Introduction

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The nineteenth century is as rich and remarkable as any century in historical memory. Whether we broach it in terms of diverse intellectual and ideological currents, or of vast political and social upheavals, it yields a dazzling and often frantic display of movement, conflict and cataclysmic change. This single century housed the bourgeois revolutions and the rise to hegemony of the middle classes; the philosophical movements stemming from Hegel, and the counter-movements stemming from Schopenhauer; the blossoming of Romanticism; the German Higher Criticism; Darwin; the rise of nationalism; the dawn of the social sciences; the explosive development of the natural sciences and technology; the era of literary positivism, Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Decadence; the climax and catastrophes of imperialism; the articulation of socialism and the imminence of welfare states; the widening of the franchise and the demand for women's rights; the development of ideals of literary autonomy; and, not least in pertinence to this study, the beginnings of literary criticism as an autonomous, professional discipline in the academy.

Aims of this volume

In bringing together over thirty essays written by experts in their respective fields, this book aims to provide the reader with a clear sense of the development of literary criticism as an institution during the period 1830–1914, as well as the range of themes and concerns which preoccupied literary critics in this era. The chapters attempt to display not only the main lines of literary-critical development within various national traditions, but also the interconnections between major critical movements, and the development of specific genres. This volume attempts, additionally, to highlight the contributions of certain influential critics of the period, such as Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, Hippolyte Taine and Matthew Arnold. It also aims to give due attention to the predominant intellectual contexts of literary criticism, including developments in science, the arts and religious thought, as well as the various tensions between literary scientism or determinism and humanistic

visions of artistic autonomy. These broader contexts of criticism are in turn sometimes underlain by important political events and patterns, such as the continuing legacy of the French Revolution, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Franco-Prussian War, the various struggles for national unification, populist insurgency and conflicts between liberal and conservative ideologies. The chapters that follow examine not only the range and richness of literary criticism in this period but also the ways in which it was shaped internally by these larger movements.

Outline of this volume, its scope and significance

1 Literary criticism as an institution

The first three chapters offer various perspectives on the social conditions, ideological conflicts, intellectual contexts and literary debates that shaped the institutional growth of literary criticism. In the opening chapter, on the contexts and conditions of criticism, Joanne Shattock traces the changing nature of periodical literature and the impact of this on criticism as a discipline. By the 1830s, a number of important quarterly reviews had been established, including the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly* and the *Westminster Review*. Their articles spanned a broad spectrum of disciplines and were heavily political in their orientation. The quarterlies were powerful instruments in creating a middle-class audience. The monthly and later weekly journals that arose addressed a narrower range of subjects, and were more focused on literary topics, largely excluding politics and theology. Periodicals such as *Macmillan's Magazine* and the *Cornhill* had a revolutionary role, generating a culture of serious literary reviewing, as opposed to belletrism. A journal entitled the *Academy*, started in 1869, promoted scholarly standards of criticism and cultivated a readership in the universities. These developments were symptomatic of a growing tension between academic specialists and general reviewers which, arguably, has persisted to this day. Literary criticism was increasingly becoming a professional activity, with its status and function being fiercely debated from 1850 onward. These changes, in turn, were an index of the development of English literature as a discipline.

Indeed, the institution of English literature had tortuous and tangled beginnings, as David Goldie explains in his chapter on 'Literary studies and the academy'. Goldie recounts how within half a century 'academic English literary criticism moved from being a peripheral subject with little establishment recognition to one of the key disciplines, in which the nation could index its every mood and characteristic'. It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the ancient universities

established Chairs of English Literature and implemented English as a legitimate discipline. It seems that the founding causes of this rise of English to eventual institutional recognition were largely ideological: at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the classics were viewed as the heart of liberal education. But as industrial society developed, there arose a pressing need to educate the urban population, to combine training in literacy with the fostering of national values. Moreover, professional exams, such as those required for the Indian Civil Service, demanded proficiency in English literature – an institutional acknowledgement of a widespread tendency to see English as an index of broader nationalistic patterns and impulses. The first university teachers of English, many of whom came from journalism, were anxious to make it a more scholarly and rigorous discipline in the service of an aesthetic and moral vision. On the other hand, distinguished figures such as A. C. Bradley, Arther Quiller-Couch and Walter Raleigh attempted to resist what they saw as stifling scholarship and theory, urging instead that the role of criticism should be sympathetic and imaginative.

