CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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> Journalism is a plant of slow and gradual growth . . . And taken in its history, position, and relations, it is unquestionably the most grave, noticeable, formidable phenomenon – the greatest FACT of our times.[1]

W. R. Greg's assessment of newspaper press in 1855, written in the wake of the repeal of two of the so-called Taxes on Knowledge levied on newspapers, was one of several articles on the current state of the press and on the emergent profession of journalism at mid-century. 'Journalism is now truly an estate of the realm; more powerful than any of the other estates; more powerful than all of them combined if it could ever be brought to act as a united and concentrated whole', the anonymous article continued. Writers for the press could be classed under three heads: barristers waiting to practice, young and promising politicians, and 'men of trained and cultivated minds who have chosen literature as a profession and politics as a favourite pursuit' and who have been driven into journalism by 'accidental connexions' or by the attractions of an income and an audience.[2]

Greg himself was a good example of the last category of recruits to the new profession. So too was E. S. Dallas, a prolific contributor to the periodical press, who was similarly buoyant about its present condition in a two-part article on 'Popular Literature – the Periodical Press' in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1859:

> The rise of the periodical press is the great event of modern history. It has completely altered the game of politics; it has rendered obsolete more than half the State maxims of European Cabinets; it represents the triumph of moral over physical force; it gives every one of us a new sense – a sort of omniscience as well as a new power – a sort of ubiquity.[3]

[1] [W. R. Greg], 'The Newspaper Press', *Edinburgh Review* 102 (October 1855), 470–98, 470.
[2] 'The Newspaper Press', 477, 484.
[3] [E. S. Dallas], 'Popular Literature – the Periodical Press', *Blackwood's Magazine* (January 1859), 96–112, 100.

Dallas's focus was on the growth of the press, the explosion of print which reached out to all sectors of society:

> The newspaper is the elemental form of modern literature. Who is not interested in it? Who is not reached by it? The railway, the steamboat, and the telegraph, all add to its importance. Every improvement that is made in the art of communication and travel contributes to its dignity and increases its utility. No class is beyond its influence. There is not a man, there is hardly a woman, who is not more or less dependent on it.[4]

The periodical press was a material presence on the streets of villages, towns and cities, its readers numbering in hundreds of thousands:

> The most vivid idea of the enormous diffusion of periodical literature will be obtained by a visit to any flourishing newsvender: by seeing how his shop is loaded with periodicals of all sorts and sizes, and at prices from a halfpenny up to a shilling; by noting the rapidity with which he disposes of all these, each transaction being for the most part limited to the value of a penny and by considering how many hundreds of such shops and stands there are in London alone, not to speak of the country, where we find every shire, every town, almost every village, with its local newspaper, strong in itself, and stimulating the absorption of the metropolitan literature. It is out of such an organisation, which is continually spreading its influence, that we obtain journals whose daily or weekly circulation is to be measured by tens and hundreds of thousands.[5]

Both Greg and Dallas emphasised the representative power of the press; it reflected the views of a far broader cross section of society than Parliament, given the limits of the franchise. Both argued vigorously in support of anonymous versus signed articles, the subject of an ongoing debate in the late 1850s as new publications such as *Macmillan's Magazine* adopted signature as a matter of policy.[6] Dallas pointed to an aspect of periodical literature that had long been a subject for comment – its ephemerality:

> A periodical differs from a book in being calculated for rapid sale and for immediate effect. A book may at first fall dead upon the market, and yet may endure for ages, a wellspring of life to all mankind. A periodical, on the other hand – be it a daily paper, a weekly journal, a monthly magazine, or

[4] [E. S. Dallas], 'Popular Literature – the Periodical Press', *Blackwood's Magazine* (February 1859), 180–95, 180–81.
[5] 'Popular Literature' (January 1859), 101.
[6] See Dallas Liddle, 'Salesmen, Sportsmen, Mentors: Anonymity and Mid-Victorian Theories of Journalism', *Victorian Studies* 41:1 (Autumn 1997), 31–68.

