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LAUREN GILLINGHAM

THE NEWGATE SCHOOL AND THE 1830S

With the exception of a few recent studies that have reconsidered the relationship between the Romantic and Victorian periods, we rarely speak of the 1830s when we discuss fiction of the nineteenth century.\(^1\) In literary studies, the decade is frequently dismissed as a period of transition, with no distinct character of its own. Caught between the waning Regency on one side and a still-emergent Victorianism on the other, the late 1820s through early 1840s tend to be regarded as a rather fallow period. In the words of one critic, most of the fiction of this decade is simply “inferior stuff, for, apart from the work of [Charles] Dickens and [William Makepeace] Thackeray, this was a period of fads and fashions rather than of major developments in the novel.”\(^2\) It was a decade in which the “new kind of consciousness” that Raymond Williams identifies with the “new and major generation” of novelists emerging in the late 1840s was still in embryo.\(^3\) It was a decade in which minor popular genres flourished—genres such as the high-society silver-fork novel and its low-society counterpart, the Newgate novel, both of which Kathleen Tillotson has dismissed as “extravagant romance.”\(^4\) These popular novels are of interest to us, she contends, only insofar as they “increase our understanding of those who react against them.”\(^5\) Once again making an exception for Dickens and Thackeray, the novelists of the 1830s seem never to have emerged from the shadow of Thomas

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Carlyle’s denunciation, in *Sartor Resartus* (1836) and various review articles, of all the British literature of his age, especially the fiction. On the other side of the canonization of a certain version of Victorian bourgeois realism, few critics take seriously a body of fiction characterized by its predilection for the unruly and the excessive, and by its frequent recourse to the narrative patterns and topoi of romance.

In arguing for a reconsideration of the literary and cultural significance of this decade, and especially for the relevance of its fiction to subsequent developments in the Victorian novel, I want to pause over the concession that most critics are willing to make: namely, that Dickens’s and Thackeray’s early work can be excepted from the general disrepute of 1830s fiction. Theirs are perhaps the texts affiliated with the Newgate school with which we are most familiar: *Oliver Twist* (1837–39), *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *Catherine* (1839–40), and *Vanity Fair* (1847–48) have kept the Newgate school in British literary history, if only as a footnote. Both Dickens and Thackeray worked to distance themselves from the Newgate school by repeatedly disavowing its tendency to glamorize crime and criminals, and by using parody and a self-professed realism to counter its generic dependence on romance. Their open, sustained engagement of the Newgate phenomenon, however, positioned these texts and their authors much closer to the school than we tend, these days, to recognize.

That proximity may carry little weight in our analyses of the period, but it was of far greater consequence to them and their contemporaries. Although Dickens was confident, for example, that *Oliver Twist* set itself apart on both moral and representational grounds from the common variety of crime fiction, Thackeray was unequivocal in his condemnation of *Oliver Twist*, along with William Harrison Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* (1839–40), for having elicited readerly sympathy for thieves and prostitutes. Dickens’s interest in the Newgate school, moreover, does not subside with the razing of Newgate prison in *Barnaby Rudge*. David Copperfield’s double and nemesis, Uriah Heep, owes much to the criminal heroes of Newgate fiction, particularly in the beguiling nature of his transgressions. And in late novels such as *Great Expectations* (1860–61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), the doubling of gentlemen and criminal agents draws on narrative patterns that were central to the Newgate novel, as I will argue below. Thackeray too returns repeatedly to the Newgate school—not only in *Catherine*, but again in *Vanity Fair*’s parody of *Jack Sheppard*’s storm scene on the Thames, as well as in the
“Preface” to *Pendennis* (a novel otherwise indebted to silver-fork, rather than Newgate, fiction).\(^{10}\) The difficulty that both Dickens and Thackeray manifest in attempting to control the criminal energies that they put into play in their texts reminds us that lines of respectability, propriety, and sympathy are notoriously difficult to draw, as Patrick Brantlinger has argued, when one deals with crime fiction and, particularly, with the effects of reading criminal stories.\(^{11}\)

In invoking Dickens’s and Thackeray’s ties to the Newgate school, I aim neither to raise the critical fortunes of comparatively minor novelists such as Ainsworth and Edward Bulwer-Lytton simply by stressing their association with more canonical authors, nor to flatten out all distinctions among the highly disparate novels that have been tagged with the Newgate label. Instead, I remark these ties in order to underscore the breadth of the cultural fascination in the 1830s with criminal heroes and the urban underworld. That fascination serves not only to distinguish a certain thread of 1830s fiction—a thread that, notably, traverses canonical boundaries—but equally to link that body of fiction to some of the broader social, political, and generic issues that we conventionally associate with more canonical, and rather less riotous, Victorian novels. Indeed, the interest of the Newgate school lies in its simultaneous engagement with the immediate concerns of its social-historical moment, and with the conventions of a longer literary tradition of which it self-consciously forms a part.