While literature contributed in varying ways to ideological and nationalist struggles in the nineteenth century, it was also obliged to confront the notion of gender. The chapter on 'Women and literary criticism' is intended not to maroon or ghettoize the endeavours of female critics – who are dealt with in many of the chapters here – but to highlight their achievement and their peculiar circumstances. Kimberly Adams's chapter focuses on the most prominent of these critics, Harriet Martineau, Anna Jameson, Margaret Fuller and George Eliot. She stresses that the performance of these women as literary critics, marked by a consciousness of gender, was necessarily politicized. She shows that an important achievement of female literary critics was that they variously helped to define Victorian Realism. They also made a compelling case for the novel as the genre of the age; and they detached 'the discussion of morality from both doctrine and didacticism . . . All addressed and defended their positions as public intellectuals . . . They made gender itself a critical concept, theorizing about masculinity, femininity'.

II *National developments in literary criticism*

The next series of chapters traces various national movements in criticism. Julia M. Wright's chapter 'Nationalism and literature' introduces this part. Wright traces the ways in which literature became an index of national ideas, inasmuch as a nation's literature was held to reflect its character, its merits, and indeed its political legitimacy and sovereignty. She stresses that what is distinctive of modern nationalism is its emphasis not on a ruling elite but on a common public culture; it was in this,

rather than in geographical boundaries, that a nation was understood to reside. Tracing analyses of 'nation' from Locke and Hume through modern theorists on nationalism, she builds on Anthony D. Smith's point that modern nationalism emerges from two schools of thought: Enlightenment philosophy, which emphasized empire, universality and progress, and Romanticism, which stressed the importance of nativism, regionalism and a return to roots. Indeed, the critical concept of national literature emerges out of these polarized eighteenth-century theories. But both sides saw their nation's literature as evidence of a core national identity and a shared national inheritance. Even as universality became prominent as a literary aim, writers in many countries, including the United States, Ireland and Canada, all argued for their own national literatures.

In Germany, as Willi Goetschel explains, modern criticism developed through a struggle to understand the legacy of Romanticism. The situation here was further complicated by the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, which enforced surveillance of the press, universities and books. Literary criticism became a covert medium for political critique. Many critics reacted against Romantic ideals in insisting that criticism must connect literature and life, some espousing a literary nationalism. The influential poet Heinrich Heine saw Goethe's death in 1832 as the end of the 'period of art', and himself as Goethe's successor. In his enduringly influential work *The Romantic School* (1835), Heine broke new ground for literary criticism, seeing the literary voice as distinctive in its interplay of political, aesthetic and ethical dimensions. The prominent groups in modern German criticism, whether liberal in outlook like Young Germany or more moderate like the Young Hegelians, made the German national idea a central part of their agendas.

Allan H. Pasco notes that French Classicism, after its resurgence early in the century, never again rose to power as a dominant school after 1830. Even when writers like Nisard and Moréas proclaimed the virtues of their Classicism, it had few similarities to the movements of either the seventeenth century or classical Antiquity. Critics continued to emphasize the importance of formal perfection, beauty and objectivity. Many of the traits of Classicism were adopted by those praising modernity. No longer attached either to a particular author or group of authors, or even to a period, Classicism became a complex of traits that could be ascribed to almost any author from Baudelaire to Leconte de Lisle, or to Brunetière, Valéry and Gide. Desmarais observed that pure Classicism was no longer possible.

As Stephen Prickett explains in his chapter on the Romantic legacy in England, Victorian literary criticism was wider in scope and more popular than criticism would ever be in the twentieth century. Journals of the

period saw literary criticism as integrally related to philosophy, theology and even science. Nearly all of the notable figures of this period – including Arnold, Carlyle, Thomas De Quincey, E. S. Dallas, the Brownings, Tennyson and George Eliot – ventured into one or more of these areas in their creative and critical endeavours. In this breadth, they were conserving and extending a Romantic heritage, and they addressed many of the issues that had centrally concerned their Romantic forebears: breaking with artificial poetic diction, dissolving barriers between genres, defending the status of literature against a rising tide of bourgeois philistinism and even crafting new theories of poetic imagination. But what distinguished the Victorians' focus on these issues was a new sense of history. Carlyle, Ruskin and Trollope saw not only literature but their own critical endeavours as informed by historical context.