> a quarterly review – is a creature of the day: if each successive number does not attain its object in the short span of existence allotted to it, then it fails for ever – it has no future . . . It is necessary, therefore, to the success of a periodical, that it should attain an instant popularity – in other words, that it should be calculated for the appreciation, not of a few, but of the many.[7]

The popularity of the press and the vast increase in the number of titles published had not resulted in a deterioration in quality, he argued. Rather, the press had become increasingly specialised. Every interest group had its own organ, every profession its own journal. Periodical literature was 'essentially a classified literature':

> There is the *Builder* for architects, there is the *Art Journal* for artists, there is the *Mechanics' Journal* for artisans; there is the *Economist* for merchants. Lawyers have the *Law Times*; medical men have the *Medical Times* and the *Lancet*; chemists and druggists have the *Pharmaceutical Journal*; Churchmen of every shade – high, low and broad, have their papers; Dissenters have theirs; Catholics have theirs; the licensed victuallers have a daily paper . . . And then there is an Agricultural Journal, a Shipping Gazette, a Bankers' Magazine, a Statistical Journal, a Photographic Journal, a Stereoscopic Magazine.[8]

Writing in the year in which the stamp duty on newspapers was repealed, Greg was cautious about the predicted expansion of the newspaper press, noting the number of new provincial papers that had begun and quickly folded, and prophesying the reinvigoration and expansion of existing titles as a more likely outcome of the removal of restrictions on the press. Wilkie Collins, writing in Dickens's weekly miscellany *Household Words* in 1858 was more pessimistic, despairing of the quality of the 'penny fiction weeklies' that were catering to a vastly increased readership, the 'Unknown Public' of the title of his now famous article.[9] But whether they were optimistic like Dallas or cautious like Greg and Collins, the mid-Victorian generation of writers for the press articulated a sense of a historic moment, an awareness that they were part of a modern phenomenon at a crucial point in its development. Greg's article was ostensibly a review of F. Knight Hunt's *The Fourth Estate: Contributions towards a History of Newspapers, and of the Liberty of the Press*, the first of several contemporary histories of the newspaper press, many of them written by newspaper men.

[7] 'Popular Literature' (January 1859), 101. Greg argued that articles were 'written to be read hastily and to be read only once', 'The Newspaper Press', 483.
[8] Ibid, 103.
[9] [Wilkie Collins], 'The Unknown Public', *Household Words* 21 (August 1858). See Chapter 19, this volume, pp. 328–40.

The following year the journalist Francis Espinasse, writing under the pseudonym 'Herodotus Smith', published a series of articles on 'The Periodical and Newspaper Press' in the literary weekly the *Critic*, which he described as 'biographies' of reviews, magazines and newspapers, together with sketches of their contributors past and present. As he later observed in his *Literary Recollections* (1893), several histories of the British newspaper press had been published since he wrote the articles, among them James Grant's *The Newspaper Press. Its Origin, Progress and Present Position* (1871) and H. R. Fox Bourne's *English Newspapers. Chapters in the History of Journalism* (1887), but apart from his series there was still no history of the periodical, as distinct from the newspaper, press.[10]

Espinasse's articles identified many individuals who were currently writing anonymously for reviews, magazines and newspapers. This was the first occasion on which this information had been in the public domain. The world of metropolitan journalism was an intimate one, however, and gossip was rife, so the authorship of controversial articles or those by high-profile contributors was often an open secret. Equally, for those in a journal's inner circle the authorship of recent articles and reviews was common knowledge; this too became a channel for information.[11]

More information about the identity of writers for the periodical press emerged from an unexpected quarter in 1862. Edward Walford, an experienced compiler of biographical dictionaries and other reference works took over an edition of *Men of the Time*, a dictionary of living persons first published by David Bogue in 1852. Walford was determined to enlarge his subject base by including members of what he termed 'the aristocracy of intellect', members of newer professions such as authorship and those involved in the creative arts. As a result, writers, many of whom earned a living by writing for the periodical press, were given entries that named the journals to which they contributed. Similarly lawyers, dons, clergymen and other professionals who wrote intermittently for periodicals were credited with writing for specific publications.[12] For the first time,

[10] James Grant, *The Newspaper Press. Its Origin, Progress and Present Position*. 2 vols. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871; H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers. Chapters in the History of Journalism*. 2 vols. London: Chatto & Windus, 1887; Francis Espinasse, *Literary Recollections and Sketches*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893, p. 368.

[11] Authors of articles were sometimes named in reviews and monthly summaries of periodical contents, and also in advertisements. See Chapter 22, this volume, p. 374. For a historical overview of anonymous publication see John Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature*. London: Faber, 2007.

