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A PASSAGE OF WORDS: THE TRANSMISSION OF THE NOVEL THROUGH SELECT HAMPSHIRE NEWSPAPERS, 1772–1800

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transmission of eighteenth century novels through two selected Hampshire newspapers, the Hampshire Chronicle and the Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, between 1772 and 1800. Both popular novels and those included in the growing literary canon are considered. It examines the external influences governing that transmission as, for example, through professional relationships forged between London booksellers and Hampshire editors. It takes account of marketing processes and considers the importance of advertisements, particularly as an indication of readership. These newspapers identify some of the novels which were actually on sale. There is also some evidence, although inevitably speculative, of the social background of Hampshire readers and whether they were purchasers or borrowers of novels. The study concludes that the reader, himself or herself, is an integral part of the transmission process.

INTRODUCTION

This article concerns a study of the transmission of the novel through two provincial newspapers in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It examines some of the conditions affecting the process of a work of fiction from writer to printer, to bookseller, and essentially, to newspaper proprietor or editor, and finally to the recipient provincial reader. The principal primary source material is the *Hampshire Chronicle* (from 1772) and the *Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* (1794–1799). The *Hampshire Chronicle*, a 'regional' paper, has been selected as covering a substantial period of time. Its circulation in the eighteenth century covered a very wide geographical area, which included the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight, parts of Berkshire, and continued into Devon and Cornwall. In contrast, the *Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, a 'local' paper, circulated in a much smaller area, being distributed in Portsmouth, Chichester and parts of West Sussex. In both newspapers there is evidence, sometimes spasmodic, of a wish to cater for a novel-reading public, whether by the inclusion of advertisements for novels, and the magazines which contained serialized novels, or by reviews or short articles concerning some aspect of a particular work of fiction. *The Times* has also been referred to for comparative purposes, the year 1796 being selected as representing a period significant for new developments in the novel and when political or social dissent was of particular importance. At this time Ann Radcliffe was establishing a new genre with her Gothic novels, and Jacobin novelists such as William Godwin were putting forth controversial views at a time of repression by a government made nervous by the French Revolution.

Some of the arguments in this study are based on a supposition that local readers only read Hampshire newspapers. In reality, many of them would have had recourse to London papers and literary journals such as *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which contained reviews of the latest books, through their circulating libraries, coffee shops or by sharing with friends. Unfortunately there are no records through which to assess the extent of this wider reading.

The period covered is from the inception of the *Hampshire Chronicle* in 1772 to 1800. It has been selected as it is an interesting period in the development of the novel. It reflects the beginning of a national literary canon, which is evident in some of the advertisements; the popular 'trashy' novels include examples of all the major genres, which

continue to the end of the century. The 1790s, a period of development both in the Gothic genre, and in the emergence of radical political views reflected in the works of the Jacobin writers, are considered particularly important years. Significantly, these developments are not reflected in the newspapers under study. My methodological approach has combined a careful analysis of the frequency and genre of novels advertised and presented in the newspapers, together with an analysis of the language used in that presentation. It has also included some discussion of sociologically important material such as external influences in terms of political and international events and of professional relationships between printer/booksellers in London and the newspaper editors in Hampshire. This approach to methodology has a lateral perspective as it is only in this way that the various influences on the transmission of the novel to the Hampshire reader can begin to be understood.

The theoretical basis for this study is influenced by the work of John Sutherland, who wrote: 'they (literary texts) can be fully understood only in the broader context of the whole world of print, a world of authors, readers, printers, publishers, booksellers, censors, politicians and lawyers' (Sutherland 1990, 834), to which may be added, newspaper editors. Whether in the form of a book or as part of a magazine, whether by the way in which it was promoted in Hampshire newspapers, with all the messages concerning it which advertisers or reviewers conveyed, a novel was presented to the reader as a work already coloured by views other than those of the author. The readers' needs, expectations, and aspects of their particular provincial way of life demanded certain kinds of novels, whether to read or to display upon their library shelves. As in all marketing processes, there is a strong relationship between supply and demand. Business- men do not waste money on goods which do not sell, but try to create markets. There is plenty of evidence in the primary source material to indicate professional influences governing the suppliers. However, the demand aspect of the commercial process, or how novels were received and read by readers, is more difficult to evaluate. There are insufficient book lists or catalogues in the Hampshire archive for the period under review to draw any firm conclusions. The Earl of Banbury's library catalogue includes two 'classic' novels both written in 1748 (Earl of Banbury 1771), Mary Bacon's list of books contains no novels (Mary Bacon *c.* 1790), whereas *The Books of William Cope* (William Cope 1799) include at least seventeen novels, both popular and classic. There are some diaries in the Hampshire archive, but a full consideration of these in relation to the reception of books is outside the scope of this present research. Inevitably, therefore, some comments and conclusions must remain speculative.

THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

The general background

The commercial business surrounding the novel was only one small part of a flourishing national book trade in the eighteenth century. Earlier in the century few people would have read novels as the high cost of books militated against all but the comparatively well-off being able to afford them. Towards the end of the period there was a lively publishing trade in abridgements, cheap 'sewn' editions, and chap books. This was attributable to a rise in literacy and an increase in reading, largely due to the influences both of increased wealth and education and the opening of many more circulating libraries. William Lane was to found the Minerva Press in 1791, publishing sensational and violently sentimental novels. The relatively uncultivated reader now had an abundant supply of books.

It is important to understand the role of the late-eighteenth-century provincial newspaper proprietor in relation to the society, both commercial and otherwise, in which he lived and where he had considerable power and respect. The very fact that he owned and was editor of a newspaper denoted both business acumen, and also either relatively substantial means, or a strong head for gambling! Many provincial newspapers went out of print quickly, often due to over expansion. *The Hampshire Journal*, 1790–1, only survived for a few months. One of the changes in ownership of the *Hampshire Chronicle* was due to bankruptcy. Stamp

duty was high, newsmen and newsagents had to be employed to cover a large geographical area for circulation, and there were transport costs in ensuring that the news arrived from London quickly.

Most provincial newspaper proprietors were also booksellers, dealing not only in books, but also in patent medicines, stationery, millinery or wine. Many owned circulating libraries as well, an important factor in considering that the value of an advertisement to a proprietor was often twofold. The recipient reader needed wooing not only in the purchase of books, but also in joining the library in order to read those he could not afford to buy. Circulating libraries were a relatively inexpensive way of reading with an average subscription at approximately half a guinea a year. A useful comparison can be made with a servant's wage of £1 13s for a month (Mary Bacon *c.* 1790).

The relationship between provincial newspaper proprietor and London publisher was very complex and important to understand. Provincial owners depended on London as their only source of stamped paper and they themselves represented a means of deep penetration of the provincial market by London publishers (Feather 1988, 98). The late eighteenth century was a time of enormous growth in spending, and there was 'such an explosion of new production and marketing techniques, that a greater proportion of the population than in any previous society in human history was able to enjoy the pleasures of buying consumer goods' (McKendrick *et al.* 1983, 9).

With growth not only in London but also in the provinces, there was a new market ready for the taking. John Feather suspected that the whole advertising effort was carefully co-ordinated and perhaps jointly financed by London publishers and provincial booksellers (Feather 1990, 855).

Circulation figures are difficult to establish. There is a rough guide to circulation figures of all newspapers in Britain for the period in question in that by 1780 the annual sale of newspaper stamps was 14,100,000. The proportion of these sold in the provinces was probably fairly small. As newspapers were habitually not only purchased, but also passed round many borrowers, read in circulating libraries and coffee houses, the actual number of recipients is almost impossible to determine. A consensus of rough estimates appears to be fifteen readers per copy. *The Hampshire Chronicle Bicentenary Publication* cites the populations of both Winchester and Southampton in the 1770s as approximately 4,000. The circulation of the *Hampshire Chronicle* is given as 'small'. Christine Ferdinand gives the average print run of this paper in the late 1770s and early 1780s as about 1,500 (Brewer & Porter 1993, 406). In comparison with the *Salisbury Journal* for which she gives a circulation figure of over 4,000, it was relatively small (Ferdinand 1987, 4).

The two Hampshire newspapers

In general the two selected Hampshire newspapers, the *Hampshire Chronicle* and the *Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, followed the overall pattern of provincial newspapers as outlined above. There are, however, some specific areas for study which may help to illuminate the transmission of novels in Hampshire and the ways in which local inhabitants might have received them.

Although it has been speculated that the readers themselves may have played their own part in the selection of novels they demanded to read, there can be little doubt that the most important person in the transmission process was the editor of the newspaper. Provincial newspaper proprietor/editors invariably had professional relationships with individual printers or booksellers in London. Some of those London agents were very powerful and diverse in the works they covered. R. Snagg, 29, Paternoster Row, for example, operating in the 1770s and advertising in the *Hampshire Chronicle*, published classics, abridgements, and popular novels such as *The NewsPaper Wedding, or an advertisement for a Husband* (Anon 1774), and *The Orphan Swains, or London contagious to the Country* (Anon 1774), both of which were advertised in the *Hampshire Chronicle* (16 May 1774). He also included in his list *The Monthly Miscellany* magazine and books of non-fiction such as *The Complete Florist*. He may well have pushed Linden, editor of the *Hampshire Chronicle* at the time, to form a business relationship with him, as he would undoubtedly have wished to foster provincial trade. This kind of relationship had a strong influence on the actual choice of novels on offer to the readers of the paper.

