at Oxford, and Anthony Kearney's biography of Collins, *The Louse on the Locks of Literature* (1986) provides a detailed account of the various disputes (with Edmund Gosse, George Saintsbury, and certain Oxford professors) into which Collins entered during the course of his crusade against the educational establishment. Valentine Cunningham's essay, 'Darke Conceits: Churton Collins, Edmund Gosse, and the Professions of Criticism', also explores Collins's denigration of Gosse and his calls for a more professional approach to literary criticism. Ian Small's *Conditions for Criticism* (1991) considers the impact of professionalisation on the practice of literary criticism in the *fin de siècle*; Small focuses particularly on Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, and their very

different response (from that of figures like Collins) to the encroaching influence of university-trained specialist knowledge, and the shift of literary authority away from the ‘man of letters’ or ‘Victorian “sage”’ (Small 21), and onto academic professionals. Having discussed the academic disputes instigated by Collins, my second chapter will also then consider, briefly, this notion of professionalisation, although my chief concern is with investigating the veracity of some of Collins’s criticisms about his fellow academics, and ascertaining the nature of academic opposition to his campaign.

Having identified, in chapter two, the central issues delaying Oxbridge’s acceptance of English at an honours level, my third chapter turns to another, more effective, constituent in Collins’s campaign to prove the worthwhile nature of his subject: the English courses that were taught within the University Extension Movement. There is no shortage of material relating to the organisation and structure of Extension courses in general; N. A. Jepson’s extensive, fact-based 1973 study, *The Beginnings of English University Adult Education: Policy and Problems*, is almost without parallel in terms of detail, and I draw gratefully on the statistics that he has collated regarding the Extension Movement between 1873 and 1907. Bernard Jennings’s much briefer but also very detailed pamphlet, *The University Extension in Victorian and Edwardian England* (1992) considers the extramural experiences of working-class adults in specific communities in northern England between 1873 and 1913, particularly within University Extension, the Co-operative movement, and the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA). My research adds to these studies by uncovering syllabuses and statistics relating specifically to English literature, rather than simply the Extension Movement in general. This lends my thesis a much tighter

focus, enabling me to engage with the minutiae of lecture content, assignments, and examiners' reports. Thomas Kelly's seminal work, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain* (1992) presents an extensive overview of centuries of adult education, from the Middle Ages up until the 1960s. Alongside chapters dealing with other nineteenth-century developments such as the Mechanics' Institutes, Working Men's Colleges, public libraries, and provincial university colleges, Kelly's survey of University Extension has individual sections on the origins of the Movement, the range of courses that were on offer, and the impact on the universities of their involvement in adult education. Lawrence Goldman's *Dons and Workers* (1995) focuses on the extramural work undertaken by Oxford University from the mid-nineteenth century; long sections cover Oxford's heavy involvement with the WEA. Stuart Marriott, in *A Backstairs to a Degree* (1981), sheds light on the bureaucratic manoeuvring that underpinned extramural activities at this time, and explores the often difficult relationship between the London Extension Society and London University, particularly during the Society's 'abortive' campaign during the 1890s for the establishment of an Extension degree (75). Marriott's *Extramural Empires: Service & Self-Interest in English University Adult Education 1873-1983* (1984) also focuses mostly on the debates and controversy surrounding extramural (particularly Extension and WEA) teaching in the period; and his *Paper Awards in Liberal Adult Education* (1973), co-written with Christopher Duke, discusses the various certificates available to extramural students, and the wider ramifications of these awards.

In terms of the teaching specifically of English literature within the Extension Movement, key resources include the aforementioned biography of Collins; Kearney

shares my conviction about the scholarly teaching that Collins offered to Extension students, and has quoted from syllabuses and personal accounts to back up his conclusions. My own discussion of University Extension in chapter three thus builds on Kearney's research, but I will provide a more exhaustive analysis of archival resources, and as they relate to various English lecturers and courses, before comparing this with the late-nineteenth century attitude towards the Movement, and with more recent critical estimations of extramural English courses. Two of the most controversial and compelling discussions of the development of English studies in recent times are Terry Eagleton's chapter on 'The Rise of English' within his book *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), and Chris Baldick's *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, also first published in 1983. Eagleton's study is diminished by his preference for polemic over detail; sweeping statements proliferate in a violently left-leaning discussion that sees the study of literature in the period as 'the poor man's Classics', and a means of indirectly preserving the hierarchical social order: 'literature should convey *timeless* truths, thus distracting the masses from their immediate commitments, nurturing in them a spirit of tolerance and generosity, and so ensuring the survival of private property' (27, 26). Baldick has suggested that the Extension Movement played a crucial role in convincing Oxbridge eventually to incorporate English literature as a subject of study. However, he subsequently dismisses Extension courses as dilettantish, and, like Eagleton, he argues that they were shaped by a right-wing ideological agenda, as he places the Movement within a Marxist theoretical framework which sees English literature, from Matthew Arnold onwards, being used as a mode of social control.

Baldick's lengthy chapter on Arnold thus sets the tone for the rest of his book: there he considers Arnold's conception of literature as providing moral improvement and spiritual enlightenment to the masses when carefully selected by an intellectual minority, and, thereafter, its capacity to quell, or to harmonise, the potentially disruptive tendencies created by impoverishment, political and social division, and mass disenfranchisement. Baldick subsequently identifies this tendency towards "social mission" as informing the work of literary critics and pedagogues over the next several decades — including those working in Extension — and argues for its impact on the shape of English studies as far forward as F. R. Leavis. In a book that criticises Arnold for, among other things, his reluctance to embroil himself in practical details at the grassroots level, much of Baldick's own discussion is surprisingly nebulous, told at a distance from the events it reflects upon, and thereby providing little in the way of concrete information about syllabuses, lecture content, and examinations.

Baldick is right that numerous treatises written by proponents of English studies in the late-nineteenth century employed emotive language in a bid to persuade the public about the merits of English literature as an academic subject. However, he appears to have overlooked the fact that the purpose of these articles was to garner support for a particular cause, and he treats them as though they were solid evidence of how English literary texts were spoken of in the lecture hall. Crucial details that relate to the way the subject was actually being taught (in this case, extramurally) have been glossed over in favour of some polemical, and ultimately lofty, statements from campaigners of the time, handpicked by Baldick for the emphasis they place on the supposedly moral or civilising effect of certain texts, which therefore bear out the

politically-motivated conclusions that he has set out to reach. I instead agree with the approach suggested by Josephine M. Guy, Carol Atherton, and also John Dixon; the latter has argued that very little can be achieved through this ‘history from above ... seasoned with a new kind of left-wing fatalism’ (2). Dixon instead urges discussion of institutional structures in order to understand ‘what forms of study were attempted’, focusing ‘intensively on an initial decade or so’ (3, 4), rather than the approach preferred by Baldick which, through a combination of limited concrete evidence, and a broad temporal focus, licenses itself to present what is in reality a skewed overview of events.

Dixon’s *A Schooling in ‘English’* (1991) is one of the few other studies to acknowledge the significance of English courses in the Extension Movement, although in fact he appears not to have considered any of the evidence from examiners’ and lecturers’ reports; indeed, he seems to claim that such material does not exist: ‘We have seen the names of the key authors and some of the texts: the question is: What became of them in the course of lectures and classes? ... To define “literary studies” within the Extension we would need to know what actually happened — and, so far as I know, almost all evidence is lost’ (37). Dixon also overlooks (or at least neglects to refer to) the printed Extension syllabuses, despite acknowledging these to be ‘very detailed’ (37). I will prove that much can be gained from examining this archival material — adopting an ‘endogenous’ approach, as Guy has termed it (‘Specialisation’ 201) — and present this information in dialogue with (rather than allowing it to be overshadowed by) the contemporaneous polemic. Thus in this third chapter, consultation of the often impassioned debates that took place within the pages of late-Victorian periodicals, and the numerous treatises written at

the time by those involved in Extension, as well as those who spoke out in opposition to it, will be balanced with research and analysis of Extension material obtained from university archives.

The sample that I have gathered dates from the period 1887 until 1892; where possible, however, I afford prominence to courses taught in the years 1891 and 1892. This of course picks up from where the previous chapter will have finished, but my reasons for choosing this academic session actually go beyond that, for 1891-92 marked the very highest point for the Movement in terms of attendance figures. Figures from previous years demonstrate that participations levels were already impressive by this stage, so that Collins, writing about the Movement in 1889, could state with some justice that ‘For good or evil it has become a great fact in education’ (‘Universities in Contact’ 576). Nevertheless, this claim was reinforced two years later, when Extension numbers increased dramatically following the Technical Instruction Act of 1889 and the Local Taxation Act of 1890, and the resources for adult education (the “whisky money”) that were suddenly made available.⁴ In the session 1891-92, Cambridge had well over double the amount of Extension courses from the previous year: 329, up from 135 in 1890-91. These were spread over 205 centres, with 18,779 students in attendance (Jepson 342). Oxford offered 393 courses (up from 192 in 1890-91) within 279 centres, to 27,969 students in 1891-92 (Jepson 343). The London Society taught 10,512 students in this session over 110 courses, and the number of Extension courses given by the Victoria Commission that year

⁴ Lawrence Goldman explains that ‘an excise duty levied on spirits provided funds that the new county councils, recently established, were permitted to use on technical education under the terms of the 1890 Local Taxation Act. Many of them turned to university extension for lecture courses ...’ (100).

jumped from 12 to 102, with the number of students in attendance rising from 1,400 to 5,000 (Kelly, *Outside* 16).⁵

By prioritising, as much as possible, the Extension material from this particular session, I will therefore be well-placed to show exactly the type of teaching that was being offered to extramural students while the Movement was at its zenith. On a different note, 1891 was also the year when Collins's *Study of English Literature* was published. In this book, Collins's most extensive appeal for the institutionalisation of English at Oxbridge, he brought in the Extension Movement as evidence that the subject could be taught in the scholarly and systematic fashion that rendered it worthy of honours-level degree status; it will prove constructive to determine whether this is reflected in Extension syllabuses and reports from the same year.

I have chosen not to focus on the archives at Oxford University, because this Extension branch favoured shorter, six-week courses, rather than the ten or twelve weeks advocated by London and Cambridge. At half the length, Oxford's curriculum cannot justifiably be seen as extensive, and even at the time was regarded as 'dangerous', in its potential to 'depreciate the value of the certificate' awarded after the successful completion of a course (Mackinder and Sadler 87). In the main my sample has been drawn from the London Society syllabuses (although Cambridge lecturers will also provide certain points of reference, and Oxford provisions will not simply be ignored) because it was in London that Collins taught the majority of his courses. My third chapter will therefore focus on the minutiae of course detail, balancing this against the late-nineteenth century perception of the work that was

⁵ Given that an average of 50,000 students were involved in Extension, the Victoria total still marked it out as the 'least important of the four Extension authorities, and [it] always tended to remain rather aloof from the rest' (Kelly, *Outside* 29). Thomas Kelly has summed up the situation thus: 'the candid historian must record the impression that Victoria was something of a poor relation in the University Extension world' (*Outside* 30).

being conducted, and with more recent scholarly assessments of English teaching within the Movement, including those offered by Eagleton and Baldick.

Carol Atherton's recent book, *Defining Literary Criticism* (2005), is based on a similar premise to my own: she begins by tracing the teaching of English in 'five English universities, selected to represent both the ancient and the nineteenth-century foundations that were seen as the natural home of the "poor man's Classics": Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester, Nottingham and King's College, London' (26). She sets out to examine 'the vexed and complex questions of what students were actually taught, who they were taught by and what they were expected to learn', and then shifts focus to 'other [non-university] cultural arenas' (25, 96), as later sections consider Woolf, J. M. Murry, and A. R. Orage, before a subsequent return to academia through T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, and F. R. Leavis. Atherton's earlier chapters on nineteenth-century institutions are obviously of greater relevance to my own argument, and I agree with her call for a 'more documentary approach' to pedagogical history (14), although of course I apply this method to extramural endeavours, while her concern is with university provisions. Atherton contradicts herself, however, in her discussion of Collins. She had earlier pledged to focus on 'lecture lists, syllabuses and examination papers' (26), in order to trace the 'development of academic English' rather than 'the elevation of the critical spirit' (14). It is hardly in keeping with this approach subsequently to highlight Collins's remarks about the 'moral benefit of literary study' and 'its capacity to influence and mould character and beliefs' within his polemical articles (Atherton 39), while omitting to mention the syllabus he had outlined in his *Study of English Literature*, or the work he carried out within the Extension Movement. Thus Atherton concludes that Collins failed to 'convert his

ideals into a practical programme of study that would justify giving English disciplinary status' (39) without considering what I perceive to be some significant pedagogical achievements.

These and other valuable primary resources are similarly absent from the work of both Brian Doyle and Margaret Mathieson. In Doyle's *English and Englishness* (1989), he also relies almost entirely on the contemporary polemic surrounding the institutionalisation of English literature. Rather than describe how it was taught within structures such as University Extension (which he barely mentions), Doyle has chosen to focus on the overblown rhetoric employed by bodies such as the English Association and the Newbolt Committee. Mathieson, in *The Preachers of Culture* (1975), is also too distracted by the 'Moral zeal' (40) prevalent among Victorian advocates for English to discuss the tangible, and ultimately much more informative material relating to the grassroots teaching of the subject.

This focus on the supposed Arnoldian ideological agenda held by proponents of English literature offers up only a partial, and certainly partisan, version of events, and I would argue that Matthew Arnold himself was a minor figure (if not in fact irrelevant) in terms of the practical advancement of English literature as a university subject. In staking this claim, I agree with Franklin E. Court's statement that Arnold 'was the most influential critic in England after the 1860's [sic], but his influence on the teaching of English literature never matched his success as a critic. That is a point that many current scholars who accuse Arnold of inventing English studies seem unable to recognize' (117). Court's *Institutionalizing English Literature* (1992) instead centres on 'marginal figures' including David Masson and F. D. Maurice, who, despite being 'relatively unknown to the interpretive community', actually had

far greater bearing on the shaping of the subject (6). In focusing on less well-known pedagogues of literature, my basic aims are not dissimilar to those of Court.

However, the main body of my thesis concentrates on various extramural endeavours, and these within a relatively narrow time frame, whereas Court's extensive study examines university English teaching from Adam Smith to Walter Raleigh. Most of my project, with the exclusion of my broader, more historical introductory chapter, thus draws on a different set of primary material from that discussed by Court.

Following my analysis of the University Extension Movement, my fourth chapter considers the work of a provincial reading group founded in 1890 by University Extension lecturer Richard G. Moulton: the Backworth and District Classical Novel-Reading Union. This was inspired by the principles underpinning an innovative teaching method that Moulton had formulated, some years earlier, to meet the mixed abilities of extramural students, and which also lent itself particularly to the study of novels. The contextual framework regarding the status of the novel at the *fin de siècle* has been provided by Nicholas Daly, in his *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880-1914* (1999); also Peter Keating's *Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875-1914* (1989); and Kenneth Graham's *English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900* (1965). My central focus, in this chapter, is on the manner in which the novel was discussed within institutional and non-institutional organisations at this time, and these studies, along with essays by Kate Flint, Kelly J. Mays, Joseph W. Childers, and Mary Hammond's *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (2006), usefully explore the contested status of the novel in the late-nineteenth

century, the numerous contributions to this (sometimes viciously argued) debate from critics and novelists alike, and the negative portrayal of novel readers in the press. These demonstrate why the stakes were quite so high, culturally speaking, for Moulton and his novel-reading group during the *fin de siècle*, and why his pedagogical priorities marked his distance from other university and even extramural teachers at this time.

Moulton produced a pamphlet outlining the activities of Backworth during its early years of existence; this 1896 volume, *Four Years of Novel Reading*, together with his description of his “inductive criticism”, and some of his Extension syllabuses, reports, examination papers, and the newspaper reviews both of his teaching method and his Backworth book, form the primary material for this penultimate chapter. This section is also informed by some unpublished letters to Moulton, written by an English literature professor at Yale during the 1890s, which are stored in Moulton’s papers at Cambridge University. These allow me to draw conclusions about Moulton’s pedagogical influence in America during the *fin de siècle*.

My final chapter looks at the comparatively more light-hearted reading advice offered by Arnold Bennett, pseudonymously, in the pages of popular Edwardian newspaper *T. P.’s Weekly (TPW)*. As this section will discuss, Bennett wished for this early series of articles, the first of several that he wrote for this particular publication, to be gathered together as a book. This never materialised, and although the British Library holds a complete run of *TPW* at their Newspaper Collection in Colindale, North West London, this is one of the few places in Britain where these early articles may be accessed in their entirety. Bennett’s ‘Savoir-Faire Papers’

remain, therefore, relatively unexamined, a matter that this chapter will redress.

Elsewhere, much of the previous scholarly writing on Bennett has focused primarily on his fictional work; in John Carey's barnstorming *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), for instance, where Bennett is presented as the 'hero of this book', attention turns to the sensitive and sympathetic depiction of lower-middle class suburbanites in Bennett's novels, where 'the shattering, momentous, utterly everyday subject of youth and age is pursued, reformulated, analysed' (152, 169). Carey emphasises that Bennett 'never fell for the simple intellectual sneer' (162), and his appraisal of Bennett's largely compassionate stance towards his fictional characters colours my reading of his *T. P.'s Weekly* (TPW) articles, as does Carey's view of Bennett as a 'torn' intellectual, who 'resents and renounces the exclusiveness of intellectuals, yet values literature too much to pretend that its lack does not maim' (180).

Much of the Bennett section in Hammond's book discusses his anomalous literary reputation in the early twentieth century: 'To the middlebrow and the serious autodidact his work was "art"', she argues, yet Bennett was still regarded as an 'inartistic' writer from the perspective of the 'absolute elite' (184). In Hammond's reading of the *Clayhanger* novels, she traces Bennett's effort to 'create a synthesis between the artistic, masculine solemnity of traditional forms and the demands of a new age', by 'making a case for the correction of the idealisation of women' through the character of Hilda Lessways, but 'also demanding a correction of the vilification of lower-middle-class masculinity' (187). Hammond then discusses the 'sometimes unsettling narrative method' used by Bennett that 'switches between narrated facts and an individual character's assessments of them, and not infrequently fails to provide any parity between the two' (188). She suggests that it was the use of this

‘stylistic device’ (188) to depict a social class whose ‘concerns’ Woolf wished to ‘disavow’, that accounts, in part, for Woolf’s famous attack on Bennett (Hammond 190).

My own interest in Hammond’s book, however, lies in her discussion of Bennett’s ‘damning’ attitude towards middle-class ‘acquisition of “culture”’ and his denigration of “classic” texts and those who read them (108). I will consider this latter analysis in the light of Bennett’s hitherto rarely discussed literary advice columns for *TPW*. Peter D. McDonald’s *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914* (1997) takes the same time frame as Hammond, but imposes Bourdieu’s model of the literary field onto the careers of Joseph Conrad, Bennett, and Arthur Conan Doyle. In doing so, McDonald highlights the chameleonic nature of Bennett’s career, during which he took up ‘multiple positions ... as novelist, serialist, and journalist’ (101). Thus McDonald defines Bennett’s first novel, *A Man From the North* (1898) as ‘a minor but exemplary 1890s-style avant-garde text’ (70), but describes how these early aesthetic priorities were seemingly abandoned, as Bennett subsequently wrote within more popular, and therefore lucrative, generic categories, such as serial fiction and drama. Meanwhile Bennett launched, in the *Academy*, an attack on the ‘purists’ anti-populist discourse’, in his refusal to belittle the work of ‘popular authors’ (McDonald 91), yet all the time ensuring ‘judicious management of his literary output’ in an attempt to forge a reputation for himself as a “serious” literary novelist’ (116, 117). Rather than viewing Bennett merely as a cynical profit-seeker, McDonald describes him as a ‘maverick committed to revolutionizing the literary field’, whose efforts towards the ‘democratization of culture’ are most traceable in his *TPW* articles, which offered lively and instructive

literary advice to ‘the new generation of readers’ (95), encouraging them to ‘make major literature, and books in general, part of their everyday lives’ (98). However, in McDonald’s relatively brief discussion of *TPW* he also notes that ‘the response to its cultural mission, of which Bennett was chief advocate, was not always cordial’ (99), and he subsequently focuses on some of the more negative letters sent in by Edwardian readers; I will instead highlight Bennett’s acute understanding of his readership.

This latter point needs to be understood within the broader context of Edwardian literary journalism and its readers; important groundwork has been laid by Philip Waller’s vast study of the period, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations* (2006), which offers some useful discussion of *TPW* and its colourful proprietor, T. P. O’Connor. Waller argues that the publication’s ‘ethos’ was that ‘literature, and improving the mind, was fun as well as functional’ (102), and I agree that these priorities are perceptible in Bennett’s informative yet informal articles, which, I will suggest, encouraged literary enthusiasts to embark upon a manageable, yet ultimately fulfilling, programme of reading. Waller describes the particular demographic who subscribed to *TPW* as ‘Dwellers in the expanding working-class and lower-middle-class dormitory suburbs’ (88); Richard D. Altick’s seminal piece of research, *The English Common Reader* (1967) collated a mass of information about nineteenth-century autodidactic readers, and first-hand accounts from these readers form the basis of Jonathan Rose’s *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2002). The slightly chaotic presentation, particularly its lack of a coherent chronology, of the enormous collection of personal testimony gathered by Rose does at times work against its obvious usefulness as a resource. Nevertheless, an instructive chapter on

lower-middle class clerks, 'What Was Leonard Bast Really Like?', allows an insight into the literary experiences of *TPW*'s target readership, and as Hammond has also noted (178), Rose has even identified one reader who was 'Methodically building up a personal library following the guidelines of Arnold Bennett's *Literary Taste*' (Rose 191).

My coda on the "Newbolt Report" (1921) will bracket off critical authorities almost entirely. I instead use this government document to reflect back on the extramural activities discussed in my previous chapters, before glancing briefly ahead, to what the future held in store for English studies both at a university level, and also extramurally.

1.

English Literature as a Subject of Study from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth

‘Another obstacle which must be overcome is the tendency to reduce all events prior to the establishment of English at Oxbridge to the level of a pre-history, an ideological husk discarded by English in its advance to the status of an academic discipline’ (Doyle, ‘Hidden’ 18).

As my introduction has explained, this thesis will consider the teaching of English literature to adults within a variety of institutional and non-institutional settings between 1885 and 1910, prior to and during its incorporation as a subject of study into the curricula at Oxford and Cambridge. My four main chapters each stay within that time frame, yet this opening chapter will reveal that English texts had been discussed and taught beyond Oxbridge at least as far back as the mid-seventeenth century, and that extramural endeavours after 1885 can therefore be seen as an intensification, or concretion, of these previous developments. Nonconformists, Scots, and the industrial working classes had each understood the value of literary texts variously as instruments of instruction; as a counter-balance to technical, scientific studies; and as a means through which ‘provincials’ could gain access to the ‘dominant culture’ (Miller 5). This chapter will trace the development of literary studies in various settings beyond Oxbridge before the late-nineteenth century, in chronological order: coffeehouses, Dissenting Academies, Edinburgh University, Mechanics’ Institutes, University College, London, and Owens College in Manchester.

I

Some of the earliest literary pedagogical endeavours took place in locations not affiliated to a university, or indeed any other obviously educational institution: reading societies and book clubs had long been a means through which groups of

people could read and discuss literary texts, with varying levels of formality,⁶ and coffeehouses had, since the mid-seventeenth century, provided an informal, ‘democratic assembly’ (A. Ellis 46) for the discussion of literature. Although these were later established all over London, the first coffeehouse was in fact founded in 1650 in Oxford, where students were drawn to this ‘alternative space’, set apart from their university studies (Cowan 91). In contrast to the rigid theological or scientific curriculum at Oxford, as Brian Cowan has identified, the coffeehouse was ‘a place for like-minded scholars to congregate, to read, as well as to learn from and to debate with each other’, without the burden of ‘church or state patronage’ (91). The coffeehouses, or “penny universities”, became synonymous with the new *Spectator*-reading public in the early eighteenth century, but from the beginning they had been a forum for men⁷ of all social classes to discuss literature, often in the company of the actual writers: ‘A man on entering was free to take any vacant seat and to engage his neighbour in conversation. If unable to read, he was able to hear the news read out aloud ... or he could listen to the poets as they read and discussed their work, or hear the informed opinions on the latest play’ (A. Ellis xv).⁸ Some coffeehouses also offered lectures, sold books, or had libraries of their own, but all of them enabled men to read and to talk about literature in a relaxed setting, learning from each other,

⁶ Paul Kaufman in particular has conducted extensive research into book clubs in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries; see his ‘English Book Clubs and Their Role in Social History’, and ‘The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History.’

⁷ Cowan notes that ‘Women were a vital part of coffeehouse society’, yet ‘the activities commonly associated with coffeehouse society — especially debate on political or learned topics, business transactions, and the like — were considered to be traditionally masculine activities or responsibilities’, and therefore ‘the supposedly “real” business of coffeehouse life was thought to be distinct from the activities of the women and servants who made it possible’ (228). Later Cowan writes that ‘In theory, there is no reason why any woman who found her way into a coffeehouse could not have joined the conversations there, but in practice there is no evidence of any woman actually taking part in a coffeehouse debate’ (246).

⁸ See A. Ellis 58-69, and M. Ellis 151-55 for discussion of Dryden’s long literary connection to Will’s coffeehouse, in Covent Garden.

and formulating ideas on contemporary writing; I would argue that they served an important function as early, informal, and non-institutional classrooms, where the emphasis was on open-ended literary discussion, and lively, uninhibited debate.

II

Dissenting Academies were set up following the Test Acts in the seventeenth century, which barred Nonconformists from holding public office or from entering Oxbridge.⁹ These Academies provided education for the sons of commercial businessmen and also the gentry who were concerned by the ‘notoriously extravagant and undisciplined’ life at Oxbridge, but they also offered training for Nonconformist clergy (Palmer 7). The prominence of the sermon in the Dissenting service, in comparison to the marginal role it played in the Anglican church, meant increased emphasis on inculcating skill in composition, elocution, and rhetoric, and illustrative examples and quotations from secular texts were used in sermons ‘to clarify truth or impart splendour’ to them (McLachlan 273). Herbert McLachlan, historian of Nonconformity and principal of Manchester Unitarian College, reflected, in the 1950s, on ‘the homiletic use of English Literature’, a traditional feature of Dissenting sermons; he noted that ‘Prose and verse may alike serve our purpose, and no form of literature from the drama to the novel need be excluded’ (270, 272). Taking Shakespeare as an example, he remarked that ‘The characters of Macbeth and his wife are not unlike those of Ahab and Jezebel, and a psychological study of the two pairs may be instructive as a lesson in greed and ambition’ (284). McLachlan’s

⁹ Palmer has provided us with a useful summary of these Acts, and their impact upon educational provisions: ‘The enforcement in 1662 of the Act of Uniformity deprived non-conforming ministers of their livings, excluded dissenters from the universities, and made it virtually impossible for them to teach in the grammar schools. Consequently, numbers of such ministers opened schools in their homes, and after legal difficulties were relaxed by the Act of Toleration in 1689, some of these establishments were reconstituted as Dissenting Academies. These colleges flourished up and down the country, giving a general education alternative to that of the universities’ (7).

comments are consistent with the ‘secular strain’ that Anne Janowitz has traced in the Dissenting Academies’ curriculum, which was well-adapted for educating ‘a wide social base of sons of planters, professionals and manufacturers’ (64). It valorised ‘useful knowledge’ that could prepare students for civic life, and possessing a strong foundation in English literature functioned as a ‘mark of breeding’ (Palmer 9).

Warrington Academy was one of the most prominent and influential Dissenting Academies. Founded by John Seddon, a graduate of Glasgow University, and in existence from 1757 until 1786, the academy ‘achieved a considerable reputation’ through the work of tutors such as John Aikin, Joseph Priestley, and William Enfield (Ashley Smith 160). Enfield put together a collection of English literary texts, called *The Speaker*, which was first published in 1774.¹⁰ A later-appended essay, ‘On Reading Works of Taste’, offers us some insight into Enfield’s objective in producing this anthology. He argued for the merits of contemporary English prose and verse, which he felt should not be overlooked ‘in favour of antiquity’, since writing by Addison, Sterne, Gray, Thomson, and Pope could, ‘with some degree of confidence, be respectively brought into comparison with any examples of similar excellence among the ancients’ (Enfield xli). One of the benefits of studying exemplary works by English authors was ‘to produce [in the reader] a general habit of dignity and elegance’ which would improve his character and ‘diffuse a graceful air over his whole conversation and manners’ (xlii). Further advantages to the study

¹⁰ Here excerpts, generally of around three or four pages in length, were organised into a series of sections: Select Sentences, Narrative Pieces, Didactic Pieces, Argumentative Pieces, Orations and Harangues, Dialogues, Descriptive Pieces, and Pathetic Pieces. Sources included Pope, Shakespeare, Dryden, Milton, Gray, Mrs. Barbauld, Sterne, the *Spectator*, and the *Rambler*. Thus Gray’s ‘Hymn to Adversity’ and Shakespeare’s ‘The Entry of Bolingbroke and Richard into London’ featured in the Descriptive category; ‘Yorick’s Death’, taken from Sterne, was a Pathetic Piece; and two *Spectator* articles, ‘On Modesty’ and ‘On Cheerfulness’, were included among the Didactic examples.

of literary texts, Enfield argued, included sharper judgment in ‘determining the degree of merit in literary productions’, and thereafter the development of one’s own powers of ‘elegant expression’, both in writing and in speaking (xliv). For these reasons, ‘the study of polite literature’ deserved to be ‘made a principal branch of liberal education’ (xliv).

Enfield was more specific, later in the essay, about his actual approach to studying texts; these comments offer us an insight into how English lessons at Warrington were constructed. Alongside knowledge of the language and source for each text, Enfield advocated an emphasis on close reading, in order to reach an understanding of excellence in ‘Thought, Arrangement, and Expression’ (xlviii), by learning to appreciate, among other aspects, variety in image and ideas, accuracy of language, and a melodious rhythm (xlviii-lix). Providing students with this ‘acquaintance with Polite Literature’ (lix) would, Enfield believed, be sufficient to guard them against ‘the intrusion of idleness and spleen’, as well as furnishing them with ‘innumerable topics of conversation’ (lx). Enfield’s priority here was to prepare the Dissenting student for social success: the conversational fluency one could gain from exposure to certain well-written literary texts was privileged over issues relating to, for instance, characterisation, or plot-driven interpretation.

Within the confines of these non-establishment educational institutions — where English literature was already included on the curriculum, as we have seen — additional societies existed to promote the reading habit among students and staff. Jan Fergus has conducted some research into the records of the Daventry Dissenting Academy (attended by Priestley and Enfield), and reveals that students and teachers together ‘formed a book club sometime before 1765, called the “Academical

Society”, which bought at least twenty novels among other works in 1765 and between 1771 and 1779’ (190). By comparing these records with those at an English public school, Fergus indicates the more progressive attitude towards literature within non-elite educational institutions: ‘Academy students appear to be impressive customers for prose fiction. Their appetite for novels was proportionally much greater than that of the Rugby boys present in the ledgers — from one perspective, five times as great’ (189-90). Dissenting Academies thus provide us with an example of early educational (yet non-establishment) institutions that offered instruction on literary texts, while also encouraging their students’ interest in contemporary reading.

III

While acknowledging the contribution made by Dissenting Academies, Robert Crawford suggests that Scottish universities should be afforded greater prominence in any study of the growth of English literature: they ‘matter most’, he argues, ‘because they were *universities*, the dominant, established, mainstream (not dissenting) channels of higher education’ (*Devolving* 22). Crawford is of course relaying the pedagogical beginnings of English literature with a very specific, Scottish-centred, cultural agenda in view, and as the preceding section on Dissenting Academies has made clear, I do not agree with him in privileging the growth of English in Scottish universities over all other developments in the subject’s creation.¹¹ Nevertheless, he builds a compelling argument (and one that tallies with the interpretation of events offered by Franklin E. Court and also Thomas P. Miller) in identifying the beginnings of English literature in eighteenth-century Scotland as

¹¹ The fact that Crawford’s comment appears within a book called *Devolving English Literature*, and that he has also edited a collection called *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, should be sufficient to alert the reader to his nationalist bias.

part of a move towards ‘linguistic propriety’ by promoting a discourse ‘purged of Scotticisms’, as the post-Union Scottish context suggested to urban professionals that their commercial and social success depended upon their ability to converse elegantly in polite English (Crawford, *Devolving* 18). The study of literary texts thus became a means of inculcating correct speech and manners: ‘Language, the most important of bonds, must not be allowed to hinder Scotland’s intercourse with expanding economic and intellectual markets in the freshly defined British state’ (Crawford, *Devolving* 18).

In Edinburgh, English literature, or “belles lettres”, as it was termed at this stage,¹² was included within the university curriculum after it had been developed within a broader civic context. Scottish economist Adam Smith gave a lecture series in Edinburgh from 1748 until 1751. Underpinned as they were by Smith’s theoretical concerns about a ‘self-regulating market’ where ‘self-interest’ and ‘public interest’ could meet, the lectures held particular appeal for non-establishment citizens, ‘the sons of the newly emerging mercantile class’ (Court 20). They therefore reflected the emphatically civic, commercial context in which they were conceived, rather than one of academic esotericism, and offered functional lessons on behaviour and speech that his audience could utilise. Some brief examples from Smith’s lectures will illustrate this point.¹³ In lecture eight, for instance, when Smith sought to define stylistic excellence, he singled Jonathan Swift out for special praise. Swift’s

¹² The subject was renamed “Rhetoric and English Literature” in 1860, at the behest of Regius Professor W. E. Aytoun.

¹³ The following discussion is based on lecture notes taken by two students at Glasgow University, where Smith was Professor of Logic and Rhetoric from 1751. However, J. C. Bryce has stated, in his introduction to the lectures, that ‘We hardly need evidence to prove that ... [Smith] would fall back on his Edinburgh materials, including the Rhetoric, which it was his statutory duty to teach’ (9). Later in this introduction, Bryce has noted the ‘general continuity of the lecture-course from 1748 to 1763’ (12). Thus we can assume that the lectures I refer to here were almost certainly delivered first in Edinburgh.

uncomplicated style, Smith noted, 'is despised as nothing out of the common road; each of us thinks he could have wrote as well; And our thoughts of the language give us the same idea of the substance of his writings' (42). Smith warned his audience that 'it does not appear that this opinion is well grounded'; a more astute examination reveals that Swift in fact possessed 'a complete knowledge of his Subjects'; the ability to 'arrange all the parts of his Subject in their proper order' and 'describe the Ideas ... in the most proper and expressive manner' (42). Smith's lecture audience, we can assume, were being asked to emulate Swift's type of writing, and not imagine that an elaborate, convoluted style necessarily equated to a sophisticated set of ideas. Later in this lecture, during Smith's discussion of Swift's 'talent for ridicule' (43), he illustrated this with reference to *Gulliver's Travels*, before a comparison with *The Rape of the Lock* and Pope's later work, *The Dunciad*. Smith drew examples from other writers in subsequent lectures; in lecture twelve, for instance, the focus was on different approaches to composition. He stated that 'The Idea <of> a fact that is grand may be conveyed in two ways, either by describing it and enumerating various particulars that concern it or by relating the effect that it has on those who behold it' (Smith 64). Milton and Shakespeare were brought in to highlight these differences: 'Milton makes use of the first method in his description of Paradise, and of the 2d [2nd] in the account Adam gives the angel of the effect Eves [sic] presence had on him' (Smith 64). Shakespeare 'uses the 2d [2nd] Manner in the description of Dover Cliff in King Lear' (64).

Hugh Blair had been in the audience for Smith's lectures, and his own series was delivered to the city in 1759; thereafter he took the chair as Edinburgh University's first Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in 1762, institutionalising the study of

literary texts within the university, having first trialled his lectures in the city at large.¹⁴ This can be seen as a crucial milestone in the development of English studies, for it marks the official introduction of the subject into a British university. The first half of Blair's lectures to Edinburgh students considered 'Taste, Criticism, and Genius' (1: 36); the 'Sublime in Writing' (1: 57); and 'Style, and the rules that relate to it' (1: 183), such as 'Perspicuity and Ornament' (1: 184). In order to 'illustrate the subject' of 'Language and Style' (1: 408), Blair drew examples from (among others) Addison, Swift, and Milton. In the second volume of his published lectures, Blair's stated aim was to 'ascend a step higher, and to examine the subjects upon which Style is employed' (2: 1). Thus he set out to teach eloquence in 'the three great Scenes of Public Speaking', which he listed as 'Parliament' (2: 42), 'the Bar', and 'the Pulpit' (2: 43).

Later lecture topics included pastoral poetry, where Blair gave long consideration to Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*; and 'Epistolary Writing' (2: 298), with examples drawn from Pope, Swift, and Dr. Arbuthnot (2: 301). Sustained consideration was given to *Paradise Lost* in a subsequent lecture; *Macbeth* and *Othello* were listed elsewhere as the 'two masterpieces' (2: 524) of 'the great Shakespeare' (2: 523), where 'the strength of his genius chiefly appears' (2: 524); and, in the forty-seventh and final lecture, on ancient, French, Spanish, and English comedy, Blair identified Shakespeare and Ben Jonson as the main exponents of the 'first age ... of English Comedy' (2: 542), which was followed by the 'licentiousness' of Restoration comedy (2: 543), and, finally, the post-Restoration comedies written by Dryden, Congreve, Cobber, Vanburgh, and Farquhar (2: 544-

¹⁴ See Court 17-38 for a discussion of the differing approaches to literature offered by Smith and Blair.

46). Leaving aside some of the unfortunate choices of professor,¹⁵ English remained prominent in the Scottish university curriculum throughout the nineteenth century; the popularity of W. E. Aytoun's course, which he taught between 1845 and 1865, led the 1858 Regulatory Act to require that each of the other Scottish universities should appoint professors of English (Frykman 7). Aytoun's successor David Masson, Regius Professor between 1865 and 1895, and also George Saintsbury, from 1895 until 1915, both proved to be impressive and popular lecturers at Edinburgh.

IV

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, English literature was also being taught in Mechanics' Institutes, which had originally been initiated by George Birkbeck in Glasgow. More than 550 of these were in existence in 1850, and this number had risen to more than 700 by 1863 (New 346). Barrister, journalist and Whig politician Henry Brougham had offered financial backing to the London branch, founded in 1823; his pamphlet *Practical Observations Upon the Education of the People* (1825), which pushed for developments in adult education, had a profound ideological effect upon the Institutes, and he also drew on his far-reaching personal and political influence to promote the 'gospel of universal enlightenment' (Stewart 183) by giving addresses, writing articles and letters, and attending meetings all over the country (186). Initially, Mechanics' Institutes had been

¹⁵ William Greenfield, who took over from Blair in 1784, was dismissed from the university in 1798 after a homosexual scandal. He was exiled to England, and forced to assume another name. Sir Walter Scott, in a letter of 1809 to John Murray about trying to persuade Greenfield to contribute anonymously to the *Quarterly Review*, referred to him as 'Mr. G', and remarked that Greenfield signed his letters 'Rutherford or Richardson or some other name' (W. Scott, 'To John Murray' 183). Scott continued, 'The secrecy to be observed in this business must be most profound ... to ... all the world — if you get articles from him (which will & must draw attention) you must throw out a false scent for enquirers — I believe this unfortunate man will soon be in London' (183). Andrew Brown, Regius Professor from 1801 until 1834, seemed more interested in history than in teaching literature, and his appointment is generally considered to have been a disaster; his files in the Edinburgh University archives consist almost exclusively of boxes stuffed full of handwritten notes on North American history.

designed to offer scientific instruction to workers, in order that they might develop skills that would benefit them in the workplace; however, I would argue that the Institutes also played a largely overlooked, yet nonetheless significant role in the pedagogical history of English. As Palmer notes, ‘most of them included lectures on English literature in their programmes, and through their libraries they enabled many members to develop the reading habit and to make some acquaintance with the national literature’ (32).

James Hole, honorary secretary of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics’ Institutes, provides us with a contemporary account of developments: writing in 1853, he acknowledged that works of fiction comprised a ‘strikingly large’ section of Mechanics’ Institute libraries; in the Leeds branch in 1852, for instance, these, together with periodical literature, made up ‘more than half the whole circulation’ (27). Lectures in the Institutes also developed along lines that were more literary than had been originally intended, as Hole recorded: ‘Of a thousand lectures recently delivered at forty-three Institutes more than half (572) were on literary subjects, about one-third (340) on scientific, and 88 on musical, exclusive of concerts’ (30). Unlike the Dissenting Academies and Edinburgh University, it is difficult to say exactly what was being taught at these Institutes; we can assume that literary instruction tended to be in the form of discrete lectures, rather than systematically-structured courses. Nevertheless, literary study was clearly taken up with great interest, marking the Institutes out as another important stage in the pedagogical history of the subject.

V

The foundation of London University (subsequently renamed University College, London), was a crystallisation of Brougham's previous endeavours in democratising education, such as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and the Mechanics' Institutes (Court 43). Dissenters, and those from the commercial and middle classes who were unable, for religious or economic reasons, to attend Oxbridge, were the students that London University aimed to attract; its utilitarian ethos and inclusive admissions policy thus offered an alternative to elitist, establishment Oxbridge. The institution was 'controversial' from the start, as Brougham's insistence that it remain unaffiliated to any religious faith, as was the case with the ancient Scottish universities, was 'opposed by churchmen, disturbed and threatened by what they perceived to be a fatal blow to the old conservative authority of religious education in British schools' (Court 42, 43). King's College, London, an Anglican institution, was founded shortly afterwards in order to counteract the supposedly "heathen" university-level education being offered in the metropolis.¹⁶ Both colleges were teaching institutions only, but London University was chartered in 1836, and became an examining body for both King's and the newly renamed University College.

Brougham's primary educational objective was to encourage the spread of literacy, as the means through which to enable the populace to understand political reform. As Court has identified, his agenda was therefore related less to his enthusiasm for English literature in general, than to encourage a rise in literacy

¹⁶ Alan Bacon's article, 'English Literature Becomes a University Subject: King's College, London as Pioneer' offers a detailed discussion of the establishment of this institution, and the prominent position in the curriculum that was afforded to English in its first few decades, particularly under F. D. Maurice.

levels, and ‘A university course emphasizing “good,” that is, instructional reading in English as an end in itself, would add academic legitimacy to the campaign to promote the habit nationally’ (Court 45). Thomas Dale, the first Professor of English at London University (as it was then called) in 1828, taught one course on language, and one ‘exclusively’ on literature; the former was divided into three sections, one of which was on ‘the use and application of the language in speaking and composition’ (Court 56). However, even this ostensibly language-based section drew examples from literature ‘for something other than declamation, rhetorical analysis, and the appreciation of style’ (Court 56). For the first section, on the history of language, when Dale began with Anglo-Saxon poetry and ‘progressed chronologically’, he taught in such a way that ‘Hooker and translations from the Bible ... exemplified the language of theology ... Spenser and Sidney the language of poetry; and Shakespeare’s plays the language of “common life”’ (Court 56, 57). The literature course, also divided into three sections, appears to have been extensive in coverage, as this summary from Court reveals:

the first covered the ‘earliest English compositions’ to Chaucer and Gower; the second, the mid-fourteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century; and the third, the entire eighteenth century. The course also dealt in detail with generic classifications. In his discussion of prose forms, he treated theological writings, romance (as ‘romantic fiction,’ distinct from the ‘novel’), biography, history, essays, and ... periodical literature. He also included lectures comparing ‘English and ancient literature’ and ‘English and . . . modern literature’; and lectures examining the ‘contrast between . . . French and English models of professional oratory,’ ‘pulpit eloquence,’ the history and progress of American literature, and the ‘connection between literature and morals’ (58; 1st ellipsis my own).