In his chapter on later Victorian literature and culture, James Najarian also stresses the broad concerns of the Victorian 'prophets' such as Carlyle and Arnold. Like Arnold (who is dealt with in a separate chapter), Carlyle was concerned to revitalize what he saw as failing social and ethical norms, viewing literature as assuming some of the functions of religion. John Ruskin saw art as a medium of truth, with a didactic role, and he addressed the creation and dissemination of art in industrial society. Socialists such as William Morris and George Bernard Shaw also developed secular aesthetics, respectively impugning the modes of industrial manufacture and some of the idealistic systems that had replaced Christian belief. This tension between Aestheticism and overt social commitment continued to inform literary criticism through the twentieth century.

By the first decades of the nineteenth century, the United States had established a firm sense of its political identity; it now needed, as David Van Leer argues, a 'theory on the Americanness of its literature to parallel its declarations on the nature of individual liberty'. The most eloquent spokesman of a national literary identity was Emerson, whose famous exhortation to abandon the 'courtly muses' of Europe and to embrace the 'common' was complicated by a poetic theory that he borrowed from Kant. An equal ambivalence is found in Washington Irving, whose Eurocentrism was counterbalanced by a rhetoric of literary nationalism. Poe reacted against European Romanticism, and rebelled against the 'heresy of the didactic' that he attributed to the Transcendentalists, arguing that the poem should be written for its own sake, and that its primary concern should be to produce a unity of effect. The Romanticism of Melville and Hawthorne was infused with scepticism or realism. Common to all American Romanticism was a celebration of nature and the unique expansiveness of the American landscape. By the 1850s, political concerns eventually overturned the philosophical and aesthetic impetus

of American Transcendentalism, as seen in the work of both Thoreau, who influenced twentieth-century political resistance movements, and Frederick Douglass. After the Civil War, American literature took a more pragmatic orientation. Thinkers such as C. S. Peirce and William James distrusted metaphysics. With further industrial growth, the 'nature' underlying Romanticism was redefined and eventually dissolved.

If censorship in parts of Europe was harsh, it was perhaps worse in Russia. In the face of the censor, as Edith W. Clowes explains, Russian literary criticism became a seedbed of multiple discourses: political, economic, theological and philosophical. Aesthetic perspectives were integrally tied to political, social and moral agendas. There emerged in the 1830s a debate about Russian national identity, history and society, between Westernizers and Slavophiles. The first professional Russian critic, Vissarion Belinsky, made these issues 'the very foundation of the Russian critical enterprise'. Another notable development was the insistence on artistic autonomy expressed by Vasily Botkin, Aleksandr Druzhinin and Pavel Annenkov. Over the next several years, Aestheticist critics debated with socially engaged critics. The final decades of the century witnessed the first academic Russian critics: Aleksandr Potebnya, who examined language as a sign-system, and Aleksandr Veselovsky, who drew on scientific positivism. Both had a substantial impact on Formalists such as Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Zhirmunsky. In the Modernist era, the greatest Russian poet, Aleksandr Blok, entertained an apocalyptic vision of high culture, while a socialistic current of criticism – treated in more detail elsewhere in this series – was devoted to social transformation. Overall, Russian criticism made major contributions in Realism, Modernism and investigation of the cognitive role of literature.

III *Critical movements and patterns of influence*

The focus in this part is on the increasing importance through the nineteenth century of the notion of literary autonomy, as well as the various streams of aesthetics, often conflicting but also intersecting, which stemmed respectively from Hegel and Marx.

The rising emphasis on literary autonomy is traced in its various moral and cultural registers by Harold Schweizer. In modern times it was Alexander Baumgarten and Johann Georg Hamann who first attempted to justify the aesthetic as an independent domain, in opposition to eighteenth-century rationalism and the centuries-old ascription of a mimetic and didactic function to literature. The doctrine of aesthetic autonomy arose as theology declined; it provided a refuge against the

rising quantification and commodification of value. Literary autonomy arose through 'productive misappropriations' of Kant's aesthetic theory, which had seen the realm of the aesthetic, of beauty, as autonomous and distinct from the realms of both morality and usefulness.

In the nineteenth century, ideas of autonomy were taken up in various modes, as in Coleridge's concept of organic form, or Matthew Arnold's concept of critical 'disinterestedness', or Baudelaire's flâneur, who is a paradoxical passionate spectator. Radical autonomists such as Flaubert, Mallarmé, Pater and Wilde saw art as a refuge from the world's vulgarity and mediocrity. The contradictions and tensions inherent in autonomy are reflected in its range of ideological significance. The Young Germans saw it as an obstacle to political emancipation, whereas French writers used it to oppose the reactionary dogmatism of writers such as Désiré Nisard and Gustave Planche.