Under Linden's proprietorship other names constantly recur. T. Carnan sold both classics and popular novels, the name of G. Kearsley is to be found in relation to works both of fiction and non-fiction and names such as T. Lowndes, Allen and West, John Bell, recur several times. Under the editorship of J. Wilkes, (June 1778–1783) only Carnan continues. J. Wenman, Harrison & Co., Alex Hogg and W. Lane are now introduced. With the advent of Thomas Blagden as editor (29 December 1783 to 1791), the major influence of J. Stockdale occurs, although Lane and Hogg continue. Wilkes became editor again in 1791 and although he continued to trade with Alex Hogg, the rest of his London links appear to be new. As I have not analysed all the books, fiction and non-fiction, printed under the second period of Wilkes, this must remain a general statement. The last editors of the *Hampshire Chronicle* in the eighteenth century were Joseph Bricknell and Benjamin Long. They advertised very few novels and seemed to relate to no new London booksellers or printers apart from Cooke, who promoted his lists of classics very widely during the 1790s. W. Donaldson, the editor of *Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, operating for only four and a half years, advertised very few works of fiction. He only advertised Cooke's classical novels and the more popular works promoted by W. Lane at the Minerva Press. It may be argued that the Titans of the printing and bookselling trade such as Bell, Cooke, and Lane were likely to be advertised in almost every provincial paper anyway. However, there seems to be some evidence that business relationships changed from one editor to another, thus influencing the novels available through advertisements to Hampshire readers.

An examination of content in a newspaper is extremely important; to a large extent it can convey its own social reality in terms of its readers and consequently the kinds of people who read the novels promoted in its pages. It was the responsibility of the editor to set the 'tone' of his paper and to maintain a balance between important and unimportant items. It is useful to study in detail the ways in which he did this, the atmosphere he created reflecting the mood and needs of the reader, as well as wider, national, issues. Advertisements themselves, being a major part of content, show the kinds of readers the paper attracted. The *Hampshire Chronicle* in the eighteenth century covered almost every social class, advertising for servants, journeymen, apprentices, in the lower level of society. Tradesmen such as hairdressers, mantua makers, wine merchants advertised and the prices of such commodities as grain, tea, and sugar were given regularly. The diversity of occupations is also represented in the growing number of trade magazines advertised, such as *The Builder's Magazine* (29 August 1774) and *The Merchant and Seaman's Guardian in the English Channel* (25 May 1778). It was indeed a newspaper for all.

External events impinged upon the content of the paper. A national deficit in the production of works of fiction occurring in the late 1770s to early 1780s is reflected in the lack of advertisements for novels. Although the editor promised in January 1778 that 'every department of biography, anecdote, or belles lettres that can, with propriety come within their plan, will be arduously averted to ... ', there are no novels advertised during that year. Apart from Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield,* 1762, the only fiction referred to in 1779 and 1780 are classics to be read in *The Novelist's Magazine.*

The 'tone' of the *Hampshire Chronicle* can be seen to change over the period under review. Initially, in 1772, there is a sense of humour and fun in the paper. Advertisements are for Jewels, Pearls and Toys, Masquerade dresses, *The Luscious Jester*, 'a miscellany of merriment', and *Jeremy Twitcher's Jests.* It is not surprising that the only novel at this time to be advertised is *The Egg or the Memoirs of Geoffrey Giddy Esq.*, Anon, (5 October 1772), a seemingly very light, though satirical, piece. 1773 continues with reviews of plays, little sentimental poems, scandals and anecdotes; some popular novels are advertised.

In 1779, however, the mood of the paper is serious, containing mostly naval news of the English Fleet with threats of battles with French ships. The production of novels nationally was low at the time, but perhaps the 'tone' of the paper did not encourage their promotion anyway. Although by 1784 levity returns, there are no novels advertised that year, the first of Blagdon's reign as editor, which must be a significant factor in their

lack of promotion. Perhaps he was feeling his way and getting to know both his London colleagues and his readers. The fluctuations continue; they were sometimes explicable and at other times were difficult to understand. What can be concluded is that there were many influences both internal and external reflected in the content and tone of the paper which themselves undoubtedly affected the mood in which novels were advertised, bought or borrowed, and finally read. The novels were selected largely through the relationships of the editor with his London associates, but also because he had a knowledge of the readership he was trying to attract. He showed through the content and 'tone' of his paper that he had an idea who his readers were, for without at least partially fulfilling their needs, he would have no paper to sell.