We can identify, from this overview, Dale’s willingness to discuss a broad range of literary categories, examined within a coherent chronological structure. Comparative

analysis between English and ancient, European, and American literature, testifies further to the breadth of Dale's curriculum.

This literature course cost four pounds, and was taught 'two evenings a week with no prerequisites'; it was therefore probably intended for students 'not formally enrolled', and Dale also set up a 'graduated fee schedule so that those who preferred attending part-time would pay only part of the fees. The course was separated into four units, any one or more of which could be selected by the student' (Court 58). In fact evening classes became a regular feature at University College throughout the nineteenth century. During Henry Morley's University College professorship, which began in 1865, the *University College, London Calendar* for the session 1866-67 explained that 'The object of [... evening] Classes is to extend the benefits of the College tuition, especially to gentlemen engaged elsewhere during the day; and to provide instruction in Subjects not taught in the ordinary College Classes' (*University College* 44). Examinations and certificates marked the end of each course, and 'The Library is open for the convenience of the Students between 6 and 9.30 on the evenings when the Classes meet, except when wanted for other purposes' (*University College* 44). University resources were thus extended to London's extramural students; this highlights, I would argue, the egalitarian principles underpinning the institution.

Under Morley, extramural students were only asked to pay for individual English courses, and these were set at £1. 1s. for a term consisting of twenty lectures (two courses of ten, one on language and one on literature), or 10s. 6d. for an individual ten-lecture course (*University College* 48).¹⁷ Three terms of literature courses aimed

¹⁷ In 1866, a labourer in London could expect to earn around 21s. a week (Bowley 10). These courses were not therefore within the reach of working-class students.

to instruct extramural London students on ‘English Literature from 1688 to 1866’ (*University College* 48). The first term considered the ‘Reigns of William III., Anne, and George I.’; the second, ‘From the Accession of George II. to the time of the French Revolution’; and the third, ‘From the time of the French Revolution to the Present Day’ (*University College* 48). As well as the evening classes, Morley also taught courses for matriculated juniors and seniors; John Sutherland has discovered that ‘over 200 pupils [were] studying English at the highpoint of his tenure’ (63), an indication of the immense popularity of English under Morley.

In the 1866-67 session, matriculated seniors studied ‘English Literature from the Accession of Elizabeth to the Restoration’ for an hour on Mondays, and ‘Milton, Dryden, Pope’ on Thursdays, for ‘the Principles of Style, with practice in applying them to English Composition’ (*University College* 17). The potential usefulness of English study was thus being highlighted: students were being shown how to improve their own writing skills by examining the work of other writers. Fees for matriculated students were set higher, at £3 13s. 6d. for two lectures a week through the session (*University College* 17). Further testament to Morley’s influence on literary pedagogy is the fact that many of his students would later become successful English professors, both within Oxbridge and beyond; these include Edward Arber, who became Professor of English at Birmingham University; and Walter Raleigh, who taught at Liverpool and Glasgow before Oxford (J. Sutherland 63).

VI

Manchester’s Owens College, founded in 1851, stemmed from the extramural literary activities in its area. For instance, Manchester’s Literary and Philosophical Society, established in 1781, was just one amongst a plethora of educational

endeavours in the city, and in fostering a climate for ‘thought and discussion, and giving rise to continual demands for provincial university education’, this society (among others) had a direct effect on the foundation of Owens College (Sheehan 519). The Owens College committee decided early on that English Literature and Language was an essential part of the degree,¹⁸ and as well as being appointed Principal of the College, A. J. Scott also took up the chair of Professor of Comparative Grammar, English Language and Literature, Logic, and Mental Philosophy in 1850 (Palmer 56). The high value he placed on English literature can be determined from the inaugural address he had given earlier in his career, on his appointment as Professor of English at the renamed University College, London, in 1848. There Scott had advocated a chronological survey of literary history in order to provide the student with an acquaintance of past civilisations; he also pushed for greater emphasis on ‘vernacular literature’, which offered an insight into the ‘national mind’ while ‘under the conditions of the character and the circumstances of our own people’ (A. J. Scott 11). Thus modern (or non-classical) writers such as Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe, were shown to be ‘manifesting themselves in relation to all the great realities of spiritual and outward life’, through language that was familiar, as ‘partakers in our national character and circumstances’, an advantage that was ‘not conceivable where the great gulf is fixed that separates us from those who spoke a language now dead’ (21).

Scott remarked that students should keep in mind the specific context within which Dryden, for instance, was writing, because this would allow one ‘to observe

¹⁸ Keith Vernon has explained that ‘A committee of the trustees was formed to interpret Owens’ will and quickly decided that the Scottish and London universities were a much more appropriate model for Manchester than Oxbridge’ (97). Thus they ‘drew up a curriculum that combined new and old subjects, including mathematics and natural philosophy, mental and moral philosophy, English and modern languages’ (97).

the connection between the overstrained religious rigidity of the Commonwealth, and the reactionary making-light of everything in Charles's time, and the fullest development of English satire turning both into cordial derision' (20). English literature, Scott argued, stood 'on the frontier of the university, to connect it with the world, and to prepare the passage between them' (25); thus students would derive significant benefit from being privy to knowledge offered by great modern writers, allowing them to experience certain events vicariously, without the impediment of a language barrier, as preparation for their own contact with contemporary society: 'The time approaches when he [the student] shall be in the thick and heart of the reality. Let part of his reading at least gradually connect him with this' (A. J. Scott 24). These pedagogical priorities mark Scott's emphasis on functionality, rather than aesthetic appreciation — consistent with the utilitarian learning environments within which he taught.

Elsewhere, other new university colleges also prioritised the establishment of English departments, as the subject continued to flourish among, if not necessarily provincials, or extramural groups, then certainly within non-Oxbridge environments. King's College, London had 'made English part of the core curriculum and combined it with the study of history' (Court 87), and this plan was carried out under F. D. Maurice in 1840 (Court 88). Firth College in Sheffield used a government grant of £1,200 in 1889 to create a Professorship of English Literature, 'whose duties were to include supervising the expansion of the college's Extension schemes' (Palmer 61-62). This pattern was also followed by (among others) University College, Liverpool, Birmingham's Mason College, and University College, Nottingham (Palmer 62-63). English had been based outside Oxford and Cambridge for centuries, as this chapter

has made clear; by the 1880s, however, they stood among the very few university-type educational establishments in the country that still refused to embrace English literature as a subject of academic study. My next chapter will communicate the specific context for this debate regarding the institutionalisation of English at Oxbridge after 1885, which was led by Extension lecturer John Churton Collins.

2.

**John Churton Collins and the Dispute over University English Studies
in the *Fin de Siècle***

‘It was simply our duty, our imperative duty, in the interests of literature and in the interests of education, to speak out’ (Collins, ‘English at Universities’ 312).

My previous chapter has offered an historical overview of various institutions that taught English literature as a subject, or, at the very least, provided an environment that was amenable to informal literary discussion. My third chapter will reveal that by the late-nineteenth century the subject was also taught in University Extension centres under the aegis of Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Victoria, and diplomas and certificates were awarded to those who had completed a stipulated amount of work in the subject. Nevertheless, English literature was still not offered as an honours degree subject at Oxford until 1894,¹⁹ and Cambridge held back until 1917.²⁰ Such blatant inconsistency in university policy was highlighted by prolific Extension lecturer in English literature John Churton Collins, who vehemently pushed for the introduction of his subject at these universities. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century this developed into an often vicious dispute, between scholars and outsiders alike, as questions were raised over whether English literature could justifiably claim to possess the credentials deemed necessary for consideration as an academic discipline. Prominent among the reasons given to explain its continued exclusion from Oxbridge, was that the subject was regarded as superfluous

¹⁹ This is not to say that literary texts were not taught at all at Oxford before this date; D. J. Palmer has explained that ‘English literature was made one of the four parts of the Pass Degree requirements’ in 1873, although the examination material appears to have been fairly rudimentary (70).

²⁰ As E. M. W. Tillyard has explained, English literature was also taught at Cambridge in some degree before 1917, although the emphasis was very much on language study. Nevertheless, Arthur Quiller-Couch (“Q”) succeeded A. W. Verrall to the King Edward VII Professorship of English Literature in 1912, and his pre-war literature lectures were hugely popular. For a more detailed discussion of English studies at Cambridge between 1878 and 1917, see Tillyard 19-40.

to the curriculum; students were expected to possess the wherewithal to take up literary texts in their own leisure time. Moreover, as this chapter will demonstrate (and my subsequent chapters will firmly challenge), the standpoint adopted by the initiative's many detractors was that it was not sufficiently clear what should be included within an English literature course, or even how it would be taught and by whom. Disregarding the fact that it was already being taught elsewhere, and had been for some time, William Morris was among those who believed that discussion of literary texts within the lecture hall would amount to 'vague talk about literature' (2), thus gesturing towards the implausibility of organising a systematic course of study, based upon objective standards and irrefutable facts.

This chapter will focus primarily on the period from 1885 until 1891, the most volatile few years in the movement for English studies at Oxbridge. Imposing this admittedly somewhat artificial time frame upon my analysis will allow me to offer a concentrated discussion of the debate at the exact point when Collins, the strongest advocate of English study in the period, was building his case through letters, reviews of leading scholarly works, and polemical treatises within newspapers, pamphlets, and academic circles. Taking Collins as my focal point in this chapter will enable me to assess the veracity of some of his claims regarding the pedagogical and journalistic failings of his contemporaries. This will contribute towards an understanding of these particular aspects of the literary field at this point in time, and also the attitude towards literature as a subject of study held by some of the period's most prominent literary figures. In subsequent chapters, detailed discussion will take place of extramural literary courses in existence during the *fin de siècle*. These activities will be lent greater significance following this analysis of the campaign,

taking place contemporaneously, to introduce the subject at an honours level at Oxford and Cambridge, and Collins's distinctive, yet ultimately flawed, contribution to the debate.

I will step outside this specified six-year period only when I judge that a later published article by Collins can contribute to an understanding of the events with which this chapter is chiefly concerned. Much earlier writings by Matthew Arnold also warrant mention here, although as my introduction briefly explained, and as my previous chapter actually demonstrated by glancing back to events that mostly pre-existed Arnold's career, his influence on the practical advancement of English studies as an academic discipline was only ever very slight. The pedagogical developments with which this thesis is concerned were not, I would suggest, attributable to him in any significant way. Nevertheless, the extraordinarily influential writings about the potentially rejuvenating role of criticism that Arnold produced, from the mid-century onwards, are worth considering despite having been written some twenty years before my prescribed period, because they afforded ideological backing to Collins in his Oxford campaign. In 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' (1864), Arnold expressed his disillusionment with the stifling Puritan values of the English middle class, identifying this as a blight upon the spiritual and intellectual life of the nation. He compared this unfavourably with the 'Greece of Pindar and Sophocles', and 'the England of Shakespeare' (*Essays* 7), wherein an atmosphere had prevailed of 'fresh thought, intelligent and alive' (8). To remedy the current stasis in English creativity, where fresh and quixotic ideas were regarded with extreme suspicion, and ultimately denied fulfilment, Arnold called for an open-minded and unbiased criticism, which he charged with preparing the ground

for a new age of intellectual vibrancy. In his terminology, this could only be achieved by developing the critical faculty of ‘disinterestedness’ (*Essays* 18), in the sense of remaining at a distance from all political and other partisan factions that sought to inhibit the distribution of ideas different from their own. Only when liberated thus would Englishmen succeed in recognising ‘the best that is known and thought in the world’ (Arnold, *Essays* 19). By imbuing criticism (when properly formulated, without bias) with a crucial social function, nothing less than the advancement of the cultural perceptiveness of the entire nation and forging a dawn of new creative productivity, Arnold’s writing could be interpreted as offering up literary criticism as a legitimate discipline, and thereby affording some albeit rather lofty encouragement to Collins to pursue his strenuous and often gritty campaign.²¹

George Saintsbury’s curriculum at Edinburgh University during the late 1890s also figures outside this chapter’s stated six-year focus, and my justification for including this in the discussion is that Collins criticised Saintsbury for being a poor example of an English literature professor, who was thereby responsible for damaging the reputation of his subject. Close scrutiny of this claim will emphasise Collins’s often ill-considered and sometimes overly-aggressive approach to this debate, which in fact proved highly injurious, both to him and to the cause he espoused, yet also lent it that element of notoriety which renders this such a fascinating episode in the advance of English literature into the universities.

²¹ This is actually rendered more intriguing by the fact that Arnold was among those who remained ‘sceptical’ about Collins’s ‘proposals for the introduction of literature into the university syllabus’ (Collini 113). In Arnold’s reply to Collins’s letter asking for his opinion on this issue, Arnold wrote that although ‘The omission of the mother tongue and its literature in school and university instruction is peculiar ... to England’, and Collins ‘do[es] a good work in urging us to repair that omission’, nevertheless Arnold had ‘no confidence in those who at the universities regulate studies, degrees, and honours’ (Letter 1), and therefore ‘while you are seeking an object altogether good — the completing of the old and great degree in arts — you may obtain something which will not only not be that but will be a positive hindrance to it’ (2). Aside from the disappointment this must have caused Collins, the letter also confirms that Arnold’s contribution to the campaign was only ever ideological.

I

A new Oxford Chair, the Merton Professorship of English Language and Literature, was created in 1885. Collins assumed that this would be grasped as a belated opportunity for this ancient university at least to now endorse a subject that was in fact already being taught within the Oxford branch of the University Extension Movement, which had been set up seven years earlier. Given the prodigious experience garnered by Collins as an English lecturer within Extension — one estimate suggests that he gave ‘more than three thousand lectures’ over a period of twenty-seven years (Grosskurth 256) — one can understand his frustration after being rejected for the Merton Chair. That the position was instead offered to a renowned philologist, A. S. Napier, clearly intensified his dismay, for Collins dreaded the idea that English literature would be subsumed under language studies. Thus when plans were then initiated for an Oxford School of Modern Languages and Literature in 1886, he took decisive action to oppose a project that he suspected would again place greater emphasis upon language, and he unleashed ‘an intense and unremitting campaign’ for the study of English literature at Oxford (Palmer 80), which won him many enemies, yet also forced the issue onto the front pages, where it was taken up by some of the most influential men of the day.²²

In an effort to garner support for his cause, Collins wrote letters to some leading scholars and public figures — among them Walter Pater, Matthew Arnold, and Max Müller — asking if they wished to see the introduction of English literature, as

²² The Oxford English School, which was finally set up in 1894, would still fail to satisfy Collins; he insisted that an anti-literature bias continued to shape English studies at the university. In his essay ‘English Literature at the Universities Part I’, originally published in the journal *Nineteenth Century*, and reworked for inclusion in *Ephemerata Critica* (1901), he complained that the provisions for literature studies remained woefully inadequate, more so because the subject was pushed together unnaturally with philology, which is ‘a study in itself’ and ‘As a science ... has no connection with Literature’ (*Ephemerata* 51).

distinct from philology, at Oxford.²³ The majority of respondents came out in support of Collins's suggestions, particularly in their emphasis that literature should be dissociated from language studies, and also that it must be taught 'hand in hand with the study of the Greek and Roman classics' (Martin 1). The replies, published generally on the first page of the *Pall Mall Gazette* between October 1886 and January of the following year, demand exploration because they shed light on the specific character of the debate.²⁴ It is significant that the letters were printed in this particular newspaper, given that under William T. Stead's editorship this was largely a sensation-seeking publication, and by introducing a discussion of academic affairs onto the front page, Stead was thus responsible for popularising the debate in a way that would not have been possible if Collins's views were confined to a more serious periodical, such as the *Quarterly Review*.²⁵ The *Pall Mall Gazette* was also an evening paper, and this licensed it to disregard, when it wished to do so, the political and international events that morning newspapers were expected to cover; thus Stead could concentrate instead on this type of campaign: of current interest, but certainly not front-page news.

The overbearing emphasis placed upon the study of language was chief among criticisms of the current arrangement at Oxford. Stead, obviously sympathetic to Collins's campaign, introduced the series of correspondence by stating in rather loaded terms that the Merton Chair, 'richly endowed', had been 'immediately

²³ I use the term "philology", as did Collins, to refer to the study of language structure and etymology. This is consistent with the third definition of the word listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'The branch of knowledge that deals with the structure, historical development, and relationships of languages or language families; the historical study of the phonology and morphology of languages; historical linguistics' ('Philology,' def. 3).

²⁴ Kearney (*Louse* 72-74) and Palmer (91-92) both briefly refer to these *Pall Mall Gazette* letters in their discussion of Collins's Oxford campaign.

²⁵ The *Quarterly Review* was also used to further his campaign: it was there that Collins's review of Edmund Gosse's *From Shakespeare to Pope* (discussed below) was printed.

perverted to the study, not of literature, but of “Middle English” philology’ (1).

Thereafter T. H. Huxley deemed it a ‘fraud practised upon letters’ that a philology chair had been established ‘under the name of literature’ (1). Archdeacon Farrar similarly lamented the ‘too exclusively philological’ (1) focus of English studies, and Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Henry Edward Manning, further suggested that philology was as ‘necessary to literature as analysis to chemistry; but it is subordinate, and cannot supply its place’ (2). Support for Collins’s cause, however, was not unequivocal. Historian and Bishop of Oxford Dr. Stubbs referred back to Huxley’s earlier reply and somewhat sardonically remarked that if this apparent fraud allowed men of such quality to be appointed, then he would like to see ‘more such frauds’ to be ‘committed in the election of our Professors’ (2). Max Müller, Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford, denied that the introduction of a jointly-named chair posed any issue, given that ‘We have not one Professor of the Greek Language and another of Greek Literature. We expect our Professors of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Celtic, Chinese, &c., to be, first of all, sound scholars, and afterwards well read in some branches of their respective literatures’ (2). Until the ‘professorial Elysium’ of greater provisions being made for academic specialisation, Müller believed that Oxford had ‘hit on the right man’, more so because not only was Napier ‘known as a first-rate philologist’, but he also ‘came before us at the same time with the best credentials as to his knowledge of English literature’ (2).

Edward A. Freeman, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, offered the most comprehensive defence of philology to emerge out of this academic fracas. Freeman was ‘foremost of the antiliterature faction’ (McMurtry 161), and his *Contemporary Review* article, published in October 1887, expressed consternation at what he

considered to be an unwarranted attack on English language. He argued that ‘The study of literature might be supposed to be the study of books, and to study books implied a knowledge of the language in which they are written’; he thus considered it illogical that the two disciplines, literature and language, should be dissociated from each other (550). Seeking to pour scorn on his opponents, Freeman subsequently feigned astonishment that he had remained for so long ‘in that state of antiquated darkness which conceived that language implied literature and that literature implied language ... From this dream I was awakened, and I dare say others were awakened also, by “barbarian war-cries on every side”’ (555). Crucially, although Freeman sought to persuade his readers that it would prove mutually beneficial if the two disciplines were to be studied together, he remained unconvinced of any advantage that might actually be accrued from literature, other than merely drawing on texts for grammatical examples: ‘I had conceived that a mastery of English literature meant a study of the great masterpieces written in the language, a study grounded on a true historical knowledge of the language, in which knowledge a mastery of its minuter philology was at least a counsel of perfection’ (555). Freeman ‘found that there was something which claimed the name of “literature” which certainly had nothing to do with solid scholarship of any kind’, and therefore ‘something which we did not wish to have thrust upon us as a subject for University professorships and examinations’ (555, 556). He had therefore urged advocates of English literature to accept that Oxford was doing enough for their subject, but then immediately weakened this assertion by implying that it was not actually worthy of serious consideration at an academic level.

II

It was around the same time that Collins was initiating this very public debate in the pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, that his notorious review of Edmund Gosse's *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885), appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in October 1886.²⁶ This was the publication of lectures Gosse had delivered as Clark lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Collins's lengthy review of the book became another constituent of his campaign to persuade Oxford to recognise English literature as a discrete discipline, and at an honours level. Ostensibly a review of one book, in reality Gosse was 'merely a scapegoat' (Palmer 89), a 'symptom' of low university standards (Cunningham, 'Darke' 78), as the article furnished Collins with a platform from which he could renew his calls for the proper provision of literary teaching within the ancient universities.²⁷

Collins argued that Gosse's greatest crime in *From Shakespeare to Pope* was 'simulating familiarity with works which he knows only at second hand, or of which he knows nothing more than the title':

That a Lecturer on English Literature should not know whether the *Arcadia* of Sidney, and the *Oceana* of Harrington, are in prose or verse, or, not knowing, should not have taken the trouble to ascertain, is discreditable enough; but that he should, under the impression that they are poems, have had the effrontery to sit in judgment on them, might well, in Macaulay's favourite phrase, make us

²⁶ This dispute has been the subject of critical interest elsewhere; Kearney, discussing this review alongside other articles written by Collins that criticised the work of J. A. Symonds and Swinburne, has identified the reviews as an assault on 'impressionistic criticism' and 'anything that smacked of aestheticism' (Louse 60). I agree with Kearney that the review of *From Shakespeare to Pope* 'conveniently prepared the way for another of his appeals for a proper School of Literature where such aberrations would be impossible' (Louse 63). Palmer has also referred, briefly, to this scandal (87-90), and Cunningham has identified the dispute as 'a kind of allegory, a parable no less' of 'the false dichotomy which would sharply divide "literary scholarship" ... from what the mere reviewer, the journalist, the media critic, gets up to' ('Darke' 75). Cunningham argues that journalists and academics actually commit similar critical errors, and therefore Gosse and Collins were not as far apart, in scholarly terms, as Collins liked to claim.

²⁷ Seventeen pages from the end of the article, Collins abandoned his review of Gosse's book, instead launching into an attack on the current philological bias at Oxford, and calling for a School where English and classical texts were studied side by side.

ashamed of our species. And yet this is what Mr. Gosse has done (Collins, 'English at Universities' 296).

This was the first of innumerable instances where Collins pointed out that Gosse had categorised a work into the wrong genre; further errors to which Collins drew attention included Gosse's 'habitual inaccuracy with respect to dates' ('English at Universities' 298). Indeed, Collins argued, 'It is plain that Mr. Gosse, so far from attempting to verify his dates, has not even troubled himself to consult the title-pages of the works to which he refers' (298). At length and rather pedantically, Collins corrected dozens of these, along with further examples of Gosse's apparent 'ignorance' of 'Literature and History' (300), and the supposed idleness that prevented him from checking his material:

Our readers will probably believe us to be jesting when we inform them that Mr. Gosse deliberately asserts, that between 1660 and 'about 1760' Milton and Roscommon were the only poets who employed blank verse ... Has Mr. Gosse ever inspected the *All for Love* and the *Don Sebastian* of Dryden; the *Mourning Bride* of Congreve; the *Julius Cæsar* of Sheffield; the blank verse tragedies of Crowne; the later dramas of Davenant; the tragedies of Otway, Lee, Southern, Rowe, Lillo, and Thomson; Addison's tragedy of *Cato*; Smith's tragedy of *Hippolytus*; Hughes's *Siege of Damascus*; Johnson's *Irene*? ('English at Universities' 306).

Lists such as this appeared throughout the review, as Collins sought to highlight the many books and periods he felt that Gosse had overlooked. Collins insisted that his main concern was that unprofessional, sub-standard work was being produced by Oxbridge.²⁸ Given that these universities were trusted by the general reading public as the benchmark of distinction, responsible for the dissemination of accurate knowledge, he condemned it as a profound betrayal that they could allow a work of such poor standard to be published by their university presses: 'When we consider

²⁸ More recent critical discussion of Gosse's book has tended to agree with Collins's assessment: Cunningham has described Gosse and *From Shakespeare to Pope* as 'sitting ducks' ('Darke' 78); Kearney has written that 'The book *was* a disgrace to literary scholarship' (*Louse* 67).

the circulation secured to this volume from the mere fact of its having issued from so famous a press, and under such distinguished patronage, it is melancholy to think of the errors to which it will give currency' (Collins, 'English at Universities' 312). By appointing Gosse as Clark lecturer and thereafter publishing his book, Collins implied that Cambridge University had unwittingly revealed their indifference to English literary studies as a serious scholarly enterprise, and as an important branch of academic enquiry; 'the low standards of literary scholarship permitted in the older universities' (Palmer 89), Collins set out to prove, would have far-reaching consequences beyond the walls of these universities.

One of the most important reasons, Collins argued, for Oxford and Cambridge to heighten their commitment to teaching English literature, was that increasing numbers of Oxbridge graduates were moving into literary journalism.²⁹ Just as Gosse's Clark lectures had the potential to mislead a significant number of students, who might then circulate this flawed knowledge throughout a wider sphere, similarly, Oxbridge-educated journalists, lacking proper critical training or a background in literary studies, would produce ill-informed, amateurish reviews and articles on literary matters, thereby influencing a broad readership, many of whom would not think to question the reliability of printed material. To remedy this process of literary degradation, Collins demanded that Oxbridge produce graduates with specialist knowledge in English literature, who would subsequently apply this expertise to their journalistic endeavours. Without proper instruction along these lines, Freeman's description of "'literary" talk nowadays' as seeming 'hardly to rise above personal gossip, sometimes personal scandal, about very modern personages indeed' (564),

²⁹ This was the case particularly with A. J. B. Beresford Hope's *Saturday Review*, which recruited university men in great numbers.

would become an increasingly difficult one to refute. Thus in his review of Gosse's book, Collins wrote of Oxford and Cambridge that 'If they are resolved to encourage the study of English Literature, it is their duty to see that it is studied properly. If it is not studied properly, the sooner they cease to profess to study it the better. No good can possibly come from Dilettantism. No good can possibly come from unskilled teaching' ('English at Universities' 312). Ultimately, Collins believed, the introduction of a thorough and scholarly honours degree in English literature at Oxbridge would foster a more responsible and worthwhile brand of literary journalism, so that the articles written for newspapers by their graduates were accurate, and critical judgments were shrewd, well-informed, and undertaken with the seriousness of purpose Collins suggested was so clearly lacking.³⁰ Without the requirement of more stringent literary training, Collins argued, the non-university educated Gosse, 'the unprofessional arm of the literary enterprise', as Cunningham has described him ('Darke' 75), would continue to be given licence to pose as a literary authority. Moreover, graduates without sufficient literary knowledge, despite having attained a degree from a prestigious university, would go on 'disseminating error or ... corrupting taste' in their reviews and articles (Collins, *Ephemera* 44).

Collins's call for literary specialisation, in the sense of critics and academics (such as Gosse, and also Saintsbury, as we shall see below) accruing a specific body of knowledge that would fortify and guarantee the validity of critical judgments, should be understood within the wider context of professionalisation in the period. My primary focus in this chapter remains with Collins's campaign for English at

³⁰ Collins argued elsewhere that 'in education all moves from above', therefore it was the responsibility of Oxford and Cambridge to improve standards nationwide: 'Systematize a study at the universities, and it is systematized throughout the country; neglect it at those centres, and anarchy elsewhere is the result' (*Study* 40).

Oxbridge, the various flaws in his approach, and the nature of opposition to the movement, rather than the function that literary criticism and its practitioners, in a newly-defined professional capacity within the university, were called upon to serve in the years after its institutionalisation.³¹ Nevertheless, because Collins found it constructive to refer to the notion of specialisation and professional training in order to bolster support for his campaign, it is necessary for me to explore, briefly, the broader context within which his remarks were made. Ian Small has identified the professions as a ‘Victorian product’ (*Conditions* 20) that altered the structure and motive of the university system:

With the growth of science and technology throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, knowledge tended to become more abundant, more complex, and thus more specialized; to be competent required an individual to concentrate upon one particular field of enquiry, and to undertake an increasingly specialized training (21).

Harold Perkin has also identified an extraordinary rise in professional associations in the years after 1880, when an individual and his line of work became shaped by the ‘professional ideal’, so that a job was now ‘based on trained expertise and selection by merit’ (4), in what became a gradual shifting of power away from the authority hitherto accorded without qualification to those in the uppermost stratum of a class-based social hierarchy. Universities were expected to take a leading role in providing citizens with the requisite skills for a particular profession. This forged a ‘reciprocal’ relationship, in that the academy could bestow privileged knowledge upon the individual, thus securing their employability following the completion of an appropriate degree; and universities could then safeguard their continued ‘relevance’ in wider society (Guy and Small 378).

³¹ Cunningham’s essay ‘Darke Conceits’ is directed much more towards this latter issue; Ian Small has also offered a detailed discussion of the professionalisation of literary criticism (Small 3-30, and *passim*).

This provided the context for Collins's warning that they risked developing into 'esoteric seminaries for esoteric instruction' (*Study ix*) by neglecting to offer skills required within a capitalist marketplace, and therefore existing in isolation from wider society. He cast a horrified glance at the burgeoning field of literary criticism, which he believed 'has now assumed proportions so gigantic, that it has not merely overshadowed that literature, but threatens to supersede it' (*Ephemera 17*). Ideally, it would only be practised by a limited number of suitably qualified practitioners; this is why Small has described Collins's attitude as a 'Messianic embrace' of new 'professional values' (20). This was not, however, enough to convince detractors of English literature about the judiciousness of introducing the subject as an honours degree. Freeman, wary of reform in this area and thus positioning himself in the opposite faction, would have preferred universities to continue disseminating a much broader, unspecialised cultural education: 'Some stop should be put to this lowering of the University by adapting its system to suit this or that calling, instead of cleaving to the sound rule of giving an education which should be good for a man whatever may be his calling' (559).

III

Given Collins's negative assessment of the current state of literary criticism and its need for greater professionalisation, it is necessary to consider whether literary journalism at that time was indeed as low in quality as he insisted was the case. His polemical tone and impassioned stance on this issue does mean that he risked overstating his argument, and I will therefore investigate the veracity of some of his claims in greater depth, particularly as they relate to journalistic endeavours between 1885 and 1891. This will further our understanding of the critical field as it actually

stood at this crucial stage in the movement of English studies into the ancient English universities, and also provide an insight into Collins's ultimately damaging tendencies towards exaggeration, and of cherry-picking suitable examples — habits which served only to weaken his argument.

The field of literary journalism had certainly become a quite massive industry by this stage. The vast expansion of journals and newspapers, described by one critic recently as a 'print avalanche' (Poovey 433), made it possible for men to 'make their living by writing alone, unsupported by patronage or the crutch of another occupation' (Kent xix).³² Collins was concerned that there was now space enough for almost anyone to publish a review, whether or not they possessed the credentials that he would deem necessary: 'They will pose as authorities and pronounce *ex cathedrâ* on subjects literary, historical, and scientific of which they know nothing more than what they have contrived to pick up from the works which they are "reviewing"' (Collins, *Ephemera* 27).³³ Andrew Lang, I would argue, is a pertinent figure in the current context: an extraordinarily influential critic, he used his regular column for *Longman's*, 'At the Sign of a Ship', as 'a vehicle for the expression of his own tastes, opinions, and prejudices' without recourse to scholarly justification: 'Lang's criticism of fiction, for all his wide reading, was based on essentially nonliterary,

³² Christopher Kent has put the number of periodicals in Victorian Britain at 50,000; he notes that although not all of these were literary in the strictest sense, 'one is still left with an astonishing number that carried at least some reviews, reflective prose, poetry, or fiction' (xiii).

³³ Journalists could write for numerous different publications, sheltered under the rule of anonymity; some journals, such as the *Fortnightly*, only printed signed articles, and unsigned reviews were gradually diminishing, but the latter still remained the editorial policy in influential publications including the *Saturday Review* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Facilitated by anonymity, writers could safely allow 'extensive revision by the editor' that would safeguard the party line of the periodical (Brake 103). Even when articles did appear under the journalist's name, Laurel Brake has identified that 'the published piece was the result of a collaboration between contributor and editor, sometimes with the co-operation of the author and sometimes without it' (104). In his essay 'Journalism Fifty Years Ago', published in 1930, George Saintsbury admitted that anonymity had allowed him to write 'five reviews — I think it was five — of the same book' ('Journalism' 90), presumably by tailoring the tone or content in accordance with each journal's readership.

anti-intellectual criteria' (Maurer 152, 168). He refused to be disturbed by the charges of log-rolling and puffery that were quite reasonably directed at him. The 'flexibility of his literary conscience' (Maurer 163) and popularity among readers rendered him immune to such charges. Cheerfully eschewing any claim to objectivity or specialist knowledge, I would identify the chatty eclecticism that characterised Lang's brand of informal journalism as exactly the type of writing that Collins would argue was detrimental to the profession in general, and was answerable to a large extent for the charges of dilettantism that were used to validate the exclusion of English literature from Oxford and Cambridge: 'as criticism in the hands of these fribbles becomes little more than the dithyrambic expression of ... opinion', Collins argued, 'the profession of criticism is one in which it is delightfully easy to graduate' (*Ephemera* 271).

In the very public quarrel between Gosse and Collins, much of which was carried out in the pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (having begun in the *Quarterly Review*), Collins remarked that the unjustifiably positive reviews that Gosse's book had received in both the *Athenæum* and the *Saturday Review* offered proof of the dismal state of current criticism, which urgently needed the kind of improvement — and, ultimately, standardisation — that was only possible through proper literary training at Oxbridge: 'Had its errors and deficiencies been pointed out in the literary journals, we should probably have comforted ourselves with the thought, that what had been done once need not be done again' ('English at Universities' 311). However, 'so far from the literary journals estimating it at its true value, and placing students on their guard against its errors, Review vied with Review in fulsome and indiscriminating

eulogy' (311-12). Collins therefore felt obliged to draw attention to Gosse's poor scholarship, and thereafter the positive reviews that his book had somehow garnered.

Collins was correct that the *Saturday Review*'s response to Gosse's book was simply to sketch out its central premise, politely declining to take 'objection to one or two details of little significance' ('From Shakespeare' 784). However, the review of Gosse's published lectures that appeared in the *Athenæum*, though largely appreciative, still disagreed with Gosse on a crucial point about the 'revolution in poetry' that Edmund Waller had supposedly led (Rev. of *From Shakespeare* 661), and interrogated the issue at some length, before admonishing Gosse for contradicting an argument he had developed in an earlier critical study. Moreover, Collins had clearly drawn attention to the reviews of Gosse's book in the *Saturday Review* and the *Athenæum* because they were the most positive, and therefore strengthened his argument regarding log-rolling and inaccuracies in literary journalism. If we look elsewhere, we can see that the reception to Gosse's volume more generally was not affected by this: John Dow's review in the *Academy*, for instance, criticised Gosse for the irrelevance of much of his writing: 'for those who were expecting to hear some authoritative word upon the literary revolution which cast down Shakspeare [sic] and enthroned Pope, it is too much to find Mr. Gosse come forward smiling with sheets of anecdotal biography' (Dow 350). Far from encouraging any trace of dilettantism, Dow indicted Gosse for his lack of focus, his misleading valorisation of certain writers, and his sustained inability to offer any explanation for some of the most significant poetic developments: 'He explains that Waller and Dryden effected the change by their own bent and force; but how did it

all come about? We search for the *raison d'être*, and find it referred to only in casual remarks' (350).

A short review by "J. W." in *Time* called Gosse's book 'disappointing', alluded to his fondness for 'detached fragments of biography' (248), and, in a manner analogous to Collins's sarcastic praise for the actual look of Gosse's volume, J. W. ended his review thus: 'I can only add that it is well printed, and has a good index' (249).³⁴ Collins had thus selected an unrepresentative sample of responses to Gosse's work in order to prove that inaccuracies and undeserved praise dogged late-nineteenth century literary criticism, and that Oxbridge was responsible for allowing this lamentable situation to continue by refusing to provide future critics and literary journalists with appropriate training. Collins's strongly worded argument was not, I would argue, a fair reflection on the current state of literary journalism. Most critics did not review Gosse's volume particularly warmly, and few regarded it as a scholarly survey of seventeenth-century literature. Collins's highly selective choice of examples, coupled with the consistently aggressive tone in which he communicated his arguments, certainly succeeded in attracting attention to his campaign, but this also offered a distortedly negative impression of scholarly standards, and was unlikely to win him much in the way of academic support, and certainly not from Cambridge.³⁵

³⁴ In Collins's review of Gosse's book in the *Quarterly Review*, he remarked that 'Not the least mischievous characteristic of the work is the skill with which its worthlessness is disguised. From title to colophon there is, so far as externals are concerned, everything to disarm suspicion, everything to inspire trust. An excellent index; unexceptionable type; unexceptionable paper' ('English at Universities' 295).

³⁵ Kearney notes that Cambridge 're-elected Gosse to the Clark Lectureship out of sheer defiance' (*Louse* 67).

IV

One further constituent in Collins's campaign to persuade Oxford and Cambridge to institutionalise the subject (and, he believed, consequently enhance the standards of literary criticism more generally), was to produce a workable, and therefore convincing, syllabus for a degree in English literature. This combination of intellectual rigour and feasibility was a complicated feat to enact, even more so given that resistance to such a scheme was so firmly entrenched that any plan was likely to undergo heavy scrutiny, or even be rejected on principle. The proposed syllabus had to show that literature was no more susceptible to cramming than any other subject; therefore, although an ill-considered English paper might require little more than the uninspired retrieval of tedious facts, necessitating only the most rudimentary exercise of short-term memory, these type of papers need not be set: 'If questions on the "essential characteristics" of the genius and style of particular writers became a stock part of the examination, they would in all probability be crammed; but what competent examiner would dream of setting them?' (Collins, *Study* 29).

Collins outlined a programme for his proposed Oxford English School that, if followed, would furnish students with an extensive knowledge of English literature:

First would come Poetry, then would come Rhetoric, and Rhetoric would naturally subdivide itself into Oratory proper, into History, or rather historical composition regarded as Rhetoric, and into such miscellaneous literature as is not comprised under the headings specified. Lastly would come Criticism, which might in its turn be subdivided into Historical Criticism, in other words, the History of Literature, and into Æsthetic, Philosophical, and Technical Criticism (*Study* 130).

The student would be offered instruction on the main works that fell into each of these categories, in chronological order; to facilitate this, Collins suggested that textbooks should be produced 'corresponding to each of the periods in which the

history of our Literature naturally divides itself" (*Study 37*).³⁶ These manuals would include, firstly, an epilogue of the previous era, to give a sense of any development or generation that might have taken place; next Collins suggested 'a careful account of the environment, social, political, moral, intellectual, of that literature ... accompanied throughout with illustrations drawn from the constituent elements of typical works' (*Study 38*). This would be followed by an analysis of the influence of other literatures upon that period in English literature; finally, Collins suggested drawing up some tables which would categorise — by epoch and category — writers and their works, 'enumerated descriptively' (39).

Historical treatment now accomplished, the student would be given 'systematic critical training', which involved 'verbal analysis, analysis of form and style, analysis of sentiment, ethic, and thought' (*Study 39*). The poetry section of the English examination would therefore

consist of questions framed with the object of ascertaining that the chief poems of each era into which our Literature may be divided had been thoughtfully and intelligently perused, and that prescribed works, the *Prologue* and four of the *Canterbury Tales*, for example, the first, second, and fifth books of the *Faerie Queen*, half a dozen of Shakespeare's best dramas, six books of *Paradise Lost*, the *Paradise Regained*, the *Absalom and Achitophel*, the *Religio Laici*, the *Hind and Panther*, the *Essay on Criticism*, the *Rape of the Lock*, the *Essay on Man*, and the like, had been *critically* studied (*Study 130-31*).

More specifically, examination questions asking students to analyse a Shakespeare play, for instance, should call for 'an intelligent study of its general structure, of the evolution of its plot, of its style and diction (not simply in their relation to grammar

³⁶ These nine epochs were as follows: 'The first will extend from about the middle of the fourteenth century to the death of Chaucer in 1400; the second from the death of Chaucer to the accession of Henry the Eighth; the third from that date to the accession of Elizabeth; the fourth from the accession of Elizabeth to the accession of Charles the First; the fifth from the accession of Charles the First to the death of Dryden in 1700; the sixth to the death of Swift in 1745; the seventh from the death of Swift to the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798; the eighth to the death of Wordsworth in 1850; and the ninth from that date to the present time' (Collins, *Study 35-36*).

but in their relation to rhetoric), of its ethics, of its metaphysics, of its characters, of the influences, precedent and contemporary, which importantly affected it' (Collins, *Study* 48). Collins believed that his method would teach students 'the interpretation of power and beauty as they reveal themselves in language', not merely by breaking them down into their component parts, but also by 'considering them in their relation to principles' (*Study* 52). Thus, 'While an incompetent teacher traces no connection between phenomena and laws, and confounds accidents with essences, blundering among "categorical enumerations" and vague generalities', Collins's student 'will show us how to discern harmony in apparent discord, and discord in apparent harmony. In the gigantic proportions of *Paradise Lost* he will reveal to us a symmetry as perfect as in the most finished of Horace's Odes' (Collins, *Study* 52).

A crucial part of Collins's strategy was to advocate the study of English literature alongside classics; indeed, rather surprisingly, given the high value he placed on his subject, he could not conceive that vernacular literature could actually stand alone as a discrete area of study: 'it would be as preposterous to attempt any critical study of our Literature, without reference to the ancients', Collins insisted, 'as it would be for a man to set up as an interpreter in Roman Literature without reference to the Greek' (*Ephemera* 62). Thus classical texts were to be afforded equal weight to English literature at every stage of the proposed course; this made for a demanding syllabus, as the following example reveals: 'In the department of Poetry' (the English element of which I have reproduced above), the 'Classical portion should consist of passages for translation, selected from the leading poets of each era of Greek and Latin Literature, from Homer to Theocritus, from Plautus to Prudentius, with elucidatory comments' (Collins, *Study* 130). Thereafter, within the section on 'Æsthetic and

Philosophic and Technical Criticism', the Greek texts Collins prescribed for historical and critical treatment were 'the *Poetics*, the third book of the *Rhetoric*, portions of the *De Antiquis Rhetoribus*, the *De Structurâ Orationis*, the *Ion*, and the *De Sublimitate*' (*Study* 131). The Latin component would ideally include 'the *Brutus*, the *De Oratore*, or a portion of the *De Oratore* ... the *Dialogus De Oratoribus*, and selections from Quintilian, including the whole of the tenth book' (131). The English element of this particular section would then be represented by 'Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, Dryden's *Essays on Dramatic Poesy*, on *Epic Poetry*, and on *Satire*, by Addison's papers on Milton, by Johnson's *Lives*, by some of the *Dissertations* of Hurd and Twining, and by selections from such critics as Lamb, Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold' (*Study* 131-32). Finally, Lessing's *Laocoon* 'ought undoubtedly' be included, since it 'stands at the head of æsthetic criticism' (132). The course was undoubtedly very extensive, and functioned as a convincing response, I would argue, to critics of Collins's campaign such as Freeman and also William Morris; the latter dismissed the study of English as being premised on 'Hyper-refinement and paradox', as he envisioned an English School in which 'Each succeeding professor would strive to outdo his predecessor in "originality" on subjects whereon nothing original remains to be said' (2). Such claims are rendered invalid by the heavy, and also scholarly, workload that Collins outlined here.