[12] *Men of the Time. A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Living Characters (Including Women)*. A New Edition by Edward Walford. London: Routledge Warne and Routledge, 1862.

information about periodical networks was made public or could be deduced. The focus was now on professional authors, and on the portfolio careers of other professionals who were also part-time journalists. For the first time, too, there was evidence of the vital link between the profession of authorship and the world of journalism. They were not two distinct professions, but different facets of the same profession. That at least was the theory.

The 1850s were an obvious point at which to take stock of the press and to look to the future, as two of the restrictions on newspapers had been removed, and the repeal of a third was imminent.[13] At the same time, the number of cheap periodicals aimed at a new reading public increased. The 1880s were another such moment, as technological advances in newspaper production demanded large capital investment, a mass market for newspapers emerged, and anxieties about the so-called New Journalism were vented.[14] By the 1880s, journalism was acknowledged as a profession. The National Association of Journalists, later renamed the Institute of Journalists, was founded in 1884, the same year as the Society of Authors. Guides and handbooks to a career in journalism proliferated, among them A. A. Reade's *Literary Success: Being a Guide to Practical Journalism* (1880), E. P. Davies's *The Reporter's Handbook* (1884), and John Dawson's *Practical Journalism* (1885).[15] More would follow in the 1890s. H. R. Fox Bourne's *English Newspapers. Chapters in the History of Journalism* (1887) was an account of the development of newspapers from the seventeenth century onwards, designed according to the preface 'to show the connection of journalism in its several stages with the literary and the political history of our country'.[16] The last chapter offered some reflections on the present day. There was now a demand that newspapers contain something besides news, Fox Bourne observed. There were no longer clear lines separating news and criticism; journalists could be both reporters and commentators. This was enabling for prospective journalists, but there were still disadvantages in a profession that had neither entrance examinations nor requisite qualifications. Talent and ambition often counted for more

[13] The excise duty on paper was removed in 1861.

[14] For discussions of the 'new journalism' on both sides of the Atlantic, see Chapter 15, this volume, pp. 263–80 and for Oscar Wilde as a 'new journalist', Chapter 22, this volume, pp. 370–82.

[15] John Dawson, *Practical Journalism, How to Enter Thereon and Succeed. A Manual for Beginners and Amateurs*. London: L. Upcott Gill, 1885; E. P. Davies, *The Reporter's Hand-Book, and Vade Mecum. With Appendix . . . Affording comprehensive instructions for reporting all kinds of events*. London: Guilbert Pitman, S. W. Partridge, 1884, rev. edn 1910; A. A. Reade, *Literary Success: Being a Guide to Practical Journalism*. London: Wyman & Sons, 1885.

[16] Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers* vol. I, p. v.

than experience, allowing the gifted and determined outsider to leap ahead of those working their way up in the profession:

> A smart member of parliament, a successful barrister, a versatile clergyman, a retired schoolmaster, a popular novelist or anyone else with enough influence or intellect, or with a name likely to prove useful, may slip into an editorship or be made a principal leader writer in preference to men of long standing in the office, who perhaps have to teach him his duties and correct his blunders.[17]

Moreover journalism required a particular temperament that often made other occupations unattractive. It was not unusual for a journalist, seeing that chances of promotion were slim, to regret having taken it up and yet be unable to turn successfully to another career. Modern Fleet Street was in many ways an improvement on eighteenth-century Grub Street, Fox Bourne concluded, but some of the 'traditions and infirmities' of Grub Street remained.[18]

His appraisal of present conditions was not an unqualified endorsement for journalism as a career. An ambivalence about the status of journalism lingered well into the twentieth century. However much discussions about careers in journalism mapped on to discussions about authorship as a profession, there remained an unspoken distinction between the two. When it came to prestige, in many eyes the designation 'journalist' was definitely not the equivalent of 'author' or 'writer'.[19]

In the various reflections on the press at mid-century and in the 1880s, there was one aspect of the expansion of the press that was not alluded to. What Greg, Dallas and their colleagues possibly did not foresee in the 1850s and what historians such as Grant and Fox Bourne did not consider was the extent of the influence of the British press abroad – the intricate connections between British periodicals and their counterparts on the Continent, the reciprocal influences on the production of mass market newspapers between Britain and America, and the export or 'migration' of British titles to major centres of print culture in the Empire. Most of these relationships existed in embryonic form at mid-century and were obvious by the 1880s, but their significance was ignored by contemporary observers.