THE NOVELS

The popular novel: inclusions

References to novels in Hampshire newspapers were almost exclusively found through advertisements, which can be divided into two sections: the popular novel, and those ascribed to the growing literary canon of accepted 'classical' works. (There is one book review in the *Hampshire Journal*, of *A Spanish Romance*, Anon (6 November 1790) and one article in the *Hampshire Chronicle* on the fashions promoted through Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther* (21 November 1785), which cannot be discussed within the confines of the present work). Popular novels referred to in the two newspapers appear in a very irregular manner. Unlike *The Times*, 1796, in which there were often several new novels advertised within a week, the *Hampshire Chronicle* sometimes went for weeks or even months with no mention of a popular novel.

During the first editorship of the *Hampshire Chronicle* the main London supplier of books appears to have been R. Snagg, referred to above. He advertised classics, books for children, abridgements, and then, on 16 May 1774, a short list of new novels, none of which appears in the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue*. One has to question whether these little known books would have ever emerged in Hampshire had Linden and his partner Wise not had a monopoly of local bookseller/distributor advertising in the *Hampshire Chronicle* and therefore there were no other outlets for the importation of novels.

In accordance with the general production of popular novels in England, the period from 1775 to 1782 was a very lean one indeed. This is reflected in the *Hampshire Chronicle*, which although continuing to advertise *The Lady's Magazine* and *Town and Country*, both good sources for light reading, together with the classics, promoted almost no new popular novels during this period. It is not until the appearance of William Lane, another magnate in the London book trade, that popular novels reappear in the paper in any quantity. His list, advertised on 20 November 1786, is interesting for its content. Most of the authors, even if not named in the advertisement, were known and respected; many of them are women. Agnes Maria Bennett was a very popular novelist; *Anna, or the Welsh Heiress* sold out on the first day. Some fashionable themes are reflected in these novels. *Zoriada* by Anne Hughes is set in exotic India and features a hermit; *Warbeck*, from the French of Arnaud and translated by Sophie Lee, is sentimental and has an historical background. *The English Hermit* by Edward Dorrington, is set on an uninhabited island in the South Sea. *Saraphina, a Turkish tale* is epistolary, tragic and exotic. What more could the Hampshire readers need? These popular novels, which may only have been read once, were probably not bought for library shelves, for the cost of books was high. It is more likely that they were borrowed from circulating libraries usually owned by the newspapers editors themselves. Unfortunately no eighteenth century circulating library catalogues from Hampshire exist in the archives ,but it is likely that these popular novels listed in the advertisements were also available in the libraries. These lists would have been a good reminder of what to read both for local residents wishing to be fashionable and for leisured visitors to the county who had, for example, come to enjoy the pleasures that the resort of Southampton could provide. Popular novel production had now turned the corner. Lists by Lane and others were to continue periodically in the *Hampshire Chronicle* until the end of the century.

The Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser during its short existence has only one list of popular novels, advertised on 2 November 1795. This too was produced by William Lane at his new Minerva Press. Interestingly he had advertised lists of popular novels in the *Hampshire Chronicle* on many occasions, but never under the Minerva heading. The content offers a wide variety of choice including ghosts, mysteries, castles and abbeys, reading for leisure and relaxation. This is a newspaper with much to attract women, an advertisement for ladies lying-in, another by a young gentleman wanting a wife, and one, 'To the Ladies', for a special kind of painting which was being taught. Men in the middle-class trading Portsmouth society may have had little time for leisured reading and it seems likely that William Donaldson, the editor, had a female public in mind when accepting Lane's advertisement. By contrast the readers of *The Times*, 1796, were given a much wider selection; novels were advertised individually, on a daily basis and the very method of short, regular advertisements seems to imply a more valued reader, but also one who had more leisure time for books.

The popular novel: exclusions

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century Hampshire was a county which was developing both commercially and intellectually. Gentlemen's seats and country houses were springing up and there was a large resident aristocratic population. Southampton, a popular watering place, attracted people of fashion who could enjoy the rival circulating libraries of Baker and Linden where they could read the London and provincial newspapers (Temple Patterson 1966, 39, 41). There is a description in the *Hampshire Chronicle* (30 July 1796), of Southampton as a city where 'the theatre is open three nights in the week, and one dress ball and two promenade nights fill up the remainder'. Winchester, with the Cathedral and Winchester College, was an important centre of intellectual life. Businesses were growing, and by the end of the century there was a developing silk industry. Portsmouth was an important port not only for trade and industry, but also for the Navy (Webb *et al.* 1989, 72). Despite this commercial and intellectual growth together with an increase in tourism, it is clear from a comparison between novel advertisements in *The Times* and in the Hampshire newspapers under survey that there was an identifiable difference between fiction available to fashionable London dwellers and the people of Hampshire. This was particularly true in the 1790s.