Ironically, while much nineteenth-century literary thought was engaged in extricating art from the pressure to educate or to moralize or to imitate the world of reality, another series of movements, deriving largely from Hegel, aimed precisely to restore our understanding of art as an historical phenomenon, as integrally rooted in the historical process. The chapter on Hegel describes the central features of Hegel's aesthetic theory and his historical account of the development of art through three stages. The first stage, that of symbolic art, is characterized by a relative formlessness and indefiniteness of spiritual and intellectual content. In the next stage, of classical art, the spiritual content achieves individuality in anthropomorphic forms. The highest stage is Romantic art, which embodies a more advanced and self-conscious subjectivity, manifested at its zenith in the art of poetry. This chapter examines Hegel's analysis of the genres of poetry, including his celebrated account of tragedy, and the vast influence of his philosophy and aesthetics.

If Hegelian criticism insisted on situating art within the movement of history, Marxism deepened and problematized this contextualization. Macdonald Daly points out that Marx's own attempts to characterize the connections between a society's economic infrastructure and its superstructure are inconsistent and inconclusive. Marx did, however, implicitly urge his followers to seek the 'inner core' of his thought, which can be broadly identified: 'art . . . is a "secondary" phenomenon which bears the ineradicable traces or marks of its economic dependency . . . but . . . it also creates new needs'. Daly stresses Engels's neglected contributions to Marxist criticism. It was Engels who articulated the notion of Realism – taken up by later writers such as Lukács – as a truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances. It was Engels who laid the groundwork for discussion of issues such as authorial class allegiance,

ideological tendency and unconscious motivation. Engels undermined vulgar Marxist notions of art, and he effectively reconceived Marx's notions in the face of new political circumstances. His most profound innovation was the notion of mediation, whereby ideological consciousness – acknowledged to have a relative independence – exerts some influence on material interests and historical development. By the end of the century, Marxism had spread far beyond Germany. Daly traces the development of early Marxist aesthetic theory from Franz Mehring to Herbert Marcuse and Georg Lukács.

IV *Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Decadence*

Perhaps the most predominant literary tendencies in the second half of the nineteenth century were Realism and Naturalism, which in turn provoked reactions in the form of Symbolism, Aestheticism and what has been labelled as 'Decadence'. The next part of this volume examines these movements as they occurred in various countries, with due regard for patterns of influence and exchange between them.

In her chapter on French criticism, Rosemary Lloyd contextualizes the rise of Realism. The initial figures of the so-called Realist school were the painter Gustave Courbet and the writers Champfleury and Edmond Duranty. Courbet insisted that writers must avoid basing their art on stereotypes. Champfleury saw Realism as the representation of contemporary life without recourse to social or aesthetic hierarchies. Gustave Flaubert claimed that the greatest writers 'reproduce the Universe', setting aside their personalities. Duranty, influenced deeply by the development of photography, was an outspoken proponent of Realism, relishing the eternal variety of reality. Hippolyte Taine's ambition to make criticism less arbitrary and personal had a profound influence on many subsequent critics and writers, especially Emile Zola. Emile Hennequin aimed to found 'aesthopsychology', which he defined as 'the science of the work of art as sign'. Realism was moulded by writers such as Guy de Maupassant, J.-K. Huysmans and Zola into a Naturalism which embodied a greater emphasis upon science and causality. There were, however, sustained reactions against so-called 'scientific' criticism, which drew attention to its limits and mechanistic nature, as expressed in the views of Ferdinand Brunetière, Ernest Renan and Edmond Scherer. Scherer points to the subjective and impressionistic criticism that would dominate the work of Anatole France and others at the end of the century. A further powerful reaction against Realism and scientism came from French Symbolism, whose aesthetics were rooted in Baudelaire, and were further developed by Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Jean Moréas and Remy de Gourmont.