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[17] Fox Bourne, vol. 2, p. 371. [18] Fox Bourne, vol. 2, p. 372.
[19] The *Dictionary of National Biography* often used the designation 'author' or 'writer' rather than 'journalist' for biographical subjects. See the entries on Douglas Jerrold, G. H. Lewes and Harriet Martineau in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee. London: Smith Elder, 1885–1901.

The emergence in the first decade of the twenty-first century of a number of digital resources, among them *19th Century British Library Newspapers, 19th Century UK Periodicals* and *19th Century U. S. Newspapers* published by Gale Cengage, and Pro Quest's *British Periodicals*, has not only made the nineteenth-century newspaper and periodical press more accessible; it has also changed the way nineteenth-century print media is perceived. As one scholar has recently observed, 'it has never been so easy to consult the nineteenth-century press'.[20] In addition, a number of projects such as the *Nineteenth Century Serials Edition* and *Dickens Journals Online*[21] are freely available. All of these resources have enabled scholars to make use of the nineteenth-century press in new ways. This volume of newly commissioned essays offers a series of perspectives on nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals, enabled and enhanced by these new digital resources.

Each of the scholars contributing to the volume has been engaged in innovative work on nineteenth-century print media, although not all would see themselves primarily as periodical scholars or students of book history. One of the purposes of the volume is to show the ways in which the periodical and newspaper press is central to an understanding of the long nineteenth century, whether one is a social historian or a historian of art or of science or engaged in media or literary studies. The nineteenth century rather than the Victorian period marks the chronological boundaries of the book, even though by far the greatest number of periodicals and newspapers were inaugurated during the Queen's reign. Several of the chapters, particularly those dealing with innovations in methods of illustration or issues of genre, look back to the eighteenth century; others that concentrate on developments of the newspaper press from the 1870s onwards take the discussion forward into the twentieth.

The book does not purport to be a comprehensive history of the nineteenth-century newspaper and periodical press. The twenty-one essays discuss the nineteenth-century press from a variety of positions, ranging from a focus on an individual journalist or periodical format through to the networks of editors, journalists and proprietors who produced print media and the influence of that media on public opinion. One section of the book looks beyond Britain to the intersection of the British press with its transatlantic and Continental counterparts and the 'globalisation' of print culture that the nineteenth century inaugurated.

[20] James Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2012, p. xiii

[21] See the 'Guide to Further Reading', pp. 383–4 for details.

The volume is divided into four parts. The chapters in Part I, 'Periodicals, Genres and the Production of Print', consider periodical formats and their evolution over the nineteenth century, as new readerships emerged and patterns of consumption changed. They also look at aspects of the production of print that influenced the content of particular formats. The opening essay by James Mussell examines the relationship between the new digital resources and the newspapers and periodicals on library shelves. He suggests that readers need to become more critically aware of the materiality of the resources they use, both the historic newspapers and periodicals and their digital counterparts, and argues that the 'discursive space' opened up by digitisation enables scholars to see print anew. David Stewart looks at the magazine culture of the early nineteenth century, a culture that was in continual flux, and argues that magazines were not simply reflectors of literary culture but active participants in it. Laurel Brake emphasises the importance of genre in understanding the periodical press and traces the evolution of the review from its origins in the eighteenth century through to the *Yellow Book* at the end of the nineteenth. She analyses the impetus behind the changes that occurred in content and frequency and shows how the phenomenon of sensation impacted reviews in the 1860s and beyond. Barbara Onslow's study of the annuals, or 'picture books for grown children',[22] as they were described by a contemporary commentator, shows how the genre flourished between 1820 and 1850, a discrete period determined by the technology that underpinned its engraved illustrations. Brian Maidment's chapter on graphic satire and the radical press focuses on the period 1820 to 1845, in which political caricature and other forms of graphic social commentary maintained a significant cultural presence. He then traces the reinvention of caricature through the development of wood engraving, which produced the political cartoon, a major feature of the Victorian periodical press. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra's chapter on illustration links the era of annuals and political caricature with the development of industrial processes of illustration later in the century, when speed became essential in producing and transmitting images. She shows how readers of the newspaper and periodical press developed a visual literacy and a sophisticated graphic vocabulary. The story of the pictorial press owes as much to its readers, she suggests, as to its 'multiple makers'.[23] Linda H. Peterson's chapter on 'Periodical Poetry' emphasises the ubiquity of poetry in Victorian print culture and points to the crucial role periodicals played in launching a poet's career. The symbiotic relationship between literature and journalism

[22] See Chapter 5, this volume, p. 68. [23] See Chapter 7, p. 125.

was particularly striking in the case of poets, where publication of individual poems in periodicals was followed by collection into a book, the success of which was in turn determined by reviews in periodicals.