Hampshire readers, had they not read the London papers, were deprived of the opportunity of learning about some of the major novels of this period. Although certain London publisher/Hampshire editor relationships may have contributed to this, there is also the possibility that some novels were excluded because of their morally questionable or controversial nature. It is clear that the editor/proprietors of the *Hampshire Chronicle* were men of position within this society dominated by local gentry, merchants, industrialists and professionals. The ownership of their newspaper was not their only means of influencing the public among whom they lived and worked so closely (Oldfield 1993, 1). Thomas Baker of Southampton, editor of the *Hampshire Chronicle* in 1778, became a prosperous trader in the Baltic in timber, iron and hemp, and was also a successful local politician. William Donaldson, editor and proprietor of the *Portsmouth Gazette*, was a distributor of stamps, bookseller, stationer, and printer. These men held positions of this kind within a relatively closed society. They might have shared membership of book clubs with the gentry, as well as enjoying business relationships in the tight communities of their town. Were they likely to risk their reputations by publishing advertisements of controversial novels? Political views had occasionally been held by the *Hampshire Chronicle* editors through the pages of their paper despite the first editorial, which promised 'impartiality in exhibiting party opinions'; but the 1790s was a time of particular national wariness due to the French Revolution.

Comparison with *The Times* 1796 will illustrate this point. One of the most controversial 'Jacobin' writers in the 1790s was William Godwin, but neither his *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* nor his novel *Caleb Williams*, both advertised in *The Times*, (3 March 1796) is promoted in Hampshire. According to David McCracken, many considered

Godwin the philosophical leader of the English radicals, but when the reaction to the French Revolution set in, he passed from notoriety to obscurity (McCracken 1982). Similar views were held in Southampton where, as Temple Patterson wrote, there was a growing fear shared by the conservatives and erstwhile reformers that 'Jacobin' principles would spread to the country, a fear which was increased by the outbreak of war with France in the January of 1793 (Temple Patterson 1966, 81).

Novels by Elizabeth Inchbald and Mary Hays, both said to be associated with Godwin's circle, are included in *The Times* book advertisement columns. Could the editor of the *Hampshire Chronicle* have risked his reputation with the advertisement of a novel such as *Emma Courtney*, by Mary Hays, which advocated that 'obedience is a word which ought never to have existed' (Tompkins 1969, 84). On 4 April 1796 *The Times* announced that *The Monk, a Romance*, 'this day is published'. This controversial novel by Matthew Lewis had been criticised in *The British Critic* (7, 1796, 677) as containing 'lust, murder, incest, and every atrocity that can disgrace human nature, brought together without apology or probability, or even possibility for their introduction'. It is difficult to understand why the popular Gothic works of Ann Radcliffe are not represented in Hampshire newspapers, but easier to explain why *Camilla* by the already well-known Fanny Burney was absent from the papers' columns. This novel was advertised in *The Times*, 1796 over a period of time under subscription publishing; it was very rare for a novel to be sold in this way in Hampshire. Fanny Burney was well known in fashionable London circles, both Dr Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds being admirers of her work, but it is possible that many Hampshire readers had never heard of her. If that were the case, they may have been unwilling to pay a subscription in advance for a writer unknown to them.

Although this is subject to speculation, it may be concluded that in not wishing to offend their readers or to take risks in fashions, no doubt for their own ends, the editors of the *Hampshire Chronicle* deprived them of some of the most controversial and interesting novels of the day. The Hampshire readers may have been subject to imposed limitations on their reading. Their newspaper editors may have been following the precept that theories of demand actively accept that consumer tastes are socially determined (McKendrick *et al.* 1983, 98). Not being willing to take risks, especially at a time of government suppressions, they may have judged their readers too conservative for these books. Comparison with editors' attitudes in other provincial towns would be useful, but it would be outside the scope of this study.