In his chapter on the later nineteenth century in Germany, Martin Swales argues that, notwithstanding the provincialism of German literature, grounded as it was in the regionalism of the Holy Roman Empire rather than in a unified nation state, it explores in a sophisticated manner the aesthetics of modern prose. Goethe's death in 1832 effectively marked the end of high art and the onset of a more prosaic cultural condition. Indeed, Hegel viewed the protagonist of the modern novel as mired within the 'prose' of reality: a recurrent conflict in the novel is between 'the poetry of the heart and the countervailing prose of circumstances'. Swales traces this conflict in the *Bildungsroman* through German theorizing on the novel from Friedrich Theodor Vischer, Wolfgang Menzel and Robert Prutz to Lukács, who variously saw the novel as reconciling the claims of poetry and prose. The key theorists Julian Schmidt and Gustav Freytag advocated a style that combined poetry and prose, Idealism and Realism. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Naturalism of figures such as Friedrich Spielhagen and Wilhelm Bölsche had taken root. German Realism, though infused with the poetic, achieves a Realist mentality in the works and critical reflections of Gottfried Keller, Theodor Fontane and especially Thomas Mann. In general, this irresolution or ambivalence between the registers of prose and poetry – deriving from Hegel's enduring insight – lay at the core of Germany's contribution to the literary expression of modernity.

In her chapter on nineteenth-century British views of Realism, Elaine Freedgood examines how the Realistic novelist was obliged to break from literary convention in portraying characters recognizable as members of actual social groups. George Eliot urged the novelist to represent social and individual experience through the most mundane, material means, enlisting the most basic details of everyday life. There was a formidable link between the aesthetic and ethical imperatives of Realism. Many so-called Realist writers were well aware that they were shaping reality as much as reflecting it. Dickens portrayed the urban poor so as to arouse pity. Thackeray distorted social life to evince condemnation. All of the other Realist writers, including Gaskell, Margaret Oliphant, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, Kipling and Hardy, engineered their own perspectives to create insights into subjects ranging from the status of women through empire to sexuality. G. H. Lewes, Eliot and others were well aware that their representational techniques needed to be selective in choice of material, that they were guiding the reader's interpretative processes, and that reality was a complex concept.

American Realism was influenced by a range of European writers which included Balzac, Flaubert, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. As Carol J. Singley explains, the most salient European influence was Zola's Naturalism, which, in America, became more distinguished from Realism than

its European counterpart. 'Realism' is often used to describe the work of William Dean Howells and Henry James, while 'Naturalism' is applied to writers such as Theodore Dreiser and Frank Norris; a further group including Stephen Crane, Edith Wharton and Kate Chopin display elements of both tendencies. As with their European predecessors, American Realists such as Howells and Hamlin Garland employed Realism as social critique. A darker Realism, in the vein of Zola's Naturalism, was developed by Norris, Crane and Jack London. The sweeping social changes of the century impelled some writers – including Mark Twain, Chopin and Louisa May Alcott – to seek stability in the depiction of regional traditions and customs, a tendency some critics associated with an elementary nationalism. The African American Charles Chesnutt presented the Old South through the eyes of an ex-slave. The literary forms of American Realism were profoundly influenced by James, who pioneered the investigation into inner consciousness and narrative point of view.

It is ironic that an age which laid heavy emphasis on the imitation of science should also spawn a rich range of reactions against such positivism. Ray Furness points out that by the 1890s the term 'Decadence' had come to signify anti-Naturalism, deliberate artifice and amorality; its practitioners were seen as dandies and aesthetes, devoted to the cultivation of beauty. A pioneer of decadence was Théophile Gautier, whose work, rejecting the Christian doctrine of sinfulness, exhibits an infatuation not with spiritual or ethical values but with the visible world. He insisted that art was useless, with no moral purpose, and he anticipated Baudelaire's characterization of the 'dandy' as emblem of a new aristocracy which resists rising bourgeois mediocrity, practicality and philistinism. In England, Aestheticism was inspired largely by Walter Pater, for whom life could only have meaning in perpetual ecstasy and rapt awareness of beauty. This lesson was well learned and even surpassed by Oscar Wilde. Arthur Symons, the first to define 'Decadence' in England, saw it as a preliminary stage of Symbolism. A more powerful voice emerged in Germany, where Nietzsche proclaimed himself the 'highest authority' on Decadence. It is art, he claimed, which provides an antidote to the life-denying decadence of religion and morality. In general, as Furness points out, Decadent writers expanded the boundaries of what was acceptable, and had the courage to be spiritually 'corrupt' and to dream strange dreams.

As Roger Cardinal shows, the twentieth-century avant-garde's fixation upon novelty and surprise was a virulent continuation of the iconoclastic movements of previous decades, inspired by figures such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Wilde, Wagner and Schopenhauer. The avant-gardists, ranging from the Futurists and Dadaists to the Expressionists and Surrealists, also rejected materialism and the orthodoxies of Realism and