The proposal to combine instruction in English literature with that of classics had been immensely popular among those responding to Collins's *Pall Mall Gazette* questionnaire, most notably such contemporary luminaries as Arnold, Gladstone, and Manning. Arnold was of course a strong advocate for placing English literature within the wider European context, which he identified as 'one great confederation'

(*Essays* 39). He suggested that this could be achieved by developing an appreciation of current German and French ideas — but also by reaching back to the past, as he emphasised the rejuvenating spiritual potential of Greek poetry, and Hellenism more generally. Pater also admitted that ‘much probably might be done for the expansion and enlivening of classical study itself by a larger infusion into it of those literary interests which modern literature, in particular, has developed’ (1). Pater was making the point that an alliance with classics offered a means of ensuring that English literature would reinvigorate an academic discipline that was apparently waning in popularity, and Collins, too, found it useful to emphasise this point: ‘Classical Literature can never, it is true, become extinct, but it can lose its vogue, it can become the almost exclusive possession of mere scholars, it can cease to be influential’ (*Study* 146).³⁷ To avoid being ‘ostracized’ in this way, he believed that ‘It must be linked with life to live, with the incarnation of that which it too is the incarnation, to prevail. Associate it as poetry with poetry, as oratory with oratory, as criticism with criticism, and it will be vital and mighty’ (*Study* 146). Collins thus insisted that the introduction of English would have a modernising impact on classics. Looking at this from a different angle, classicist F. W. H. Myers, to give just one example among a whole host of others, had written to Collins that nothing ‘so easy and so agreeable as the reading, say, of Burke or Macaulay’ should ‘be classed as serious work at all’ (2). I would argue that the association of English with Myers’s

³⁷ Classics was increasingly irrelevant in terms of offering practical training for a professional career, and it was also useful for Collins to predict the disappearance of the subject unless steps were taken towards revitalising it. Nevertheless, in reality, the subject continued to dominate the curriculum at Oxford: ‘there was still a prevailing belief in the superiority of Classics in the hierarchy of disciplines ... even in the early twentieth century nearly half Oxford’s graduates (48 per cent) read Greats or “Pass Greats”’ (Howarth 612).

own well-regarded and long-established subject offered a very useful way for Collins to counter this damaging charge.

V

The previous section has established that Collins's wish was to produce an English literature syllabus that would demonstrate the subject could be taught in a systematic, scholarly manner, thereby rendering it worthy of inclusion, at the level of honours, at Oxford and Cambridge. This sheds light on his denigration of journalist turned Edinburgh professor George Saintsbury, who defiantly eschewed a systematic method for approaching literary study.³⁸ Patrick Parrinder, within his shrewd appraisal of the various modes of literary criticism that were adopted from the mid-eighteenth century until 1900, and more specifically the shifting relations between writers and critics during this period, has identified that 'Saintsbury's notion of catholic taste is so clearly aimed at the academic with time on his hands' that he 'became the symbol of the relaxed, traditionalist attitude of early twentieth-century English studies; English as a soft option, a place of sporting refreshment in which the student, though he might be threatened by a surfeit of books, would at least never have to think' (160). Collins's self-imposed task was to propose a syllabus that accomplished a dual-function, in being both intellectually demanding enough to warrant its inclusion at Oxbridge, while remaining within the bounds of feasibility. Saintsbury appeared to place no such strictures on his method, and his extraordinarily broad reading, coupled with the familiarity of tone he used to convey his enthusiasm, worked against Collins's attempt to construct a more serious image for literary study.

³⁸ René Wellek has explained that 'The main objection to Saintsbury's work is not his neglect of philosophy or abstract theory of even the extreme individualism of his taste, but the poverty and haziness of his concepts and criteria of genres, devices, style, composition — of all the tools of analysis on the level with which he is professedly concerned' (4: 423).

In an attempt to distance himself from the Edinburgh professor and what he supposedly represented, Collins criticised Saintsbury in an attack analogous to his vicious review of Gosse's book. In his article on Saintsbury's *A Short History of English Literature* (1898), Collins alluded to his academic position as further reason to expect more exacting standards in his work:

so far from Professor Saintsbury having any sense of what is due to his position and to his readers, he has imported into his work the worst characteristics of irresponsible journalism: generalizations, the sole supports of which are audacious assertions, and an indifference to exactness and accuracy, as well with respect to important matters as in trifles, so scandalous as to be almost incredible (*Ephemera* 94).

As with Gosse, Collins listed innumerable mistakes committed by Saintsbury, among them some erroneous dates in which texts were published, as well as more general historical inaccuracies: 'The American Revolution was not brought about under a Tory administration. What brought that revolution about was Charles Townshend's tax, and that tax was imposed under a Whig administration, as every well-informed Board-school lad would know' (Collins, *Ephemera* 100). Saintsbury's writing style, with its often bizarre syntactical formulations, did cloud his meaning at times, and by quoting some particularly bewildering examples from Saintsbury's work, Collins made this point very convincingly: 'It is a proof of the greatness of Dryden that he knew Milton for a poet; it is a proof of the smallness (and mighty as he was on some sides, on others he was very small) of Milton that (if he really did so) he denied poetry to Dryden' (qtd. in Collins, *Ephemera* 106).

Saintsbury was, in fact, aware of his own margin for error, and admitted to any inaccuracies in advance. In the preface to the first volume of his hugely influential work, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe* (1900-04), he rather defensively pre-empted another possible attack by Collins, who might choose again

to exploit any possible oversights in order to denigrate his critical writing more generally: 'He may have put elephants for towns, he may have neglected important rivers and mountains, like a general from the point of view of a newspaper correspondent, or a newspaper correspondent from the point of view of a general; but he has done what he could' (Saintsbury, *History of Criticism* 1: vi). In the second volume Saintsbury added that 'I not merely daresay, but am pretty sure, that I have made some blunders, especially in summary of readings not always controllable by reference to the actual books when the matter came before me again in print. And I daresay, further, that these will be obvious enough to specialists' (2: ix).

Given what we now know of Collins's commitment to formulating a more professional image for literary pedagogy, and the serious, Arnoldian claims he staked for the discipline of literary criticism, it was hardly surprising that he should question the Edinburgh professor's credentials to impart his sometimes faulty knowledge onto Edinburgh University students. The two men also differed quite significantly in their overall conception of literary study. For Collins, successful analysis of a given work from an historical point of view would ideally reveal it to be 'the expression of national idiosyncrasies revealing themselves under various conditions', which would allow the student to consider 'its relations to those conditions, and to consider it finally in its relation to individuals' (*Study* 32, 32-33). Taking the example of *Paradise Lost*, Collins argued that the teacher's task was to demonstrate how and for what reason the particular social, political and national environment had affected the work, and why, therefore, 'it could have been produced only by Milton' (*Study* 33). Saintsbury instead advised the critic to 'divest himself of any idea of what a book *ought to be*, until he has seen what it is' (*History of Criticism* 3: 609). He advocated a

more open-minded approach to literature, which offered scope for discovering lesser-known works outside the accepted canon: ‘That a work of art is entitled to be judged on its own merits or demerits, and not according as its specification does or does not happen to be previously entered and approved in an official schedule — this surely cannot but seem a gain to every one not absolutely blinded by prejudice’ (*History of Criticism* 3: 606).³⁹ Saintsbury refused to group works into apparently false categories, merely for the sake of producing a cohesive study that might reassure the reader. Reproduced in the lecture hall, this approach would certainly complicate any attempt on the part of an undergraduate student — Collins’s future critic or journalist — to follow the trajectory of Saintsbury’s syllabus in a methodical manner.

Even more daunting was Saintsbury’s advice to the ‘New Critic’ that ‘He must read, and, as far as possible, read everything — that is the first and great commandment. If he omits one period of a literature, even one author ... he runs the risk of putting his view of the rest out of focus’ (*History of Criticism* 3: 609).

Although Collins’s extensive specifications for an ideal curriculum initially seem too broad for an undergraduate student — given that he divided English literature into nine epochs, recommending thorough analysis, both historical and critical, of each period, and studying classical literature alongside this — nevertheless he did at least suggest that certain works could safely be excluded from study, and his curriculum was lent feasibility as a result.⁴⁰

³⁹ In this, Saintsbury was clearly influenced by the French critic Sainte-Beuve. Saintsbury wrote admiringly about French criticism, and noted that before Sainte-Beuve, ‘The critic either constructed for himself, or more probably accepted from tradition, a cut-and-dried scheme of the correct plan of different kinds of literature, and contented himself with adjusting any new work to this, marking off its agreements or differences, and judging accordingly’ (*Short History of French* 526). Sainte-Beuve, on the other hand, ‘was the first to found criticism on a wide study of literature, instead of directing a more or less narrow study of literature by critical rules’ (526).

⁴⁰ As I have explained, Collins listed scores of different English texts (both critical and poetic) within his proposed syllabus, from the *Canterbury Tales* to Matthew Arnold, insisting that these be studied

In a short, scathing critique of Saintsbury's critical endeavours, Herbert Read castigated him for offering the reader little more than a quite prodigious amount of facts. Read suggested that Saintsbury's works 'will probably be used as manuals by several generations of undergraduates' (199), and Read used this as the basis from which to make some pointed remarks regarding university education: 'official education such as it is, they are perfect instruments. They guide the student down tidy paths, they cram his unwilling maw with the fruit of knowledge, they lead him inevitably into the wilderness of satiety' (199-200). Read's distrust of Saintsbury's educational background, I would suggest, is perhaps sufficient to explain these remarks,⁴¹ yet given Saintsbury's avowed rejection of theoretical frameworks, and his condemnation of 'neoclassical rigidity, rules and regulations, principles of kinds, and decorum', and his appeal instead for 'complete freedom' (Wellek 4: 422), it is reasonable to assume, as Read had done, that Saintsbury's syllabus at Edinburgh would have been rather indiscriminate, structured according to his own capricious notion of what might reward further study. His lectures, moreover, would presumably suggest a degree of unsystematic enthusiasm not necessarily appropriate for a university student.

However, in Saintsbury's inaugural address, delivered in October 1895, he appeared to differentiate between his journalistic and critical endeavours on the one hand, and his pedagogical responsibilities on the other. He acknowledged that 'The duties with which I am charged are those of inculcating a regular course, and not

alongside 'Greek and Roman Literatures' (*Study* 131). He did, however, subsequently state that he was not 'proposing that all these works should be prescribed' (132).

⁴¹ Tanya Harrod writes of Read that 'The stimulation he experienced during his course of hard-won self-education left him with a distrust of formally trained minds schooled in classics at Oxford or Cambridge' (Harrod, 'Read, Sir Herbert Edward'). Saintsbury had a degree in classics from Merton College, Oxford.

merely of presiding over haphazard excursions' ('Inaugural' 179). Subsequently he stated that

It may be an agreeable thing ... to browse at large over the literary common; but it is more agreeable still, and assuredly far more profitable, to take possession of it by an orderly survey, to find that its growths and its features are not haphazard accidents, but closely connected with each other and with general laws ('Inaugural' 182).

Edinburgh students who have written of their memories of Saintsbury as a professor recalled that 'His lectures were not impressive, and were not meant to be'; instead 'They were vigorous, but cool and useful, and kept clear of platform and of pulpit tricks. The delivery was high-pitched, unemphatic and unpausing' (Webster 57). Nevertheless, they offered brief displays of 'whimsical hyperbole' (Webster 57-58), and were 'not finished or exhaustive', thus sparking a lifelong enthusiasm for literature among his students: 'He set us on a quest, opened vistas, kindled the passion, put clues into the hand, and bade us follow Knowledge like a sinking star' (58). These personal reflections on the lectures must be treated with the circumspection one would usually accord to individual reminiscences, more so given that they were not published until 1945, and within a collection designed to commemorate the Edinburgh professor. The awed tone perceptible in the tribute of one student in particular further highlights a pervasive and rather cloying devotion to their late teacher: 'Other universities might have professors of English very able and very learned, but there was only one Saintsbury, and *we* had *him* ... He was a great man, this; and a formidable' (Oliver 18).

It is therefore more prudent to consult Saintsbury's syllabus, as published in the university calendar. This reveals that his lecture series for the Edinburgh honours course in fact followed an analogous pattern to another English literature syllabus,

this time for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) entry examination, which Collins had elsewhere endorsed as the ideal model for an English course, and which he suggested that Oxford and Cambridge should therefore seek to emulate.⁴² The ICS curriculum, as Collins described it, expected the candidate to have accrued ‘a general acquaintance with the course of English literature between the reign of Edward III. and the accession of Queen Victoria’ with specific reference to some seminal writers (Collins, ‘New Scheme’ 846). The second part then required ‘a minute and particular knowledge of the literature produced during a specified period, which will vary every year till it necessarily repeats itself’ (847). In 1895, for instance, the ‘period specified’ would be ‘from 1800 to 1832’ (Collins, ‘New Scheme’ 847). Following similar lines, the *Edinburgh Calendar* of 1897-98 reveals that in the winter term, Saintsbury taught a ‘Higher Rhetoric Course on the Theory of Prose and Verse in English, opening with a sketch of the History of Literary Criticism from Aristotle onwards’ (*Edinburgh 1897-98* 69). Thereafter in the spring term, students looked more closely at ‘some special subject connected with the Honours period of the year’ (69). In 1898 this was listed as ‘The Study of Nature in the Eighteenth Century’, and the following year this was to be ‘English Poetry from 1798 to 1825’ (*Edinburgh*

⁴² In an article written by Collins for the *Contemporary Review* in June 1891, he argued that Thomas Macaulay’s ICS examinations promoted ‘the very best curriculum of education which has ever existed in this country’ (‘New Scheme’ 837), because these placed heavy emphasis on English literature, theoretically awarding a student one thousand marks for English literature and history, equal only to the category of pure and mixed Mathematics. According to Collins’s appraisal, the written examinations under Macaulay’s scheme were not designed to test a candidate’s proficiency as a pedant; they required each student to work out problems and offer original analysis in response to questions that could not have been predicted during preparation for the tests. ‘Immense pains’ were apparently taken to ensure that the examinations ‘baffle and render superficial instruction nugatory’ (Collins, ‘New Scheme’ 842). In fact my own analysis of these examination papers does not tally with Collins’s description; the first question in the 1855 paper (which Collins gestured towards as an example) listed four periods of English literature, before asking candidates to ‘Give a classified list of the great literary names in each. Describe, very briefly, the leading characteristics of each. Mention, also very briefly, the most important influences, foreign and domestic, to which each was subject’ (British, East India, *Reports* 10). The final question offered a list of short quotations, and asked the candidate to ‘Mention the Author, the Work, and the substance of the context, from which the following common quotations are taken ...’ (British, East India, *Reports* 12).

1897-98 69). The structure of Saintsbury's Edinburgh course was thus the same as the ICS course that Collins endorsed: each began with a general, historical overview, before focusing on a more specific literary area. This rather invalidates Collins's efforts to distance himself from Saintsbury, and his implication that Saintsbury was providing his students with an inadequate literary education.

Saintsbury's examination questions also required a high degree of intellectual rigour from the student, who was asked to evaluate literary works comparatively in relation to classical texts, and to offer incisive and original answers, thereby discouraging the candidate from merely cramming as many facts as possible.⁴³ In the First English Paper in March 1898, for example, students were asked to 'Relate Aristotle's views as to the scope and function of Tragedy to his conception of Poetry as Imitation'; to 'Contrast and relate the views of Aristotle, Dante, and Wordsworth on Poetic Diction'; and to 'Compare Quintilian's treatment of Figures with that of Professor Bain' (*Edinburgh 1898-99* 664). The model questions that Collins had included as an appendix to his *Study of English Literature* as 'specimens of the sort of questions which might be proposed to candidates in such a School as we have been discussing' (*Study* 151), offer us further proof that he and Saintsbury were actually working along parallel lines, for the comparison-based questions Collins listed were similar in both style and content to those on Saintsbury's Edinburgh paper quoted above. For instance, Collins would have asked, 'In what way, and to what extent, has "Platonism" affected respectively Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley?', and 'Compare Aristotle and Coleridge as critics of Poetry, and discuss the

⁴³ Both men and women were taking these examinations by this time; women had been admitted to Edinburgh University as fully matriculated students in 1892. Jones has recorded that 'Edinburgh Honors degrees in English, 1892-1914, totaled 89 men and 56 women, with 42 percent Firsts, 46 percent Seconds, 12 percent Thirds' (204).

chief points of difference between ancient and modern Criticism, (a) in relation to its methods, (b) in relation to its aims and its spirit' (*Study* 154, 160). This is not an isolated example; other questions proposed by Collins were also very similar to Saintsbury's Edinburgh examination paper. Saintsbury required his students to 'Write the history of Italian influence upon English non-dramatic literature' (*Edinburgh 1897-98* 701), just as Collins would have presented them with the following question: "It would be difficult to name any important branch of English Literature, either on poetry or in prose, which has not been more or less affected by the influence of Italian writers." Discuss that statement' (*Study* 155).

As previously noted, one of Collins's priorities was to place each literary work into its historical context, and study it as a product of its environment; Saintsbury, too, required students in March 1897 to 'Show what literary and social circumstances aided the rise of the Periodical Essay under Addison and Steele' (*Edinburgh 1897-98* 703). Finally, just as Collins advised identifying connections between successive epochs, Saintsbury asked Edinburgh undergraduates to 'Show clearly the influence of Thomson upon English Poetry. In how far was his attitude a return to earlier modes?'; 'Trace the relations of Wordsworth to his predecessors of the Eighteenth Century, especially as regards the representation of Nature'; and 'Trace the indebtedness of Burns to Fergusson in respect of themes and forms' (*Edinburgh 1898-99* 665-66, 666, 667). In their conception both of overall syllabus structure, and also of individual examination questions, Collins and Saintsbury were, as these examples demonstrate, largely in agreement.

Saintsbury was in many ways Collins's straw man: an Oxford-educated establishment figure, successful journalist, editor, and university professor, he

epitomised for Collins an impressively broad but ultimately unspecialised learning that had been allowed to flourish during this period, and would continue to dominate the critical field unless radical steps were taken to systematise literary study within the ancient universities. As with so many of Collins's chosen examples, however, this image of Saintsbury does not fairly represent the man and his legacy. By René Wellek's estimation Saintsbury was 'by far the most influential academic literary historian and critic of the early 20th century' (4: 416), whose 'influence in the English-speaking academic world has been enormous' (4: 428). More importantly in this context, we can see that his lectures and syllabus at Edinburgh University denoted a commitment to supplying students with a cohesive and extensive understanding of English literature that was not consistent with the rather blundering approach that Collins suggested was answerable for the current state of literary criticism and the exclusion of English literature as a discrete honours degree at Oxford and Cambridge. It is not insignificant that Saintsbury had been one of Scotland's foremost university professors for almost ten years before Collins — the 'pugnacious outsider' (Kearney, *Louse* 65) — was finally offered his coveted university chair, in 1904, at the University of Birmingham. This can be seen as an eventual embrace of the overtly professional approach to literary study that would dominate criticism and theory throughout the twentieth century and beyond, but Collins himself, who died in 1908, would never reach beyond the confines of a provincial university, and even this minor victory had taken many years to transpire. For the time being, English literature would continue to prosper beyond the closeted environment of Oxbridge, taught by committed and in many cases highly capable

men, all of whom were teaching a subject in which they had no formal literary training from either Oxford or Cambridge.

This chapter has sought to open out some of the main features of Collins's many-sided campaign, and assess the veracity of the fervently espoused remarks he aimed at practically anyone he felt might be standing in the way of progress. His often inaccurate, frequently impertinent, and even vicious claims actually alienated him from the very institutions from which he sought approval,⁴⁴ but these also do much to demonstrate the unflinching passion with which he carried out his crusade. Collins's argument became much more convincing — and indeed successful — when he drew attention to the work conducted by lecturers within the University Extension Movement, where he himself taught for most of his career. The popularity of English courses within this scheme, the serious, scholarly way in which the subject was being taught there, and the need for proper teacher training in order to maintain high pedagogical standards, brought Collins's campaign right to the doors of Oxford and Cambridge. My next chapter will consider this matter in detail.

⁴⁴ Kearney has discussed Collins's application to the Oxford Chair of English Literature in 1904, which instead went to Walter Raleigh: 'If anyone could revive the fortunes of the Oxford English School, and possibly of Classics too, Collins was the man. As he must have known himself, though, Collins was totally unacceptable to Oxford, or at least to official bodies at Oxford' because 'he had spent far too many years abusing Oxford attitudes, degree structures and syllabuses, to be rewarded with a chair' (*Louse* 117).

3.

English Literature and the University Extension Movement

‘The general success of the lectures and the growing demand for their extension proved conclusively that they were supplying a great national want’ (Collins, ‘Universities in Contact’ 563).

The University Extension Movement, which first emerged as an organised and functional educational scheme in England during the 1870s, aimed to provide tertiary teaching for those unable to go to a university. The initiative was not unique in this objective; it should be understood as part of the wider developments in adult education that had taken place since the beginning of the century, some of which have been discussed in my first chapter. At this time, the ancient English universities of Oxford and Cambridge continued to prepare the aristocracy for careers in ‘politics, the Church, or the law’, yet they provided no practical training that would assist members of the rising middle class planning to move into the trade or business sector (Kelly, *History* 216). Oxford and Cambridge were even further removed from the working classes, in terms both of the financial costs involved in university attendance,⁴⁵ and the insufficient level of secondary school education available to the majority of working-class adolescents, which rendered them unable to compete for entry against pupils who had enjoyed the intellectual privileges and preparation of England’s elite public schools.⁴⁶ On a less tangible level, university education simply

⁴⁵ Tuition fees at Oxford in 1871 usually stood at around £21, but could be as high as £27 per year (Dunbabin 414). Food, residence and general living costs of course added significantly to this total. A labourer in London in 1872 would have earned just over £1 for one week’s work (Bowley 10).

⁴⁶ J. R. De S. Honey and M. C. Curthoys have explained that, following the ‘transformation of the public schools’, the percentage of public school undergraduates at Oxford became much more pronounced as the nineteenth century developed (545). Of matriculating male students between 1895 and 1898, 59.7% had been educated at public schools; 12% had come up from minor public schools; 3.5% had been privately educated; 5.1% had come from other British universities, and the remaining 19.6% had come from other British schools (552). Honey and Curthoys note that ‘Apart from the obvious barrier of university costs, the continued requirement that all undergraduates should pass an examination in Greek was a major factor limiting the range of schools feeding Oxford’ (554).

existed beyond the ken of rising middle- and working-class people, and these institutions were therefore either disregarded as being utterly irrelevant, or they existed in a romantically distorted form in the popular imagination, as an idyllic way of life that would remain perpetually unattainable for the majority of citizens.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, significant developments in adult education were taking place during the nineteenth century, and these achieved a certain level of success in bridging this cultural divide. As discussed, London University (later renamed University College, London), non-resident and open to all who could afford the fees for individual courses and pass the matriculation examinations (and therefore designed to make higher education a more viable, and certainly cheaper, option than Oxford and Cambridge), was founded in 1826. Mechanics' Institutes began to emerge early in the nineteenth century, as also previously noted; the London Working Men's College was founded in 1854; and numerous 'institutions of university character' (many of which began as Extension centres, and which would later become universities proper) such as those in Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield and Bristol, were all founded in the 1870s and '80s (Kelly, *History* 217). Further, the eventual abolition of religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge in 1871 indicated a modest but nonetheless significant move towards opening up these two universities to a wider section of the public.

University Extension played a crucial role in this development: Cambridge in 1873, and Oxford in 1878, each looked beyond their privileged and hitherto closeted confines, attaching their name to a Movement that aimed to attract members of the working- and lower-middle class who were eager for self-improvement and willing

⁴⁷ Statistics relating to Oxford University (we can assume that Cambridge's figures were broadly similar) reveal that there were just 740 matriculating students in the session 1878-79 (Curthoys and Howarth 578).

to attend lectures and classes on a part-time basis in their local area. The London Society for the Extension of University Teaching was set up in 1876, and organised along slightly different lines: London University conferred degrees but was not a teaching body at this time, so the work of the Society was monitored by a Universities Joint Board, made up of three representatives each from Oxford, Cambridge and London who recruited lecturers, organised courses, appointed examiners, and awarded certificates. The federal Victoria University became involved in Extension in 1886.

That my chief concern in this chapter is with the University Extension Movement, rather than any of the other previously mentioned innovations in adult education, is due, firstly, to the sheer popularity of Extension courses on English literature: Anthony Kearney⁴⁸ has identified that in 1889, for instance, almost a quarter of all courses conducted by the London Society were on this subject (*Louse* 37).⁴⁹ Moreover, English literature lecturers such as Richard G. Moulton and of course John Churton Collins were among the most prolific and well-known figures in the entire Movement, and Collins's esteemed reputation furnished him with a powerful platform for persuading the ancient universities to introduce the subject on their curriculum, given that their name was already associated with literary teaching in the provinces. He argued, further, that Extension lecturers needed to be provided with Oxbridge instruction in the subject they would later teach. One of my tasks in this

⁴⁸ Kearney's biography of Collins provides some very useful information about his University Extension career; I expand on his findings by focusing as much as possible on a sample of twenty syllabuses taken from 1891-92. This allows me to discuss the pedagogical activities of numerous different English lecturers, thereby offering a more rounded impression of London Society provisions.

⁴⁹ These statistics were mirrored in other parts of Europe: Dirk van Damme, in his discussion of University Extension courses in Ghent, Belgium, between 1892 and 1913, has discovered that 'The largest category unquestionably was literature and language (thirty-seven out of ninety-six courses). Particularly in the early years interest in Dutch, German and English literature was remarkably high' (24).

chapter will be to investigate this claim. Moulton, one of the best-regarded and most committed figures in University Extension (who in 1892 became Professor of English at Chicago University), wrote in his 1887 discussion of the current progress and aims of Extension that ‘the movement has been pioneering in educational method ... the University Extension Method of Teaching is put forward as an advance upon the systems usually pursued in Colleges, and one which may, with advantage, be applied in the Universities themselves and elsewhere’ (*University* 6). Through an examination of archival material, this chapter will assess the veracity of these statements, along with some of their most vehement counter-claims.

I

Before proceeding to an analysis of specific courses, it will prove constructive, at the outset, to outline some of the practical details relating to the organisation of the Movement. Lecturers were appointed by the Extension authorities and sent out to local centres (either set up specifically to house these courses, or adapted from already existing facilities, such as Toynbee Hall) to teach courses of between ten and twelve weekly sessions.⁵⁰ Course fees tended to be staggered; at full-price they usually stood at around 10s. 6d., but could be high as 20s. Students on lower salaries were asked to pay between 3 and 5 shillings (Roberts 15), although the cost was sometimes as low as 1s. 6d. Very rarely, courses were free for all who wished to attend.⁵¹ Students who signed up and paid the fees were entitled to attend lectures

⁵⁰ Selection of lecturers tended to be based on demanding criteria, which firstly depended upon the possession of a degree; candidates were also expected to have had previous experience in public speaking, and had to undergo trial lectures and probationary periods.

⁵¹ It is worth noting that in 1886, the average earnings of skilled craftsmen such as metalworkers stood at 26s. 6d. per week (Bowley 50). This suggests that Extension courses were generally beyond the reach of most members of the working class. Middle-class women, in fact, were the most important instigators of University Extension: often it was local women’s education associations that made the first move in securing Extension courses in their area (Harrison 227-31). Indeed, the Movement was much more successful in attracting a female contingent to its courses than it was in securing the

and classes, submit weekly written exercises, and, provided their work had reached a satisfactory level, could enter for an examination at the end of the course. Supporters of the Movement were understandably eager to endorse the work that was being carried out, and tended to expound at length on this four-part structure, claiming that completion of all elements in a particular subject ensured a unique and rigorous learning experience. R. D. Roberts, secretary to the London Society between 1885 and 1894, for instance, insisted that the Extension format was ‘effective in attracting large audiences and, at the same time, securing a high degree of educational thoroughness’ (7). Attendance figures for the courses in fact varied quite dramatically, and though the reasons for this cannot be verified with certainty, it seems obvious that factors included the popularity of a certain lecturer, or the particular appeal of the texts they taught. For instance, Moulton’s ‘Stories as a Mode of Thinking’ in Michaelmas 1891 in Hackney attracted 150 to each of the lectures (London, *Lecturers’ Michaelmas 1891*), yet at the same centre during the following term, Malden’s ‘Shakespeare’s Historical Plays’ managed only just over half this number, with an average of 89 students (London, *Lecturers’ Lent and Summer 1892*).

Other English courses offered by the London Society in 1891-92 illustrate the range of options available; these included ‘The Homeric Age’, ‘Shakespeare’, ‘Poetry of Robert Browning’, ‘The Poetry of Mrs. Browning, Clough, Matthew Arnold’, ‘Literature of the Seventeenth Century’, ‘The Poetry of Tennyson’, ‘The

support of working-class men, its original target audience, as women took advantage of increased educational opportunities in local areas by signing up for lectures. This was particularly the case for courses in English literature. Pupil-teacher courses also did much to shape the character of the courses after it was decided that ‘certain sessional Extension courses’ could ‘count towards the Queen’s Scholarship examination’, for entry to teacher training college (Marriott, *Backstairs* 75). Charles Kingsley’s inaugural address at Queen’s College for Women, in 1848, denotes the strong emphasis placed on English courses for women from the mid-century. Most of the first Oxford English students, post-1894, were also women (Palmer 116).

Greek Tragedies’, and ‘The Age of Byron’ (all of which were taught by Collins); Moulton’s ‘Literary Study of the Bible’ and ‘The Ancient Classical Drama for English Audiences’; Israel Gollancz’s ‘The Development of the Elizabethan Drama’, and ‘Ancient Tragedy’; ‘Great Novelists of the Nineteenth Century’, taught by J. A. Hobson; ‘The Literature of the Eighteenth Century — Pope to Goldsmith’, by E. L. S. Horsburgh; and ‘Tennyson and his Contemporaries’ and ‘A Century of Poets’, both taught by W. Hall Griffin.⁵²

The first component of the course, the hour-long weekly lecture, was characteristically attended by a general audience of mixed ability, who signed up for the course with a variety of objectives in mind. More specifically, this lecture aimed to meet the requirements of ‘two distinct sets of people’: both those with a general curiosity about the subject under discussion, who treated it as ‘an entity in itself’ (Jepson 259), and the more serious student who wished to complete every element of the course (260). Such diversity of interest within the audiences was assumed to be mutually beneficial, as Moulton explained in 1887:

The method pursued under the Movement is based upon the recognition in all that is done of two kinds of people to be dealt with: (1) Popular Lecture Audiences, and (2) in every Audience a nucleus of Students ... The combination of these two kinds of people is found to be for the advantage of both: the presence of Students raises the educational character of the Lectures, and the association of Students with a popular Audience gives to the teaching

⁵² Malden was a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and Honorary Secretary of the Royal Historical Society, for which he edited the *Magna Carta Commemoration Essays* (1917). Other publications edited by Malden include the four-volume *Victoria History of the County of Surrey* (1902-12). Most of his publications were on historical rather than literary topics. Gollancz was a University College, London lecturer from 1892, Cambridge University English lecturer from 1896 until 1906, and Professor of English Language and Literature at King’s College, London from 1903. He was also a founding member of the British Academy (Hymason, ‘Gollancz, Sir Israel’). Hobson was a renowned economist, author of *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (1894), *The Social Problem* (1901), and *The Crisis of Liberalism* (1909). He was a London and Oxford Extension lecturer in English literature and, later, political economy, during the late 1880s and ’90s. Horsburgh was a Queen’s College, Oxford scholar, ex-president of the Oxford Union Society, and thereafter an Oxford University Extension lecturer. His *Bromley, Kent: From the Earliest Times to the Present Century* was published in 1929. W. Hall Griffin was Professor of English Literature at Queen’s College, London.

an impressiveness that mere class-teaching could never attain (*University* 7).⁵³

The class, which formed the second element of the course, was usually held immediately after the lecture. Moulton emphasised the opportunity these classes provided for discussion of more complex issues than could be imparted during the previous hour:

the time is occupied in any way that seems desirable for elucidating and driving home the matter of the lectures. Discussion is invited of knotty points; questions are put to the lecturer by Students as to any points that seem difficult or obscure; or the lecturer gives additional details and illustrations, or brings forward particular points he has considered too difficult for a general audience (*University* 8).

However, as N. A. Jepson has argued more recently, a range of issues came into play that in reality imposed limitations on the effectiveness of the classes: ‘The material environment was often unsuitable, in so far as frequently the class had to be held in the same large hall as the lecture. The size of the class might be too large for the lecturer to get to know and help his students as individuals’ (269). Figures from the London Society confirm that on certain occasions, when combined with the length of time devoted to the class, the numbers attending must have precluded some of the thoroughness that Moulton claimed to offer. Thus, although Collins’s 1891 ‘Age of Byron’ course averaged only eight class members, and the class was a fairly reasonable forty-five minutes long, in his ‘Shakespeare’ course, also in 1891, an average of fifty-five students attended a shorter thirty minute class, and his ‘Robert

⁵³ Commentators have since argued that lecturers struggled to find a way of appealing to both of these categories, torn as they were between the necessity to remain entertaining (and thereby attract larger fee-paying audiences) and the commitment to providing scholarly detail: ‘from the point of view of the lecture it did raise the difficulty that the lecturer was faced with an audience composed not only, and not mainly, of students who were prepared to work for themselves, but of listeners who wished to be satisfied by the lecture alone’ (Jepson 261). The universities charged local centres between £30 and £45 for each course they provided, and other costs included lecturers’ travelling expenses, syllabus printing, examination fees, advertising, and room hire; bringing in popular courses was a good way for local centres to maintain solvency (Moulton, *University* 24-25). In subsequent sections of this chapter I will offer a detailed examination of a sample of English literature syllabuses; this will allow me to draw my own conclusions regarding pedagogical standards within these lectures.

Browning' class, which averaged seventy-five students, had just forty-five minutes of supplementary teaching each week (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas 1891*), hardly a sufficient length of time for a really fruitful discussion.

All class members were encouraged to submit the weekly written exercises; completion of an acceptable number of these, and to a satisfactory standard, ensured eligibility for entering the examination at the end of the course. The number of students who completed weekly papers again varied a great deal, but the figures I have gathered from the London archives suggest that the average was around one quarter of those who had attended the class. For instance, in Hobson's Lent 1892 course in Lewisham on 'Great Novelists of the Nineteenth Century', fifty of the hundred-strong audience stayed for the class, and an average of twelve submitted papers to be marked each week (London, *Lecturers' Lent and Summer 1892*). The weekly assignments were generally very rigorous; examples of these exercises, taken from Malden's 'Shakespeare's English Historical Plays', reveal the type of questions that students were asked to tackle. In the third week, they were expected to familiarise themselves with broader concerns arising from the play (in this case, *Richard II*), and be able to offer an informed interpretation: 'What political purpose has been supposed in this Play? Do you think it likely to have been intended?' (Malden, 'Shakespeare's Plays' 7). Members of the following week's class, on *Henry IV, Part One*, were asked to focus exclusively on the play itself for a question on character analysis: 'Compare and contrast Hotspur and Glendower' (8). Another question that week asked them to reflect on the practicalities of stagecraft in the early modern period: 'Shew [sic] how the simplicity of theatrical machinery influenced the treatment of the warlike part of this Play' (8), while in the sixth week, on *Henry IV*,

Part Two, class members were asked to relay their knowledge of the play's context: 'How far is there historical foundation for the picture of his [Prince Henry's] youth given here?' and 'What real causes of trouble in Henry IV. time are omitted in the Plays?' (10).

Students who had submitted enough of these weekly essays then had the option of entering the examination at the end of the course; this was marked by an external examiner, who was required to report on the general standard of the papers. Certificates were handed out on the basis of examination results, combined with the student's performance in the weekly exercises. Moulton spoke for the organisers more generally when he highlighted the scope the system allowed for increased thoroughness: 'This requirement of a double test [weekly essays and a final examination] does not increase, but diminishes, the difficulty of obtaining Certificates: for it removes a leading cause of failure — the temptation to neglect work until a final examination draws near' (*University* 9). The sample of archival evidence I have gathered demonstrates that, as with the weekly submissions, sometimes only a minority of those attending the class actually took the examination, and this of course lessened the significance of exams within the scheme. In the Lent 1892 course on 'Great Novelists of the Nineteenth Century' given by Hobson in Lewisham, only nine candidates took the examination out of an average attendance of fifty at each of the classes, and Collins's Lent 1892 course on 'The Poetry of Tennyson' in Paddington attracted around thirty-five to the weekly classes, seven of whom took part in the examination (London, *Lecturers' Lent and Summer 1892*). Some courses were even less successful in attracting students to take the final assessment: in Collins's report on his 1891 'Age of Byron' course, for instance, he

noted that ‘In spite of all my efforts the people declined to do papers and there was no one qualified to stand in the Examination’ (London, *Lecturers’* Lent and Summer 1891).

II

The preceding section of this chapter has aimed to provide a faithful representation of University Extension endeavours, specifically in relation to English literature courses. The impression this gives is not wholly positive, by any means; the number of completed assignments, and levels of examination attendance, could be very low at times. Nevertheless, champions of extramural education such as Collins, Roberts, and Moulton, were keen to promote the Movement as a rigorous educational scheme, and wrote numerous articles in a bid to prove to outsiders that the standard of work was suitably impressive. In a particularly polemical essay (and one which we should therefore treat with a certain amount of circumspection) published in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1889, for instance, Collins insisted that he had been shown written testimony from Extension markers that proved there was reason to be buoyant about the standard of extramural education:

The examiner, for example, in political economy at the Putney and Wimbledon centres, after observing that he had good opportunities of comparison, as he had just concluded an examination of the candidates for the Oxford B.A. degree in political economy, and an examination of the candidates for a fellowship, reported that ‘the average level of the answers is considerably higher than that of undergraduates who pass the University examination, while several of the papers are distinctly better than those of the candidates for the fellowship’ (Collins, ‘Universities in Contact’ 570).

Collins was right that remarks such as this from external examiners licensed him to make the highest possible claims about the scholarly instruction being offered to Extension students, allowing him to equate his own pedagogical endeavours with Oxbridge teaching. Moulton, too, claimed that ‘where comparison has been possible

with work done in the Universities themselves, the general advantage of such comparison has been with the Extension Students' (*University 6*). Because neither Collins nor Moulton were likely to offer an unbiased opinion, close scrutiny of the original handwritten examiners' reports will prove constructive at this point; more so because these reports also provide information about when particular questions had been avoided, and whether the class had understood the topics fully.

C. H. Herford was one of the main external examiners in English for the London Extension Society; before I reflect on his assessments of extramural students' work, it is worth glancing briefly at the academic credentials he brought to his marking. After graduating from Cambridge with a degree in classics, he was appointed to the Chair of English Language and Literature at University College, Aberystwyth, in 1887; later, in 1901, he became Professor of English at the University of Manchester (Shelston, 'Herford, Charles Harold'). His critical study of Browning was published in 1905, and he also wrote several books on other poets including Wordsworth and Blake, as well as on Ben Jonson and Shakespeare. Herford's scholarly pedigree, and the considerable experience of university teaching against which he could measure his findings as an external marker, suggest we should take seriously the comments he made about Extension papers in the end-of-term reports. In his appraisal of the work carried out in Collins's 'Browning' course in Hackney in Lent 1891, he remarked that the examination scripts were

as a whole, of very good quality, and showed, with one exception, considerable study of Browning, and an adequate command of the literary history of his writings. The paper of No.1, and in particular that of No. 8, showed the rarer quality of vigorous independent judgment and thoughtful criticism, and the latter is distinctly one of the most remarkable Browning-papers which have ever come before me (London, *Lecturers' Lent and Summer 1891*).

This was high praise indeed, and he was similarly impressed with the examination papers produced by students of Collins's Michaelmas 1887 Greenwich course on 'English Poetry since 1830.' His examiner's report stated that 'As upon previous occasions, this course of lectures, dealing with poets more or less familiar at first hand to all cultivated persons, elicited work of high quality. It was evident in the case of several candidates that they wrote from an intimate knowledge of the poetry they described; and they quoted with great readiness' (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas 1887*). The non-public nature of this communication also allows us to assume that when Herford offered fulsome praise in his reports (which he did, frequently), these were his candidly expressed opinions, rather than an attempt to push a particular agenda.

For Collins, the Extension Movement offered proof that English literature was a genuine, academic, subject of study, difficult yet also teachable, and therefore an appropriate honours degree at Oxford and Cambridge. Positive remarks on individual courses (such as those from Herford quoted above) were encouraging, but it was more important for him to demonstrate that the subject could be structured systematically, allowing the student to accumulate a body of knowledge over a sustained period of time, as with a university degree. A Terminal Certificate was awarded on completion of a single Extension term's work, but the London Society's Sessional Certificate was introduced as a stimulus for an Extension student to complete nine months' worth of continuous work, consisting of two consecutive courses of lectures, in the winter and spring terms, and a shorter course in the

summer.⁵⁴ Roberts, writing in 1891, insisted that the ‘offer of some inducement to continuous work by the central authority is essential to educational efficiency’ (80-81), in that both students and lecturers were encouraged to pursue a systematically-assembled series of courses, with the aim of building a comprehensive amount of knowledge in a particular literary area. More recently, Bernard Jennings has noted that by the mid-1890s, Sessional courses made up more than half of all the London Society courses (15), and Laura Stuart (wife of James, one of the original activists for Extension) put this figure even higher, quoting from a University Extension Congress Report in support of her point: ‘That the centres do not ... invariably pirouette from science to art and *vice versa* is shown by the fact that in London “out of fifty-five courses given in the Lent Term of 1894, no less than forty-five were in direct sequence with the courses in the preceding term”’ (385). This rather defensive comment marks Stuart’s attempt to depict the Extension Movement as a long-term educational programme for extramural students, where single courses were taken only rarely.

In an article written in 1899, Collins was, inevitably, very enthusiastic about the Sessional Certificate, calling it a ‘guarantee against superficiality’ (‘University for People’ 469). Although the Oxford School of English had been established five years earlier, in 1894, Collins was unhappy with the philological bias of the degree regulations and wanted more reform. This accounts for his continual emphasis that Extension was leading the way, and could boast literary teaching of a standard appropriate for immediate implementation at Oxbridge. In the academic session 1891-92, Collins offered two courses that were designed to be taken in succession at

⁵⁴ The London Society also offered a Certificate of Continuous Study, awarded after attaining four Sessional Certificates, later ‘re-modelled, in 1901, as the Vice-Chancellor’s Certificate’ (Duke and Marriott 60).

the Whitechapel Centre: 'The Poetry of Robert Browning', followed by 'The Poetry of Mrs. Browning, Clough, Matthew Arnold, and Rossetti.' Careful examination of each syllabus, along with the course reports from both Collins and the examiner, will fulfil a twofold aim: firstly, this will allow me to assess the level of teaching that was offered to an Extension student in the early 1890s. Chris Baldick has claimed that 'The form of the extension lecture itself (since it was rarely possible to back this up with close reading of a series of agreed texts) meant that there was a tendency for the lecturer merely to expound the peculiar beauties of one author or another in a more or less biographical manner' (*Social* 75). This comment was presumably made on the basis of an archival sampling process similar to my own, and it will prove constructive to compare Baldick's influential assessment with my own findings. Secondly, close analysis of both courses will enable me to ascertain the extent to which these supplied a progressive system of learning over a sustained period.