The essays in the second part on 'The Press and the Public' look primarily but not exclusively at the newspaper press, and at the way issues of public interest and concern were interrogated and presented to a rapidly expanding readership from the 1830s onwards. Nothing more fundamentally defined the British press in the nineteenth century than its freedom, Martin Hewitt points out in his essay 'The Press and the Law'. It was a mutually constitutive relationship; the law could protect as well as constrain, which was why many established papers welcomed the penny stamp as protection against competition. By the late 1860s, however, there was a clear transformation of the press as the removal of restrictions was felt. Catherine Waters, in '"Doing the Graphic": Victorian Special Correspondence', highlights a new kind of reporter who emerged in the 1850s, the 'special correspondent', who became vital to newspapers in need of authoritative reports from all parts of the country as well as from remote corners of the world. The 'specials' were often colourful and idiosyncratic writers whose work was ambiguously positioned between literature and journalism. In a richly detailed account of the press coverage and response to the Great Exhibition of 1851, Geoffrey Cantor argues that the exhibition could be seen as a creation of the newspaper and periodical press.

The essays in the third part of the book, under the heading 'The "Globalisation" of the Nineteenth-Century Press' are examples of the transformation of the study of print media that has been enabled by the extensive digitisation of archives. The periodicals and newspapers discussed in this section emanated from Melbourne, Sydney, New York, Chicago, Paris, Calcutta and Serampore. In his chapter 'Journalism and Empire in an English-Reading World: The *Review of Reviews*', Simon Potter warns against making simplistic comparisons between the mass media in 'our own hyper-connected age' and what was at most was a 'semi-globalised world' in which British models of journalistic practice were highly influential. The nineteenth century saw an unprecedented degree of 'transnational interconnectivity' which fell short of near-total interdependence. As Potter demonstrates, W. T. Stead's transnational publishing strategy with regard to the *Review of Reviews* was an attempt to unite English-speaking readers across the world, but due to clashes of personality, differences in management policy and the constraints imposed by contemporary technology, the experiment had only limited success.

Joel Wiener, in his comparative study of British and American newspapers, shows how the transformation of newspaper journalism followed a similar trajectory in both countries. The differences were owing to cultural factors including the strength of class feeling, levels of education and the impact of technological developments. Other than in visual technology, most of the stimuli came from America. In her study of 'Colonial Networks and the Periodical Marketplace', Mary Shannon points to the family relationships between periodicals and shows how through the efforts of two emigrant journalists, *Punch* 'migrated' first to Melbourne and then to Sydney, the two new publications demonstrating a healthy independence from the parent periodical. Juliette Atkinson's chapter 'Continental Currents: Paris and London' makes the point that whereas in England the journal was celebrated in contrast to the writers, who were unknown, in France 'writers were everything' and the journal merely 'the frame to the picture he paints'.[24] Atkinson points to a number of influential French critics who wrote for English periodicals, often under their own names, one of many cultural exchanges that bound European and British communities of print. The world of cosmopolitan periodicals, as she demonstrates, was often a remarkably intimate one. Deeptanil Ray and Abhijit Gupta's discussion of the newspaper and periodical press in colonial India begins with the manuscript newspaper culture of the eighteenth century. They trace its evolution through to a burgeoning native language newspaper press in Calcutta in the 1830s and from there to a vibrant print culture that included both English- and native-language newspapers and periodicals.

The fourth part on 'Journalists and Journalism' offers six case studies of well-known writers who were also highly productive journalists. Journalism played a different role in the careers of each of the three women journalists included. As Iain Crawford shows, Harriet Martineau became a model and also a mentor to the next generation of women authors, proving that women could earn a living by writing for the press provided they could negotiate the gender politics involved. Marian Evans's and Margaret Oliphant's careers initially intersected through their connection with the firm of William Blackwood and Sons and the benign oversight of John Blackwood. Their paths then diverged as Evans withdrew from journalism to pursue her career as a novelist. Oliphant in contrast kept up a steady pace of reviewing along with a prolific output of fiction for more than four decades. Joanne Shattock traces her long-standing

[24] Chapter 13, this volume, p. 230.