The popular novel: lists

Why were so many popular novels advertised in these newspapers in the form of long lists rather than in shorter advertisements for one or two works? It is possible that booksellers such as William Lane, who frequently published such lists, may have been getting rid of remaindered books. Not having sold in town, he may have wished to try them on the country market. It is, however, noticeable that there are no such lists in *The Times*, 1796. According to John Feather (Feather 1985, 40), booksellers usually kept only a few novels. Readers would have to order the rest. If the only reason for lists was for the booksellers to clear stocks, then why were more novels not advertised singly and why were the lists themselves often included quite spasmodically? Although this is supposition only, it may be suggested that there was another reason for these lists; circulating libraries had become the main source of reading material, reflecting the increase in purchase prices. By the end of the century there were nearly 1,000 in the provinces and nearly 100 in London. John Brewer (Brewer 1997, 179) concludes,

> It may have been, however, that the rise in the price of novels meant that more of them were borrowed from circulating libraries and their clients concentrated their book purchasing on what they regarded as more durable literature.

Most of the Hampshire editors also owned circulating libraries which would have contained quite a high proportion of novels. Books were very expensive to buy but relatively cheap to bor-

row. An average price for a single volume 'sewed' was 3s., more if bound. A full-length novel could run into three or four volumes. By advertising lists of the latest novels on behalf of London booksellers such as William Lane, the editors were also encouraging readers to look for those books on their own circulating library shelves. Although there were rich landowners and industrialists in the county, and it was said of Southampton that 'many gentlemen of fortune have come to settle here, since it has become so polite a place' (*Guide to Southampton* 1781, 37), relatively few people within the social structure of Hampshire towns, or in the rural areas, could possibly have afforded to purchase all these novels, but they could borrow them. When Lane was advertising in the 1790s, Southampton was already a popular resort. Winchester also attracted tourists, who would certainly use the local circulating library. John Oldfield, in his Hampshire Paper (Oldfield 1993, 25) lists a total of 16 circulating libraries in the county, but they were not all operating at the same time during the period under review. For example, six are listed for Southampton, but apart from small overlaps, there were rarely more than two libraries in business at any one time. In Portsmouth, only William Donaldson is listed, from 1791. Bookshops were spread over the county with an approximate total of 61 (some dates are uncertain). There are no booksellers catalogues in the archives and therefore it is not possible to assess the proportion of novels to 'durable literature' sold. Unfortunately, there are very few such catalogues extant in the country,but it is known that 20% of the books sold at Clays Bookshop in Warwick were fiction, drama or belles lettres (Fergus 1984).

A cheap way of buying novels was by purchasing the *Novelist's Magazine*, costing 1s., which rarely contained more than one work of fiction at a time. It is interesting to note that whereas it is advertised relatively frequently in the *Hampshire Chronicle*, it is notably absent from *The Times* 1796. One may speculate, therefore, that the appearance of the *Novelist's Magazine* in a provincial, but not an urban, newspaper may confirm that some rural readers came from a social class less able to afford the prices of new works. This was particularly true during the last decade of the century when book prices had risen. It seems that here it may have been the reading public dictating demand rather than the transmission process itself.

The canon

In the last third of the eighteenth century, a literary canon had slowly been building up. Certain novels, most of which had gone into many editions, were beginning to comprise a list of those which ought to be read. With a leisured class, still relatively new in its formation, benefiting from increased education, it must have been important for Hampshire readers to be seen to possess the 'best' novels and to display them on newly made library shelves. As will be discussed, there was considerable emphasis in provincial advertisements on books as attractive objects to possess. What better choice could they have than Mr. Cooke's Pocket editions of universally approved novels by the most esteemed authors, which included names they could recognise? He advertised in the *Hampshire Chronicle* for the whole of the period under study and although he appears to have almost always got it right, two novels advertised on 11 August 1794 are obvious failures. Little known works, *Peter Wilkins*, Anon, and *Quevedo's Vision*, Anon, are not even recorded in the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue*. This seems to prove the point that books on these canon lists were bought because they were well known and would be valued as possessions. If not known, readers were unlikely to take the risk and they would not appear again on the lists.

The first intimation of this canon to be found in the *Hampshire Chronicle* is an advertisement (27 December 1773) entitled NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN, inserted by F. Newberry. These books are clearly abridged, as they are very cheap, costing 1s. each and almost exclusively comprise works by Richardson and Fielding. Not only were library shelves important to Hampshire readers, but also the education of their children. It is not surprising that relative newcomers to education and literacy should need guidance as to what they should encourage their children to read.

Not only was a canon forming for children and the wealthier among their parents, but also for the lower paid. With little cost, through the pages of a

new magazine, *The British Novelist, or Virtue and Vice in miniature*, advertised in the *Hampshire Chronicle* as 'due to be published on the second Day of May, 1774, they could read a valuable Collection of the best English Novels, carefully selected from the Works of Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Griffiths, Mrs. Lennox, Miss Fielding, Sig. Cervantes, Mons. Le Sage, Henry Fielding Esq., Mr. S. Richardson, Dr. Smollett, Dr. Croxall, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Brooke, Dr. Goldsmith (18 April 1774).