Collins's Michaelmas course on Robert Browning claimed to 'introduce students to the serious and systematic study of the works of Browning' ('Poetry Robert Browning' 2), and on the evidence of the printed syllabus, the coverage was extensive. Part of lecture four, for instance, divided Browning's poetry into dramatic lyrics and dramatic romances, with consideration given in each category to 'Studies in incident and character; studies of the affections; studies directly didactic; psychological studies' (5). Collins then picked out individual poems to elucidate broader thematic concerns, before concluding the lecture with some 'General remarks on the collection' (5). The following week Collins focused on *Men and Women*, giving special consideration to issues such as the 'meaning of the allegory', before focusing on 'Fra Lippo Lippi', 'Andrea del Sarto', and 'The Bishop Orders

His Tomb', each of which he 'commented on, with illustrations' (Collins, 'Poetry Robert Browning' 5). In week six Collins offered an analysis of *The Ring and the Book*, exploring 'the real incidents; the real characters', before 'An introduction to the study of the work and power displayed in the analytical delineation of the characters and personifications' (6). This was followed by analyses of each of the twelve books and, to conclude, a 'minute and detailed analysis' of 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' (6). Students were being shown how to perform a close textual reading in this lecture, but we can assume, given the subject of this latter poem, that contemporary religious issues were also discussed, by way of context.

I explained in the previous chapter that Collins was a strong advocate for comparing classical and vernacular literature; here, the seventh lecture of his course set out to consider Browning's poetry in relation to Greek verse. This involved discussion of Browning's 'extraordinary translation of the Agamemnon', and his 'Singular ignorance of, or indifference to, the true principles of translation. Illustrations of his version compared with the original' (Collins, 'Poetry Robert Browning' 6). The material covered in the third week also included some comparative analysis, this time in terms of characterisation, with the consideration of 'Paracelsus, as a type', against 'the Prometheus of Æchylus' (4). Part of the final lecture analysed Browning's 'conception' of Caliban alongside Shakespeare's treatment of the same character (8). Baldick is not mistaken in remarking that an author's biography often featured in these courses; the first of Collins's Browning lectures, for instance, considered the poet's 'ancestry; his parents; his early surroundings; his early education', the 'autobiographical interest' of 'Pauline', his 'meeting with Wordsworth and Macready' and the 'Immense influence exercised

over him by his wife' (Collins, 'Poetry Robert Browning' 3). However, biographical details could be strongly justified in a discussion of 'Pauline', and it is also worth remembering that this lecture served as an introduction to Browning's work for the students, and hardly represents the course as a whole. My previous examples from the lecture outline establish the scholarly treatment of Browning's poetry, as well as the ambitious amount of ground that Collins aimed to cover in a single hour. As further testament to the breadth of knowledge that Collins could offer his Extension students, the summary of the final lecture is worth quoting in full:

The selected poems grouped. (1) **Abt Vogler** and **Rabbi Ben Ezra**. (2) **Caliban upon Setebos**. (3) **La Saisiaz** and **Epilogue to Dramatis Personæ**. Each of these poems analysed and discussed. What is the key to Abt Vogler? Browning and Marcus Aurelius. **Teaching of Rabbi Ben Ezra**. Illustrations from Seneca and Bishop Butler. An analytical account of **Caliban**: Shakespeare's conception of the character compared with Browning's. General drift of the poem. A satire on anthropomorphism. Illustrative passage from Xenophanes. Analysis of the poem, with a view to illustrating its threefold interest and purpose. An introduction to the study of **La Saisiaz**. Why memorable and important? Its general teaching. **Epilogue to Dramatis Personæ** analysed and discussed. General summary of Browning's theological teaching. Conclusion (Collins, 'Poetry Robert Browning' 7-8; emphasis in orig.).

Although a large amount of material was covered in each weekly session, this did not mean concessions were made as to the depth of knowledge that students were expected to build up. They were asked to conduct research individually, beyond the classroom, following the suggested readings listed in the syllabuses.⁵⁵

Shifting focus now onto the issue of continuous study, I will consider whether Collins's second course succeeded in offering a coherent expansion upon some of the themes and contexts outlined in the previous term, towards a systematic treatment of mid-Victorian poetry. Once again, the first lecture of this second syllabus was

⁵⁵ Some lecturers, such as Hobson, provided a list of critical works that applied specifically to each week's topic; Malden outlined a few more general secondary readings at the start of his syllabus. Collins, I would assume, spoke in the lectures about which books students should consult.

biographical in content, as it set out to examine Elizabeth Barrett Browning in the context of her husband's work: 'Influence exercised by her on the genius of her husband. Robert Browning's tribute to that influence ... Her first volume of poems. Life up to the time of her marriage — formative influences' (Collins, 'Poetry Mrs. Browning' 4). By situating Elizabeth Browning's poetry within the framework of her husband's writing, Collins was endeavouring to set out a recognisable context for his continuing students. Having alleviated any possible concerns about the unfamiliar material, subsequent lectures broadened out, with focus shifting onto Browning's contemporaries, such as Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold.

Those who had attended the initial course on Browning would also have benefited from their previous acquaintance with some of the themes and strategies of literary comparison that were replicated in the second term, but here applied to a wider range of poets and texts. In an analogous manner to some of the earlier lectures on Browning, analysis of the classical references that informed Matthew Arnold's writing, too, was embarked upon. Before Christmas, Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure* had been studied alongside Euripides's *Alcestis*, and, following a consistent set of aims, a second-term lecture looked at Arnold's treatment of the 'legend of Merope', and the role of Greek drama 'in the structure, teaching, and style of Arnold's tragedy' (Collins, 'Poetry Mrs. Browning' 7).

These two Extension syllabuses on mid-Victorian poetry of course provide us with a mere snapshot of literary teaching within the Movement; nevertheless, regarding the volume of material covered, and the depth of analysis, they offer a fair representation of the other syllabuses within my sample. Baldick's remark about the lecturers' propensity to offer potted biographies of various authors offers an

inaccurate reflection on Extension teaching. His related claim, that by ‘concentrating all attention on purple passages or Great Authors considered as higher personalities’, extramural English literature teaching ‘was to impede the development of any thorough or systematic study of literary works’ (*Social* 74), provides us with an equally erroneous impression of the actually very scholarly instruction that was available within extramural learning environments. Baldick appears to have overlooked some of the course-related material he presumably must have gathered in relation to late-nineteenth century non-university English teaching. My own detailed analysis of Extension syllabuses has persuaded me to draw some rather different conclusions about this particular pedagogical endeavour.

These Extension syllabuses were written and sold very cheaply before the start of each course; what they do not reveal, of course, is how much of the lecture was actually understood by the students. Examination results can offer us more information in this area. Generally, English literature students were required to answer eight out of twelve questions, and these asked for evidence of thoughtful analysis: one from the Browning examination, for example, asked students to ‘Describe the characteristics of Browning’s style, and show how far it is adapted, or the reverse, to be the medium of (a) psychological analysis, and (b) and [sic] spiritual teaching’ (Collins, ‘Poetry Robert Browning’ Examination). Another question required candidates to ‘Compare Browning’s relation to Greek poetry with that of any other contemporary poet. What elements in the Greek genius do you consider akin to his?’ (Collins, ‘Poetry Robert Browning’ Examination). Not all questions, however, required evidence of original analysis; the final question in this examination, ‘Quote as much as you can of any single poem of Browning’s’ (Collins,

‘Poetry Robert Browning’ Examination), was probably designed for less confident members of the class. Nevertheless, the fact that eight questions had to be answered means that this was only a temporary respite from the otherwise rigorous testing. Herford, reporting on this course in 1891, remarked that although ‘In some cases a certain lack of previous literary, and especially poetic, culture was apparent, which tended to obstruct insight into Browning’s conceptions’, nevertheless ‘It [the material] had been however conscientiously studied; and the two best papers showed, besides varied and detailed knowledge of Browning, much aptness of appreciation and expression’ (London, *Lecturers’ Michaelmas* 1891). I referred above to Herford’s Browning expertise; comments such as this offer convincing proof not only of Collins’s breadth of knowledge, but also his ability to communicate this to his extramural students.⁵⁶

III

The affiliation scheme, initiated by Cambridge in 1886, with Oxford adopting a similar arrangement in 1890, was fervently endorsed by key players in the Extension Movement, such as Roberts and Collins. If a local centre offered courses ‘arranged in an approved sequence’, it could apply for affiliated status, which allowed Extension students who had completed the requisite number of courses over several years, and to a sufficient standard, to move straight into the second year of a degree at the parent university (Jepson 306). It was believed that demand for this would encourage local centres to follow a more systematic scheme for organising courses. Collins outlined the work that was required from an individual student in order to qualify:

⁵⁶ Extension records reveal that one of the students who attended both of these courses was given the lowest mark in the Christmas examination, but showed a marked improvement by the end of the second term, when she was commended by Collins for the high standard of her weekly essays (London, *Lecturers’ Lent and Summer* 1892).

Dividing the subjects for examination into two groups — (A) natural, physical, and mathematical science; (B) history, political economy, mental science, literature, art — it requires that students should have attended a consecutive series of courses of lectures and classes for six terms in a subject — not necessarily the same subject — included in one of these groups; that in addition to this they should have attended in each of two terms a series of classes and lectures on some subject included in the other group ... that in each of these courses the necessary certificates granted jointly on the lecturer's report of the weekly exercises and the examiner's report on the whole work at the close of the course should have been attained. In addition to these provisions it requires that at some period before being admitted to the privilege of affiliation an elementary examination must have been passed in (1) Latin and one modern language; (2) in Euclid, Books I.–III.; and Algebra, to Quadratics ('Universities in Contact' 568).

Students therefore had to undertake a demanding, although by no means unfeasible, amount of study. An appendix to Moulton's book on Extension laid out a (hypothetical) plan for the six terms of English courses; this allows us to see how he envisaged structuring such a scheme. Each course was designed to be 'independent' and therefore 'have for a general audience an interest of its own', yet the entire curriculum should 'introduce to all the different sides of literary study: History of Literature, Literary Art and Criticism, Foreign or Ancient as well as modern English Literature, Prose as well as Poetry' (R. G. Moulton, *University* 55). The first year would therefore focus on literary history, starting with a presumably very broad-reaching course spanning 'the whole field of our literature' (55). After Christmas, students would examine a specific era in detail, such as Elizabethan literature. The aim in year two, Moulton wrote, 'would be to awaken the critical faculty' by comparing 'two strongly contrasted schools' (*University* 55). Thus 'Shakspere [sic] and the Romantic Drama' could be followed after Christmas by 'The Ancient Classical Drama' (55). The third year might begin with a varied programme that included Goethe, Tennyson, and Browning, and the final term, in what looks almost like a minor concession to language study, or perhaps rhetoric, could focus on

‘workmanship in literary art’ (*University* 55). Completion of these six terms, combined with the additional examinations, would have qualified an Extension student for second-year entry to the relevant university.

Roberts, obviously pushing an agenda, insisted that with affiliation, ‘the University deliberately placed its stamp upon the work done at local centres. It afforded the strongest proof, and one which would be intelligible to all, that the University had satisfied itself of the thoroughness and efficiency of the University Extension method of teaching’ (83-84). This comment reveals that the affiliation scheme was a point of great pride for Extension co-ordinators, and Collins, too, was optimistic about the development. He felt certain that ‘By linking the local-lecture centres with the mother University’, they were ‘virtually incorporating among members of the University such students as succeed at those centres in obtaining the requisite certificates’ (*Universities in Contact* 567). The effect of this among Extension students, Collins insisted, would be ‘a just ambition to acquire so honourable a privilege’, which ‘forms not the least of incentives to study’ (567). We should, however, pay attention to the fact that Collins wrote these comments in 1889, and therefore at a time when any candidates who wished to take advantage of the affiliation scheme would still have been working through the series of Extension courses. In reality, and somewhat predictably, only very few students were actually in a position to make use of the scheme, given that any original financial difficulties would hardly have been eradicated just by spending one less year in residence at Oxford or Cambridge. Roberts admitted that ‘It was not expected by the University or by local committees that many students would ever be able to avail themselves of this privilege of a shortened term of residence’ (83). He also acknowledged that the

number of students enrolling on consecutive courses tended to diminish in the second term of work; most centres could only maintain a continuous course of study by a 'special local subscription fund', because when fewer participants were willing to sign up (and therefore pay) for a second course, the centre had to cope with the ensuing financial losses (Roberts 99). In Collins's two-part course on Victorian poetry in Whitechapel, which I referred to above, the number of students submitting papers, and those taking the examination, both halved in the second term.

As well as the relatively small number of students signing up for affiliation courses, this scheme was also subject to criticism from outsiders to the Movement. Charles Whibley, fiercely opposed to Extension in general, decried the emphasis that Roberts and Collins had placed upon affiliation, arguing that it was an 'inelegant word' that had no 'practical meaning' and would remain 'an empty title, if it do not degenerate into a corrupt practice' (2: 603). While admitting that the affiliation scheme could, in theory, encourage students to pursue a more continuous course of study, Whibley believed that in practice, 'the desire of change is beyond the love of affiliation, and that class which supplemented a hasty examination of land-surveying by a feigned study of Aristophanes would seem neither singular nor ridiculous to the friends of Extension' (1: 205). Whibley was therefore unwilling to accept the Movement could offer anything other than a seemingly random, haphazard selection of lectures; he was speaking as a graduate in classics from Cambridge who would later become an honorary fellow at the university (Matthew, 'Whibley, Charles'), and resented his university's involvement in an apparently dilettantish provincial endeavour.

I would argue that an inability to maintain focus on a single subject over a sustained period of time was not, in fact, among the reasons preventing students from pursuing a three-year Extension course — or in some cases, from attending all the courses required for a Sessional Certificate, or even completing the weekly paper work and enter for the examination for individual courses. Aside from the issue of limited financial resources, students also felt that they would benefit little from certificates or university recognition of this type. In lecturer S. J. MacMillan's report⁵⁷ on his own course on 'English Literature of the Eighteenth Century', he was able to justify the fact that out of an attendance of ninety at the classes, an average of only eight and a half papers were returned each week: 'the majority of those who attended belonged to a class to which the Certificate would be of little or no practical value — middle-aged and old gentlemen and ladies and young men in good positions in the city' (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas* 1887). Lack of leisure time was another contributing factor: in Collins's 1887 course on 'English Poetry since 1830', out of an average of eighty-five who had attended the lectures, only seven students entered for the examination. Collins claimed that 'they were engaged in hard work either in offices or schools all the day and ... they had not the time necessary for writing the Essays on Browning's poems ... Others said that they were too old & had the care of families ... so said it was quite impossible for them to do papers and go in for the Examination' (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas* 1887). For many it 'could only be a recreation, directed', but Collins also reported that his students felt 'it was a great

⁵⁷ MacMillan was Professor of History and English Literature at Queen's College, Belfast (later renamed Queen's University of Belfast).

“pleasure and privilege” ... to have studies’, and therefore ‘It is to this last class that we are perhaps most helpful’ (London, *Lecturers’ Michaelmas 1887*).⁵⁸

Because of the somewhat limited impact of affiliation within the Extension Movement, it is more constructive to view this as an ideological victory, rather than one that offered practical benefits to a significant number of students. I would certainly sympathise with the claim, put forward by James Stuart in his introduction to Moulton’s 1887 overview of Extension, that affiliation demonstrated ‘satisfaction’ (iii) on the part of Cambridge University about the pedagogical endeavours on offer within the scheme. Regardless of the low figures as they appear on paper, the fact that both Oxford and Cambridge bestowed on extramural students the opportunity to enter into the second year at university strongly supports my claim regarding the high academic standard of Extension teaching. Students’ personal circumstances were largely to blame for low levels of participation, rather than unwillingness, or inability, on the part of lecturers to organise a systematic series of courses. When affiliated teaching was asked for, and could be afforded, Extension lecturers could provide excellent preparation for university. This is underlined by Bernard Jennings’s discovery that in 1894, three affiliation students graduated from Cambridge, ‘two with first-class honours’ (14). The affiliation scheme offered a way for universities to establish, publicly, their support for provincial educational initiatives, and also provided Extension lecturers, students, and administrators with an effective line of defence against those critics for whom extramural teaching appeared to be more amateurish than scholarly. It is worth remembering that the

⁵⁸ R. M. Wenley, honorary secretary to the Glasgow Extension Board since 1890, who wrote at length, in 1895, on the developments taking place in Scottish branches of the Extension Movement (now regarded as a failure), also insisted that many students ‘possess interest and leisure enough to attend the lectures with regularity, but ... are prevented by business or other arrangements from undertaking extensive private study’ (10).

Movement was originally set up to provide part-time evening courses for busy men and women, rather than serving as a stepping-stone for two years of university residence; this does much to account for the relative lack of success, although not total failure, of the affiliation scheme.

IV

Charles Whibley's highly confrontational articles on Extension formed part of a debate with Laura Stuart that took place in the pages of the journal *Nineteenth Century* over a few months in 1894. Within the unambiguously titled article, 'The Farce of "University Extension"', Whibley complained of the mockery he believed was being enacted on the universities through their association with the Movement. He argued that Extension had begun with an apparently worthy agenda, namely 'to organise, under better auspices, the penny readings which once were popular' (1: 203) and to 'lighten the leisure of idle young ladies' (1: 204). However, the Movement had grown too ambitious, bolstered by its early success:

no sooner was the scheme devised than the shallow optimism of democracy expressed itself in a blind enthusiasm. No more was heard of Local Lectures. It was 'a really national movement, impelled by latent forces' ... Though even partisans confessed that women of leisure composed 'at least half the audiences,' and that the system was designed to 'attract large numbers,' such phrases as 'national higher education,' 'high degree of educational thoroughness,' 'serious study,' were always upon the tongues of the priesthood (Whibley 1: 204).

Whibley grasped the opportunity to pour scorn on some of the (admittedly sometimes rather overblown) language that was often employed by Extension organisers when they wrote about the Movement. Here his mockery was directed at Roberts:

In the judgment of Mr. Sadler's friend, then, University Extension is a kind of travelling prayer-meeting, wherein 'soul' is of more importance than 'brain,' and where learning does not matter so long as the spiritual aspirations are

vaguely satisfied. But shall we confuse learning and hot-gospelling? Are our Universities to become branches of the Salvation Army? (Whibley 2: 601).

By using the terms “hot-gospelling” and “priesthood”, and comparing Extension with the Salvation Army, Whibley’s implication was that the Movement was similar to some of the missionary-spirited university endeavours which date from this period, when young men from Oxford and Cambridge travelled out to the most deprived areas of London. The most famous of these, Toynbee Hall, founded by Reverend Samuel Barnett in 1885, was remarkably successful in terms of organising educational programmes and lectures for the working classes in Whitechapel. However, I believe that Whibley was undermining what was in fact a crucial distinction between these settlement movements and University Extension: in the latter case, the socialist energy that was driving the scheme, though regularly promulgated in the polemical treatises produced by men such as Moulton and Roberts, was in practice, at the grassroots level of the lecture theatre, as secondary to the stridently educational emphasis of the Movement. Thomas Kelly has drawn the same conclusion in his extensive historical study of adult education: ‘we may well regard University Extension and the settlements as the twin offspring of Christian Socialism, the one being a development mainly in the direction of education, the other mainly in the direction of social work’ (*History* 239). I would thus downplay the significance of contemporary remarks regarding the apparently civilising effect that would be achieved through means of the broad cultural education that Extension could offer.

This type of Arnoldian rhetoric is, however, difficult to escape from when conducting any research in this area, since proponents of the Movement so frequently spoke of their Extension work, and English literature courses in particular, in

elevated terms, seeking to capture the public imagination and thereafter garner national support for the work they were undertaking. John Morley, in an address to London Extension students in 1887, spoke in particularly high-flown terms about the value of literature as a subject of study:

Literature is one of the instruments, and one of the most powerful instruments, for forming character, for giving us men and women armed with reason, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness and courage, and inspired by that public spirit and public virtue of which it has been well said that they are the brightest ornaments of the mind of man (226-27).

Lofty statements such as this actually serve to distract and detract from the scholarly activities taking place in the provinces. Placing undue emphasis on polemics of this type has convinced Baldick of the existence of an apparent ideological agenda that dictated the way English was taught, as he assumes that particular literary texts were held up as an appropriate means of instructing the nation on the ideal characteristics of an Englishman: ‘Lecturers in English Literature had been content to explain the value of their subject within Arnold’s terms of formative example or “contact” with great minds — a very simple theory of cultural contagion which can be found in most apologies for popular literary education in this period’ (Baldick, *Social* 74). Baldick is correct to point out that these Arnoldian notions were pervasive in pamphlets and articles on education at this time. However, to then claim, as Baldick does, that the intention was ‘not to dole out knowledge or hand over educational facilities’, but rather to instil among the working classes ‘a feeling of their need to be improved according to others’ standards’ (*Social* 64), is to make an assumption about teaching that does not accord with the tangible proof I have uncovered regarding pedagogical practices in the *fin de siècle*.

Terry Eagleton, too, is certain that literature in the period was being used, covertly, to preserve the hierarchical social order. With the declining influence of religious dogma, Eagleton insists, literature was substituted as an appropriate means for controlling the lower classes, therefore ‘the emphasis was on solidarity between the social classes, the cultivation of “larger sympathies”, the instillation of national pride and the transmission of “moral” values. This last concern ... was an essential part of the ideological project’ (Eagleton 27). In plainer terms, ‘this can be taken as meaning that the old religious ideologies have lost their force, and that a more subtle communication of moral values, one which works by “dramatic enactment” rather than rebarbative abstraction, is thus in order’ (Eagleton 27). English students, according to Eagleton, were being encouraged to emulate the behaviour of specific, carefully selected, literary characters. Within the specific context of the Extension Movement — which, for me, is itself a massively important stage in what Eagleton terms the ‘rise of “English”’ — I can find little trace of any ‘humanizing’ (27) function being applied to literature for the containment of supposed class-based anarchy. My sample of London Extension syllabuses betrays no particular effort to channel the patriotic, sentimental, or spiritual thoughts of the nation through particular writers or texts. Collins and Moulton were two of the most influential Extension lecturers, and their syllabuses denote a commitment to offering thorough, critical analyses of individual texts, rather than idealistic allusions to superlative examples of English conduct or moral fibre.

This is true, as I have already shown, of Collins’s course on ‘Mrs. Browning, Clough, Matthew Arnold, and Rossetti’, and his ‘Poetry of Robert Browning’; in his ‘English Poetry since 1830’, too, close textual detail, literary context, and classical

influences tended to figure in each lecture. Students in Moulton's 'Stories as a Mode of Thinking' (which I will consider in more depth in chapter four) were shown how to perform textual analyses on numerous different genres, while Hobson's courses, among them 'Prose Writers of the Nineteenth Century', and 'Great Novelists of the Nineteenth Century', were dominated by complex discussion of narrative and genre. This latter syllabus, to take one further example, began with a preliminary discussion of the novel's position within the broader context of literary history: 'Daniel Defoe was the first to make popular in England the novel as a representation of common contemporary life ... But it is to Fielding we must turn for the first clear conception of the large scope of prose fiction and of the art of novel-writing' (Hobson, 'Great Novelists' 3). A subsequent lecture on this course explored issues of character development, deploying terms borrowed from psychology as a way of approaching the 'Science of Character' in the fiction of George Eliot (Hobson, 'Great Novelists' 8). In later weeks, Hobson examined differing approaches to narrative and characterisation within various novelistic sub-genres. This included the historical novel, where Walter Scott was among the examples; the 'Russian "Realistic" Novel' (14), a lecture which included discussion of Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev; comedy and Dickens; satire in Thackeray's writing; and, in the lecture on George Meredith, the author's various incarnations as 'Humourist, Psychologist, Realist, Romanticist, Caricaturist' (11).

Rather than serving as a pretext for conveying patriotic ideals and nobility of purpose for the apparent ethical improvement of the lecture audience, the English Extension syllabuses in my sample were structured along scholarly lines that prioritised systematic and analytical treatment of each work. More importantly, the

material on these syllabuses was also conveyed very effectively to the class. This is clear from Herford's remarks on Hobson's course in Streatham in Lent 1892; he reported that

The papers from this Centre all showed appreciative study of the comprehensive subject discussed. The principal Novelists concerned were evidently well known at first-hand and the criticisms conveyed in lectures had been in most cases intelligently assimilated. In one or two cases there was a considerable amount of independent and somewhat original criticism (London, *Lecturers' Lent and Summer 1892*).

V

This pedagogical reality could not prevent Whibley (any more than it would Baldick or Eagleton, entering the debate from a very different political standpoint some ninety years later, as the previous section has shown), from emphasising the apparently sub-standard teaching on display at local lectures. Whibley's comments are worth exploring further, as they offer us some intriguing insights into the actual nature of opposition to University Extension in this period. Whibley deduced that the popularity and attractiveness of Extension courses denoted a lack of systematic study, and he claimed to be fighting an injustice on the part of working-class students, disingenuously being offered access to a supposedly high level of scholarship that in fact was nothing of the sort. Extension in general, he suggested, was simply a very cynical money-making ploy on the part of lecturers: 'Why, indeed, with the *Epic of Hades* on its table, should Newcastle or even Doncaster trouble itself with the ancient drama? The answer is simple: to provide Mr. Moulton with a class' (Whibley 1: 206). Moulton held a fervent, and life-long, belief in democratising educational opportunities, as my next chapter will address in detail; Whibley's comment is thus lacking in foundation, and his similar contention that 'a pleasant pastime has been from the first the aim and ambition of lecturers' (1: 205) can easily

be refuted through reference to the punishing work schedule undertaken by Collins. I listed, at the start of this chapter, just some of the courses that Collins taught for the London Extension Society in a single session. Anthony Kearney has remarked that ‘Extension teaching was back-breaking work’ and in ‘some weeks he [Collins] gave as many as twenty lectures in different centres, schools and private houses, frequently offering as many as four or even five in a single day’ (*Louse* 45).

The response within Extension to Whibley’s article was forthright, as one would expect; an article that appeared in an October 1894 edition of the *University Extension Journal* objected to Whibley’s ‘flippancy of tone’, and the ‘inaccuracies and mis-statements’ which were more numerous ‘than we should have thought it possible could be included in a single article in the pages of a Review having the reputation of the *Nineteenth Century*’ (‘Notes’ 3). Moreover, this article deemed ‘remarkable ... the bitter vehemence with which [Whibley] denies the possibility of culture, in the University sense, for those who by the conditions of their lives are unable to enjoy the privileges of residence at Oxford or Cambridge’ (‘Notes’ 3). As the article was too correct to identify, Whibley felt Extension students were utterly incapable of attaining any degree of cultural knowledge, and, being ill-suited to serious study, they desired mere entertainment: ‘Not even the lantern-slide is forgotten, and if a piano be needed for accompaniment, nothing but lack of money is likely to exclude it’ (1: 205). My own research contradicts Whibley’s assumptions; in Percy M. Wallace’s report⁵⁹ on Collins’s course ‘The Homeric Age’ in Kew and Richmond, 1891, he noted that

Several of the Students have set themselves up a regular course of reading in

⁵⁹ Wallace, an Oxford classics scholar, was Professor of English Literature at Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, between 1887 and 1890, and Assistant Secretary to the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching between 1891 and 1901 (‘Wallace, Percy Maxwell’).

Homeric Literature and with excellent results, the Papers of some six or seven having been most commendably sound and thorough week by week. The prevailing note of this Centre seems to be a lively and vigorous devotion to the subject in hand, intelligence uniting with interest in the production of very satisfactory work (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas* 1891).

This report reveals that rather than dilettantes, willing to pay for a relaxing weekly lecture, Extension students were serious about their literary education, keen enough to organise additional study groups, and unafraid to grapple with often very difficult reading material.⁶⁰

Whibley's views were characteristic of a conservative faction within the university that resisted any effort to democratise education, particularly when this might threaten the elitism that at this point was synonymous with Oxford and Cambridge. This is clear from the following remarks: 'why should our Universities exist if the unlettered are given their share in the privileges and patronage of learning?'; 'tell the housemaids and artisans of England that learning lies for ever beyond their reach' (Whibley 1: 208, 1: 209).⁶¹ I would draw further significance from the fact that, although Whibley graduated with a first from Cambridge, he had also been a grammar schoolboy and was the son of a merchant (Matthew, 'Whibley, Charles'). He therefore conformed to a convenient but in fact extremely accurate stereotype of an ultra-conservative member of the middle class who, in remaining painfully aware of his proximity to the working classes, sought to dissociate himself from them through vehemently-held Tory ideals and high cultural pretensions.

Stephen Donovan, in an essay about Whibley's highly polemical *Blackwood's*

⁶⁰ Another example of Extension students' enthusiasm with regard to their studies can be found in W. Hall Griffin's report on his own course, 'Robert Browning in Italy' in the South Hackney centre in 1892; he noted that 'Not only was the prescribed number of papers ... written but there was sufficient interest to produce extra papers' (London, *Lecturers' Lent and Summer* 1892; underlining in orig.).

⁶¹ Whibley was also writing in the shadow of the extension of the franchise dictated by the 1884 Reform Act, a context that explains his railing comment, in this tirade against University Extension, that although the 'Board School and the County Council are sufficient for the manufacture of voters', still 'at least it should be possible to keep art and literature from the public greed' (1: 209).

column, has attributed this reactionary attitude to a similar cause: ‘In spite of (or perhaps because of) his middle-class origins, Whibley adopted patrician cultural tastes and disdain for “that strange form of government known as democracy” with all the fervour of a religious convert’ (260).⁶²

Alongside numerous organisational and financial issues, the Extension Movement therefore also had to battle against the prejudice of those who would prefer university education to remain an aristocratic privilege. One other contemporary perspective on Extension comes from a rather different source: in a satirical article published anonymously in the November 1888 edition of *All the Year Round*, a fictional graduate is casually asked by an acquaintance if he would like to ‘extend’, since it is the responsibility of the University to find employment for its graduates, ‘these deserving young men’ (‘Confessions’ 435, 436). The article offered an image of a hapless yet pompous young man, derogatory towards his lower-class students, utterly lacking in intellectual integrity, and therefore eager to cobble together a series of lectures that privileged ‘novelty’ over fact: ‘I proved that Fielding was greater as a dramatist than a novelist; I restored Yalden and Pye to their places amongst the great poets of England’ (‘Confessions’ 437). It would be an overreaction to accept this as indicative of the contemporary attitude towards Extension lecturing in general; nevertheless, this periodical attracted a large, general readership, and satirical articles such as this therefore had the potential to persuade a significant, and also very diverse, sector of the population. That Extension was pilloried within a publication of this nature, as well as the more scholarly *Nineteenth Century*, is revealing of the

⁶² Donovan notes that ‘in one of his first articles for *Maga*, published in March 1899, Whibley had delivered a searing indictment of Forster’s Education Act of 1870 for creating a readership hungry only for sensationalist ephemera and its baneful complement, “the worst periodical press that Europe has ever known”’ (261-62). This further underlines the political and social values underpinning Whibley’s reaction to the Extension Movement.

contemporary uncertainty about what is here depicted as an amateurish and cynical educational endeavour, however far removed this was from the reality of extramural teaching.

VI

In spite of these criticisms, Collins used his work for the University Extension Movement to renew his calls for a School of English at the ancient universities. Following his failure to be appointed for the Merton Chair in 1885, as Kearney has also identified, Collins ‘used the Movement for propagandist purposes’, and it was beneficial to his campaign to suggest that ‘Oxford stood for academic backwardness; the Extension Movement for an exciting new development in education’ (Kearney, ‘University Extension’ 329). This accounts for the often very fervent remarks in Collins’s reports about the excellent progress he felt was being made by his students, while at the same time, comments about the ‘Very little support [that] appeared to be given by the Institution at which the lectures were held’ (London, *Lecturers’ Michaelmas 1890*) are also prevalent within these Extension files, a signal of his growing frustration at the lack of assistance from local and central authorities he felt was being offered to him and his English literature colleagues.

Collins set himself the unenviable dual-task both of insisting that English literature was already being taught in the systematic and professional manner appropriate to a university subject, and therefore suitable for immediate implementation, while also maintaining, somewhat inconsistently, that it was vital for lecturers to be properly trained before the Movement could guarantee the responsible dissemination of knowledge. In an 1889 article he wrote for the *Nineteenth Century*, he reminded readers that ‘Of the subjects included in the

Extension lectures English literature fills a very wide space' and 'The Universities undertake to provide lecturers on it, to hold examinations on it, to grant certificates of proficiency in it' ('Universities in Contact' 580). Moreover, 'Every year scores of graduates quit Oxford and Cambridge to fill posts in all quarters of the world, the chief function of which is the interpretation of that literature' (580-81). Therefore,

Those who are not acquainted with the internal administration of our Universities will scarcely credit us when we say that the subject to which so much importance is apparently attached is not even recognised in the curriculum of one of them, and in the curriculum of the other is so purely subordinated to philology as to be practically unrepresented ('Universities in Contact' 581).

Here the notion of professionalisation takes on greater relevance to my argument: the danger, for Collins, lay in the fact that most Oxbridge students would have no motive to supplement their knowledge before embarking upon a teaching career. This was because the prestige of graduating from either of these universities was usually sufficient to gain them a teaching position; as Collins noted in an essay included in his 1901 collection, *Ephemera Critica*, 'his [the Oxbridge graduate's] scholastic reputation has been made, and a comfortable independence is assured. To very many men, indeed, who go up to the Universities with the intention of following teaching as a profession, a high degree is a mere investment' (68). Jepson has recorded that between 1885 and 1903, twenty-seven of the thirty-seven Oxford Extension lecturers in Yorkshire were Oxford graduates (249). Given the predominantly language basis of the Oxford English degree at this time, we can conclude that even if these men had, after 1894, taken English at university, they would still have been offered very little instruction in literary texts. For Collins it was therefore reasonable to assume that most English literature Extension syllabuses would be structured according to the whim of individual teachers, who would organise courses on no other grounds

than their own personal taste: 'its teachers are sometimes represented by men who have graduated in the classical schools and sometimes by men who have graduated in the modern history schools', therefore 'it is not surprising that both should approach it from different sides' (Collins, 'Universities in Contact' 581). The lack of standardised teacher training, Collins suggested, meant that pedagogical levels were uneven, varying across different Extension courses.

Archival evidence suggests that lecturers and examiners only very occasionally disagreed about teaching material and the correct way of approaching literary texts. Herford was relatively unimpressed with the examination questions that Collins had set for students of his 'Milton and Dryden' course at the South Lambeth centre. He observed that the 'The paper was ... comparatively easy, following the lines laid down by the lecturer somewhat closely, and did not therefore put the merit of the best candidates to a very severe test' (London, *Lecturers'* Michaelmas 1887). One of the few other examples I could find relates to Malden's course on 'Shakespeare's Historical Plays' in Michaelmas 1891, as examiner Edward Purcell⁶³ criticised the overly broad coverage of the course, a major shortcoming which left students 'grasping for something tangible' in the examination; he suggested that 'if the Lecturer were to recommend one or two to be read specially, several questions could be devised in the paper to enable them to illustrate the lecturer's teaching from those particular plays' (London, *Lecturers'* Michaelmas 1891; underlining in orig.). These disagreements and incongruities, rare instances of which are revealed to us in the Extension archives, were symptomatic for Collins of the lack of proper training in the form of an honours degree in English literature from either Oxford or Cambridge.

⁶³ I have been unable to uncover any biographical information on Purcell.

Collins was not alone in calling for university-level training for English Extension lecturers in order to guarantee consistently high pedagogical standards. H. J. Mackinder and M. E. Sadler⁶⁴ were less vocal about this lack of appropriate preparation, but still acknowledged that it could be problematic. Choosing not to address the question directly, they would ‘only remark that the present arrangements of the University make it far more difficult to find a young man who is competent to lecture on literary subjects than on history, philosophy, political economy, or any branch of natural science’ (112). George Goschen, President of the London Society, wrote to the Oxford University Vice-Chancellor in 1887 that in London at least, ‘there is no subject in which there is a greater demand for courses of Lectures than English Literature’ but ‘at the same time none in which there is more difficulty in finding the necessary number of thoroughly satisfactory teachers’ (381). Thus ‘it would seem that every effort should be made to encourage the cultivation of English Literature at Oxford by placing it on the same level as other recognized academic studies’ (382).

The incongruity here, I would argue, is that Collins regarded himself as an exemplary lecturer, and in need of no further training. He had effectively placed himself into a double bind, in that he needed to highlight the necessity for proper instruction in order to improve the Extension system, without admitting that English literature therein was being taught in the flawed manner that might validate its current near-total exclusion from Oxford and Cambridge. Collins was thus careful to

⁶⁴ Mackinder was an Extension lecturer in geography, and an Oxford Extension secretary between 1885 and 1893; he established the Oxford School of Geography later in the century (Blouet, ‘Mackinder, Sir Halford John’). Sadler was a secretary to the Oxford Extension delegacy between 1885 and 1895, and Professor of Education at Manchester University from 1903. He became Leeds Vice-Chancellor in 1911, and returned to Oxford University twelve years later to take up the mastership of University College (Lowe, ‘Sadler, Sir Michael Ernest’).

acknowledge that in most cases, English Extension lecturers had taken a more responsible line, opting to become better informed on the subject by conducting their own research in the absence of guidance from the university: ‘intelligent curiosity, ambition, or a sense of shame would induce him to supplement voluntarily, and by his own efforts, what he needed in his profession’ (*Ephemera* 68). The syllabuses within my archival sample, which this chapter has already drawn upon, certainly do not suggest an insubstantial level of literary knowledge on the part of lecturers. It is much more likely that Collins raised this issue to add another dimension to his Oxford campaign, and not because he had any reason to be concerned about the standard of teaching provided by his colleagues in Extension.

VII

Leaving these complaints and complications aside, I am convinced that University Extension represents a crucial, and too often overlooked, episode in the pedagogical history of English literature. Extension lecturers could hold up their syllabuses and examination results as evidence that English was a legitimate subject of study, and the thousands of adults signing up for courses throughout the provinces demonstrated that it would prove a popular choice if fully instituted at Oxbridge. The academic establishment could also no longer remain impervious to the sheer volume of letters and articles written, firstly, by Extension lecturers like Collins, but also by more generally well-known and respected figures like George Goschen and John Morley. Kearney sums up the situation neatly when he writes that ‘Oxford delayed as long as it could, but it could not altogether ignore national opinion, and national opinion on this issue during the early 1890s was very much mobilized by Collins from his Extension platform’ (‘University Extension’ 330). The fact that those speaking as

members of the university establishment — among them Charles Whibley — should choose to criticise the Movement so vehemently can be taken as an indication that, rather than regarding the scheme as a pointless, dilettantish, or, more seriously perhaps, a disingenuous money-making scheme which did not warrant serious attention, a conservative faction within the academy was in fact hugely anxious about the changes that Extension could force, in terms of the structure, the aim, and the expectations of university education more generally. The affiliation scheme was in practical terms a near-failure, but theoretically it offered an indication that establishment-based support for the Movement was strong, and willing to make itself known.

Moreover, English professors including — but not limited to — Walter Raleigh, Collins, Moulton, Gollancz, F. S. Boas,⁶⁵ and Oliver Elton, each taught in Extension before taking on a university English post, which offers the strongest possible evidence of the expertise they must have brought to their Extension teaching in the first place, as well as the influence of their extramural teaching experience on their future academic careers. This is particularly the case for Moulton, as my next chapter will show. That the extensive syllabus outlined in Collins's 1891 *Study of English Literature* was instituted practically verbatim as the Cambridge English Tripos in 1917, demonstrates that, despite Collins's reputation for disrespect and his hectoring approach, his literary expertise, too, was highly regarded in the academic world, and his pedagogical endeavours proved much more difficult to denigrate than those vicious reviews of other academics which I considered in my previous chapter.

⁶⁵ Boas was an Oxford Extension lecturer between 1887 and 1901; Professor of History and English Literature Queen's College, Belfast between 1901 and 1905; and also Clark lecturer in 1904. He published extensively on Elizabethan drama and poetry ('Boas, Frederick S.').

Finally, and most palpably, it is worth highlighting the progressive nature of the Extension format. The lecture, followed by a smaller class, can be seen as a precursor to the introduction of tutorial classes at universities, and an early version of the modern English university tutorial was therefore in existence from the 1870s, despite the fact this development is more commonly associated with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), after the formation of the Oxford Tutorial Classes Joint Committee in 1908. John Dover Wilson associated tutorials much more with the WEA; when he described introducing tutorials at Edinburgh University in the 1930s, for instance, he made no reference to their previous incarnation within the Extension Movement. Arriving in Edinburgh in 1936, Dover Wilson recalled being 'astonished' to discover that 'apart from firing lectures at them, the professor had no personal contact with his class at all' (123). Thus he asked the Principal 'to have a number of assistant lecturers added to my staff' so that the First Ordinary could be divided into classes of 'not more than ten', and with 'each assistant taking two or more groups each week, getting them to write for him about the set books and correcting their essays, while conducting discussions at the group meetings' (Dover Wilson 123). This was later introduced at Aberdeen by one of Dover Wilson's former students; Dover Wilson added (in what can only be termed an understatement, given current university provisions), that 'if it is copied in still other Scottish universities I may have reached my objective after all by working from within and not from without the pyramid' (126). This pedagogical structure had in fact already been adopted some sixty years earlier by the University Extension Movement.

We should take seriously Lawrence Goldman's call to 'reject arguments that make a sharp distinction between this phase of university adult education [the late-nineteenth century] and the subsequent heroic era, after 1907, when the alliance between universities and the Workers' Educational Association made possible an academic education for working-class students in tutorial classes' (101-02). The WEA certainly improved on the Extension format, in limiting the number of students in each class to thirty-two, and organising courses that lasted for up to three years with the same tutor. Nevertheless, this tutorial system, synonymous with the WEA in the early twentieth century, and now a feature of practically every university humanities course in Britain, was a teaching model that had already been keenly endorsed and successfully initiated by late-nineteenth century Extension lecturers such as Collins and Moulton, who recognised the unique educational advantages it could bestow.

4.

Richard G. Moulton's Inductive Criticism and the Novel in Extramural Adult Education during the *Fin de Siècle*

‘Whether it be by the union of several students in a society, or by the individual efforts of isolated readers, in some way the regular study of fiction must be set on foot. And this study of fiction will be, in its highest form, the study of life’ (R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 13).

The previous two chapters have highlighted the widespread unease towards the institutionalisation of English literature at Oxbridge during the 1880s and '90s, and the efforts made by the self-appointed spokesman of this campaign, John Churton Collins. As my examples have indicated, the courses Collins taught within the Extension Movement featured only authors that were already deemed to have a place within the literary canon, or at least assured of a position there in the near future, among them Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Browning. Collins indicated that his Extension syllabuses comprised of teaching material that Oxford and Cambridge should seek to incorporate in a syllabus. It would, therefore, have been detrimental to the cause he espoused if he were seen to be lecturing on any texts that were not widely regarded as unassailable in terms of literary merit. This explains the absence of novels on Collins's Extension syllabuses, for the novel was still a relatively new genre, ill-defined, diverse in form and style, and hugely popular.⁶⁶ Concerns about the novel were also prominent within periodicals and newspapers at this time, as academics, journalists, and even authors expressed consternation about the putatively

⁶⁶ In Peter Keating's discussion of publication figures for novels, he has noted that the year 1886 'marked the inauguration of a boom that, with occasional variations, was to continue until just before the First World War' (32). Indeed, 'By 1894, the year when the circulating libraries announced the death of the three-decker because they could no longer keep up with the amount of fiction being published, 1,315 new adult novels appeared, an average of 3.5 per day, "Sunday included"' (Keating 32). The figures, probably 'underestimates' in the first place, still fail to depict 'the actual amount of fiction being written and published: that can only be approximated by considering the growth of newspapers and periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth century' (Keating 33). Later Keating notes that 'not all of the possibly 50,000 different Victorian newspapers and periodicals were concerned with fiction ... But ... it is important to stress the total number of periodicals because a very large proportion of them did contain a fictional component' (36).

harmful effects of reading too much fiction, especially upon young women, children, and the working classes. The voracious reader, it was feared, might forge an overtly sensationalised conception of reality, and a decline in standards of morality in society more generally could also occur as a result of unwarranted exposure to crime, romance, and adventure. Kate Flint has reflected on some of the terms used to describe novel readers at this time:

The stereotype of the woman who gorged herself on romances as though they were boxes of sugar-plums, at first deliciously palatable but increasingly inducing an unhealthy, sickly saturation was a familiar one in advice works which sought to encourage women to take more substantial mental sustenance, or to read something more spiritually or socially improving (27).⁶⁷

Popular novels, Flint reminds us, were commonly seen as an unwholesome pastime, a treat that would engender nausea if indulged in to excess; Mary Hammond, too, has noted that ‘Fiction reading had come by this period [the 1890s] to stand in a metonymic relation to a number of social ills’, such as the ‘mental laxity’ that excessive reading was understood to encourage, particularly in women (32, 42).

Given the concerns about English as a subject of academic study that were circulating at this time, and the prejudices that Collins’s campaign was facing, one can understand that he would dissociate his already contested discipline from this controversial generic category.

In an article on the relationship between the rise of English and the emergence of literary modernism, John L. Kijinski therefore makes an astute claim when he

⁶⁷ Kelly J. Mays, too, has identified that popular reading in the late-nineteenth century was seen as an ‘addiction’, a ‘social disease that contributed to the enfeebled body and mind peculiar to modern men and women’ (174). Mays’s entire essay, in fact, offers a very detailed discussion of the negative portrayal of readers, particularly readers of fiction and cheap journalism, in the Victorian periodical press: ‘As essayist after essayist stressed, contemporary reading resembled not eating merely but “overfeeding,” “devouring,” a “mental gluttony” that was itself an addiction’ (173). Of course, these concerns were not unique to this specific period; in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland’s penchant for reading Gothic novels led her to imagine that Northanger Abbey was the site of gruesome crimes. Famously, Austen’s novel also contains her defence of the novel, with the author’s biting comment to critics over their disparagement of the genre.

identifies that the novel as a genre, and English literature as a subject of study, were in an analogous position during the *fin de siècle*: ‘As late Victorian novelists faced the widely held assumption that they worked within a second-rate genre, one that was dominated by mere entertainments, early advocates of English studies faced a similar problem’ (39). However, rather than attribute Collins’s choice of set texts in his Extension syllabuses to a strand of conservatism in his literary tastes, as Kijinski has then interpreted the situation, I would instead reiterate that Collins’s decision to disregard the novel was an entirely acceptable one given the particular dimensions of his campaign, which, as my previous chapters have suggested, was a vociferous crusade against the ancient English universities, and therefore certainly not the work of an unyielding educational traditionalist. Kijinski also neglects to mention the fact that, although not taught by Collins, courses on the novel were organised by some of his colleagues in Extension, such as J. A. Hobson and Richard G. Moulton.⁶⁸ My interest in this chapter lies with the extramural novel courses taught and organised by Moulton. These were underpinned by a method of interpreting literary texts, also formulated by him, which was designed specifically for use by extramural students.

Subsequent sections of this chapter will focus in greater depth on Moulton’s “inductive criticism”, its suitability for Extension students, and its influence on his endeavours in teaching the novel. Nevertheless, it will prove constructive to outline,

⁶⁸ The genre was also no stranger to university English departments in Britain: eighteenth-century academics including Hugh Blair and William Enfield, for instance, had drawn on novels as illustrative examples in their teaching, and W. E. Aytoun, seminal English professor at Edinburgh from 1845 until 1865, referred to contemporary novelists including Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray, and Charles Kingsley in his lectures, although only ever very briefly. For more on Aytoun’s discussion of novels in his Edinburgh lectures, see Frykman 53-58. This rather undermines Elizabeth Langland’s observation, within an essay about the receptions through the years of various Victorian novelists, that in early-Victorian England, ‘there was a real question about whether one should read novels at all, and they certainly did not figure in any educational curriculum’ (390). Student lecture notes reveal that, later in the century, David Masson also name-checked several nineteenth-century novelists in his Edinburgh lectures, including Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well as O. W. Holmes, who at that time was still alive (Watson, ‘Notes on Masson’s Lectures’).

briefly, some of its main principles here. Moulton's description of his new interpretative mode appeared in his essay 'Plea for an Inductive Science of Literary Criticism', which served as an extended introduction to his *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1885).⁶⁹ The keystone of inductive criticism was maintaining focus exclusively on the textual specifics of each individual work, 'to get a closer acquaintance with their phenomena', such as characterisation, dialogue, and plot (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 2). One was strictly limited to discussion of verifiable, observable details, towards an understanding of the relationship between component parts within a single text. To reach an interpretation of the character of Macbeth, for instance, 'The inductive critic simply puts together all the sayings and doings of Macbeth himself, all that others in the play say and appear to feel about him, and whatever view of the character is consistent with these and similar facts of the play, that view he selects' (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 25). It was unnecessary, and even inhibiting, to have accrued an extensive amount of extraneous literary knowledge, because this could serve no purpose, and might even prove a distraction, when one sought to offer a strictly text-based inductive interpretation.

Moulton's interpretative method was mastered very successfully by groups of Extension students in the 1890s, but it is rarely discussed today. Baldick, for instance, presents us with only a partial reflection on the *fin de siècle* when he writes that 'Interpretation and analysis, so prominent in later periods as to be synonymous with criticism itself, appear to have been of little interest to critics at this time'; instead the

⁶⁹ In order to discuss Moulton's inductive method as fully as possible, it has been necessary to draw also on his much later work *The Modern Study of Literature* (1915). Although this book falls beyond my thesis's specified time frame of 1885 to 1910, it offers a more thorough explanation of theories that Moulton had already laid out in the earlier essay; as his nephew explained in his memoir of Moulton, 'in his *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* he first enunciated the foundation principles of those methods of study and interpretation which — thirty years later — we find completely and categorically expounded in *The Modern Study of Literature*' (W. F. Moulton 54).

‘conduct of critical writing is ... founded upon the assumption that the critic’s task is to define an impression of an author’s sensibility or characteristic temperament, or to pick out a work’s leading moods and character-portraits, not to delve into detailed questions of style, structure, or meaning’ (*Criticism* 58). Given that inductive criticism made constant appeals to the text itself as a concrete grounding for a verifiable interpretative appraisal, I would assume that Moulton has been overlooked in this summation from Baldick, although he does briefly mention him later, in terms of the similarities between his work and that of Northrop Frye in the 1950s. I would suggest that the existence of Moulton’s workable, and, as I will show, remarkably successful approach to literary interpretation poses something of an obstruction to the neater, but much less accurate, account of English literature, with which the previous chapter should have familiarised us, that associated academic literary criticism in this period with ‘appreciation and comparative valuation’, ‘deformed by a kind of ancestor-worshipping imperative’ (Baldick, *Criticism* 58, 59). More generally, I believe the fact that Moulton developed and practiced his initiative outside the academy in Britain, before moving over to America, has led to his marginal status, or ‘invisibility’ (Buckridge 30), even, in comparison with the critical attention afforded to those academic figures one would associate with Oxbridge, such as Matthew Arnold, A. C. Bradley, Walter Raleigh, and Arthur Quiller-Couch.

Regardless of recent marginalisation, Moulton’s influence on extramural education, together with his innovative approach to literary study, renders him absolutely central to the present discussion. This chapter will begin by outlining the main principles of Moulton’s inductive criticism, before reflecting briefly on its anticipation of — although not inspiration for — I. A. Richards’s practical criticism.

Bringing in examples from Extension lectures, I will then highlight the particular suitability of Moulton's interpretative method for the needs of extramural students. Following analysis of contemporary criticisms of Moulton's methodology, this chapter will then consider the ways in which inductive analysis justified pedagogical attention being afforded to the novel at a time when the genre was neglected by other more prominent academics. Finally I will explore the wider ramifications, this time in America, of Moulton's extramural work.

I

In a bid to explain his formulation of this inductive critical method, Moulton gestured towards reviews published within newspapers and periodicals; rather than offering a discussion of the book in the spirit of disinterested objectivity, he argued, most of these articles were used by reviewers as the means through which to disseminate their own biased views.⁷⁰ For Moulton, this criticism tended to refer so sparingly to the work that was supposedly under discussion that in fact it 'belongs to the literature treated, not to the scientific treatment of it'; the 'interest' of these reviews 'lies ... in their flashing the subjectivity of a writer on to a variety of isolated topics; they thus have value, not as fragments of literary science, but as fragments of Addison, of Jeffrey, of Macaulay' (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 22). Moulton's analysis of the current state of literary journalism suggested to him, further, that there was too much scope for inaccuracy when there was 'nothing to guarantee the examination of a book before it is reviewed', or, to put it more directly, the reviewer may not have read the book thoroughly, if at all, since it was barely necessary even

⁷⁰ Mary Poovey offers a similar reading of the literary field to that of Moulton: 'the conventions that governed journalism, including the speed with which journalists were required to write and the number of titles they were expected to review in a single article, encouraged reviewers to subordinate careful judgements about what they read (or pretended to read) to displays of their own vituperative style' (439).

to mention it in his article (*Modern* 319). In response, Moulton posited an alternative, ‘scientific’ mode of literary analysis, based upon sympathetic appreciation, ‘independent of praise or blame’ (*Shakespeare* 4, 22), and, most crucially of all, grounded in the facts presented by the text, rather than the subjective impressions received by the critic. Thus, although Moulton acknowledged that a subjective response to any given work was inevitable, he believed that one could prevent this from distorting the interpretation by constantly referring back to textual elements such as dialogue and description, and thereby consulting ‘no court of appeal except the appeal to the literary works themselves’ (*Shakespeare* 24).

This presumably rather time-consuming method was also an egalitarian approach to the text, in that every constituent of the work was deemed to have a bearing on the action, and therefore had to be accounted for during the interpretative process. Rather than ‘fastening attention on its striking elements and ignoring others as oversights and blemishes’, the inductive critic would collate ‘with business-like exactitude all that the author has given, weighing, balancing, and standing by the product’ (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 25). If the text was analysed with complete attention and accuracy, by a well-trained inductive critic, the conclusion would rest ‘upon a basis of indisputable fact’ (25), and could be verified by others trained in the same method, thus allowing for a more consistent, objective, interpretative appraisal.

Moulton was not unique in offering a critique of literary criticism at this time; Laurel Brake has drawn attention to the ‘self-conscious’ attitude that rendered the period so rich in ruminations on the profession, as critics ‘grope their way through problems of identity, method, and language’ in a bid to define the correct approach to critical analysis (94). In a three-part article titled ‘The Science of Criticism’, which

appeared in the May 1891 edition of the *New Review*, Henry James, Edmund Gosse and Andrew Lang each offered their view on the current state of literary journalism, and the qualities they looked for in critical writing. It will prove constructive to explore some of the main points raised in this tripartite discussion, before comparing them with Moulton's own critical priorities. James distinguished between actual criticism and reviewing, as Moulton had done, and condemned the latter type of writing as mere padding: if 'Periodical literature ... is like a regular train which starts at an advertised hour, but which is free to start only if every seat be occupied', then a review is a 'stuffed manikin' that is 'thrust into the empty seat ... It looks sufficiently like a passenger, and you know it is not one only when you perceive that it neither says anything nor gets out' (James 398).

Depicted in James's terms, low critical standards, characterised by a 'paucity of examples', and the 'profusion of talk and the poverty of experiment' (398), were an infection, and a sub-standard review had a destructive influence on the literature it presumed to discuss, 'poison[ing] the air it breathes' (400). Thereafter, typically disparaging of his own profession, and with his tongue firmly in his cheek, Lang insisted that 'Criticism does very little, if anything, for any art, but man is so made that he takes pleasure in having his say' (405). I mentioned in my second chapter that Lang conceived the best criticism to be quixotic and entertaining, and he made this point here: 'It is rather originality, individuality, the possession of wide knowledge and of an interesting temperament, that enable a writer on books to write what shall be valuable. For writing *about* writing is not in itself a very noble profession, nor one very well worth devoting time and labour to' (404). This was far removed from Moulton's own critical priorities, which, as I have shown, lay solely with the printed

text, rather than any extraneous information, or idiosyncrasies, that an individual critic might bring to bear on his interpretation.

Gosse's contribution in the *New Review* discussion is more revealing still; as with Moulton and James, Gosse also distinguished between pedestrian reviews that addressed the great deluge of novels published on a daily basis, and the 'other class of literary criticism', which he deemed the 'most exquisite of intellectual products' ('Science' 409). At first glance, therefore, Gosse and Moulton would appear to agree about the two types of criticism. However, closer analysis reveals that according to Gosse, the principles that Moulton had appropriated for his inductive criticism were actually only useful for churning out those prosaic book reviews:

The critic has to take the book on its own merits, to describe succinctly its contents or the line of its argument, and to give a judgment on its execution. This work is strictly impersonal. He must not air his own opinions, he should not, in this elementary kind of criticism, compare the author's book with those of his contemporaries, or even with his own earlier productions. The critic is here merely employed to tell the newspaper-reader what is the nature of this or that particular volume which has just been published. His duty is to be truthful, to be unprejudiced, to guard against riding any of his own hobbies unfairly, in short, to give the book before him a fair field and no favour (Gosse, 'Science' 409).

For Gosse, this type of "impersonal", "unprejudiced", and "truthful" review was inferior to the 'comparative and composite' (409) criticism that was saturated with the personality of the critic. Moulton and Gosse were thus at odds in their conception of how literary criticism should be performed. The former sought to eradicate any trace of subjective response, and believed that the critical focus should remain solely with the text itself; Gosse, in contrast, was dismayed when literary criticism was not sufficiently opinionated: 'it must be personal, that is to say, individual to the critic' ('Science' 410). Moulton's inductive method, in staying close to the text, offered a very different critical approach.

George Saintsbury provides us with another point of reference here: both he and Moulton differentiated between book reviewing and what they deemed to be the more important field of literary criticism proper. However, Moulton's further contention was that thorough training in the latter process taught one how to eradicate what he regarded as unnecessary qualitative judgments. Although 'likes and dislikes must always exist', Moulton argued that 'such preferences and comparisons of merit must be kept rigidly outside the sphere of science', which 'knows nothing of competitive examination' (*Shakespeare* 28). Saintsbury, on the other hand, believed that scholarly writing should actually be utilised for this purpose. The following passage, taken from Saintsbury's *History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (1896), illustrates this point well:

Henry Kingsley, younger brother of Charles, was himself a prolific and vigorous novelist; and though a recent attempt to put him above his brother cannot possibly be allowed by sound criticism, he had perhaps a more various command of fiction, certainly a truer humour, and if a less passionate, perhaps a more thoroughly healthy literary temperament (333-34).

Rather than grading and comparing different authors and their works in this way, identifying errors and constructing a scale of literary excellence based upon personal taste, or 'authority however high' (Moulton, *Shakespeare* 25), Moulton wished to dispense with the idea of relative merit altogether; the critical 'power', he argued, lay in 'clearly seeing that two things are different, without being at the same time impelled to rank one above the other' (*Shakespeare* 29). This was also the case for broader generic categories. Moulton contended that literary modes had a tendency to be regarded with suspicion when they deviated from an apparently definitive, and certainly static, set of laws, which privileged older genres: 'Judicial criticism', he noted disapprovingly, 'has a mission to watch against variations from received

canons' (*Shakespeare 2*). In place of this censorious and stiflingly 'unreceptive' (*Shakespeare 7*) judicial criticism that was dismissive of new forms, Moulton's alternative mode of analysis insisted that it was the critic's duty to adopt a 'receptive attitude', where critical concentration would simply have to be altered for 'each variety of art' (31). Critics who turned their face against current literary activity, 'using ideas drawn from the past to mould and limit productive power in the present and future', were likely to be proved wrong in the future, and Moulton offered some past instances of this, by way of illustration: 'critical taste, critical theory, and critical prophecy were unanimous against blank verse as an English measure: for all that it has become the leading medium of English poetry' (*Shakespeare 16, 14*). Thus it is the case that 'If the critics venture to prophesy, the sequel is the only refutation of them needed; if they give reasons, the reasons survive only to explain how the critics were led astray' (Moulton, *Shakespeare 17*).

These critical priorities licensed the inductive critic, I would suggest, to disregard many of the late-Victorian wrangles over the particular status of the novel within the literary hierarchy. For Moulton '*literature is a thing of development*' (*Shakespeare 37*; emphasis in orig.), and the novel, or any other genre, was not therefore inferior for its having adopted different literary conventions from, for instance, classical Greek drama. Indeed, Moulton reminded readers that 'generations of literary history have been wasted in discussing whether the Greek dramatists or Shakespeare were the higher', whereas 'now every one recognises that they constitute two schools different in kind that cannot be compared' (*Shakespeare 30*). This invalidates Kijinski's complaint that 'in its first stages', English studies 'failed to provide a critical discourse that would allow members of the discipline to engage in intelligent

critical commentary on new literature' (49). As I have shown, Moulton asked that while critics maintain reverence for the literary past, they also trust in the potential of contemporary writers to produce work that was equally accomplished, however different in form: 'If an artist acts contrary to the practice of all other artists, the result is either that he produces no art-effect at all, in which case there is nothing for criticism to register and analyse, or else he produces a new effect, and is thus extending, not breaking, the laws of art' (*Shakespeare* 34).⁷¹ On a local level, the purely textual focus of inductive criticism, whereby the interest lay in understanding the relationship between each element of the individual work, meant that a newly-published novel provided material for interpretation that was just as fertile as a Renaissance play, for example, or an eighteenth-century poem.

II

The previous section has explored the main principles underpinning Moulton's inductive criticism; before I examine how this functioned in the extramural classroom, it is worth noting that certain aspects of his methodology strongly anticipated some of the principles underpinning practical criticism, the later critical approach that would become synonymous with I. A. Richards, and Cambridge English, in the 1920s and beyond.⁷² Suzy Anger, in an essay about the shifting priorities in late-nineteenth century textual interpretation, has already made this connection: 'The New Criticism is not in fact an invention of the twentieth century: in the Victorian critic Richard Moulton's now forgotten works we find its principles

⁷¹ Patrick Buckridge has described this as 'the constructive *suspension* of judgment on works of assumed merit in the interests of revealing the widest possible field of affective meanings and cognitive structures in the work' (30).

⁷² I should note, however, that Richards's interest in the psychological impact of texts upon readers was not one of Moulton's concerns. Moreover, Richards applied practical criticism to poetry, while Moulton used his inductive criticism on numerous different genres.

originally and brilliantly introduced' (36). She identifies that Moulton's 'appeal to fixed properties of the text', and his eradication of 'authorial intention as the locus of meaning' (Anger 35) mark him out as the first exponent of what would later emerge as a groundbreaking critical method.⁷³ A more detailed exposition of the similarities between Moulton and Richards has been offered by Eugene Williamson; indeed, his entire essay sets out 'exclusively' to demonstrate Moulton's 'anticipation of "modern" critical concepts' (632).⁷⁴

The essays by Anger and Williamson therefore do much to re-establish Moulton's largely overlooked critical achievements, but while he is likely to be a particularly revealing figure for specialists of twentieth-century critical theory, my own interest in Moulton's method lies with the relationship between his extramural endeavours and his formulation of inductive criticism. Anger has acknowledged that inductive criticism 'has important pedagogical consequences' in that 'students of literature can focus entirely on the text itself without recourse to "external" information on the author or the time period in which the text was written' (36). She does not, however, explain why this method was particularly suitable for extramural students, and she thereby omits what I deem to be part of the driving force behind Moulton's critical priorities. Williamson has briefly acknowledged that Moulton 'had many years of experience in the difficult art of making literature comprehensible and interesting to

⁷³ I will suggest in my coda that practical criticism finally put to rest any doubts about the suitability of English as a university subject, by rendering it a respectable, examinable discipline.

⁷⁴ Both Williamson and Anger emphasise that Moulton anticipated — rather than directly influenced — some key aspects of Richards's practical criticism. Thus Williamson has written that despite the similarities between Moulton's ideas and those of later critics such as Northrop Frye, Richards, Cleanth Brooks, and John Crowe Ransom, 'none of them has left any evidence of his awareness of this fact' (633). In René Wellek's discussion of precursors to Richards's critical method, he described it as a 'restatement of the affective theory of art which can be traced back to Aristotle's catharsis and has its immediate ancestors in the tradition of psychological aesthetics in Germany, England, and the United States' (5: 222). Wellek subsequently cited other critics, contemporaneous with Moulton, whose traces can be found in Richards's work, such as Ethel D. Puffer, Wilbur M. Urban, and James Ward; Moulton's name does not appear in Wellek's index.

miscellaneous, occasionally untutored, audiences', which 'seems to have accorded well with his dedication to "the scientific study of literature as a whole"' (633).

Although Williamson subsequently remarks that 'his [Moulton's] extension lectures were successful applications of his literary theories' (633), he then offers no further insight or illustration of how this might have been enacted.

Under different educational circumstances, Extension students were likely to struggle in contextualising the work of an author, or anyway feel too intimidated to relate their own assessment of a text. With inductive criticism, however, aspects such as the biography of the author, literary categories, or the historical context of the work (unless this background information was referenced directly in the text itself) were bracketed off, and therefore any previously obtained, specialist knowledge offered no advantage to the critic. Inductive criticism thus allowed Extension students to present an interpretation that had equal claims to validity as an analysis formulated by a well-practised, knowledgeable reader. Outside information on an author or work might in fact impede the inductive critic in his analysis, by distracting him from the text itself with extraneous details that he must actively strive to disregard during the course of his interpretation. Moulton, confident that his methodology could benefit many thousands who lacked tertiary-level education, decided to publish it only after he had spent almost a decade testing and altering the original inductive model (which he had formulated while a student at Cambridge) in accordance with the response of Extension students. His nephew, W. Fiddian Moulton, wrote of him that while the 'book form was carefully planned out' before he started teaching, nevertheless, 'modification of some details' followed on from the lectures (75). Because inductive criticism was originally designed for extramural

students, Moulton's Extension syllabuses are crucial in understanding how his interpretative method functioned at a practical level; it will prove constructive to examine one of these syllabuses in depth, and thereafter the reaction that inductive criticism provoked, firstly among his students, and also from journalists at the time.

III

The printed syllabus for Moulton's Extension course on 'Stories as a Mode of Thinking', reveals that set texts included *Macbeth*, Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama*, *The Tempest*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Moulton therefore disregarded any notion of a generic hierarchy, instead placing the novel on the same level as epic poetry and Shakespearean drama. Focus remained instead on the manner in which the story was told within each work; lectures were on enchantment and destiny, and the way that characterisation was directed towards this central theme. The stated aims of the course were consistent with those of inductive criticism: emphasis was on, firstly, 'Story as an art in itself: especially Plot, the application of artistic handling to the sequence of events', and also 'Stories as a mode of thinking', where 'the personages and action' became 'concrete embodiments of ideas and speculations' (R. G. Moulton, 'Stories' 3).

Participation levels at certain Extension courses could be low at times, as I suggested in the previous chapter; this was not, however, the case here: in Lewisham during the Michaelmas term of 1891, for instance, Moulton's course attracted an average attendance of 270 at each of the ten lectures, 200 of whom stayed on for the class, while 52 students produced weekly written papers (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas 1891*). A list of exercises Moulton had appended to the end of this Extension syllabus confirms his determination to maintain focus upon the specifics

of the text, in this case with the purpose of reaching an accurate understanding of character. Students were asked to ‘Examine the description of Macbeth as the practical man by comparing him as seen in periods of action and under circumstances in which action is impracticable’ (R. G. Moulton, ‘Stories’ 34). Other questions called for comment on specific scenes in the play, while the following advice was provided in a footnote: ‘In “analysing” a scene, such a description should be given as will make clear the purpose of each speech, or its bearing on the general drift, any changes of thought or movement on the part of the actors, the scenery and general surroundings being not forgotten’ (‘Stories’ 34). Moulton asked students to consider how each textual component, such as dialogue, and even stage directions, contributed to an understanding of character, and the development of the plot.⁷⁵

Week six of the Extension course took Scott’s *The Monastery* as its focus. Here Moulton’s syllabus stated that the ‘intrinsic interest of the White Lady as a piece of art-creation must come before all others’ (‘Stories’ 21). Rather than expend energy exploring the historical background to the novel, Moulton encouraged students to pay attention to how ‘abstract fancies [are] conveyed in plastic form’ (22). For instance, the syllabus stated that ‘creative curiosity’ is the ‘central interest’ in the novel, but the emphasis was placed on how this is ‘*crystallised into the conception*’ (R. G. Moulton, ‘Stories’ 22; emphasis in orig.). Thus at one point Moulton questioned how the ‘central interest of speculation is supported by others’ in the

⁷⁵ To facilitate this type of analysis, Moulton stated in the syllabus which edition of each text he was using. This was essential because of his constant page number references, but it also reveals that he was aware of — and encouraged his students to purchase — the cheap reprints that were being produced at this time. In the lecture on *The Tempest*, he stipulated that students ‘should use the Globe Edition of Shakespeare (Macmillan, 3/6), the references below being made to the numbering of the lines in that edition’ (‘Stories’ 14). Moulton also recommended that students consult the ‘Clarendon Press Series’ edition, at 1s. 6d., for ‘explanatory notes’ (14). For Southey’s *Curse of Kehama*, he suggested the ‘Cheap edition in Cassell’s National series: 3d.’ (‘Stories’ 2). References to *The Monastery* were from the ‘sixpenny Waverley novels (Black)’ (‘Stories’ 2).

novel; note here the abundance of page references, as students were encouraged to stay close to the text:

Natural scenery often favours the mysterious: mists and fantastic resemblances (413.b.3) — ravines, groves, sense of loneliness: distance from the real becomes nearness to hidden possibilities (chapter ii., particularly 409.b.3) — thus the general idea of *haunting*: every such idea a centre of imaginative activity. [Compare 474.a.2.] ('Stories' 23; page references, parentheses, and emphasis in orig.).

Exercises on *The Monastery* that students were given to complete in their own time further emphasised the need to provide textual evidence to support every aspect of their argument: 'Bring out (especially by quotations from her speeches) some of the more striking ideas embodied in the conception of the "White Lady"'; and 'Note the details of appearing and disappearing in the manifestations of Scott's Fairy, as illustrations of the art with which he suggests its *unsubstantial* nature' (R. G. Moulton, 'Stories' 35; emphasis in orig.). Superfluous information about the author, or the context of the work, which could certainly be justified in relation to an historical novel such as *The Monastery*, but would probably deter less knowledgeable students, is notably absent from the syllabus.

Another text on this Extension course was Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Again, what is striking about this lecture is the number of page references Moulton provided, as he framed every remark with evidence brought in from the actual narrative, and encouraged his students to follow suit. For instance, when Monte Cristo's 'Retribution upon Villefort' was examined, Moulton examined how he was attacked

Through his household: the murderous instincts of his wife discovered [note that (Chapter 52) she had first 'consulted the count about the health of Mademoiselle de Villefort'] and fed with encouragement till she becomes an exterminating demon for the whole family. [Chapters 47 (latter part), 52, 57-9, 72-24, 78 (init.), 79-80, 93, 94, 100-3, 105, 108, 111.] (R. G. Moulton,

‘Stories’ 32; page references and parentheses in orig.).

There are, I would argue, some obvious drawbacks to such a highly prescriptive mode of critical analysis, not least its wilful disregard for a writer’s powers of expression. This example also highlights what was presumably a very tedious process of gathering together so much in the way of textual detail. Of greater significance in the current context, I would reiterate, is the fact that these Extension lectures were consistent with Moulton’s stated aim to render literature accessible to all readers. The printed text of the novel or play that all students had in front of them was privileged over information relating to the author, or the political backdrop against which the work was set, and references to historical events were introduced only in terms of their enactment in Dumas’s plot: ‘The original crime: two betrothal feasts. — Marseilles: the return of Napoleon and the Hundred Days. [Chapters 1-13.]’ (‘Stories’ 31).

Extension students, asked to note the ways in which individual components worked together at every stage of the text, were discouraged from ignoring or even sidelining any textual element, however seemingly minor. One final example, from *The Tempest* lecture in week five, foregrounds this egalitarian attitude towards the ‘objective details’ of the work (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 24). Moulton wished to demonstrate how Shakespeare prepared a ‘Background for the Enchantment’, firstly through scenery, the ‘saturation of the play with details of nature-beauty’ (‘Stories’ 14). Thus Moulton highlighted, for instance, the ‘Sense of desolation (3.3.80) — inaccessible (2.1.37) — the secret of sailors (1.2.270) and hidden currents (1.2.159, 178) — guarded by storms (1.1) and forbidding cliffs (2.1.120, 1.2.227)’ (‘Stories’ 14; line references in orig.). Following this minute focus on descriptive scene-setting,

Moulton turned to characterisation: Miranda's 'ideal beauty (1.2.421)'; her 'peculiar position: the highest intellectual education (1.2.172) — yet no contact with the world — has seen none of her own sex (3.1.48)'; and also her 'Simplicity — often childlike ... simulating its opposite in 3.1' (R. G. Moulton, 'Stories' 15; line references in orig.). By drawing together several different components of the play, Moulton's student could reach an understanding of the 'Enchantment Itself' (15). Thus setting, characterisation, plot, and dialogue were all brought in as evidence that 'Sleep and Music are gates to Enchantment':

The drowsy quality of the climate (2.1.200; compare Miranda throughout 1.2) — dream-scenery (3.2.148) — music is regularly Ariel's instrument of enchantment (1.2.376, 387, 407; 3.2.144-9, &c.) — sounds of nature gathered into a symphony (Ariel's Song, 1.2, from 376) — soothing and drowsy force of music (1.2.391; 2.1.188) — natural at first, then transcending nature (1.2. compare 387 and 405) (R. G. Moulton, 'Stories' 16; line references in orig.).

My archival research has revealed that this extraordinarily detailed approach was carried out very successfully by Extension students. In C. H. Herford's report on this course in Lewisham, he noted that 'The papers from this Centre were almost all of considerable merit; and all have evidence of the keen interest which had been aroused in the subject discussed, and of careful study of the books dealt with' (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas* 1891). Although there was a 'tendency to tell the "Stories" as stories and not as "Modes of Thinking"', nevertheless 'the analytic method (exemplified in the lectures) was (thoroughly apprehended, and) aptly if not quite uniformly applied' (London, *Lecturers' Michaelmas* 1891; parentheses in orig.). A second report from Herford, this time on the same course but in Paddington, recorded that 'A considerable proportion of the writers had read all the literature discussed, and, for the most part, with a not unsuccessful effort to attain the proper critical stand-point (exemplified in the lectures). Several papers showed considerable

ability' (London, *Lecturers'* Michaelmas 1891; parenthesis in orig.). These reports from Herford provide us with valuable evidence that the system worked very efficiently in extramural learning environments. Students understood Moulton's method, and thereafter stayed close to these inductive principles when formulating their own literary interpretations beyond the Extension classroom.

IV

Despite its success in the lecture hall, Moulton's 'Plea for an Inductive Science of Literary Criticism' did not escape censure when it was first published in 1885. A review of the book in the *Athenæum*, having set the tone by remarking that 'There is no reason why it should have been written, none why it should have been printed, and none why it should ever be read', subsequently claimed that although Moulton had sought to emphasise the centrality of the text, rather than the critic, 'of Shakespeare as an artist in drama there is not much said that is worth anything, while of Mr. Moulton as a critic of Shakespeare, and of the impossible terminology which Mr. Moulton has been obliged to invent to express his meaning, there are upwards of three hundred solid pages' ('New Publications' 313). Moulton's book was actually criticised elsewhere for this tendency towards 'contemptible jargon' ('Some Books' 88), and also for the failure of his method to capture the spirit of Shakespearean drama: 'In truth, Shakespere's [sic] men and women are not to be expressed in formulae; their fluent vitality escapes such criticism; they mock your solution from afar with ironical laughter' (Dowden 127).

Moulton would presumably have felt that this "vitality" would not have been lost to the inductive critic, who would simply have been expected to identify which

aspect of the text conveyed this particular sense of liveliness to him.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Edward Dowden's argument in the *Academy* is a compelling one, and more so when he writes of inductive criticism that 'When we have gained the gain of such an hypothesis, we can dismiss it, and plunge among the crude facts once more' in order to enjoy the 'play of passions around what is beautiful or lovable or hateful [which] carries us farther than all knowledge unvitalised by emotion' (127). When employed as a way of writing about Shakespeare plays, I agree that Moulton's method seemed to produce only dry, potentially pedantic analysis. This would not, I would argue, have had any bearing upon its obvious effectiveness within extramural education, where different priorities governed, particularly the inculcation of uninhibited discussion that included every member of the class, each of whom could bring in evidence from the text to make a valid point, regardless of their previous literary training.

The drama critic William Archer, unable to appreciate this pedagogical function of inductive criticism — unsurprisingly, given that he had only the printed version upon which to base his assessment — used his lengthy review of Moulton's book in *Macmillan's* as an opportunity to formulate a scathing attack on the inductive critic trained in Moulton's method, particularly in terms of its openness to different genres. Moulton had cited Ben Jonson as an example in order to demonstrate that merely because a work or an author was different from what was generally perceived to be exemplary, in this case Shakespeare, this did not mean that Jonson was necessarily at fault:

But, judicial criticism insists, the object of the Drama is to pourtray [sic] human nature, whereas Ben Jonson has painted not men but caricatures.

⁷⁶ Moulton does not appear to have responded to any of these reviews.

Induction sees that this formula cannot be a sufficient definition of the Drama, for the simple reason that it does not take in Ben Jonson; its own mode of putting the matter is that Ben Jonson has founded a school of treatment of which the law is caricature (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 3).

By taking to an extreme Moulton's call to analyse each work within the terms it had set for itself, and his consequent receptivity to new literary forms, Archer parodied this discussion of Ben Jonson by suggesting that a "Post-Office Directory", being different in kind from *Hamlet* but not, according to inductive criticism, either better or worse, would draw the following conclusion: 'judicial criticism will maintain, it must be admitted that the Shakespearean mode of portraying [sic] mankind is infinitely the higher. Inductive treatment knows nothing about higher or lower, which lie outside the domain of science. Its point is, that science is indebted to the Post-Office for a new species' (Archer 47). Thus, although 'Judicial criticism complains that the "Post-Office Directory" sets forth no logical sequence of events or train of thought', Archer joked that for inductive critics 'the point of the "Post-Office Directory" lies in its illogicality; it establishes a new mode of "piercing through the body of the suburbs, city, court," not by description or analysis, but by streets and squares' (Archer 47). Archer was right that inductive criticism neglected to offer any prescription for disallowing certain works from serious critical appraisal, and this had the potential to become farcical, in that any piece of writing could make equal claims for the textual analysis one might afford to, for instance, a Shakespearean play. I would draw attention to the fact that these courses were not, of course, constructed by the students themselves, but by generally very knowledgeable and experienced teachers. Elsewhere Moulton had written that 'While the teaching process is going on you take on trust, when it is finished you decide for yourself' (*Modern* 319), and his

Extension syllabuses consisted of — among other topics — ancient Greek drama, the Bible, and nineteenth-century prose.

Moulton's 'Plea for an Inductive Science of Literary Criticism', moreover, preceded a series of Shakespeare essays. As Archer was right to point out, however, Moulton was guilty, in this latter volume of criticism, of deviating from his own inductive principles, by presenting non-scientific, subjective judgements on Shakespeare's work. Apparently secure in the knowledge that an appreciative assessment of an already-canonised author was unlikely to be contradicted, Moulton offered up, as text-based and therefore verifiable fact, what Archer identified instead as 'mere conventions', the 'perceptions of a certain number of men ... who agree to call themselves cultured' (49, 48). Archer noted that 'The very title of Mr. Moulton's second essay is, "How Shakespeare *improves* the Stories in the Telling"', and he asked readers of his review to consider 'In what sense are we to take the word I have italicised, if it does not imply a statement of "relative merit?"' (Archer 51). Having quoted several more examples of Moulton's evaluative assessments of various Shakespearean plays, Archer pointed out that 'Most readers will heartily concur in these judgments — mark the word — and for my heart I do not in the least blame Mr. Moulton for not attempting a scientific demonstration of their truth. They are, in the nature of things, incapable of scientific demonstration' (51-52). He reminded readers, however, that 'They are "judicial" utterances of the writer's individual taste, which happens to jump in this case with the taste of most educated men' (Archer 52). Moulton had fallen back on a time-honoured and thus seemingly irrefutable critical consensus on Shakespeare that was not, however, the exclusively text-based, objective interpretation of an individual play that he himself had called for.

This lapse into a widely accepted yet ultimately comparative and judicial appraisal was difficult to avoid when one was interpreting canonised works; when discussion turned to modern writers, however, an inductive critic was less likely to deviate from his interpretative principles. This was because, firstly, modern writers tended not to have a concrete literary reputation, or be surrounded by a well-known body of critical writing, to which the inductive critic would have to struggle to remain actively impervious when formulating their strictly impartial, text-based response to a literary work. Thereafter, the critic was likely to feel discouraged from introducing non-textual aspects into the interpretation, such as subjective impressions, or comparisons drawn with other texts, because these would expose one's interpretation to possible invalidation by a later-published work from the same writer, or the unpredictable shift in public taste over the years. Provided the inductive process was rigidly adhered to, and no detail was introduced into the interpretation from beyond the text, there was no risk of this being held up as an erroneous conclusion in the future. Inductive criticism thus offered a framework for unimpeachable discussion of recent literature, when context-based assessments might prove less durable.

This capacity to discuss new writing was rather different from the attitude held by Moulton's fellow academic George Saintsbury. As a journalist for numerous different periodicals (among them the *Saturday Review*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Bookman* and the *St. James's Gazette*), Saintsbury reviewed novels as they were published; while a professor at Edinburgh, however, and in his scholarly writing, he refused to consider the work of an author who was still alive. His biographer, Dorothy Richardson Jones, has remarked of his *History of Nineteenth Century*

Literature that ‘Distortion results from his genteel habit of not judging living artists’

(Jones 144). Saintsbury clarified his position on this issue in the preface:

‘What shall be done with living authors?’ Independently of certain perils of selection and exclusion, of proportion and of freedom of speech, I believe it will be recognised by every one who has ever attempted it, that to mix estimates of work which is done and of work which is unfinished is to the last degree unsatisfactory ... save in regard to the earliest subsections of this period, Time has not performed his office ... of sifting and riddling out writers whom it is no longer necessary to consider, save in a spirit of adventurous or affectionate antiquarianism (*History of Nineteenth* v-vi).

This can be seen as part of what Francis O’Gorman has identified as Saintsbury’s concern with ‘canon formation’, for in his scholarly works we can see him ‘telling his readers what Victorian fiction was the best’, with the ‘assumption that readers would share Saintsbury’s value judgements. Or, certainly, that they would accept his statements without needing explanation because of a general acknowledgement of his authority as a professional critic to make such judgements’ (22). Saintsbury’s exclusion of contemporary writers was therefore symptomatic of a desire not to be contradicted, and thereby have his expertise put into question, by the later-published work of an author upon whom he had already pronounced judgment.⁷⁷ This was not the case for Moulton’s inductive critic, for whom the purely textual basis of his interpretation licensed him to begin examining a work immediately.

More generally, as I have also shown, inductive criticism was premised upon receptivity to all literary genres, ‘watch[ing] for new forms to increase its stock of species’ (R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare* 2). It was this combination, of an open-minded approach to genre, together with a text-based, rather than contextual, interpretative methodology, that explains why Moulton felt justified in creating a course on

⁷⁷ Other critics have remained sympathetic to this decision; Walter Leuba, for instance, deems it to be ‘based on sound principle’, given that for Saintsbury, ‘the critic was no jack-of-all-trades but a responsible and fully informed student of *proven* literature’ (83).

nineteenth-century fiction for provincial students in the early 1890s. Moulton's less well-known work on the novel warrants analysis in the present context because it affords an insight into the progressive nature of the extramural literary activities that were taking place at this time. To my knowledge, no-one previously has noticed the particular suitability of Moulton's inductive criticism as a strategy for, and also as a way of justifying, analysis of modern literature. Given the connection I have already made between inductive criticism and extramural education, this explains why Moulton set up this provincial novel-reading group, which he then staunchly defended, and wished to see introduced elsewhere.

V

As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, the notion of teaching fiction was relatively unusual in the late-nineteenth century, although not entirely without precedent. Early Scottish academics such as Hugh Blair and Adam Smith, along with various Dissenting Academy tutors, were already lecturing on novels in the eighteenth century, and the successive Edinburgh professors Aytoun, Masson, and Saintsbury did not shun discussion of fiction in the classroom.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Moulton remarked that 'fiction-study is in the tentative stage' (*Four Years* 12), and his spirited defence of the Backworth and District Classical Novel-Reading Union, in a pamphlet of 1896 recording its first four years of progress, suggests that he expected condemnation of his scheme, rather than approval. He was certainly not oblivious to ongoing reservations about the novel, and acknowledged that the

⁷⁸ Saintsbury wrote enthusiastically, and often, on this genre. Edinburgh University calendars reveal, however, that although he also lectured on the novel, they did not feature heavily in the examinations; in 1898, for instance, only two questions were in relation to this genre. These were also both fairly perfunctory, and stopped short of the Victorian period. The first asked students to 'Write notes as to subject, treatment, and style, on the following: *The Fleece*, *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Fable of the Bees*, *The Man of Feeling*, *Cato*, *The Minstrel*, *The Splendid Shilling*'; the other, to 'Sketch the history of the Novel from Richardson to Scott' (*Edinburgh 1898-99* 666).

popularity of novels, and the volume of fiction being produced at this time, had done nothing to dispel the suggestion that novelists were working within a second-rate literary genre. He rejected, however, the negative connotation traceable in the term ‘current fiction’ (*Modern* 160),⁷⁹ and was convinced of the educational benefits that could be accrued from the study of modern novels. He stated that although ‘It is good to make our reading catholic’, nevertheless ‘if my young friend be straitened in leisure and opportunity, I would counsel him to leave to more fortunate persons the literature that limits itself by fact, and make the best of his time by going straight to the world’s great fiction’ (*Four Years* 1).