The novels: conclusion

From this analysis a hypothesis is forming: the persons responsible for the transmission of the popular novel had a greater influence on choice and distribution, whereas the reader himself was more likely to dictate the classical works he would like to read and possess. In both cases, the reader was to some extent governed by provincial editors' relationships with the London booksellers and printers and, as will be seen, influenced by the ways in which novels are presented to him in advertisements. The editor's perceived knowledge of the market and his conservative inability to take risks are further factors.

The popular novel was presented to readers intermittently; it was not every day that they could take a list of books, from an advertisement, to the circulating library with ideas as to what to read. They undoubtedly demanded romance and sentiment, but unless they were readers of the London papers, they may not have known what fashion was and were inevitably at the mercy of the commercial choices made by the editors and booksellers. The social class of readers may have been wide; serving girls wishing to dream away their uncomfortable worlds were unlikely to make demands but had to accept what was on offer. Perhaps one of their advantages was that because they did not choose from the more fashionable columns of *The Times*, they could be more independent in their judgements. They did not have to agree with London opinions and it is possible, though speculative, that they may have received these books with more open minds.

On the other hand, once most of the works of the canon had been through many editions their popularity with the public, and consequently the worth of the author, was proven. They were good commercial propositions both as books to be read for themselves, for education, or for display on library shelves. What is clear is that there is indeed a complex network of people, materials and events involved in the production of literary works, but the influence of the readers, although not part of the transmission process, cannot be ignored. Hampshire newspaper editors may have thought they knew what their readers wanted, but the readers too were partly responsible for the formation of their own taste.

The novels in the magazines

To assume that all fiction consumed by eighteenth century readers was contained in books of tales and in novels would be both misleading and untrue. Calhoun Winton, makes this point. 'In all probability, for every one reader who first encountered fiction in book form, twenty read fiction in periodicals' (Winton 1977, 25). These magazines and journals fell into two categories: the miscellany magazine in which it might take as long as two years to publish a novel in very short episodes, and journals which were devoted solely to one novel at a time.

Short stories, or tales, also appeared in these magazines and occasionally in newspapers. The *Hampshire Chronicle* printed several short fictional pieces as well as poems, scandals, and gossip during the period and it is not therefore surprising that editors of magazines judged the 'tone' was right and advertised in its pages. *Town and Country*, *The Westminster Magazine* and the *Lady's Magazine*, among others, appear for much of the period. That Hampshire residents were magazine readers can be in little doubt. It has been possible to trace the actual novels they were exposed to in this way by comparing the advertisements in the papers with a very comprehensive catalogue of magazine novels devised by Robert D. Mayo (Mayo 1962). Unfortunately it is beyond the confines of this article to elaborate on this research. *The Times*, 1796, printed neither short pieces of fiction nor many advertisements for magazines. It might therefore be assumed that in fashionable London circles there was less demand for trivial pieces of fiction, the authors of which were frequently anonymous.

On the other hand, in Hampshire, the editor assessed the demand for this kind of fiction, fostered it through his own columns, and then responded again by inserting advertisements for magazines. The influences on transmission are complex, but it seems clear that, in this respect, the readers themselves played an important part. Towards the end of the century, supplements and indexes became available in annual volumes, some of which were advertised in the *Hampshire Chronicle*. It is an indication not only of the growing importance of this reading material, but also that the readership probably included those who could afford to buy them and may have wished to keep them on their library shelves.

ADVERTISEMENTS: 'PUFFING'

Advertising

There were three main ways in which novels were advertised in the eighteenth century: through booksellers' catalogues, on the flyleaves of other books, and in journals and newspapers. Without the income from advertisements, newspaper proprietors were unable to meet very heavy costs principally incurred by stamp duty and distribution. Not only were the advertisements themselves a source of revenue, but if the proprietor assessed the market correctly they could also increase the sales of the paper. As in all marketing processes, the customer, or the reader, was essential in the two-way system of supply and demand.

According to John Feather (Feather 1985, 50), it was only in exceptional cases that any real attempt was made to advertise books in the country newspapers. A search in the two selected papers does not altogether uphold his view. Although novels were not advertised on a regular basis in the *Hampshire Chronicle*, there being some years when they did not appear at all, between 1772–1799 there was a total of 138 novels, both popular and classical. Many of these are listed more than once. Although the *Portsmouth Gazette* includes regular advertisements for Cooke's Cheap Novels, it only contains one list, which names 35 titles of popular novels, during the period of its publication. All the novels in both newspapers were advertised by London publishers. There is no evidence of any novel, either written locally or otherwise, being printed and promoted in Hampshire.