By refusing to adhere to negative criticisms of fiction, and even privileging this genre over historical and essayist material, Moulton marked his distance from his fellow Extension lecturer, Collins. I mentioned earlier that Kijinski’s essay draws attention to Collins’s neglect of the novel ‘as a genre for serious literary study’ (Kijinski 48). For Kijinski, this was symptomatic of Collins’s concern that ‘a new class of teachers be formally educated to train a new class of readers’, but that ‘only safe, traditional literature — literature which speaks from the position of an official culture — be offered to this new readership’ (Kijinski 48). This seems to me a crucial misreading of the extreme difficulty of a campaign that Collins took right into the heart of the educational establishment, and I instead identify Collins’s decision as an exercise in necessary chariness and political savvy. Moreover, many who felt

⁷⁹ Moulton argued that ‘We are constantly hearing this phrase, and are continually having thrust upon us astonishing statistics of circulating libraries and “best sellers.” It is often made a reproach against particular novelists, whose literary skill is not disputed, that they hanker after a certain set of social problems, or cater to certain tastes and fancies, simply because these have popularity at the moment; and it is freely prophesied that such novels as these will not live’ (*Modern* 160-61). Moulton argued that this was a ‘misreading of a literary phenomenon’, because the ‘point to which current fiction testifies is, not deficiency in the literature, but elasticity of the medium’, in its capacity to communicate a range of experiences: ‘It is part of the vitality of fiction as a literary form that it tends to become a floating literature of transient human interests’ (161).

themselves qualified to speak on educational issues agreed with him about the unsuitability of the novel as material for study. Matthew Arnold, for instance, already ambivalent about the proposals for university English, was vehement in his disapproval of this particular genre. As René Wellek has noted, ‘the novelists hardly interested him. He read *David Copperfield* for the first time in 1880 and thought burying Dickens in Westminster Abbey “a monstrosity”’ (4: 163). Thereafter Liberal politician and journalist John Morley, like Collins a fervent advocate for English literature at Oxford and Cambridge, was addressing students of the London Society for University Extension in 1887 when he suggested that the lack of formal instruction in English literature had drawn people to fiction: ‘I suspect, though I do not know, that one reason why there is in Scotland a greater demand for the more serious classes of literature than fiction, is that in the Scotch Universities there are what we have not in England — well-attended chairs of literature, systematically and methodically studied’ (203).

Although Morley insisted that he was not ill-disposed towards the genre altogether, and wished to convey that he too was ‘rather a voracious reader of fiction’, he regarded the novel simply as a relaxant: ‘when a man has done a hard day’s work, what can he do better than fall to and read the novels of Walter Scott, or the Brontës, or Mrs. Gaskell, or some of our living writers’ (203). Such works therefore had no place in the scheme he laid out for ‘good and disinterested reading’ (206) among the busy young men and women in the audience.⁸⁰ Crucial debates over the “art of

⁸⁰ Similar doubts about the novel were apparent in the early years of Oxford English: as is perhaps unsurprising given the university’s hesitancy about the subject more generally, few concessions were made to this apparently upstart literary genre, and Victorian novelists did not feature at all on the first syllabus. This neglect of modern writing became a pervasive feature of this university’s curriculum: lectures on twentieth-century literature in general did not take place until 1970 (Cunningham, ‘Literary’ 437).

fiction” were taking place at this time; these were associated particularly with Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson, but in fact involved several of the key novelists and literary commentators of the day, among them Gosse, Lang, Saintsbury, Walter Besant, Thomas Hardy, John Addington Symonds, Hall Caine, and H. Rider Haggard. The specific nature of these discussions, which were formulated primarily within the pages of journals and periodicals, have been analysed at length elsewhere.⁸¹ For my purposes, what is relevant here is the conviction these writers shared that there was an art and aesthetics of the novel, thus marking the emergence of a new, and increasingly complex, critical apparatus through which to discuss novelistic endeavours. Moulton, I would assume, would have been receptive to these debates; unlike his more outspoken Extension colleague, he could not stand accused of disregarding contemporary literary activity. This is clear from his insistence that books written by Dickens, George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, and Charles Reade, ‘not to speak of the crowd of living novelists ... will not yield in rank even to the works of the greatest masters’ (Moulton, *Four Years 2*), and should therefore be afforded serious pedagogical attention. Comments such as this, I would also argue, aimed to encourage any autodidact readers whose preference might have been for modern and contemporary novels, but who felt they should really be reading other literature such as poetry and drama. Moulton’s claim that ‘In such an age of fiction a vow of total abstinence is equivalent to a sentence of excommunication from contact with the best minds’ (*Four Years 2*) offered validation that this pleasant pastime could be transmuted into a scholarly activity.

⁸¹ See, for instance, Lyn Pykett’s ‘The Real *versus* the Ideal: Theories of Fiction in Periodicals, 1850-1870’; Keating 330-51, and *passim*; Graham; Daly 1-29; Wheeler 155-96; Childers; Norquay 51-81, and *passim*; and Anna Vaninskaya’s ‘The Late-Victorian Romance Revival: A Generic Excursus.’ For a particularly detailed exploration of this debate, and the ways in which it was reflected within, and moulded by, the various publication modes in which it was presented, see also Feltes 65-102.

VI

The Backworth scheme was set up in this Northumberland community in 1890 after ‘wage cuts and reduced employment’ left miners unable to afford Extension courses (Jennings 18). In his brief outline of the Backworth society’s beginnings, secretary John U. Barrow, who was also a miner, observed that during a course of Extension lectures ‘of a purely literary nature’ in 1890, it had been apparent that ‘although Backworth read fiction ... there was no systematic study’, and therefore only ‘scanty knowledge of the great classics of fiction which are among life’s best text-books’ (‘Backworth Brief History’ 18). Nevertheless, the course ‘awoke in many the first perceptions of the great educational value of literature’, and thereafter followed proposals for the formation of a society to read fiction, a project that ‘was received with an apprehension closely allied to enthusiasm’ (Barrow, ‘Backworth Brief History’ 18). From the outset, Barrow was keen to emphasise the systematic, scholarly credentials of the Backworth Union. Its aim was to ‘train earnest students’ (‘Backworth Brief History’ 25), and each member of the group, having paid a shilling, was sent a postcard at the beginning of each month, listing the novel they were expected to read, along with study questions from ‘some competent literary authority’ (Barrow, ‘Backworth Brief History’ 19). Originally, the time allotted to read each novel was one month, although this was lengthened to two after it was discovered that readers often struggled to read the novel in the stipulated time.⁸²

Halfway through each two-month block, when it was deemed that members should

⁸² Members were expected to obtain books for themselves, ‘either by loan or purchase; or sometimes, in the case of a group of students, by mutual purchase — each member obtaining the use of the book in turn, while it is finally disposed of to the members in rotation’ (Barrow, ‘Backworth Brief History’ 24). Administrative costs were covered by a loan from University Extension funds, which was later paid back. Moulton also donated Backworth the fee he had received for a lecture: a sum of £3 16s. 10d. (Barrow, ‘Backworth Report’ 6).

have familiarised themselves with the material, a meeting was organised, where ‘subjects are set for essay and debate’ (Barrow, ‘Backworth Brief History’ 24). This reference to coursework, and the earlier allusions to “educational value”, and “earnest students”, reveals that participants — some of whom were miners, while others lived beyond Backworth, and took part as distance learners — were expected to be serious, disciplined readers, providing evidence that they had actually studied the novels, and stayed close to the suggestions from literary experts.⁸³

The syllabus was diverse, and included works by still-living authors such as George Meredith, Robert Buchanan, R. D. Blackmore, and O. W. Holmes, as well as more conventional choices like Scott and Jane Austen. In the months when Moulton himself offered study guidelines for his Backworth readers, the now familiar priorities of inductive criticism came into play; contextual analysis was hardly called upon. With the fifteenth novel, Eugène Sue’s *The Wandering Jew*, for instance, Moulton asked readers to ‘Note how the legendary immortality of an individual is brought into contact with immortality as seen (1) in a family, (2) in property — compound interest, (3) in a corporation — the Jesuits’ (*Four Years* 35). The next task was to ‘Contrast the first part of the book — intrigue by violent opposition — with the second part, — the intrigue that acts through the passions of its opponents’ (*Four*

⁸³ This spirit of autodidacticism was not unusual within mining communities; Jonathan Rose has identified that by midway through the nineteenth century, ‘nineteen out of fifty-four collieries in Northumberland and Durham had some kind of library or reading room’ (238). John Benson notes that ‘The great period of library and reading room foundation came in the second half of the century. Old buildings were reopened and new ones started wherever large scale mining took place ... From 1850 onwards, the Seghill (Northumberland) reading room was open for two nights a week providing its members with a choice of 700 to 800 books and a selection of London newspapers and magazines’ (152). Benson states subsequently that ‘Night schools, mutual improvement classes, literary and debating societies, the Workers’ Educational Association and the University Extension Movement also made some limited impact towards the end of the century’, but ‘Reading rooms, institutes and libraries were the most important adult educational self-help institutions to be found in the coalfields’ (154). The Backworth novel course, therefore, while not necessarily exceptional, was slightly rarer for being an example of a more collective, organised educational scheme.

Years 35). This underscores my contention that Moulton's inductive priorities underpinned his Backworth scheme in two key ways: by organising a novel-reading union in the first place, he had marked his comparatively "receptive" attitude towards this contested genre during the *fin de siècle*. Thereafter, he continued to apply his text-based interpretative method to individual novels.⁸⁴

The fact that a range of "literary authorities" were asked to provide suggestions means that the principles of inductive criticism were not maintained consistently. Nevertheless, each contributor was clearly sympathetic to Moulton's proposal to study nineteenth-century novels, and was suitably convinced that there were educational advantages to be gained from a course devoted to this particular genre. Barrow's introduction also drew attention to the fact that Extension lecturers were among the advisers allied to the scheme. He stressed that their input had added greatly to the success of the Backworth Union, and elsewhere, in his 1891-92 Backworth Report, he expressed his gratitude to 'Mr. J. A. Hobson, M.A., Oxford University Extension Lecturer, for the kindly interest he has shown in our work, and particularly for some valuable suggestions for the Study of Development in English Fiction, which are here subjoined' (Barrow, 'Backworth Report' 5). Extension and Backworth were therefore closely related; given the conclusions I drew in my previous chapter about the academic achievements of the Extension Movement, its alliance with the novel-reading union confirms the scholarly ambitions of this latter enterprise.

A glance at the list of those contributing suggestions in fact testifies to the respect accorded to the "experiment" across a variety of disciplines. Goldsworthy Lowes

⁸⁴ As I will discuss in greater depth towards the end of this chapter, Moulton took up a professorship at Chicago in 1892. Nevertheless, he remained actively involved in the Backworth scheme, and contributed study suggestions throughout its first four years of existence.

Dickinson's notes on *The Cloister and the Hearth* asked Backworth readers to consider 'The value of the historical novel as supplementing history, giving with vividness the manners and customs and daily life of the period'; also 'The particular characteristics of the period with which the novel deals, — the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance' (qtd. in R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 35); and the 'broad humanity of the author' (36). Irish novelist and MP Justin McCarthy asked readers of *A Tale of Two Cities* to contrast Dickens's 'description of a French mob in this novel', with that of an English crowd in *Barnaby Rudge*; to debate whether the 'noble self-sacrifice of the hero [was] within the range of human generosity'; and to write an essay on 'The character of Carton as it develops under the influence of his pure, unselfish love' (qtd. in R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 30). Thereafter Owen Seaman, at that time a Cambridge Extension lecturer, but who in 1906 would become editor of *Punch*, offered some guidelines on *Vanity Fair*. Moulton also employed the services of popular contemporary novelists: other notable advisers to the scheme included W. E. Norris, John Henry Shorthouse, and Stanley Weyman (the latter clearly building on his own interests in historical romance, by offering some points on Walter Scott's *Woodstock*); also prominent civil servant Sir Courtenay Boyle; and world-renowned physician and pharmacologist Sir Thomas Lauder Brunton, who set some questions on O. W. Holmes's 1861 novel, *Elsie Venner*.

The support from such distinguished figures was not, however, mirrored in the press reception to Moulton's scheme. A particularly caustic review of Moulton's pamphlet appeared in the *Saturday Review*, which insisted that the study of novels would only produce 'prigs; not cheerful prigs, priggish from overflowing youthfulness, but serious, boring prigs', generated by a 'rotten system' ('New Books'

769). The reviewer felt that studying ‘first-rate fiction’, if intended as a ‘direct educational force’, was a ‘mistake’, because ‘The study of fiction is not the study of life in the sense that Professor Moulton and Mr. Barrow mean: novels are not a useful and practical guide to personal conduct; this is not their justification’ (769).

The article ended with the following plea: ‘Must Dickens and Jane Austen and Meredith all go the way of Browning? We have given him over willingly, without a murmur; is not he enough?’ (‘New Books’ 770). This reference is almost certainly to the London Browning Society, founded in 1881 by F. J. Furnivall and Emily Hickey, and in existence until 1892. The Society was mocked and criticised constantly by the press, and particularly in the *Saturday Review*, for being a gossipy, dilettantish organisation.⁸⁵ Backworth was here being held up as an equally laughable endeavour.

This, however, was to misconstrue the activities and intent of the Backworth Union, which was not merely a recreational discussion group or provincial book club. Moulton’s rather more ambitious aim was to use this enterprise to formulate a ‘practical method of systematically studying fiction’ (Barrow, ‘Backworth Brief History’ 26) which he and his fellow organisers hoped would act as a prototype that could be appropriated and mobilised elsewhere for the benefit of other autodidacts: ‘It is an experiment that can be tried on a larger scale by the formation of similar unions, or on a smaller scale by a few friends reading together; while isolated readers can join this or similar societies at a distance, and gain the major part of the advantages of the plan’ (R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 12). Moulton hoped to undermine the prejudices of ‘graver moralists of to-day’— men such as John Morley,

⁸⁵ William S. Peterson notes that ‘The almost universal impulse ... was to laugh at the Browning Society, which proved such an easy target for wits that during its eleven-year history it must have been the most satirized institution in England’ (173). Later Peterson writes that ‘The *Saturday Review* repeatedly charged in strident language that Browning had displayed bad judgment in allowing the Browning Society to be formed’ (183).

presumably — for whom fiction was either ‘a relaxation or venial indulgence’ (R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 3), but certainly did not represent suitable material for scholarly evaluation.

One further remark offered by Moulton in this introduction to the Backworth pamphlet, may also help to explain the tone of the *Saturday Review* article. Moulton had emphasised that the scheme was not for the ‘professed student, with leisure and means to use the machinery of university education to assist him in developing his receptive powers’, but instead for the ‘busy men and women, to whom literature can never be anything else than recreation’, but were keen to ‘make their recreation productive’ (R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 10) through ‘a little of the mental capital we call study’ (11). The *Saturday Review* was popular among university students, and many of its writers were Oxbridge graduates. Kerry Powell has described the publication as ‘Addressing the educated and privileged classes’; she notes that it ‘opposed democratic innovations ... ridiculed socialism and bitterly opposed the labor union movement’ (380).⁸⁶ This conservative editorial stance goes quite some way to account for its negative response towards Moulton’s extramural novel-reading course, which for the *Saturday Review* simply represented ‘culture rampant, an unlovely sight’ (‘New Books’ 769).

VII

Given the attitude expressed by some of Moulton’s academic contemporaries towards the novel, his own endeavours in teaching the genre offer valuable evidence of the avant-garde teaching that developed in extramural organisations during the late-nineteenth century. However, this risks being labelled as academically marginal,

⁸⁶ Powell also describes how the ‘tone’ of the *Saturday Review* ‘not only rang with authority but was sometimes slashingly critical, earning the review its various nicknames: the “Saturday Snarler,” “Saturday Scorpion,” and “Saturday Reviler”’ (380).

a one-off experiment, if its influence did not spread beyond Backworth, for in reality, student numbers there were small. Barrow put the membership at just eighty-three at the four-year point, while only twenty books had been read by the group, and thirty-four meetings had taken place ('Backworth Brief History' 24-25). Nevertheless, Barrow spoke of Backworth as a 'service to literary study in general' in terms of working out a systematic, scholarly way of studying fiction which would then be implemented more widely:

This has been done at such places as London and Exeter; and a further result of this local effort may be seen in the larger place given to fiction in the programmes of the numerous debating societies, in both town and country, and in the general consent which has been accorded to the idea that the importance of the novel as a vehicle of thought, and its influence in life, are such as to justify special study and organization ('Backworth Brief History' 26).

After extensive research, I could find no information regarding fiction-reading courses in either London or Exeter, other than a brief notice in the *University Extension Journal* in January 1892 recording an enthusiastic response to Moulton's 'Stories as a Mode of Thinking', in Hackney, and regret that the course 'has so soon come to an end' ('Local Centres' 10). In its place, a local Students' Association, which was currently being formed, 'has decided that the work for the first year shall consist in carrying on the subject of Mr. Moulton's Lectures, with monthly meetings for Essays and Discussions on the "Stories" read' (10). In Barrow's report on Backworth for 1891-92, he was presumably referring to this development when he wrote that 'In London (Hackney) there is now a literary society with the study of fiction as part of its plan, and Exeter is likely to follow' ('Backworth Report' 7). The Backworth organisers were keen to disseminate their ideas about studying fiction

around the country, but my research has revealed that these were not taken up with any particular degree of enthusiasm.

Moulton's novel-reading union did, however, infiltrate other learning environments. In *Professing Literature*, Gerald Graff's book on literary study in America, he has described the work conducted by William Lyon Phelps towards the institutionalisation of modern fiction in American universities. Phelps, a young man when he was appointed English lecturer at Yale in the 1890s, organised a course on modern novels for undergraduates, 'including in the reading such works as *Jude the Obscure*, *Almayer's Folly*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and *Trilby*' (Graff 124). This provoked fury amongst many of Phelps's colleagues, and they 'threatened to dismiss him unless he dropped the course at the end of the year' (Graff 124). When, in 1910, he 'published a book entitled *On Modern Novelists*,⁸⁷ he [Phelps] says that reviewers "were amazed that a book of essays on contemporary writers should come from a university professor"' (Graff 124). As Graff has noted, and as I have already demonstrated was also the case in England at this time, 'academic interest in the literature of the present or recent past was at best hesitant and sporadic', and the 'more *popular* kinds of recent literature remained outside the pale for scholar and critic alike' (124, 125).

Phelps is an important figure not merely because his academic radicalism resembled that of Moulton; I have uncovered archival evidence that suggests Phelps actually took direct inspiration from him. In December 1895, by which stage the Backworth and District Union had been in existence for four years, he sent Moulton the syllabus for his Yale novel course, with the following message handwritten

⁸⁷ This was actually called *Essays on Modern Novelists*.

across the front page: ‘You do not remember me, but I shall never forget your “Ben Jonson” lecture at Harvard. I thought you might be interested in this announcement, which I use for correspondents’ (Phelps ‘Printed Syllabus’). Phelps was thus aware of Moulton’s pedagogical endeavours, but I would draw further significance from the fact that, firstly, most of the novels on Phelps’s syllabus were British, and, secondly, many of the authors and titles on the Yale course had appeared on Moulton’s Backworth reading list; these include George Meredith, and R. D. Blackmore’s *Lorna Doone*. Even more striking, however, are the points of convergence between Phelps’s examination paper and the study suggestions given to Backworth members. In the Christmas 1895 Yale examination paper, for instance, Phelps asked students to identify ‘the most peculiar feature of the *style* of “Lorna Doone”’ (Phelps ‘Printed Syllabus’). In a similar fashion, Backworth participants had also been invited, when reading *Lorna Doone*, to consider ‘the style of the book. The prose often has a wonderful rhythm and ordered movement about it, so that it sometimes comes to be almost blank verse’ (R. G. Moulton, *Four Years* 39). That Phelps had sent this syllabus to Moulton offers strong proof that he knew about, and approved of, the Backworth scheme. The fact that he then borrowed parts of its syllabus, and even adapted its study points into Yale examination questions, underscores the scholarly credentials of the Backworth scheme, and its influence on other, much more prestigious, learning environments.

There is further evidence to suggest that Phelps and Moulton were working along parallel lines: Phelps’s defence of the modern novel in ‘Novels as a University Study’, an appendix to his 1910 *Essays on Modern Novelists*, strongly echoed sentiments expressed by the Englishman in his *Four Years of Novel Reading*.

Moulton had written, in his introduction to the latter pamphlet, that ‘Fiction is going to be read, whether they [the education authorities] like it or not; but they may attain the object at which they are really aiming, if they turn their energy into the channel of demanding that preliminary training which will determine whether fiction shall be a dissipation or a mental and moral food’ (*Four Years* 10). Reflecting back upon his own attempts to introduce the genre at Yale in the 1890s, Phelps offered a similar view: ‘The real object is (after a cheerful recognition of the fact that he [the student] will read novels anyway) to persuade him to read them intelligently’ (Phelps, *Essays* 248). Both men were keen to present the study of novels as a scholarly endeavour, which they believed would have a positive impact on the reading habits of their students.

Further, just as Moulton had formulated a critical methodology that dispensed with issues of canonicity or literary reputation, the American also refused to valorise certain texts merely because they had been written a long time ago. He explained his position on this in *Essays on Modern Novelists*, where he insisted he was not ‘for a moment pleading that the study of modern novels and modern art should supplant the study of immortal masterpieces’; nevertheless they should ‘not be regarded either with contempt or as unworthy of serious treatment’ (Phelps, *Essays* 249). The ‘modern novel’, Phelps continued, could be examined ‘first, as an art-form, and secondly as a manifestation of intellectual life’ (*Essays* 249). Through Phelps, ideas underpinning a relatively small — although, as I have shown, very influential — provincial reading group in England, were thus institutionalised in the American educational academy.

VIII

Moulton, having discovered that American universities in general could offer a more amenable educational environment for the implementation of his democratic learning principles, took the chair as English Professor at the University of Chicago in 1892. Receptivity to extramural teaching had served as one of this university's founding tenets: Janet Coles has written of the first Chicago president, William Rainey Harper, that 'his belief in the importance of university extension was such that the furtherance of it was one of the conditions under which he accepted the presidency', and 'His appointment of Moulton was to a large extent responsible for the particular manner in which university extension developed in Chicago' ('University Extension' 121). Moulton had already been on an extensive lecture tour of America in the winter of 1890-91,⁸⁸ and he prioritised extramural instruction after becoming a professor at Chicago, setting up new centres all over the city and in other states, and offering 'university credits' for work conducted at these courses (Coles, 'University Extension' 122). He also taught many of these himself: Coles has recorded that in the session 1902-03, 'Chicago was providing over two hundred courses in a total of eighteen states', and 'Moulton ... lectured at eleven centres during the session' ('Fire' 64). Moulton's Chicago professorship thus allowed him to promote the study of literature among non-matriculated students, while also ploughing his efforts into the university department; during his tenure, English was one of the few courses compulsory for all students (Tolman 87). He lectured on

⁸⁸ For details of Moulton's reception and engagements during this American tour, see W. F. Moulton 78-86.

inductive criticism to undergraduates, and his chair was renamed Professor of Literary Theory and Interpretation in 1901 (W. F. Moulton 105).⁸⁹

Phelps wrote to Moulton again in February 1916, while Moulton was still a Chicago professor; this was a delayed ‘thank you for your fine volume on the study of literature’ (presumably Moulton’s *The Modern Study of Literature*) which ‘I have thought of ... very often. You can get more solid cerebration onto one page than any critic I know’ (Phelps, ‘Letter to Moulton’). Phelps continued, ‘Let me ... take this opportunity of expressing to you my immense feeling of gratitude for all you have done to stimulate the real study of literature in America ... It was a fortunate day for America when you migrated hither’ (‘Letter to Moulton’). The letter testifies to the influence of Moulton’s egalitarian educational priorities over the entire country, which offers a stark contrast to the generally negative response in England to University Extension, Moulton’s inductive criticism, and his Backworth scheme.⁹⁰

Shifting focus back to the 1890s will allow me to highlight, by way of conclusion, the cultural, pedagogical differences between the two countries, which are reflected in their attitude towards the novel in the university. After the initial backlash to Phelps’s novel course that I mentioned above, he followed the advice of the Yale president, bowing to press and old guard pressure in abandoning this course for the next year. However, he had to wait just two years before initiating a course on American literature, ‘in which I included all the American novels I had discussed in

⁸⁹ As the title of his chair suggests, Moulton’s ideals of literary interpretation infiltrated the wider ethos of his university department. Albert H. Tolman, Moulton’s colleague at Chicago, noted in 1895 that ‘The study of the most charming of the English classics has too often been made a mere starting-point for laborious investigations into antiquities, history, geography, etymology, phonetics, the history of the English language, and general linguistics’ (89). At Chicago, however, ‘The masterpieces of our literature are studied ... primarily as works of literary art’, and therefore ‘No study can be too minute and careful which aids one in gaining a vital appreciation of a great masterpiece’ (89).

⁹⁰ University Extension was taken up enthusiastically all over America, and it quickly improved on the English example, building on an already healthy tradition of open-access educational endeavours, among them literary societies, travelling speakers, and of course the Chautauqua.

the previous course' (Phelps, *Autobiography* 302). In England in this decade, things looked very different. *Punch* responded to news of Phelps's Yale course by printing a parody of how such a scheme might work. A don at a fictional Cambridge college is seen talking to one of his students:

Mr. Robinson, I'm sorry to say that your work is unsatisfactory. On looking at your Mudie list, I find that you've only taken out ten novels in the last month. In order to see whether you can be permitted to take the Tripos this year, I'm going to give you a few questions, the answers to which must be brought me before Saturday ... *Question five*. Rewrite the story of *Jack and Jill*, — (a) in Wessex dialect; (b) as a 'Keynote'; (c) as a 'Dolly Dialogue' ('Novel Education' 255).

The author of this sketch clearly regarded Phelps's Yale course as a rather ludicrous endeavour. Unlike in America, dedicated novel courses in England were not flourishing within the educational establishment, but instead in provincial literary organisations, such as Backworth and the University Extension Movement. In the academic session 1915-16, some twenty years after Moulton's *Four Years of Novel Reading* was published, Oxford's English examination paper had just one question that had to be answered specifically in relation to the novel (O'Gorman 20). I would argue, however, that Moulton's ideological, as well as geographic, distance from the academy provided him with the ideal conditions for the development and implementation of an innovative, and highly successful, mode of critical analysis, and thereafter the necessary freedom for teaching a putatively unscholarly genre, before he was offered an academic post in a learning environment where his democratic educational principles were regarded as a distinct advantage.

5.

Arnold Bennett and the Joy of Reading for the Edwardian Clerk

‘[Y]our object, so far as I am concerned, is simply to obtain the highest and most tonic form of artistic pleasure of which you are capable’ (Bennett, *Literary* 63).

Previous chapters have focused on the remarkable and often visionary literary programmes that thrived outside the academy in the late-nineteenth century, both in institutional and in non-institutional environments. This chapter moves forward to the Edwardian period, with the purpose of examining the work of another innovative figure in the field of extramural education: Arnold Bennett. Bennett was not an English literature teacher in any formal sense; he did not give classes or lectures, and, unlike John Churton Collins, George Saintsbury, and Richard G. Moulton, Bennett was not affiliated to an educational institution. Nevertheless, it is my contention that the practical advice Bennett offered to urban working- and lower-middle class readers, in the pages of popular newspaper *T. P.’s Weekly*, was the basis for a practicable and hugely popular scheme that emphasised above all the pleasure one could derive from reading literature. For hundreds of thousands of clerks and city workers, eager to broaden their literary knowledge but lacking the time, resources and, in many cases, the inclination to attend a University Extension course, Bennett’s plain-speaking journalism furnished them with the confidence to read widely and attentively, and thereafter to converse knowledgeably about literature with their peers. The informal and wholly supportive reading advice Bennett offered to a primarily lower-middle class readership affords him a prominent position within the broader context of my research into extramural literary endeavours. This chapter can therefore be seen as a continuation of previous sections of the thesis, in providing a further instance of literary instruction available outside universities at this time.

However, this final chapter also explores a rather different set of guidelines on reading and studying literature; Bennett stood beyond institutional structures altogether, and his emphasis was on learning to enjoy books, rather than approaching them as a scholar. As this chapter will explain, Bennett's articles therefore impressed upon *T. P.'s Weekly* readers the need to derive pleasure from works of literature. Nevertheless, he also encouraged them to be more disciplined in their approach to texts, urging them to set goals for covering a certain amount of material; to read slowly and to make notes and annotations in their books; and to supplement their reading with secondary texts, such as critical works and biographies of their chosen authors. Because Bennett's articles appeared in a newspaper that encouraged readers to write in with comments and questions, and then printed many of these in a lively letters section, this chapter will also foreground the readers' perspective. Personal testimony from either Extension or Backworth participants has proved unobtainable, which has meant that the opinions of extramural lecturers and co-ordinators have dominated this thesis thus far. This chapter will redress the balance.

Bennett was certainly not unique in offering advice on literature in the press; indeed, the sensation caused by Sir John Lubbock's list of "100 Best Books" in 1886⁹¹ can be taken as evidence that a newly-educated readership was actively seeking authoritative guidance on their reading, and the crowded market for reprints of classic texts in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods demonstrated that publishers were efficient in their response to this social trend.⁹² That this chapter

⁹¹ This was originally discussed in a speech Lubbock had given to students at the London Working Men's College, and later picked up by a variety of newspapers, including the *Pall Mall Gazette*. See Hammond 93-95, and Feltes 41-64, for further discussion of this list, and its wider cultural and economic impact.

⁹² Cheap series being produced at this time included (but were certainly not limited to) the World's Classics, the Everyman's Library, the Camelot Classics (subsequently the Camelot Series, and later

takes Bennett as its primary focus, rather than any of the numerous other sources of literary guidance in the period, is in part due to Bennett's ability to forge a connection with his readership. This was attributable, I would argue, to the fact that he had worked as a legal clerk in the early 1890s, and subsequently managed to carve out a hugely successful career for himself as a journalist and author. His navigation through the literary field from relatively humble beginnings accounts for the knowing, direct tone of his articles.⁹³

Bennett enjoyed extraordinary prominence on the Edwardian literary scene, testament to which stands the massive volume of both fiction and critical writing that he published in the period.⁹⁴ To prevent my argument from being obscured by such a wealth of articles and books, I intend to draw upon only a small, representative sample of material. The 'Savoir-Faire Papers' were an early-Edwardian series of articles that Bennett was commissioned to write for new literary publication *T. P.'s Weekly (TPW)*, and which he wrote under the pseudonym "The Man Who Does."

the Scott Library), the Temple Classics, Collins's Pocket Classics, the Chandos Classics, Nelson's Classics, Newnes's Thin Paper Classics, Newnes's Penny Library of Famous Books, Stead's Penny Popular Novels, Canterbury Poets, Cassell's National Library, and the Macmillan's Globe Series. Richard D. Altick has written that the 1890s 'saw the ultimate victory of the cheap-book movement', as 'English publishers began to make the classics available to the common reader in a cheap form that was dainty yet sturdy, convenient to the pocket, and printed on good paper in readable type' (*English* 316). It is worth noting, however, that some of these series, including the Oxford World's Classics and the Everyman's Library, date from the Edwardian period. For analysis of these cheap reprint series, see Hammond 85-115; Turner; Altick's *English Common Reader* 294-317, also his *Writers, Readers, and Occasions* 174-95; and Rose 131-36.

⁹³ See Drabble 47-56 for a more detailed overview of Bennett's early years in London.

⁹⁴ Between 1901 and 1910, Bennett's major publications included the fictional works *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902), *The Gates of Wrath* (1903), *Leonora* (1903), *Teresa of Watling Street* (1904), *A Great Man* (1904), *Sacred and Profane Love* (1905), *Tales of the Five Towns* (1905), *The Loot of Cities* (1905), *Whom God Hath Joined* (1906), *The Sinews of War* (1906), *Hugo* (1906), *The Ghost* (1907), *The City of Pleasure* (1907), *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns* (1907), *The Reasonable Life* (1907), *Buried Alive* (1908), *The Statue*, co-written with Phillpotts (1908), *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), *The Glimpse* (1909), *Helen with the High Hand* (1910), and *Clayhanger* (1910). Non-fiction works included *Fame and Fiction* (1901), *How to Become an Author* (1903), *Things That Have Interested Me* (1906-08), *The Reasonable Life* (1907), *The Human Machine* (1908), *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day* (1908), and *Literary Taste: How to Form It* (1909). Bennett also wrote the play *What the Public Wants* (1909), and contributed innumerable articles to newspapers and literary magazines including *T. P.'s Weekly* and the *New Age*.

This was the first of many regular columns he produced for the paper, and it appeared from the first issue on November 14, 1902, and lasted until November 6, 1903, when the column was renamed 'A Novelist's Log-Book.' My research takes advantage of this perhaps somewhat arbitrary dividing-line in order to focus on the initial series of articles, which I will supplement with the more concentrated reading advice Bennett offered in *Literary Taste: How to Form It* (1909). As with the 'Savoir-Faire Papers', *Literary Taste* had appeared in *TPW* in an earlier incarnation as a series of articles, printed between 2 October, 1908 and January 15, 1909, which were later gathered together and published as a book. The 'Savoir-Faire Papers', on the other hand, never appeared as a collection, although Bennett's letters to his literary agent, J. B. Pinker, reveal that he was anxious to make this happen. This correspondence is worth reflecting on briefly, as the letters demonstrate that Bennett held the early articles in very high esteem. On October 25, 1903, he wrote to Pinker:

The *Savoir Faire Papers* finish in *T. P.'s Weekly* next week. (I am going to take up another feature for them by way of change, which I hope will be equally successful.) There will be 52 papers, but the last two I might probably prefer to leave out of a book. Total about 60,000 words. Can you do anything with this now? If so, kindly get the complete file from Whitten. My idea is a I/- book (pseudonymous), & if 60,000 words is too much, some papers might be omitted not unadvantageously ('Letter to Pinker' 40).

He pursued the matter with his agent again the following April: 'Enquiries about the publication of *Savoir Faire Papers* in book form still persist from readers of *T. P.'s Weekly*. Also *A Novelist's Log-Book* comes to an end in about 3 weeks time, & this feature too has had a great success, & enquiries about its publication in book form are frequent' ('Letter to Pinker' 46). Bennett reiterated this point several times in the letter: 'I really believe this would sell, if issued cheap (say I/- in paper) with a proper sub-title. I think it would sell well ... Only you clearly understand that I wish these

two *T. P.*'s books to be published, & by C. & W. [Chatto & Windus]' ('Letter to Pinker' 46-47).

Only a week later, Bennett pushed the matter one more time, here clearly responding to reservations about the impact its publication might have upon his novelistic reputation: 'I don't see how the two *T. P.* books affect my fictional side at all ... I am firmly of opinion that the *Tales of the Five Towns* & at least one of the *T. P.* books should be issued this year' ('Letter to Pinker' 49-50). That this never actually materialised means that the 'Savoir-Faire Papers' have remained a relatively unexplored area of Bennett's oeuvre, a matter which this chapter will remedy by taking them as its central focus. The prodigious amount of correspondence these early articles drew from literary enthusiasts denotes the strong impact they had upon the readers of *TPW*. Bennett himself had already remarked to Pinker on the unexpected popularity of his column: 'My weekly article in *T. P. W.* has "caught on" so that they have asked me to enlarge it' ('Letter to Pinker' 37).

My claim that Bennett was influential in the field of extramural education is very different from the way in which he, personally, considered his activities. On several occasions he openly criticised organisations such as the University Extension Movement, candidly expressing his disapproval of the individual educationists I have considered in previous chapters, and demarcating his own priorities from theirs, as a self-stated alternative to institutionalised literary education. In the first chapter of *Literary Taste* Bennett wrote that

In attending a University Extension Lecture on the sources of Shakespeare's plots, or in studying the researches of George Saintsbury into the origins of English prosody, or in weighing the evidence for and against the assertion that Rousseau was a scoundrel, one is apt to forget what literature really is and is for (13).

Instead of presenting uninspiring, irrelevant material to his readers, Bennett insisted that ‘It is well to remind ourselves that literature is first and last a means of life, and that the enterprise of forming one’s literary taste is an enterprise of learning how best to use this means of life’ (*Literary* 13). Those who thought otherwise, and would ‘sooner hibernate than feel intensely’ — such as Extension and university lecturers — ‘will be wise to eschew literature’ altogether (13), according to Bennett. He was therefore keen to mark his distance from English lecturers by offering a more impassioned approach to literary study.

In an essay called ‘The Professors’, originally published in the *New Age* in 1908 under the pseudonym “Jacob Tonson”, and later reprinted in *Books and Persons* (1917), Bennett used the occasion of John Churton Collins’s death to criticise the current standard of English teaching. Bennett argued that Walter Raleigh, Oxford English Professor since 1904, should have burnt two of his own books, *Style* and *Shakespeare*, because ‘they are as hollow as a drum and as unoriginal as a bride-cake: nothing but vacuity with an icing of phrases’ (*Books* 45). Collins was also a target, despite the fact that he had died only recently. According to Bennett, Collins had made an ‘ideal University Extension lecturer’ because he had presumably recreated his ‘arid and tedious’ essays in the lecture hall, where students had come to expect such ‘sterile’ material (*Books* 42). Collins had been ‘bereft’ of the accomplishment that Bennett was trying to instil in his readers, ‘original taste’, and he warned that ‘A man may heap up facts and facts on a given topic, and assort and label them, and have the trick of producing any particular fact at an instant’s notice, and yet, despite all his efforts and honest toil, rest hopelessly among the profane’ (*Books* 41). As I will show, at times Bennett’s *New Age* persona contradicted the

view he offered in *TPW*; in this instance, however, there is consistency between the two versions of Bennett, as his attitude towards organised English courses remained wholly negative across his writing.

Reassurances about the nature of Bennett's own literary advice therefore recur throughout each of his *TPW* columns, as he promised readers that he was not starting out on a programme to transform them into students: 'Yes, I have caught your terrified and protesting whisper: "I hope to heaven he isn't going to prescribe a Course of English Literature, because I feel I shall never be able to do it!" I am not' (*Literary* 62-63). It is certainly true that Bennett's guidance was much more informal in tone and different in texture from the scholarly challenges of a University Extension course, where, as I have shown, the focus was generally on exploring a fairly specific literary area in great detail, and where essays and examinations formed part of the curriculum. Unlike the Backworth course, too, Bennett provided no actual reading list or study questions for his readers to consider. In contrast to this more serious, organised approach, he emphasised the pleasure one could expect to gain from reading at home, in whatever spare time one could afford to devote to this pastime; therefore one could absorb a broader cultural education in a relaxed, belletristic fashion, free from the pressure of keeping to a syllabus and providing evidence of completed work. That enjoyment was a prerequisite to reading is forcefully stated in *Literary Taste*: 'the one primary essential to literary taste is a hot interest in literature. If you have that, all the rest will come' (27). Bennett's endeavours thus functioned as a very effective counter-movement to University Extension, catering to the Edwardian reader who read primarily for pleasure, but who also wished to develop his literary taste without this becoming too onerous a task.

This concept of “taste” has a long and complex pedigree which escapes easy definition, based as it is on a rather vague notion of aesthetic appreciation, and tending to valorise traditional, classical models. Significant treatises in the history of this concept include Joseph Addison’s *Spectator* articles, David Hume’s essay ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ in *Four Dissertations*, and Hugh Blair’s extensive discussion of taste in his lectures to Edinburgh University students, beginning from the first lecture after the introduction.⁹⁵ More recent examples, from an Edwardian perspective, included the writings of French literary critic Sainte-Beuve, whom Bennett deemed to be among the most prominent arbiters of taste. For Bennett, and likewise for Saintsbury,⁹⁶ Sainte-Beuve was the exemplar of laid-back yet authoritative belletrism, an unimpeachable judge of literary standards, for whom taste was a combination of a ‘native, instructive sensibility, and a habit cultivated by experience and tradition’; it was a ‘perception of unity, of simplicity, of dignity; unreasoning and spontaneous but eminently educable, a touchstone for the simple, the refined, the unexaggerated’ (MacClintock 55). By undertaking the necessary groundwork, Bennett believed that his readers could refine their sensibility in order to reach a plateau of sophisticated literary discernment, from which they would be able to appreciate the “right” texts almost intuitively, as part of what Christopher Prendergast, in his recent book on Sainte-Beuve, has described as ‘an implicit appeal to an assumed agreement between right-minded readers as to what constituted good taste’ (12).

⁹⁵ In this early lecture, Blair wrote that the ‘inequality of Taste among men is owing, without doubt, in part, to the different frame of their natures ... But, if it be owing in part to nature, it is owing to education and culture still more ... Taste is a most improveable faculty, if there be any such in human nature; a remark which gives great encouragement to such a course of study as we are now proposing to pursue’ (1: 19). Blair also directed his readers to Hume’s treatise, and described Addison as ‘a high example of delicate Taste’ amongst ‘the moderns’ (1: 25).

⁹⁶ In Saintsbury’s *Short History of French Literature*, he wrote of Sainte-Beuve that ‘His taste was remarkably catholic and remarkably fine’ (527).

I

This chapter must first consider the particular readership to which Bennett directed his *TPW* articles; this will reveal why his advice — which focused primarily on purchasing, reading and storing literature as economically as possible — held such a wide appeal. Clerks were not *TPW*'s only readers; indeed, various articles on kitchen appliances and other housekeeping features point to a strong female readership.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, many of Bennett's 'Savoir-Faire' articles were directed specifically towards the young clerk earning around £120 a year, 'the Leonard Bast of Edwardian England', as Peter D. McDonald has termed them (98). For instance, in November 1902 Bennett discussed how to enjoy a variety of weekday lunches while keeping costs down: 'There is the public-house where they stick a board over the billiard-table, and *sans* ceremony give you a passable British ordinary for tenpence. There is the hot meatpie place, and the place where sandwich-making is lifted to the level of a fine art' ('City' 83). Later he offered advice on how to economise on clothing while retaining a smart appearance, and guidance on affordable lodgings for the junior clerk living alone in London: 'The young man should strive to enter a household which has never entertained a boarder before; there will he have the best chance of finding an imitation home which resembles the real article' ('Alone II' 498). As these examples make clear, the "Man Who Does" felt qualified to reassure his readers about every aspect of city life.

Edwardian clerks were numerous enough to be regarded as a separate class, and a lucrative prospective reading market. Geoffrey Crossick's research into white-collar workers of this period appeared in the 1970s, and remains influential to this day; for

⁹⁷ Philip Waller has offered a useful discussion of *TPW*'s strategies for appealing to female readers (96-100).

him a major factor contributing to the increase of clerks was the ‘commercialisation and bureaucratisation of the secondary sector’ (20). Higher rates of literacy after 1870 also coincided with the ‘expansion of the financial and commercial significance of Britain, especially of the City of London’, and heightened levels of international trade, too, required a large and capable administrative workforce (20). Crossick has revealed that the number of clerks in Britain in 1871 stood at 262,084; this increased quite significantly to 534,622 in 1891, and swelled even further through the Edwardian period, reaching a massive 918,186 in 1911 (19). What these figures do not reveal, however, was that the expansion in those qualified for office work led inevitably to an ‘over-supply in the clerical labour market’ which showed no clear sign of slowing down: ‘With the oncoming generations came successive waves of potential clerks’ (Lockwood 117). This generated increased pressure on the individual to impress his or her peers and work colleagues: competition was fierce and these ‘aspirations for mobility’ had ‘real viability’, for a man might work his way up through the clerical ranks, or even ‘rise to a partnership in his firm’ (Crossick 21). Having an acquaintance with literature, being able to converse fluently about literary matters, and owning a selection of books, would provide one with a considerable degree of cultural cachet, or “savoir faire”, which was likely to prove useful when one sought to present oneself as an intelligent, discerning employee. As Mary Hammond has argued, ‘an important part of social aspiration was the cultivation of “literary taste”. Some of this was about social posturing; a reader might display one book on the shelves at home (or record in an autobiography that his or her life was changed by it) but read another for pleasure when alone’ (13). As I will show, Bennett assisted clerks in eradicating this disparity between what they would

ideally choose to read, and what they felt was most appropriate to be seen reading. This could be bridged by following his advice in order to reach the point of having good taste, after which one could gain pleasure from hitherto seemingly formidable works: ‘If your taste were classical you would discover in Lamb a continual fascination; whereas what you in fact do discover in Lamb is a not unpleasant flatness, enlivened by a vague humour and an occasional pathos ... There is a gulf. How to cross it?’ (Bennett, *Literary* 58).

That the majority of working- and lower-middle class urbanites lacked any solid grounding in literature in the first place, and therefore felt the need for Bennett’s advice, can be ascribed to certain deficiencies in the educational system. Crucial changes in the provision of education had been generated by Forster’s Education Act of 1870, pushed forward in part because the 1867 Reform Bill ‘had extended the franchise to a large proportion of the working class’, and it was deemed judicious to offer this social group sufficient education in order that they might use their vote intelligently (Humphreys 5).⁹⁸ School Boards were created in areas where current educational provisions were below what was considered to be an acceptable standard. These Boards ‘had powers to build and run schools, and to issue a precept to the local rating authority for a share of the rates’, and compulsory attendance was enforced after 1880, when local authorities were ‘required to make bye-laws’ to this effect (Stray and Sutherland 372, 373).

Leaving aside the undoubtedly progressive nature of these general developments, the reality was that they did not necessarily translate into particularly high classroom standards, and had little effect on the teaching of English. Anna Vaninskaya has

⁹⁸ Darlow W. Humphreys, and also James Murphy, have described the minute complexities that attended the progression of this Act through Parliament, and its aftermath; for further information specifically on School Boards, see also Gillian Sutherland 81-112.

described how late-Victorian schoolchildren were taught with ‘general-purpose readers’ which were ‘indispensable ... their primary aim remained, as it had always been, the teaching of basic literacy, and in the higher standards ... reading fluency’ (‘English’ 277).⁹⁹ My own analysis of the textbooks commonly used in schools has confirmed that they tended to consist of a series of short extracts, together with some rudimentary biographical information on the author. Volumes from the *Longmans’ New Readers* series (1885) that were aimed at younger pupils consisted mainly of spelling exercises, while subsequent Readers included short literary excerpts, divided into numbered paragraphs, from writers including Scott, Dickens, and Shakespeare. However, these were positioned between miscellaneous other articles, in a frankly nonsensical order. In the fifth Reader, for instance (written for pupils aged eleven years), Darwin’s ‘The Cuttle-Fish’ from *A Naturalist’s Voyage round the World* was followed by an excerpt from Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, then ‘The Ocean’ by Lord Byron, taken from the last canto of ‘Childe Harold’ (*Longmans’* 150-66).¹⁰⁰ Each passage was followed by short vocabulary and grammar exercises; the excerpts were clearly designed to teach spelling above all else.¹⁰¹ Bennett did not look favourably upon this method of teaching English. In the short article ‘How I Was

⁹⁹ Vaninskaya explains that ‘The so-called “general” readers ... were random miscellanies or multidisciplinary collages ...’ (‘English’ 278). Peter Keating’s findings generally accord with those of Vaninskaya: he has stated that ‘In Board School education ... ability in “English” was tested by having children read aloud, parse a sentence, compose a brief letter or “statement”, or recite a specified number of lines of poetry learned by heart. The primers or “readers” compiled for use in the Board Schools generally assumed a low level of comprehension, even for children in the top grades’ (451).

¹⁰⁰ This offers a stark contrast to H. E. Marshall’s *The Child’s English Literature*, published later, in 1909. This chronological survey of English literature (inclusive of drama, poetry, fiction, and journalism) paraphrased key works, offered biographical information on the authors, identified their place in a broader literary context, punctuated them with short quotations to give a sense of the style, and, finally, provided suggestions for further reading. This was not, however, aimed at the school market; as Marshall wrote in the introduction, ‘The object with which I write [... is] to amuse and interest rather than to teach ...’ (x).

¹⁰¹ Even when English was introduced into schools as a “class” subject in the 1890s, grammatical analysis continued to dominate. See David Shayer 1-25 for a useful overview of the still very rudimentary instruction in English given to pupils at the start of the twentieth century.

Educated', originally published in *John O'London's Weekly*, and reproduced in *Sketches for Autobiography* (1979), he touched on the education he had received at school in the late 1870s and early '80s: 'no attempt was apparent to make literature interesting, or even to explain its aim, its beauty, and its relation to life. Shakespeare was cut up alive into specimens of sixteenth century locutions' (*Sketches* 11).¹⁰² The point to be made here is that the majority of pupils in the late-nineteenth century were provided with very little in terms of literary education; if literature was taught at all, it usually involved reading excerpts without further elucidation, and — particularly in the case of the Readers designed for each standard — in an illogical order, wedged between unrelated passages relating to history, geography, and biology.¹⁰³

Indirectly, and certainly unwittingly, the effect of this was to give to a vast new readership the merest taste of literary culture; newly acquainted with some of the delights of English literature, yet denied any more extensive exposure to texts within the classroom, and, later, feeling self-conscious about this lack in the workplace and among friends, it is hardly surprising that many should look for guidance and fulfillment in this area. As I have already shown, for thousands this meant signing up

¹⁰² H. G. Wells described the education of his protagonist, Mr. Polly, in similar terms: 'Mr. Polly went into the National School at six, and he left the private school at fourteen, and by that time his mind was in much the same state that you would be in, dear reader, if you were operated upon for appendicitis by a well-meaning, boldly enterprising, but rather overworked and underpaid butcher boy, who was superseded towards the climax of the operation by a left-handed clerk of high principles but intemperate habits — that is to say, it was in a thorough mess. The nice little curiosities and willingness of a child were in a jumbled and thwarted condition, hacked and cut about — the operators had left, so to speak, all their sponges and ligatures in the mangled confusion — and Mr. Polly had lost much of his natural confidence, so far as figures and sciences and languages and the possibilities of learning things were concerned' (13).

¹⁰³ It was possible that individual teachers might have taken English literature provision beyond what we glimpse here, but Vaninskaya has claimed that these Readers 'were the first books that the majority of working-class children in the Board Schools would have come across' ('English' 277), and the figures certainly support this: the Nelson *Royal Readers* (which were similar to the Longmans' version mentioned above) 'sold over five million copies in the four years from 1878 to 1881, thus reaching potentially a sixth of the population' (Vaninskaya, 'English' 278-79).

for courses in the University Extension Movement, or attending meetings within local organisations such as the Backworth Reading Union. For far greater numbers of Edwardians, however, the literary discussions that took place in publications such as *TPW* were a cheaper, less forbidding, and more readily available resource for the information they sought.¹⁰⁴

II

T. P.'s Weekly was founded in 1902 by Irishman T. P. O'Connor, a New Journalism 'pioneer' since 1888, at which time he had edited the evening newspaper the *Star*; subsequent projects included *M. A. P.*, a penny weekly; the *Sunday Sun*, and the *Sun* (McDonald 95). *TPW* was a one penny paper primarily dedicated to literary matters, which it approached in a chatty, informal manner, within a snappy layout that offered a mixture of brief, miscellaneous articles, interviews with authors, and longer pieces. In this way it was successful in attracting Edwardian readers who were keen to keep abreast of the contemporary literary scene, sought entertaining reading material, and yet also wished for a point of entry to the less accessible literature that had featured only very vaguely on their school curriculum — hence the series 'Cameos from the Classics', which presented an excerpt each week from a different "classic" text.

Wilfred Whitten, or "John O'London" was 'acting editor' of *TPW* from 1902 until 1911 (Waller 92), and his work for this paper was an important precursor to his own post-War publication, *John O'London's Weekly (JOLW)*. Whitten had already done much to alter the tone of the *Academy* as assistant editor in the 1890s, 'enlivening a literary journal which had become conventional and even stale' (Waller 92). We can

¹⁰⁴ David Lockwood notes that many clerks in the mid-Edwardian period earned around 34s. a week (43). A penny paper like *TPW* was thus a much more affordable source of literary information than an Extension course, which usually cost between 5 and 10 shillings.

gather much about the tenor of *TPW*, as well, from his later insistence about *JOLW* that it should be a ‘literary paper “for readers not ‘high-brow’, but eager to know their way amongst the masterpieces”’ (Waller 93). Sainte-Beuve was a strong influence on Whitten’s career; he described the Frenchman as ‘the most human and entertaining critic who ever put pen to paper’, and spoke of his ‘passionate intellectual curiosity’ (O’London 90), principles which came to dominate in both *TPW* and *JOLW*. Jonathan Wild has written about this latter journalistic enterprise, and much of what he has discovered is also applicable to the Edwardian publication that is the focus of my own research: ‘To an audience that lacked formal education in the study of literature, a degree of didacticism was clearly welcomed. It was, however, equally imperative that this instruction, rather than echoing the enervating format of a school textbook, should be interspersed with lighter material’ (Wild 51). Wild makes the important claim that ‘for the new reading and writing public, *JOLW* formed if not a university, then what we might recognise today as an interactive distance learning centre’ (56). Similar priorities can be traced in sections of *TPW*, where enthusiasm for literature was conveyed in lively, yet straightforward, “no-nonsense” terms, with plenty of scope for spirited readerly contact.

The fact that *TPW* appealed primarily to the lower end of the middle-class spectrum meant that its advice and articles could also afford to disregard elitist detractors who might pour scorn on features like the ‘Savoir-Faire Papers’ as offering merely superficial, ‘cheapjack wisdom’ (Waller 91). Instead Bennett was licensed to be candid in the reading advice he gave to his readership — even more so, given that he was writing anonymously — serving them with information they could actually use, rather than feeling obliged to ingratiate himself with Edwardian

custodians of culture. Bennett would certainly place himself among this latter group of taste-makers, but as the “Man Who Does”, and within *TPW*, he was at liberty to contradict some of the less populist views that he espoused when writing under his own name, or as “Jacob Tonson”, for instance, in the *New Age*.

A brief survey of the articles in an early issue of *TPW* (taken at random, as the formula and layout remained much the same throughout its first year), will allow us to grasp the paper’s tone.¹⁰⁵ In the sixth instalment, which was published on December 19, 1902, the first two pages were devoted to abridged excerpts and discussion of the ‘Book of the Week’, in this case *Tolstoi as Man and Artist* by Dimitri Merejkowski. In the next section, regular feature ‘T. P. in his Anecdoteage’, casual reflections were offered on Queen Victoria’s reign. Thereafter followed a new instalment of H. Rider Haggard’s *Stella Fregelius*, which took up three pages, and then a page-long, factual article on the Nobel prizes. ‘Books and Their Writers’, on the following page, featured brief, seemingly random discussions of various writers including John Wesley, and, presumably as inspiration for *TPW*’s readers, ‘one or two typical passages showing how Wesley fortified his mind with good literature’ were also printed (‘Books and Writers’ 169). ‘T. P.’s Bookshelf’— a list of recently published works, many of which featured elsewhere in the issue — was followed by ‘Cameos from the Classics’, in this issue an excerpt from the fifth volume of Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*. Following various other articles, including a page-long discussion of Max Müller, two pages of advertisements underscore for us the nature of *TPW*’s intended readership, as several publishers’ notices offering cheap books jostled for space with a large advertisement for the Pelman School of Memory

¹⁰⁵ Waller has offered an overview of a later, 1907, issue of *TPW* (95-96).

Training. Bennett's 'Savoir-Faire Papers' this week offered advice on keeping bedrooms warm; this was followed by various reviews and poems, and a section called 'The Books of My Childhood', with contributions from Henry Newbolt, George Bernard Shaw, Silas K. Hocking, Oscar Browning, and Canon and Mrs. Barnett. Towards the end of the paper, the 'Five O'Clock Tea Talk' (directed specifically towards female readers) offered a discourse on the digestive properties of Christmas dinner. The final pages consisted of miscellaneous articles on topics including New York hotels; tips for behaving tactfully in awkward social situations; and 'N. Q. A.' (Notes, Questions, Answers), an opportunity for readers to have their literary enquiries replied to by other readers. Finally, 'T. P.'s Letter Box' this week included a letter about William Blake, a response to a previous article on 'Should an Author Kill his Hero', together with more light-hearted, general correspondence: 'My brother thinks your paper is a champion. Why don't you ask your girl readers to send you accounts of their own experiences at school' (Hilda 190).

This formula clearly worked: *TPW* was immediately successful, with the second issue boasting that it had already 'established at least one claim to a place in the History of Journalism; it broke the record as a first number. Within a few hours after the issue of the paper 200,000 copies were disposed of' ('Breaking' 58). Subsequent issues would have had a lower circulation, but I would assume that the number of people who actually read the paper still remained high: copies would have circulated around the office, on the train, amongst friends, and within the family home. The figure is thus likely to stand at between half a million and a million readers.¹⁰⁶ The 'Savoir-Faire Papers' and *Literary Taste* therefore offer us a coherent picture of

¹⁰⁶ McDonald estimates the weekly readership to have been around half a million, but he does also admit basing this on the 'conservative assumption that four people read parts of each issue' (197).

Bennett's endeavour to formulate literary discernment, and increase enjoyment, among a potentially vast Edwardian readership.¹⁰⁷

III

Bennett understood that many of his readers had only very limited resources for the purchase of books, therefore in one of his earliest *TPW* articles, the "Man Who Does" recommended which volumes he felt to be particularly essential, and how to obtain these cheaply. First on his list were reference books; claiming to have a 'perfect passion' for these, he picked out various works, including the ten-volume Chambers's *Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge* (which, he assured readers, could be bought second-hand for around £2), an atlas, and a dictionary for 'common daily use' ('About Books' 275). Here Bennett set the tone for the articles that followed, by insisting that this one-volume dictionary should be supplemented by a multivolume work for the 'connoisseur' to turn to 'on high days and saints' days and days of special difficulties' (275). Use of the word "connoisseur" was deliberately flattering (although probably also ironic), for Bennett was aware that some of his *TPW* readers would see themselves, and also wish to appear to others, as literary enthusiasts, and for whom, therefore, more extensive works of reference such as the 'greatest and noblest dictionary of the Western Hemisphere ... "The New English"' (Bennett, 'About Books' 275), would be indispensable.

A letter from a bank clerk, printed in an early issue of *TPW*, on 5 December 1902, illustrates this point that many white-collar workers were keen to present themselves as learned, scholarly readers, and resented the apparently common perception of

¹⁰⁷ It would be impossible to work out how many of *TPW*'s readers turned to Bennett's column, and those who did might not necessarily have read it each week, or even have acted upon his recommendations. Nevertheless, circulation figures are worth mentioning because they reveal that copies of the paper were widely available, and that Bennett's advice was therefore within the reach of hundreds of thousands of Edwardians.

clerks as ‘uncultured’ (Bank Clerk 124).¹⁰⁸ The correspondent wrote that he ‘knew of a schoolmaster who, when he wanted to say something especially scathing to an “impregnable” scholar, used to tell him that there was nothing for it but for him to go into a bank’, yet ‘Seven years in a London bank have failed to show me in what ways the work is peculiarly adapted for the unscholarly’ (Bank Clerk 124). The letter continued, ‘I am ready to admit that there are bank clerks ... who would think it a lamentable waste of time to read anything besides a newspaper or an occasional new novel; but I do not think the proportion of these is greater than in the majority of professions or trades’ (124). Bennett’s reference to his readers as “connoisseurs” would therefore have tallied with the perception that many held of themselves as knowledgeable and discerning literary scholars.

Bennett remained aware of financial constraints; in his discussion of the “New English”, for instance, he offered the bathetic remark that ‘Not only is this the supreme achievement of lexicography, but it is the only dictionary that can be bought in monthly half-crown parts’ (‘About Books’ 275). This dictionary, published between 1884 and 1928, and which would subsequently be renamed the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was a particularly apposite choice for Bennett’s enthusiastic ‘neophyte’ (Bennett, *Literary* 58), for it was unique in providing short excerpts, often literary, for each word entry; as the introduction to the first volume stated, ‘it was resolved to begin at the beginning, and extract anew typical quotations for the use of words, from all the great English writers of all ages ...’ (Murray v).¹⁰⁹ The “Man

¹⁰⁸ David Lockwood has noted that as a result of an ‘overstocking of the market’ in the decades after 1870, ‘the derisive phrase, “any fool can be a clerk”, began to be repeated more frequently’ (117). This suggests why this bank clerk might have felt compelled to write the letter.

¹⁰⁹ The majority of these quotations were found and sent in by members of the public who responded to a nationwide appeal for assistance from the project’s organisers; this lends further significance to

Who Does” returned to the topic of reference books the following week, on January 16, 1903, when he noted that for the reader of his column, who is ‘by no means an average man’, because he ‘does greatly care for literature’, and is a ‘person of literary tastes’, a literary encyclopedia was a crucial purchase, ‘at any sacrifice of grosser luxuries’ (‘More Joys’ 307). Bennett suggested purchasing Chambers’s *Encyclopedia of English Literature*; as with the dictionary, one of the chief pleasures of this particular encyclopedia was the ‘copious representative extracts’ it provided, from ‘practically every English author with the least claim to be remembered’ (Bennett, ‘More Joys’ 307). Bennett expected that readers would actively enjoy perusing these excerpts, particularly given that they were framed with a ‘critical estimate’ (307) that would assist self-improvers in understanding each author’s work within the broader context of English literary history.

Independently of any formal educational institution, the novice reader was instead being directed towards cheap literary resources which were a pleasure to browse through while remaining informative, offering a point of entry to serious reading within a much more coherent, focused format than their school textbooks. The “Man Who Does” guaranteed that with proper study, the literary encyclopedia would trace a clear path for readers through the literary field, thus eradicating any potential social embarrassment engendered by confusion and ignorance of canonical writers:

you will have surveyed English literature as a hawk surveys a field, and you will be in a position to swoop down on any author to whom you have taken a fancy. You will no longer be compelled to ask advice ... Another excellent point about the cyclopædia is that at the end of the principal articles particulars of the standard editions of each author are given (‘More Joys’ 307).

Bennett’s allusion to the work, for many of these amateur contributors were likely to be the same literary enthusiasts to whom Bennett was directing his advice.

However, in the mock-stern tone¹¹⁰ adopted in each of these anonymously-written articles (and, to near-comic effect, in Bennett's later "pocket philosophies"), the "Man Who Does" warned his *TPW* readers that this reference work, however useful, would certainly not furnish them with all they needed in order to present themselves as well-informed on literary matters: 'To read the book is delectable, but the book is only a means to an end. It is a guide-post. Or, better, it is a sample room. It enables the reader to decide for himself what authors and epochs will appeal to his taste, with a view to more detailed study' ('More Joys' 307). Reiterating this point later in the same article, he reminded readers that 'works of reference are not real books' (307). Bennett thus alerted *TPW* readers to the fact that broadening their literary horizons, with the express purpose of developing their literary taste and thereby increasing the enjoyment they could gain from reading, would require a significant investment of time and energy. He was unwilling to suggest any shortcuts as to how this could be achieved more efficiently; as he wrote in *Literary Taste*, 'the maximum of pleasure can only be obtained by regular effort' (85). The fact that independence was the prerequisite Bennett demanded of his readers again marked him out as very different from either Collins or Moulton, in advocating an alternative — although equally effective, provided his readers actually committed themselves long-term — style of learning, where the onus was now placed on the "student" to work out the specific details of his own literary programme.

The nature of the response to Bennett's article on reference works testifies to this keen self-improving spirit among *TPW* readers, and also indicates that he was successful in appealing to their own interests, for correspondents were eager to share

¹¹⁰ Robert Squillace has described this 'prose style' as 'like a finger poked repeatedly against one's chest' (161).

information about the literary reference works that had served them well in the past.

One offered the following supplementary advice to his peers, which was printed on the letter page two weeks later:

Thousands of people who ‘want to know, you know,’ have no knowledge of Greek or Latin, or have not read any of the execrable or excellent translations of the classics. In these circumstances, Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary is not only useful and instructive, but absolutely enthralling. “The Man who Does” mentions a dictionary of classical quotations, but it does not answer the same purpose (H. P. H. 378).

This letter highlights the urge felt by many *TPW* readers to fill in the gaps in their cultural education, and to assist others in this endeavour. Bennett was aware of this, but he also wished individuals to set off on their own path of reading, and he therefore rebuffed, in a subsequent ‘Savoir-Faire’ article, a correspondent’s request for ‘the names of some books to help me in forming a small library of general literature. Sir John Lubbock’s “Best Hundred Books” does not include any by living authors, and amongst so many it is most difficult to select the best two or three on history, travel, and science’ (qtd. in Bennett, ‘To Whom’ 740). Bennett’s response to the letter was characteristically direct: ‘The thing cannot be done. Information such as this correspondent wants can only be usefully obtained by personal delving, personal experiment, and, I may add, many mistakes’ (‘To Whom’ 740). The sentiment was reiterated in *Literary Taste*, where Bennett advocated choosing books in an arbitrary, belletristic fashion: ‘And for reading, all that I will now particularly enjoin is a general and inclusive tasting, in order to attain a sort of familiarity with the look of “literature in all its branches”’ (20). Later, he urged readers, ‘Do not worry about literature in the abstract, about theories as to literature. Get at it. Get hold of literature in the concrete as a dog gets hold of a bone’; ‘Begin wherever the fancy takes you to begin. Literature is a whole’ (*Literary* 31, 32). His sole

prescription was that one should start with a classic; otherwise one should immerse oneself in books, and read whatever offered gratification. Such freedom of choice underscores Bennett's considerable distance from an Extension course, or even a less formal, yet still much more systematic, and certainly more didactic structure like Moulton's Backworth scheme. Bennett acted within a different set of constraints; he was not purporting to offer a methodical course of education to committed, or even particularly studious, readers. His priority was to convey his enthusiasm for literature, and thereby communicate the intense joy that his readers could look forward to discovering for themselves, simply by picking up a book.

IV

Bennett's *TPW* persona was, however, prepared to offer his readers some advice on the practicalities of book-buying. He adopted a tone which implied that *TPW* readers all had similar priorities ('One does not want one's books to resemble Sunday school prizes'), and by using the companionable phrase 'my fellow book-collectors' ('On Buying' 467), he shrewdly situated himself among their number. The "Man Who Does" cautioned against some of the mistakes made by the 'enthusiastic beginner (bless him!)', such as purchasing a book merely for its aesthetically-pleasing 'boudoir contraptions'; and becoming too passionate about the work of one particular writer: 'Avoid the monopolising spell, enchantment, fascination of a single author — no matter how great. Life is too short, and literature too vast, to justify such monopolies. Vary your experiences; by so doing you will ensure a constant "standardising" of your taste' ('On Buying' 467). Instead he emphasised the need to form a broader, more eclectic collection of major English novelists:

It is surely much better, where the purse is limited, to commence by skimming the cream off the great authors ... is it not better for a beginner, both as a student and as a collector, that in his first year of collection, say, he should have twenty-five of the very finest novels of Fielding, Scott, Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, and the Brontës, than a complete twenty-five volumes of the Waverley novels? ('On Buying' 467).¹¹¹

Once again he appealed to his readers' vanity in order to emphasise his point, slyly reminding them that 'Nothing is more pitiable than the spectacle of the student with whom one single author is first and the rest nowhere' ('On Buying' 467). Possessing a variety of novels would allow Bennett's *TPW* reader to display a catholic taste, and this, he implied, was likely to impress one's friends and colleagues.

A further important point to take from this is that the "Man Who Does" was assuming his readers would be book buyers rather than borrowers. Among other developments in the publishing industry, the recent trend for series of classic reprints facilitated those on a limited budget in becoming cultural consumers, the evidence of which they could display in the home. The arrival of literature as an inexpensive product — individual volumes typically cost around a shilling each, but could be as cheap as a penny — had already been highlighted by the popularity of Lubbock's "Hundred Best" list, where, as N. N. Feltes has identified, 'the "best" under discussion were not "authors" or "thoughts" but *books*, material objects, indeed commodities ... the "hundred best books" has an attainable completeness, a finality of its own, existing precisely as a fetish which may be owned' (46). Mary Hammond makes the point that this supposed 'democratisation of culture' (107), as publisher

¹¹¹ In *Literary Taste*, Bennett advised readers that 'In the preliminary stages of literary culture, nothing is more helpful, in the way of kindling an interest and keeping it well alight, than to specialise for a time on one author' (55). However, he then qualified this statement by suggesting that readers still combine this with the work of other writers: 'I do not mean that you should imprison yourself with Lamb's complete works for three months, and read nothing else. I mean that you should regularly devote a proportion of your learned leisure to the study of Lamb until you are acquainted with all that is important in his work and about his work' (55).

J. M. Dent had enthusiastically described the classic reprint industry, was, in ideological terms, a great deal more problematic. She argues that

the legitimate culture designated ‘classic literature’ becomes accessible to the lower classes only when it has been permitted, authenticated and ultimately cheapened by the upper strata, whether these are the aristocrats and officials who endorse the books or the professionals and intellectuals who edit and publish them (107).

For Hammond, the inner workings of the literary field at this time should be interrogated more closely. Assumptions about its ostensibly egalitarian nature rather naively overlook the fact that, behind the scenes, late-Victorian and Edwardian arbiters of culture were working in collusion with publishing houses in order to dictate which titles were now more readily available to ‘the masses’, and to what extent these were ‘expurgated’ (104). Hammond argues that it was less a question of enjoying hitherto privileged access to the ‘much-valued Arnoldian aesthetic’, and more about possession of a ‘mass-produced’ consumer product, which one was hoodwinked into assuming offered a significant degree of cultural cachet (109).

While not denying the validity of Hammond’s general argument, I offer a different reading of Bennett’s standpoint in regard to these contemporary developments in publishing. Hammond, referring to a *New Age* article written by Bennett in 1908, notes his negative attitude towards the commodification of literature; she argues that the concept of cheap reprints was anathema to him, in what she identifies as a reaction against the ‘transparent and pointless’ attempts at social mobility that, for him, the act of purchasing these books apparently represented (Hammond 108). In *TPW*, however, we can see Bennett, as the “Man Who Does”, encouraging readers to take advantage of newly inexpensive editions of titles that would otherwise have required more heavy investment. Far from expressing

‘contempt for the cheap classic’ (Hammond 113), in *TPW* Bennett was teaching his less affluent readers to be wily in their approach to the literary marketplace, and he recommended that they mix and match from the ‘admirable collections’ of low-priced reprints in order to obtain copies of books they actually wanted to own: ‘The collector should ransack them for novels, and he should also choose the finest volumes from complete editions of authors without troubling himself about uniformity’ (Bennett, ‘On Buying’ 467). In *Literary Taste*, moreover, Bennett provided a complete list for ‘a reasonably complete English library’ (*Literary* 87), consisting of 335 books, and costing £28, 1d., and which included cheap editions from the Everyman’s and World’s Classics series.

Hammond also highlights Bennett’s disparaging description of the ‘prosperous’ middle class who ‘spend their lives in spending’ (qtd. in Hammond 108). She suggests that ‘For Bennett, the drive to purchase “culture” is ... marked by an unpatriotic Americanness’ (108). Although this is an accurate summation of Bennett’s *New Age* articles,¹¹² it again contradicts the advice he gave in *TPW*, where he encouraged readers to buy as many books as possible. In one of the first instalments of the ‘Savoir-Faire Papers’, for instance, he insisted that

It is quite possible to put together a respectable library, comprising many branches of literature, at an average cost of a shilling a volume. So that if you begin with enthusiasm and resolve to buy one book every day, exclusive of Sundays and holidays, you can amuse and enrich yourself for a year on the magnificent total of fifteen pounds. And what, I ask, is fifteen pounds a year to, say, a young bachelor with an income of a hundred and fifty or two hundred? (‘Buying of Books’ 211).

The key words here are “amuse” and “enrich”: for Bennett, the point was not merely to acquire cultural ornaments for the purpose of display, but because of the pleasure

¹¹² Hammond’s discussion is based on two articles that were reprinted in *Books and Persons*: ‘Middle-Class’ (*Books* 88-100), and ‘The Book-Buyer’ (32-35).

that reading, or merely being surrounded by them, would bring. Later in the same *TPW* article he offered budget book-buying tips for those on a more modest salary of around £120; to these he advised ‘never [to] buy a book unless it is cheap’ (‘Buying of Books’ 211), and to scour the book barrows in Farringdon Road, Aldgate and Shoreditch for cheap second-hand copies ‘at a halfpenny apiece ... a shilling is princely’ (‘Alone VI’ 626). He also recommended visiting shops along the Charing Cross Road, and browsing through the second-hand catalogues of circulating libraries such as Mudie’s and Smith’s.

Hammond is right to identify that elsewhere Bennett ‘recognises the middle class’s drive to improve as well as to prove itself through spending on the acquisition of “culture”, and on that point he is ... damning’; ‘the bourgeois ... simply tries too hard’ (Hammond 108), and books are left ‘oftener unopened than opened’ (qtd. in Hammond 108-09). However, as the “Man Who Does” in 1902, Bennett had in fact urged his lower-middle class readers to gather a library for themselves regardless of whether the books would ever be taken off the shelf. He wrote that ‘Even if you don’t read a good deal, it is good to possess a library; it gives you a standing which nothing else can give; it gives you a self-satisfaction which nothing else can give, and you never know when it won’t come in useful’ (‘Buying of Books’ 211). Indeed, ‘The charm of a library is seriously impaired when one has read the whole or nearly the whole of its contents’ (‘Buying of Books’ 211). Reading, as described here, was almost secondary to the pleasures of possession.

In presenting contrasting evidence from Hammond on this point, my intention is not to invalidate her argument; more interesting, and more important, given that we can both quote from Bennett’s articles to support our separate analyses, is what this

reveals of his tendency to adopt a range of different personas, making it impossible to read him as a fixed authority. The opinion Bennett offered at any given time might depend on mere whim, or change in mood; equally, his tone would alter according to the particular publication (and its intended readership) for which he happened to be writing at the time. McDonald has identified that the ability to write within numerous different genres, and offer opposing views in each, often simultaneously, was a persistent feature of Bennett's entire career.¹¹³ As I mentioned above, the version of Bennett cited by Hammond was taken from articles originally published in A. R. Orage's *New Age*, a very different context from *TPW*.¹¹⁴ In terms of my own examples, I would place emphasis on what this reveals about Bennett's tolerant understanding of his lower-middle class readership. In accordance with Richard D. Altick's remark that 'Possession of a shelf or two of books prominently labeled "library" gave a man a pleasant feeling of added status, however humble his actual circumstances' (*Writers* 184), Bennett encouraged his readers to build up a collection of books if this would serve to bolster their self-confidence, or allow them to delight in their domestic surroundings.

This proficiency at striking an appropriate tone is perceptible elsewhere in Bennett's *TPW* writing. In *Literary Taste*, for instance, he tended towards the familiar and cajoling: 'If you are inclined to laugh when a poet expresses himself more powerfully than you express yourself ... then you had better take yourself in hand. You have to decide whether you will be on the side of the angels or on the side

¹¹³ McDonald refers to Bennett's 'tangled interests as a turn-of-the-century literary maverick' (101).

¹¹⁴ Under Orage's 'sole editorship' from 1908, the *New Age* 'began to publish ... a series of divergent opinions on socialist policies' (Sullivan, 'New Age' 251). Thereafter Orage directed the journal towards literature; his contributors included (besides Bennett) H. G. Wells, Katherine Mansfield, W. B. Yeats, and Ezra Pound. Alvin Sullivan notes that 'Orage's genius for synthesizing the thought of the best intellectuals soon made the *New Age* the center for critical discussion in London literary circles' (252). Its readers were unlikely to have been the same men and women who bought *TPW*.

of the nincompoops' (78). His extraordinary work ethic can be traced through the pages of his journals, thus he was particularly well-suited to the task of instructing busy workers how to fit literature around their work schedules.¹¹⁵ As Robert Squillace has identified, Bennett's 'self-help books' — many of which, like *Literary Taste*, had originally appeared in the pages of *TPW* — 'projected his own need for mental discipline onto his readers' (Squillace 164).¹¹⁶ He was, after all, 'a public figure who found his own portrait staring at him from the sides of hundreds of London busses by just such self-abnegating discipline as he advocates in his pocket philosophies' (Squillace 164). Thus, although the "Man Who Does" fully acknowledged the frustration of spending all day in a menial job which offered nothing in the way of literary sustenance, Bennett's own willingness to work to a gruelling timetable meant that he was impatient with those whom he deemed to be shirking. This frustration is detectable in a letter from which he quoted in August 1903, from a correspondent who had complained of having no leisure time to devote to reading:

he asks, rather mournfully and despairingly, 'How can a City man find time to read classical works?' And he closes his communication thus: 'Often when coming home weary, with a good book in my bag, I have said to myself, "Oh, it's useless to think of beginning that now; I must leave it until I can really sit down to it and dig into it." . . . In this way I am missing most of the best books, and getting only a hurried view of others' (Bennett, 'Time to Read' 338; ellipsis in orig.).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ His entry for 17 May, 1901, is typical: 'I finished *Anna Tellwright* [*Anna of the Five Towns*] this morning at 2.45 a.m., after 17 hours' continuous work, save for meals, on the last 5,000 words. I was very pleased with it; slept well for 4 hours, got up with a frightful headache, and cycled through Hemel Hempstead to St. Albans, lunched at the George, and home — 42 miles. *A. T.* is 74,000 in length' (*Journals* 67).

¹¹⁶ Squillace made this observation while constructing a separate argument about the emotionless, machine-like nature of Bennett's construction of selfhood and the process of self-formation, compared with the much more spontaneous behaviour of his fictional protagonists.

¹¹⁷ For McDonald, this particular article is an example of the many 'complaints' that Bennett received from readers (100); I see it as another instance of Bennett's willingness to offer advice to his correspondents, which emphasises the lines of communication that were open between the "Man Who Does" and the readers of his column.

The “Man Who Does” devoted the rest of that week’s article to this “mournful” enquiry (which was reminiscent of the dilemma faced by Bennett’s first fictional protagonist, Richard Larch in *A Man From the North*), and while he admitted that “Thanet’s” particular work schedule was potentially exhausting, he doubted that most other readers were this busy:

A long acquaintance with City life has convinced me that one of the most colossal concerted frauds in a city of frauds is the fraud of the City men who go home of an evening pretending to be exhausted with the Herculean labours of the day. The average City man, principal or clerk, but especially clerk, does *not* work really hard ... but the temptation to pose before one’s womenfolk as a martyr to industry is irresistible. About one man in ten in the City genuinely works hard (Bennett, ‘Time to Read’ 338).¹¹⁸

Instead of feigning a considerably more hectic schedule than was actually the case, Bennett urged his readers to draw together the scraps of wasted time scattered throughout the day, thus creating time each week which could be devoted to serious reading:

Hours and half-hours can be manipulated exactly like a row of volumes on a shelf. On four days a week, for example, “Thanet” might, if he resolved to do so, peruse his desired classics from 9.30 to 10.30 or 11p.m., and in six months he could have read the whole of the Elizabethan drama, or the Greek drama, or the Celtic Revival, or Tennyson, or the Eighteenth Century Essayists, or the French Symbolists, or whatever his heart happened to fancy (Bennett, ‘Time to Read’ 338).

As this comment reveals, for Bennett even the smallest segments of time, when employed in the right way and over a sustained period, could allow the busy city worker to cover great swathes of reading material.

On a similar note, Bennett also took the opportunity to reprimand “Thanet” — and, of course, any other readers who were also guilty of this — for idling away

¹¹⁸ In *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*, Bennett had made a similar point: ‘What I suggest is that at six o’clock you look facts in the face and admit that you are not tired (because you are not, you know), and that you arrange your evening so that it is not cut in the middle by a meal’ (29).

valuable time reading newspapers on the daily commute. If this time were instead devoted to reading literature, then ‘in a single month of oscillation between Broad Street and Wood Green you might get round the whole of Plato’s “Republic,” which will help you henceforward to a more vigorous clutch of passing events’ (Bennett, ‘Time to Read’ 338).¹¹⁹ Learning to read classical texts, Bennett suggested, would strengthen the self-improver’s mental capacity rather more effectively than merely scanning through the day’s news stories.

V

Bennett was thus keenly aware of the propensity to be distracted by reading material that was more immediately entertaining, but he also knew that many of his readers really did want to build up their personal libraries, and learn to enjoy reading, rather than regarding it as a chore that must be endured, and finally abandoned. His self-imposed task therefore was to inculcate them with the requisite skills that would allow them to derive pleasure from reading less accessible, “classic” works. I mentioned earlier that in terms of setting out a reading schedule, Bennett’s advice in *Literary Taste* was to ‘Begin wherever the fancy takes you to begin’, rather than follow a prescribed course, yet he did recommend they ‘begin with an acknowledged classic’ (32). Bennett certainly decried the notion (which had some currency at the time, as I explained in the previous chapter) that modern works should be avoided, but his objective was to develop a reader’s taste for great literature. Given that ‘Nobody at all is quite in a position to choose with certainty among modern works’ (Bennett, *Literary* 33), he deemed it judicious to utilise a text that, through successive generations, had already been branded of high literary merit. Shades of

¹¹⁹ Bennett insisted on this point again in *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*: ‘Let me respectfully remind you that you have no more time than I have. No newspaper reading in trains! I have already “put by” about three-quarters of an hour for use’ (27).

Saintsbury's ethos are detectable here, for Bennett, too, emphasised that time should not be wasted on books that might, in the future, be judged low in quality:

How are you to arrive at the stage of caring for it? Chiefly, of course, by examining it and honestly trying to understand it. But this process is materially helped by an act of faith, by the frame of mind which says: 'I know on the highest authority that this thing is fine, that it is capable of giving me pleasure. Hence I am determined to find pleasure in it.' Believe me that faith counts enormously in the development of that wide taste which is the instrument of wide pleasures. But it must be faith founded on unassailable authority (*Literary* 34).

This "authority", presumably, was the 'taste of successive generations' (*Literary* 33) of influential readers who had each agreed that a particular text deserved to be re-read in the future, and warranted a place in the cultural consciousness of the nation.¹²⁰ McDonald has remarked that Bennett 'presented himself as a mediator between the "passionate few", whose tastes and enthusiasms, he insisted, alone determined which texts belonged in the canon, and the "majority" who at best enjoyed a "rattling good story" in the *Strand Magazine* or "newish fiction" ...' (98). These priorities are traceable in *Literary Taste*, where Bennett made sure that his emphasis remained above all on the delight that could be extracted from a seemingly "difficult" work, before using this to justify its definition as a "classic." He described a classic as 'a work which gives pleasure to the minority which is intensely and permanently interested in literature'; 'It survives because it is a source of pleasure, and because the passionate few can no more neglect it than a bee can neglect a flower' (*Literary* 26, 27).

We can trace Bennett's effort to bridge the divide in *Literary Taste*, where he took Charles Lamb as the prototype for a step-by-step guide that showed readers how they

¹²⁰ E. Dean Kolbas offers a similar understanding of canon formation; he has argued that 'Canonicity requires an historical quality that is not ... quickly obtained. What newly acclaimed works lack — no less than those that have belatedly become, or had once been, popular — is a *cumulative* history, a continuum of judgments and rewritings over extended periods of time' (66).

could overcome misgivings that certain writers were in some way “beyond” them. It might be constructive to view this approach as providing an informal tutorial on how to tackle Lamb’s work, the framework of which readers could subsequently apply to other authors whom they might be reluctant to begin reading. By learning to appreciate Lamb’s writing, Bennett told his readers, they could make significant progress towards developing their literary palate. It is significant that Bennett chose Lamb as his example for this exercise. A marginal figure in English literary history at the present time, Lamb loomed large for writers of this generation, such as Whitten, E. V. Lucas, and of course Bennett. Saintsbury had described Lamb as ‘exquisite and singular in literary genius’ (*History of Nineteenth* 181), and remarked of his *Essays on Elia* that they offered ‘an endlessly various and attractive set of crotchets and whimsies’, and ‘a fervent love for literature and a wonderful gift of expounding it’ (183). More than a trace of Lamb’s essayist style is detectable in Bennett’s own articles, where subject-matter often seemed to be dictated by whim, and communicated through a humorous, ‘self-revelatory’, personality-driven style (Law 10). Lamb’s ‘affection for his books’, his ‘catholic’ reading taste, and the pleasure that literature brought him, dominated much of his discursive writing (Law 205), just as they did for Bennett; indeed the following description of Lamb’s prose, offered by Marie Hamilton Law within her book on nineteenth-century essayists, could apply equally well to the Edwardian writer: ‘His essays ... abound in allusions, quotations, recollections of books read: of characters, scenes, situations, which are used by way of illustration to give point to an idea, or as frequently happens, because the essayist wishes to share his pleasure with the reader’ (204-05). This enthusiasm for (and

similarity to) Lamb meant that he was a particularly apposite starting-point for Bennett to introduce his readers to classic literature.

Striving to allay anxieties from the outset, Bennett reminded his novice readership that a book ‘is nothing but the man trying to talk to you’ (*Literary* 35), and as a preliminary step he advised accruing some biographical knowledge of Lamb.¹²¹ Thus Bennett listed a number of biographical works, including Lucas’s *Life*, which would allow the reader to gather together a ‘picture of Charles Lamb as a human being’ (*Literary* 36). Then, ‘When you have made for yourself such a picture, read the *Essays of Elia* by the light of it ... kindly put my book down, and read *Dream Children*. Do not say to yourself that you will read it later, but read it now. When you have read it, you may proceed to my next paragraph’ (*Literary* 36-37). The next stage involved encouraging readers to reflect on Lamb’s depiction of the children in his story, and to remember this image when they next saw a child: ‘For days afterwards’, Bennett told his readers, ‘you will not be able to look upon a child without recalling Lamb’s portrayal of the grace of childhood’ (*Literary* 39). Reading a “classic” could thus persuade one to adjust and intensify one’s response to everyday situations, newly sensitive to the poignancy of ostensibly unremarkable incidents. It was this that confirmed, for Bennett, that *Dream Children* was a timeless piece of writing, in allowing ‘you [to] respond to the throb of life more intensely, more justly, and more nobly’ (*Literary* 40).