The advertisements in *The Times* are usually short and to the point whereas in the *Hampshire Chronicle* they are often very long and written in flowery language. The virtues of the commodity, the book as an object, are frequently extolled and the price is emphasised. Cooke's novels are advertised in the *Hampshire Chronicle* as

> considerably cheaper than any other edition whatever, that has yet to be offered the public, although it is embellished with every degree of expensive elegance that the artist could devise, or the typographical skills of the printer display (12 December 1792).

Almost without exception, advertisements in this paper vary from a brief statement of binding, format and price to an elaborate 'puff' concerning elegance, size, cheapness and quality of the paper. Appeal to different social classes is emphasised,

> This work is not only calculated to amuse the polite and fashionable circles but to entertain the industrious family, who, after retiring from their daily toil, will be amused with the delineation of characters which their more confined situation precludes them from observing in real life (12 December 1792).

It may be supposed that Cooke was astute enough to realise that books were being used to build up elegant libraries in the provinces and were probably being used as objects rather than reading material, or why else would he have worded his advertisements accordingly? In general, words used to describe novels as fashionable, 'selected', moral, the importance of authors, dedications, bindings, and plates, were all used to influence the Hampshire reader, but they were often told very little as to what any of the novels was about.

Advertisements in the *Hampshire Chronicle* emphasised prices which were high and which varied little throughout the period under study for ordinary 'sewed' volumes which were not cheap editions. *Tom Jones*, Fielding 1749, is advertised

for 6s.9d. and 'Count Fathom with Capital Engravings, 4 volumes bound and lettered, or four volumes bound in 2 and lettered, 2s. 8d'. (23 September 1780). The *Novelist's Magazine*, advertised in the *Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, is 'elegant enough for the library of a Prince and cheap enough for the shelf of a Peasant'. (25 October 1795) At the cost of 3d. a volume, it was within the means of most of those who were literate.

From these advertisements, it seems that the novel was probably transmitted to a variety of Hampshire readers, spanning a wide range of social class, by printers and their agents, the proprietor/editors of the newspapers. Through the advertisements they were invited to view novels in a variety of ways, whether as a book of moral instruction, entertainment or merely a commodity for the library shelf. But marketing is a two-way process and it must be deduced that what was offered was to a large extent what was wanted.

CONCLUSIONS

By studying the transmission of the novel through two Hampshire newspapers with all the contributory factors governing its presentation through advertisements, it has been possible to gain an overall picture of which novels the residents of the county were offered or denied, both in books and magazines. There is also some indication of who those readers were. Although it has been generally accepted that readers of novels in the eighteenth century were representative of the higher social classes, by studying the advertisements in these papers it may be concluded that in Hampshire, customers of the paper included a wide social range. There were those who read journals for builders, for merchant seamen and who looked for a wide variety of jobs and services. They may not all have read novels, but it must be assumed that they were open to persuasion to read them through advertisements. The 'tone' of the paper also gives some idea as to the kind of people who might have read the *Hampshire Chronicle*. It encouraged popular taste in the perusal of accounts of trials and scandals, and was mirrored in the inclusion of advertisements for popular novels of a 'trashy' and often sensational nature. Sentimental poems were included in the paper; so too were advertisements for sentimental novels. Other readers of novels clearly came from a wealthier class. They had library shelves to fill, and often themselves to educate. Their demands, as emphasised in many of the advertisements, were for beautifully bound volumes of the classical canon, which might or might not be read, but which would undoubtedly impress guests with their bindings and illustrations.

The varying demands of these readers were clearly recognised or business-men in the book trade would not have targeted them through advertisements as they did. The way in which a novel, either as a book or as a magazine, was transmitted, or marketed, or even omitted, in Hampshire papers, with all the messages about it which advertisers or reviewers conveyed, presented a work to the reader which was already coloured by views other than those of the author. The relevance of 'the whole world of print, a world of readers, printers, publishers, booksellers, censors, politicians and lawyers'. (Sutherland 1990, 834) all influence the literary text and how readers receive it. The Hampshire readers' needs, expectations, and aspects of their particular provincial way of life, demanded certain kinds of novels, whether to read or to display upon their library shelves. How the novel was read, whether carefully or clandestinely, and where it was read, whether in the garden bower, or by the kitchen fire, or in the more noisy ambience of the circulating library, was part of Hampshire eighteenth-century readers' own individual experience of reading fiction. How they transmitted these experiences into making their own contribution both to popular and classical taste was part of the marketing circle of supply and demand, and also of the transmission of the novel.

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