High-flown and rather vague though the preceding remarks might appear, Bennett was generally very astute at cutting through any potentially intimidating critical

¹²¹ This is a notion Bennett must have borrowed from Sainte-Beuve’s causerie essays, which tended to be informal, subjective essays on writers and their work, with a strong emphasis on the author’s biography. Anthony Levi notes that ‘Sainte-Beuve excelled at ... the literary art of historical portraiture, even if the subjects were still living ...’ (558).

terminology. Thus when he discussed how to detect an author's writing style, he framed this in terms his readers would understand. He advised them to 'employ the same canons as you use in judging men', and it followed that 'If an author's style is such that you cannot *respect* it, then you may be sure that, despite any present pleasure which you may obtain from that author, there is something wrong with his matter, and that the pleasure will soon cloy' (*Literary* 51-52, 52). Bennett was quick to acknowledge, however, that readers may continue to struggle with the concept of style. In that case, 'the most prudent course is to forget that literary style exists', and use 'common-sense' instead to draw conclusions about the quality of writing: 'If when you read an author you are pleased, without being conscious of aught but his mellifluousness, just conceive what your feelings would be after spending a month's holiday with a merely mellifluous man' (*Literary* 53, 54, 52). Just as Bennett recognised that evaluating an author's style might deter readers, he was also aware that, after devoting a sustained period of study to Lamb's work, 'you may be disappointed with him'; indeed, 'Lamb frequently strikes you as dull' (*Literary* 57, 58).¹²² A reviewer in the *Manchester Guardian* commended Bennett for acknowledging 'the chill that comes over the earnest seeker when his heart whispers that LAMB is not a gigantic genius after all, or that "The Prelude" is tough, arid work' ('Way To Read' 6). To these readers, Bennett suggested an adjustment of expectations: he reminded them that Lamb's work must be read 'slowly and perseveringly' and the enjoyment one could expect to derive from his writing was of a subtler pitch than the violent or forceful pleasures to which he presumed his readers

¹²² A 'Savoir-Faire' article, from 30 January 1903, expressed similar sentiments: 'I have little doubt that the first impressions of nine people out of every ten who read Shakespeare are not very remote from tedium and an inability to understand why so much fuss is made over Shakespeare. More lies are told about Shakespeare than about anything, except income-tax returns and the weight of trout' ('Reading' 365).

had become accustomed in their apparently tawdry reading (*Literary* 60). Such reading in fact ultimately ‘kills pleasure’, because ‘indulgence in the *tang* means the sure and total loss of sensitiveness’, whereas the ‘fineness’ of classic texts ‘ever intensifies it’ (*Literary* 61). Rather than privileging books that offered instant, but coarse, appeal, he urged them to begin the less immediately gratifying, but ultimately more sustainable, process of reading those “classic” works which ‘steal over you, rather’ (Bennett, *Literary* 61).

Approaching a book via the biography of the author; thereafter identifying this writer’s voice, and the emotions in his work that one could apply to one’s own experiences; and subsequently treating the work as one would an acquaintance: these were the basic guidelines that Bennett laid out for his readers. Finally, he advised them that provided ‘the work and the biography of a classical writer’ had been studied together first, one should ‘afterwards let explanatory criticism be read as much as you please,’ for it ‘may throw one single gleam that lights up the entire subject’ (*Literary* 60).

VI

Conscious that embarking upon classic texts was unlikely to fill many readers with much enthusiasm, Bennett advised adopting a reading plan in order to cut down on the likelihood of abandoning the task. If he were preparing his readers for a career as a ‘University Extension Lecturer’, Bennett wrote, then he would probably ‘prescribe something drastic and desolating’; instead he would ‘dissuade you from any regular course’ (*Literary* 63). Nevertheless, he was also fully aware that his readers would wish to discuss their reading with friends and colleagues, and he warned them that neglecting to fix a specific date for finishing a book meant that ‘the

risk of a humiliating collapse into futility is enormously magnified' (*Literary* 86). As the "Man Who Does" he had suggested his readers might aim to read, for instance, 'a play of Shakespeare's every week for three months' ('Reading' 365), and in *Literary Taste* he insisted that 'it is not enough to say: "I will inform myself completely as to the Lake School." It is necessary to say: "I will inform myself completely as to the Lake School before I am a year older"' (86). Once again Lamb can be seen as a remarkably appropriate candidate, for his close relations with writers including Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Hazlitt, meant that readers could move onto their work directly from Lamb, already armed with a sense of the literary context: 'From the circle of Lamb's own work you may go off at a tangent at various points, according to your inclination' (*Literary* 64). Bennett was confident that the result of this quasi-disciplined system of reading would be an alteration in the reader's personal taste, towards the eventual discovery that

the verdict of the ages was right, even though it did not accord with his own early views. He will discover that the reason why the classical writers, from Homer to whom you please, are esteemed and immortal, is not primarily because they are deep, and correct and restrained, and shapely, but primarily because they give joy, sheer joy, to the largest number of cultivated readers ('Reading' 365).

Such a discovery was of course crucial for Bennett: joy and pleasure were among his enduring principles. Unlike institutionalised courses in the subject, literature for Bennett (and also Whitten, his editor at *TPW*) was never connected with passing an examination; it had to enhance one's experience of life, or it was worth nothing at all. Thus when Bennett suggested setting reading goals, and listed some tactics that would assist *TPW* readers in retaining information about the texts they had read, the emphasis was on marking passages that they could enthuse about, that 'give you the most pleasure' (*Literary* 79).

To ensure that one's reading became a 'permanent inward possession' (Bennett, 'Reading in Practice' 114) that would bring lasting fulfilment, the "Man Who Does" advised keeping a commonplace book, or — since he assumed that this probably required greater effort than the average reader was willing to invest — he asked that they make a habit of recording particularly striking excerpts in the back page of the book, detailing the page number and a brief description:

No trouble, no brains, no steadfastness; but at the close of one's perusal one has a complete list of the good things in the book, and one knows where that list is; it can never be lost till the book is lost. A shelf full of books with such lists at the end of them is a treasure of practical usefulness, a key to knowledge, and an ever-present help when one needs a literary tonic (Bennett, 'Reading in Practice' 114).

The issue of book ownership is an important one to emphasise again here: Bennett was suggesting that his readers make notes in the back of books, the assumption being that they would have possessed their own copies. The individual was advised to construct a personalised directory of his own past reading, and these books stayed on one's shelf for future consultation.

The process of note-taking also compelled the reader to employ greater concentration, taking time to annotate their books, rather than merely scanning through them as quickly as possible and replacing them in the bookcase. Bennett was encouraging them to become well-practiced in the art of close reading, and capable of discussing the specific aspects of a text from which they, personally, had derived the most aesthetic pleasure. Readers of Bennett's column were effusive in their response to this article, and some even outlined the studying techniques that had proved fruitful in their own case. One reader wrote in with his tips for those who did not own their own copies, and instead had to 'depend chiefly for their reading on lending libraries':

This is how I manage. I get an exercise book with stout covers, price 4d. Then, when reading, if anything strikes me, I put a scrap of paper, or anything, between the leaves where the passage occurs, and when I have got through the book in comfort, I can find with very little bother the bits I want, copy them out, and in doing so have them impressed on my mind, besides making quite a treasure of a commonplace book, to refer to any time I need (Reader 282).

VII

As I have shown, Bennett keenly entered into this convivial ‘sense of dialogue’ (Wild 57) with his readers, emulating the interactive spirit of the classroom, but in an informal environment.¹²³ In fact the “Man Who Does” devoted an entire ‘Savoir-Faire’ article to addressing the dilemma of “A. S. W.”, who sought the columnist’s wisdom in overcoming his recent apathy in reading: ‘Ever since I was twenty miscellaneous reading has been the thing I have chiefly lived for. But now, at forty, I find my pleasure in reading growing weaker ... the desire to read is as strong within me as ever it was; yet I don’t enjoy them as I used to. . . . My books are turning traitors’ (qtd. in Bennett, ‘Lament’ 563; 2nd ellipsis in orig.). Bennett offered this reader some reassurance: he was confident that his reader’s taste would have become more sophisticated over the years, and his reading choices should be adapted accordingly: “‘A. S. W.’ mentions fiction, and, in particular, Jane Austen ... If Turgenev’s greatness in prose fiction is first-rate, as it is, Jane’s greatness is third-rate. Has “A. S. W.” read Turgenev? If not, let him do so, and come back to Jane for dessert’ (‘Lament’ 563).

Bennett also offered some unusually high-flown advice, by way of conclusion: ‘My correspondent asks what reading “leads to.” The greatest literature “leads to”

¹²³ In a ‘Savoir-Faire’ article from April 1903, Bennett wrote: ‘My readers will pardon me, I hope, if I make the present paper of a more miscellaneous character than usual, in order to deal with certain questions which seem to rise continually out of my correspondence. I receive a number of charming letters ... Many of these letters can be, and are, answered; but others cannot’ (‘To Whom’ 740). This entire article was then set aside for responding to various readers’ queries.

nothing. It is complete, an end instantly attained by that uplifting of the soul which proceeds from a sudden revelation of beauty' ('Lament' 563). An acquaintance with fine literature, Bennett argued, could forge a more positive outlook on the world in general; when absorbed properly, literature could alter one's perception of even the most humdrum episodes in one's daily life:

You would be ashamed of your literary self to be caught in ignorance of Whitman, who wrote: 'Now understand me well — it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.' And yet, having achieved a motor-car, you lose your temper when it breaks down half-way up a hill! (*Literary* 118).

Bennett insisted that although readers could not expect to alter their economic circumstances, or job prospects, through dedication to literary study, nevertheless there were other, less tangible rewards to be had, such as refining one's receptivity to aesthetic experience in each moment of the day. Robert Squillace makes a valid point when he remarks that although 'Money is no longer the object to be accrued', the fact that Bennett 'initially links the process of self-formation with that of accumulation, harking back to the familiar equation of social arrival and self-realisation with wealth, reassures his readers that they are not on ground too unfamiliar to them, too psychologically slippery' (Squillace 159). Further endorsement of this non-monetary 'stockpiling' (Squillace 159) was offered in *Literary Taste*, where in the first few pages Bennett outlined, in rather lofty terms, what he perceived to be the central aim of reading: 'An understanding appreciation of literature means an understanding appreciation of the world, and it means nothing else. Not isolated and unconnected parts of life, but all of life, brought together and correlated in a synthetic map!' (12). A literary 'epiphany' was not unusual among lower-class autodidacts, as Jonathan Rose has identified: 'their memoirs commonly

climax with *The Book That Made All The Difference*' (404). Bennett was therefore demonstrating an authentic understanding of his readers' experiences when as the "Man Who Does" he argued that the 'genuine spiritual basis and justification of reading' was, primarily, the 'thrill' one gained: 'It is a unique thing in thrills, and perhaps there is nothing on earth so tremendous save the thrill of the greatest dramatic music and of a profound passion' (Bennett, 'Aim' 146).

As one would expect, given the analogous personal testimony that Rose has uncovered, subscribers to *TPW* were delighted to share their own rapturous responses to literature: 'What a comfort "T. P.'s" is to a solitary man. That "Savoir Faire" paragraph about "the thrill" — it expresses my own feelings well. My favourite thrill, out of many, is the verse in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" about "magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn"' (Yorkshire 250). Other correspondents admitted to being equally reliant upon literature for reassurance in testing times — "J. M.", for instance, admitted that 'Books have ever been to me friends, and in all the troubles of a rather stormy career I have turned to them for comfort and solace, and they have never failed' (906). As these letters reveal, *TPW* was attracting a network of enthusiastic self-improvers who felt compelled by Bennett's column to share with each other, and also with the "Man Who Does", their own life-affirming literary experiences.

VIII

Despite the high claims Bennett staked for literature, in terms of the intangible aesthetic pleasure that reading could provide in limitless supply, as the "Man Who Does" he still requested that his readers did not allow literature to dominate their lives; he reminded them that 'It is just as much one's business to enjoy one's self as

to study the classics — especially when one is married and one's mood influences a complete household' ('You Can Live' 306). Elsewhere Bennett had written that 'I am not apt to be impressed when informed that So-and-so is "a great reader," until I have learnt something more about So-and-so' ('Reading' 365). He was concerned that his readers should not feel self-important for having read widely, and warnings to this effect appear throughout this first year of *TPW* articles; under the sub-heading 'Literary affectations', for instance, he cautioned that

I will not allow reading to be a cloak to cover sins of narrowness, prejudice, and affectation — especially affectation. Some of the most offensive persons I have ever known were 'great readers' — persons who never went to bed without reading a scene from Shakespeare, who made an appreciation of 'Marius the Epicurean' a test of social decency, who scorned all modern fiction and poetry with a reference to the 'wholesome sanity of Scott,' who were emphatically 'up in dates,' and whose minds, to be brief, were a coagulated mass of ponderous pretences. For myself, I read because I enjoy reading. I try not to pretend to like things that I don't like — it is difficult! — and when I am bored I try candidly to admit the fact. For example, I candidly admit that nearly all Dickens and nearly all Thackeray bores me acutely ('Reading' 365).¹²⁴

As my previous two chapters have demonstrated, critics of University Extension and of Moulton's Backworth Reading Union accused extramural students of misplaced high-mindedness as a result of their studies, and this word "priggish", which, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, was used by a *Saturday Review* journalist to mock the literary activities at Backworth, also recurred frequently in Bennett's early *TPW* articles, as he urged readers to remain, above all else, unpretentious.¹²⁵ He

¹²⁴ Elsewhere in the series, Bennett wrote: 'We all know the man who reads nothing but poetry, or nothing but fiction. He is capable of sublime appreciations, and he is very wonderful and fastidious and individual and refined. Nevertheless, he is a nuisance. And he is certainly narrow-minded. If you begin to talk to him about retaliation tariffs, he looks at you with an annihilating look, and signifies that politics are for the mass, and not for the elect. This shows that he is far gone in the process of becoming an ass, and that his imagination is approaching the end of its feverish career, and dying for lack of a good square meal of facts' ('Aim' 146).

¹²⁵ For instance in August 1903, while giving advice on finding time to devote to reading, the "Man Who Does" warned readers 'not [to] let your programme apply to every day in the week. Habit is a

recalled seeing an article ‘which advised the self-improver to write a critical essay on each book that he read’, but warned that young men, in particular, ‘would run a risk of being priggish if they did’ (‘Reading in Practice’ 114).

To married men, Bennett recommended they adopt a pragmatic approach to literature that did not allow what was, after all, supposed to be a pleasant pastime, to impinge upon other areas of their personal life: ‘Unless you are a highly abnormal man, do not attempt to “steal an hour” in the morning. This dodge annoys your wife and causes the children to doubt your sanity’ (‘Time to Read’ 338). He continued, ‘there are more important things in life than literature. I lay immense stress on this final point’ (338). This entreaty against excessive earnestness can be seen as part of Bennett’s continued self-distancing from formal education, and his concerns about what he deemed to be the stultifying effects of uninspiring, overtly serious, institutionalised courses in literature, such as the University Extension Movement, which valorised high attendance figures and good examination results.

Nevertheless, the “Man Who Does” devoted three weeks (from late August until September 4, 1903) to the subject of a book club, defined in his now-familiar non-nonsense terms as ‘a social organisation which is brought into existence in order to provide the members of it with something which they would probably not be sufficiently enterprising to obtain for themselves singly’ (‘About Book-Clubs’ 370). He suggested that ‘the early autumn is the natural and proper time for the inception of book-clubs’, since a ‘serious, studious, pensive vein ... is invariably induced by the peculiarities of our English autumn’ (370). It should contain between twelve and twenty-four members, with a president, a secretary, and three other members to

dreadful thing, and so is priggishness’ (‘Time to Read’ 338). In January 1903, he wrote of the novice reader, ‘Let him avoid the assumption of a too serious “pose” in regard to literature’ (‘Reading’ 365).

formulate a book-selection committee. A guinea a year, Bennett felt, was more than sufficient to purchase the requisite number of books (normally around thirty-six volumes), and the secretary should ensure that he obtained the best possible discount — ‘threepence in the shilling off all books except those issued at a net price’ — although this might necessitate placing an order with a London bookseller (‘About Books-Clubs II’ 402). Other secretarial duties included preservation of books, cutting the leaves, ensuring that books were passed around the club in the correct order, and organising an auction for the end of the session, when the books could be bought fairly cheaply by members of the club, with the proceeds being put towards purchasing more volumes for the following year.

Bennett advised that a book club thrived on a diverse selection of texts, and should therefore aim to

fairly represent the different kinds of literary taste in the club. If the committee is too bookish, too narrow and too superior in its predilections — if, for example, it happens to have a mania for the works of Mr. Henry James and Mr. W. B. Yeats to the exclusion of Mrs. Humphry Ward and Mr. Benjamin Kidd — there will soon be a row in that club and wigs on the club-green (‘About Book-Clubs’ 370).

By offering a catholic selection, and affording the same credence to each member’s choice, the book club could avoid being dominated by bestselling novels, or becoming so scholarly or inaccessible in choice of text that it excluded less confident readers. Similar priorities had shaped Moulton’s scheme a decade earlier, when he had refused to adhere to criticisms of popular contemporary fiction. However, the “Man Who Does” once again demarcated the activities he envisaged taking place within his own hypothetical book club, from an Extension class or a Backworth meeting, because he was not convinced that a serious, scholarly atmosphere would ever be established: ‘One toys with sandwiches, consumes inspiriting liquids, sits

about, and talks about the ordinary things that people usually do talk about ... But as for the discussion of the qualities of books, there is not much of that' (Bennett, 'About Book-Clubs III' 434). Because 'the primary object of a book club is not to chatter about literature, but to read it' (434), the "Man Who Does" was not actually concerned that these meetings were likely to degenerate into pleasant social occasions. In terms of passing books around, however, he felt it was more efficient to pay for someone to circulate the books between members each month, rather than meet up in person.

Continually aware of the time and financial constraints affecting his readers, and determined that they should conduct their studying independently, Bennett's book club advocated a system of distance learning proper, where contact time with others was minimal almost to the point of non-existence, and books could be shared around to keep costs low. This book club was also a fully worked-out scheme that was ready for immediate implementation. Given the enthusiastic response to Bennett's articles that this chapter has identified, it was also likely to succeed in its central aim of broadening the literary enthusiast's exposure to literature, and encouraging him to persist in reading as much as possible. As this chapter has shown, this was with the express purpose of bolstering the *TPW* reader's confidence and, thereafter, increasing his pleasure in life.

Coda

The “Newbolt Report” and University English Studies in the Twentieth Century

‘English is not merely an indispensable handmaid without whose assistance neither philosopher, nor chemist, nor classical scholar can do his work properly. It is one of the greatest subjects to which a University can call its students’ (British, *Teaching* 200).

This coda moves ahead to 1921, the year which saw the publication of *The Teaching of English in England*, generally referred to as the “Newbolt Report”, commissioned by the Board of Education to enquire into the state of English teaching in England at all educational levels. Since the turn of the century, significant developments had taken place in the provision of English at a tertiary level: alongside numerous chairs in the subject at the newer universities and university colleges, the first Oxford Professor of English Literature, Walter Raleigh, was appointed in 1904, and he immediately set about demarcating the study of literature from that of language. The English Tripos was founded at Cambridge in 1917, and the first examinations for the new degree were taken in 1919.¹²⁶ English also continued to be taught in Extension centres, and was steadily growing in demand at Workers’ Educational Association co-ordinated university tutorial classes (after a slow start, given that early enthusiasm was reserved mainly for political and economic subjects). The 1921 Report reflected back on this progress. This was one of four such committees established after the First World War (the others focused on Science, Classics, and Modern Languages), and the majority of the Newbolt panel were also members of the English Association, founded in the Edwardian period ‘to promote the maintenance of “correct use of English, spoken and written”, the

¹²⁶ Palmer has provided a particularly thorough account of the subject’s development at Oxford in the first few decades of the twentieth century (104-70); Tillyard’s (more subjective) account of Cambridge English is also very detailed.

recognition of English as “an essential element in the national education”, and the discussion of teaching methods and advanced study as well as the correlation of school with university work’ (Doyle, *English* 31). Brian Doyle argues that in fact ‘the Association was largely responsible for convincing the Board of the need for a Departmental Committee to investigate the state of the teaching of English in England, and to propose plans for future developments’ (*English* 32). That the poet Sir Henry Newbolt, President of the English Association, was commissioned to chair the Committee, makes it even clearer that the Report his panel produced would be similar in ethos to the Association, and that English would be offered up as an essential subject at all levels of education.¹²⁷ The Report’s introduction described English as the ‘keystone’ of education, ‘a matter of the most vital concern, and one which must, by its very nature, take precedence of all other branches of learning’ (British, *Teaching* 5, 10). This set the tone for the rest of the document.

D. J. Palmer has remarked that ‘Rarely has the Civil Service produced such a readable document’ (179); the Report quickly became a bestseller, and newspapers printed largely favourable reviews of the publication. Gargi Bhattacharyya has called it a ‘seminal document’, and one ‘which is widely considered to mark the inauguration of English Studies as a central focus of liberal education in Britain’ (5, 8). Likewise, Margaret Mathieson has argued that the Newbolt Report, together with George Sampson’s book *English for the English* (1921), ‘are landmarks on any

¹²⁷ The following statement from George Sampson, member of the Committee and author of *English for the English*, quoted in a report of the annual dinner of the English Association in May 1921, offers further testament to the shared values of the Newbolt Committee and the English Association: ‘As I look towards Sir Henry Newbolt, with the generosity of vision which is perhaps pardonable at the end of a public dinner, I seem to see two Chairmen. I see not only the Chairman of the English Association, but also the Chairman of the Departmental Committee on English Studies. It seems very difficult to dissociate these two Chairmen because the latter seemed a meeting of the English Association under another name’ (‘Annual Dinner’ 8-9). John Dover Wilson, another Committee member, would later record that the process was ‘dominated’ by Newbolt (97).

survey of the subject's development over the past one hundred and fifty years' (*Preachers* 69).¹²⁸ I will use the Report as a means of reflecting back on the developments already discussed in previous chapters, revealing the extent to which these earlier extramural endeavours were now being recognised — and, more importantly, praised — on an official level by the government, specifically within the later chapters of the Report: those on 'The Universities', and 'Literature and Adult Education.'

In this way, I aim to offer a reading that has a different impulse from critics who centre their discussion on the Report's calls for post-war 'social unity' (Mathieson, *Preachers* 74) and 'national pride' (Baldick, *Social* 95), its 'mission of national renewal through literary education' (Doyle, *English* 13), and 'the humanist and nationalist elements of this strategy [which] were directed at unifying the class divided nature of British society' (Mort 26). English literature, as described rather loftily by the Newbolt Committee, might improve society by rendering it more cohesive, and these critics have each focused on the rather glib, reductive, and certainly nationalistic terms employed in the Report to divert the threat of working-class dissent.¹²⁹ I do agree with these critics that the Report placed renewed emphasis on promoting a shared culture geared towards English patriotism, with the aim of encouraging each class to work together for common ideals. Mathieson has also stressed the Committee's agenda of raising the standard of aesthetic appreciation more generally, effectively seeking to "do away" with what they deemed the

¹²⁸ Sampson was a member of the Newbolt Committee; Dover Wilson later complained that *English for the English* had 'disconcerted some of us on the committee who were devoting strenuous hours in the public service to a report which would follow much the same lines as his book, a book that could hardly have been written without the evidence which a member of the committee had at his disposal' (97).

¹²⁹ See Bhattacharyya 4-11 for a rather more sober analysis of this aspect of the Report.

worthless reading material bought by the working classes: ‘literature, it was clearly hoped, would act as a defence against the penny-dreadful’ (Mathieson, *Preachers* 52-53).

The Report, further, has been criticised for offering the working classes this middle-class culture in an effort to counteract ‘the threat of monster demonstrations and working-class uprising’ (Baldick, *Social* 98), rather than seeking to alter their circumstances at a grassroots level: ‘The Newbolt Committee ... proposed that great literature should be the school’s consoling gift to those deprived souls’ (Mathieson, ‘Teaching’ 10). Instead of making any effort towards ‘changing those conditions’, Mathieson argues, they sought instead to ‘promote the experiences they were convinced would support the potentially corruptible souls who were condemned to live and work in modern cities’ (‘Teaching’ 10). While I would not necessarily disagree with these readings either — the Report is certainly very vague in terms of offering practical solutions to the social ills it diagnoses — my interest in the document lies in a different direction, in the extent to which it consolidates my own findings regarding *fin-de-siècle* extramural education, and in what this signalled for the future of tertiary-level English studies.

In the chapter on universities, the Report stated that the university is the ‘apex of the educational edifice’, and that English must occupy a central place on its curriculum: ‘English ... is needed in every Faculty. It is the one subject which for an Englishman has the claim of universality. Without it he cannot attain to full powers either of learning or of teaching in any. We should like to see this officially recognised’ (British, *Teaching* 195, 199-200). The Committee felt that working out the actual details of this went beyond its remit; in an apparent disclaimer, it stated

that 'It would be premature, and indeed impertinent, if we were to attempt to lay down in any detail the lines of a perfect "School" of English. That is a problem for time, experience, and the experiments of many Universities to solve' (201).

Nevertheless, over the course of fifty pages, the Report offered several points that are of relevance to the preceding sections of this thesis, beginning with a rebuttal of the now-familiar claim, one that had haunted English studies for decades, that it was a 'soft option' (British, *Teaching* 204). The Report described this as a 'bogey', for the subject demanded 'prolonged and laborious study', and 'will at least start its candidates on a path which, if followed to the end, leads to such knowledge of English Literature as Bentley or Jebb possessed of Greek' (204).

I described in my second chapter how even the most fervent proponents for university English literature in the late-nineteenth century, such as John Churton Collins, agreed that their subject would only be imbued with the requisite scholarly seriousness if read alongside classics. The Newbolt Committee suggested that although knowledge of classics offered a definite advantage to the English student, 'the ideal will not be attained' by every individual, and therefore they 'can only recommend that, whether in addition to Classics or in substitution for them, weight should be given in the examination to a knowledge of one or more foreign literatures, so far as they are related to our own' (British, *Teaching* 211, 211-12). On a similar note, Collins had also claimed, back in the 1880s, that drawing comparisons with English literature would rejuvenate a putatively moribund subject, and lend greater complexity to the analyses of Greek and Latin texts formulated by classics students. These sentiments were reiterated in the Report, where vernacular texts were charged

with bringing ‘added life and new interest to the Classical “Schools” and classical studies’ (British, *Teaching* 209).

Thereafter followed the assertion that, rather than being seen as merely an adjunct of either history or sociology, English could in fact be beneficial to students of other disciplines, deepening, for instance, the historian’s understanding of his own subject. Thus, although ‘much of Dryden cannot be understood by a reader who knows nothing of the political and religious history of England in the second half of the 17th century’, it was also true that ‘nowhere are certain parts of that history told with such concentrated power, with genius of that sort which refuses to be denied or forgotten, as in the poems of Dryden’ (British, *Teaching* 205). English literature, the Committee argued very convincingly, was, firstly, just as important as other academic disciplines, and secondly, would allow history students, to take one example, to experience a more potent, because poetic, and therefore stirring, view of past events, and in this way, alleviate the tedium of learning dry historical facts.

In terms of the debate which had vexed proponents for English literature back in the 1880s and ’90s, about whether universities should have a joint School of Literature and Language or divide this into two separate ones, the Newbolt Committee backed the former option, but also made it clear that philology should have no place within this. From the Elizabethan period, the Report argued, language study had been underpinned by historical and literary concerns, yet, as I also mentioned in my second chapter, attention was now devoted ‘almost exclusively to philology and phonetics’ (British, *Teaching* 217). This was deemed no longer acceptable; the ‘chief aims [of language study] should be to enable students to read our earlier literature with understanding and enjoyment’, therefore ‘language which

has never issued in literature is at best of subordinate interest', and language study in general should never 'occupy the bulk of the students' time' (British, *Teaching* 219, 227, 229). An alternative to Anglo-Saxon, such as Middle French and Medieval Latin, should also be on offer; thus it was no longer recommended that an honours English student should have to study Anglo-Saxon at all.

The Newbolt Report offered a brief history of the provisions laid out for university English teaching up to this point, placing particular emphasis on the nineteenth century in order to trace the pedagogical beginnings of the subject to Scotland, and thereafter London and the provincial universities. The Committee lamented the subject's struggle for acceptance in the university. It argued, in rather loaded terms, that English was 'a legitimate heir too long kept by circumstances out of his rights', and any further reservations that might be voiced on this issue were foreclosed with a prescriptive warning: 'English must henceforth be recognised as a study that has a first claim on the support of every English University, old or new ... Hence it will be the duty of the Universities of this country to make due provision for their English Department' (British, *Teaching* 247). However, these English departments were also called upon to look beyond the university walls, and take greater responsibility for co-ordinating higher-level instruction carried out extramurally, where demand for English courses was growing: 'in short ... the extension and tutorial classes should be regarded as an integral part of the English Department' (249). Because of the 'peculiar national importance' of English literature,

what is wanted is organisation on a national scale. In any plans for future development of their English departments, University institutions should consider not only their particular or local requirements but the rapidly expanding place of English studies in the life of this country and indeed of all parts of the English-speaking world (British, *Teaching* 251).

Thus extramural education could no longer be left to develop on its own terms and using its own initiative; it must, the Report argued, be organised and led by university professors, whose duty it was to accept the role of disseminating English literary education nationwide. We might note the now familiar quasi-religious rhetoric employed by the Committee in conveying this message, which has provoked the ire of some recent left-leaning historians of criticism:

The Professor of Literature in a University should be — and sometimes is, as we gladly recognise — a missionary in a more real and active sense than any of his colleagues. He has obligations not merely to the students who come to him to read for a degree, but still more towards the teeming population outside the University walls, most of whom have not so much as ‘heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.’ The fulfilment of these obligations means propaganda work, organisation and the building up of a staff of assistant missionaries (British, *Teaching* 259).

Cutting through this indisputably polemical language, I am more interested in the fact that the Report — and, by extension, the government — was now calling for greater prominence to be given to extramural initiatives by the university authorities, encouraging organisations such as the Extension Movement and the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) to continue along the same lines, but now with greater academy backing, and more fully integrated into the university English department.

In fact the Report was particularly fulsome in its praise of the University Extension Movement,¹³⁰ acknowledging its pioneering work in the field of English

¹³⁰ The WEA tutorial classes were also described in complimentary terms by the Committee, yet the most common subjects taught within this system of (usually) three-year courses were economics, economic history, and political science, with only limited interest in English literature, particularly in the early years. When instruction in English was demanded, this tended only to be after the completion of an entirely different course of study. Thus the WEA is of limited relevance here, more so given that its ostensibly innovative tutorial classes were in fact very similar to the Extension classes, as I mentioned in my chapter on Extension. Further, these WEA tutorial classes only really gained momentum after the formation of a joint committee in Oxford in 1908, and English literature courses were not in demand from the start; therefore these WEA developments took place outside my specific research focus, which ends in 1910.

studies, before calling for ‘generous treatment’ of the Movement by the ‘Universities themselves, the Board of Education, and Local Education Authorities’ (British, *Teaching* 269).¹³¹ Its conclusions about the pedagogical achievements of the Movement are in fact very similar to my own. Its claim that ‘University Extension lectures and classes were almost the first attempt to fill a gap in our higher education and they did a service in promoting the study of our national literature which should never be forgotten’ (British, *Teaching* 267), was the conclusion I reached in my third chapter. Individual Extension lecturers were commended — justifiably, in my view — for their pioneering work, and Collins was singled out for special praise: ‘for years [he] laboured in this cause, with scanty reward and no official academic recognition, [and he] deserved well of the republic’ (British, *Teaching* 267).

The Diploma in the Humanities that was offered by London University from 1908 onwards, as part of its Extension provisions, was also accorded special mention in the Report. This Diploma was awarded after completion of four years of continuous work in a subject area. It was thus an extended version of the Sessional Certificates I discussed in my Extension chapter, encouraging longer-term interest by putting in place a course of study, with annual examinations, that was the same length as an actual university degree. While the Committee saw value for ‘those who merely attend the lectures, provided they do so regularly and follow a course of reading on the subject that is being treated’, nevertheless they were more impressed with the long-term study options that were also in place: ‘The Diploma courses are, in our opinion, to be welcomed as opening an avenue of literary study under academic direction to many students, engaged in teaching or other day-time occupations, who

¹³¹ Financial assistance was already being given to WEA tutorial classes through these bodies.

are unable to read for a degree' (British, *Teaching* 271). This supports my own view that the Extension Movement could offer a scholarly and systematic education in English literature.

Extramural initiatives in general, the Report was right to predict, would continue to serve a vital purpose in the national education system, given that not all adults would have the chance to attend a university, or even wish to do so.¹³² Thomas Kelly has noted that 'Extra-mural teaching programmes expanded between the wars both in numbers and in scope' (*History* 269), as universities appeared to be following the advice laid down by the *1919 Report*, which had pushed for widespread provision to be put in place for adult education.¹³³ Various developments included grants being extended to universities for their Extension courses,¹³⁴ and the creation of extramural teaching departments, with full-time academics, in almost every university in England (Kelly, *History* 268-69). Nevertheless, English was also firmly established in the ancient English universities by this point, and it was in 1926 at Cambridge that I. A. Richards and his colleagues would revolutionise the subject with their

"Passages of English Prose and Verse for Critical Comment" paper, thus

¹³² Extramural adult education was, and still is, an important division of the education system, one that performs an ongoing role, rather than acting as a makeshift, temporary solution. In Lawrence Goldman's summation of the *1919 Report* (the work of a group appointed by the government's Reconstruction Committee to report on adult education), he states that 'adult education had specific social and communal ends that made it indispensable in a democratic community. It was not advocated to deal with the faults in elementary and secondary provision; it was *sui generis*' (Goldman 208). Initiatives such as the Open University testify to the continuing relevance of extramural education.

¹³³ Because it barely addresses individual subject areas, the *1919 Report* is largely beyond the scope of this discussion. Nevertheless, Kelly has described it as 'the first and ... still the most comprehensive survey of the history and organisation of adult education in this country' (*History* 267). Many of its suggestions regarding the greater resources and funds that should be made available for adult education in general, tally with the Newbolt Report's analogous calls for increased provision for extramural English literature courses.

¹³⁴ This extra financial support in fact did little to help what was by then a fairly moribund system; as Stuart Marriott has noted, despite increased government funding in 1924, 'the old Extension movement seemed to be in a bad way. Failing commitment, as measured by amount of private study and number of examination entries, had been evident since the middle 1900s ... The war seriously affected provision and a brisk recovery in 1919-21 proved only temporary' (*Backstairs* 93).

institutionalising the principles that were published as *Practical Criticism* in 1929. Developments at Cambridge meant that, in Terry Eagleton's words, whereas 'In the early 1920s it was desperately unclear why English was worth studying at all', nevertheless 'by the early 1930s it had become a question of why it was worth wasting your time on anything else' (31). Demand for English teaching outside the university walls still existed; indeed, by mid-way through the 1920s, WEA tutorial classes in English literature were almost as numerous as those in economics (Goldman 217). However, this thesis is concerned with the visionary educational activities that were taking place extramurally while Oxbridge had still held back from institutionalising English literature as a subject of study. In this decade, the 1920s, Cambridge at last took the leading role in teaching English, placing itself at the vanguard of hugely influential pedagogical innovations by forging a verifiable critical process that rendered the subject both socially important and, crucially, examinable. Finally, the subject had been accepted into the academy, and made to occupy a central position there, with any trace of its highly controversial beginnings long since abandoned.

Later, following the 1944 Education Act and new provisions from the University Grants Committee, greater numbers of students from less affluent backgrounds would have access to university education, particularly after the Robbins Report in 1963, and the so-called "plate glass universities" that were established in the 1960s.¹³⁵ These could boast flourishing and non-canonical English departments that were set up, in many cases, by grammar-school educated university lecturers who

¹³⁵ Kelly provides some very revealing statistics relating to these government-led educational developments: university student numbers rose from 52,000 in 1945-46 to 185,000 in 1966-67, and 'Expenditure by the University Grants Committee on the universities of England and Wales rose from £1.9 millions in 1944-5 to £197.5 millions in 1967-8' (*History* 334).

had left Oxbridge, and now based themselves in institutions such as Kent, York, Sussex, and the University of East Anglia (UEA). There they could choose modern and seemingly left-of-field syllabuses, and develop new pedagogical methods in a fresh and emphatically non-elitist environment. David Daiches, a founding member of the University of Sussex in 1961, wrote that the ‘declared policy of the new university’ was to ‘resist the tight compartmentalization of subjects in independent departments and to encourage fruitful cross-fertilization of subjects by refusing to have departments at all and organizing the university in flexible Schools of Study’ (87). In his discussion of English studies at Sussex, Daiches wrote that ‘If the student cannot build bridges between the various subjects he studies then, we feel, he is not studying them properly ... we try to enable him to see at least some of the works he is discussing critically in their historical, social and intellectual context’ (91). Sussex students were also encouraged to read beyond the canon, and focus just as much on ‘minor writers’ (Daiches 90).

In terms of UEA, one thinks of figures such as Ian Watt, James McFarlane, and Malcolm Bradbury, each of whom taught there in the 1960s, when, as with Sussex, ‘multi-disciplinary’ study was the new watchword (Sanderson 85). Teaching at UEA took place in student-led seminars; strong emphasis was placed on coursework and seminars as a system of ‘continuous assessment’ that worked alongside the final examinations (Sanderson 84); and the now famous Creative Writing MA, the first such course in Britain, was founded by Bradbury and Angus Wilson in 1970 (89-90). Extramural initiatives will always have a role to play in teaching English literature, yet its once progressive approach to English diminished after university lecturers, no longer distracted by the need to justify the existence of their subject, were at liberty

to introduce experimental teaching methods and new and quixotic syllabuses into the university classroom.

Conclusion

This thesis has uncovered some of the important, diverse, but often overlooked pedagogical endeavours that took place between 1885 and 1910. Extramural English literature teaching was not flawlessly executed, by any means; uneven attendance figures were symptomatic of larger deficiencies in the Extension Movement, particularly organisational disputes and the limited financial resources that were available. Nevertheless, the Movement could boast exemplary levels of scholarship from lecturers, and positive reports from examiners testify to student commitment, and to the effectiveness of a groundbreaking teaching model. Efforts to portray this as a systematic course of education found reward in the affiliation scheme, which denoted a certain degree of Oxbridge approval, prompting Collins (among others) to intensify demands for an honours degree in English in order to centralise instruction in the subject, and provide proper training for extramural teachers.

Collins was reviled by some of the authors whose work he had reviewed, and derided by academics who saw no value in — or wished to forestall — his campaign for an Oxford English School. He could not, however, be ignored, and his hectoring approach should not detract from his unquestionable literary knowledge, or his significant pedagogical impact. As one might expect, given his work at those universities, both Birmingham and London have Churton Collins literature prizes, but so too does Oxford (Kijinski 45), and the 1917 Cambridge English Tripos also owed much to Collins's own prescriptions for an English School, particularly in drawing together English and classical literature. Tennyson's description of Collins as a 'Louse on the Locks of Literature' (Charteris 197) hardly represents either his achievements or his scholarly reputation.

Elsewhere and even less well known, Moulton's inductive critical method and his extramural novel-reading group together underscore the progressive educational ideals that were circulating in the 1880s and '90s. In this instance, however, it was Moulton's distance from the academy that proved beneficial to the development of his pedagogy. Thus, although Collins argued that English literature would profit immeasurably from its institutionalisation at Oxford and Cambridge, Moulton was instead motivated by the needs of extramural students — principles which were ultimately far better suited to an American academic context.

Bennett's *TPW* articles offer an alternative view of literary education altogether, where pleasure became the watchword, and institutionalised scholarship was scorned repeatedly, as an ultimately deadening force. Bennett's column thus served an entirely different purpose from Extension courses, in espousing an open-minded, belletristic approach to reading that was defiantly non-systematic, and it was a point of pride for him to mark his distance from Extension lecturers, whom he criticised for their apparent pedantry and their uninspiring approach to literature. Even Moulton's Backworth scheme was unlikely to have impressed Bennett, despite its seemingly more capricious syllabus structure; study points and a curriculum, however informally these were presented, were merely a distraction, and a pose, when time could be devoted to the exhilarating task of personal literary discovery, and to the formulation of one's literary taste.

To illustrate these differences, by way of conclusion, it might be constructive to glance briefly at the various responses to the Newbolt Report from some now-familiar *fin-de-siècle* educationists. As previously noted, Collins (who had died in 1908) was remembered warmly by the Committee for his achievements in promoting

the cause of English education. Moulton, by this stage retired from his University of Chicago chair and back in England, offered a rejoinder to the Report in a 1922 article for the *Contemporary Review*, proving that he continued to hold an interest in the development of his subject right up until the end of his life (he died in 1924).

Moulton welcomed the Report, produced by ‘a highly competent committee, and the conclusions [of which were] formulated with lucid common sense’ (R. G. Moulton, ‘English’ 475). Nevertheless, his article emphasised the need for proper teacher training, and that these academics then take seriously their duty to impart enthusiasm for literature. He also urged that English literary studies be made broader in scope, with the inclusion of the New Testament as a piece of literature, and more accessible, with classical texts in translation to meet the needs of that ‘great mass of schoolboys and schoolgirls, whose whole experience of Classics is a struggle with linguistic difficulties’ (477).

George Saintsbury, who had been President of the Scottish branch of the English Association while at Edinburgh University, and was also now retired from academia, served as a witness to the Committee. John Dover Wilson was a member of Newbolt’s team, as was former Extension lecturer F. S. Boas. Oliver Elton (also previously an Extension lecturer, but now an English professor at Liverpool) sent a memorandum for use by the Committee. Israel Gollancz, another former Extension lecturer, and Professor of English Language and Literature at King’s College, London since 1903, spoke positively about the work carried out by London Diploma students.

Meanwhile, Arnold Bennett, normally eager to share his opinions on any event of current interest, apparently had nothing public to say about the Report. This was not,

of course, surprising, given his self-stated demarcation from institutionalised education. Thus in November 1921, when copies of the Newbolt Report were being bought faster than they could be produced, and newspapers and journals were printing reviews and inviting discussion, Bennett was occupied with other matters: having spent the summer months cruising on his opulent yacht around the south coast of England and northern France, he was back in England finalising divorce proceedings from his wife. Thereafter he journeyed to the south of France, to spend the next few months on a friend's yacht, writing, and socialising with friends in lavish surroundings (Bennett, *Journals* 456-60). The Newbolt Report, with its seriousness of purpose, and fervent espousal of the institutionalisation of literature, must have seemed to him utterly irrelevant. Nevertheless, we should take seriously its conclusions about *fin-de-siècle* extramural achievements, which represent a crucial, yet largely overlooked chapter in the pedagogical history of the humanities.

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