It is specifically in relation to the social history out of which the Newgate school emerged that the one study of these novels that has been undertaken to date establishes the school’s significance. In *The Newgate Novel, 1830–1847: Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens, and Thackeray*, Keith Hollingsworth explains the literary phenomenon largely in terms of specific political and legal issues circulating in the period.\(^{12}\) He suggests, for example, that the pressures for the “reform of the parliament and reform of the criminal law” that came to a head in the second quarter of the nineteenth century ensured the topicality of issues of justice, crime, punishment, and prison conditions (p. 13). By 1840, sufficient social and penal reform had been enacted that readers could regard the “crudest terrors of Newgate . . . as safely in the past” and, on that basis, take relatively benign pleasure in the extravagant actions of the prison breaker or the gallant highwayman: these spectacular characters and their violent deaths were phenomena proper to the less civilized society of the preceding century (p. 141).
Where Hollingsworth offers a comparatively humanitarian explanation of the Newgate phenomenon—where he suggests that because “Freedom and opportunity were in the air,” a “vast public” could take self-congratulatory pleasure in the passing of “old oppressions”—John Bender contends that a particular relish for criminal stories arose in the period from a less charitable sentiment (Hollingsworth, p. 141). Specifically, Bender argues in *Imagining the Penitentiary* that the gradual “withdrawal of these spectacles [of public execution] from the public eye” fueled, not a complacency about social progress, but rather a craving for spectacular substitutes. When hangings were moved inside Newgate Prison and out of public view, he remarks, the “mobs that once would have witnessed an actual execution” thronged, on execution days, to Madame Tussaud’s Chamber of Horrors to view a wax simulacrum of the “murderer just hanged—joined of course by an image of the current executioner.” One might then suggest that the popularity of Newgate fiction had as much, if not more, to do with the cultural void left by the penal reforms that Hollingsworth documents, as with compassionate, optimistic public sentiment.

Without discounting either of these two arguments—which are, in some measure, inversions of one another—I would query whether readings that account for the phenomenon of an emergent literary genre almost entirely in extratextual or sociological terms can adequately attend to the genre’s hold on the cultural imaginary. While the elaboration that these readings provide of the school’s social-historical context is invaluable, this focus tends to overemphasize the mimetic properties of texts that were frequently, and quite self-consciously, romances, and that thus positioned themselves at some mediated distance from the real. By treating the texts merely as reflections of a historically specific set of social conditions and political issues, moreover, this type of reading neglects the Newgate school’s relationship to other fictional forms from which it derives and for which it, in turn, clears a path. Using a reading of Ainsworth’s Newgate novel, *Jack Sheppard*, I will argue that we might learn something more, or something other, about the period’s fascination with criminal heroes by looking within the novels themselves in order to investigate the narrative and heroic models that this genre establishes.

One of the first details to remark in interrogating the cultural fascination with criminal heroes that distinguishes this period is that it is difficult to speak of the Newgate novel as such, given the diversity of the texts that have been grouped together under the
school’s banner. The name is conventionally applied to a spate of novels published in the 1830s and ‘40s that featured characters drawn directly from publications of criminal biography such as *The Newgate Calendar*, or that introduced fictional characters who could have appeared in such publications. The Newgate tag has been attached to novels ranging from the comparatively canonical, such as the Dickens and Thackeray texts already named, to less well-known texts such as Bulwer-Lytton’s crime novels, *Paul Clifford* (1830), *Eugene Aram* (1832), and *Lucretia* (1846), which investigate the relationship of different forms of crime and transgression to social circumstance and psychology. *Paul Clifford*, for example, which has been described as a Godwinian novel of ideas, openly critiques the social determinants of its protagonist’s crimes, portraying him as a largely innocent victim of an unjust society. Ainsworth’s Newgate novels, by contrast, are generally seen as rousing criminal adventure stories. His *Rookwood* (1834), which adapts the conventions of 1790s gothic to the English countryside, features two dozen songs, including numerous highwayman ballads and flash songs, and playfully embellishes the exploits of the legendary eighteenth-century highwayman Dick Turpin (Hollingsworth, pp. 101–3). Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* popularizes the adventures of another early-eighteenth-century criminal, the renowned prison breaker of the novel’s title. The novel follows Jack from his early days as an apprentice through his descent into crime, making much of his celebrated escapes from Newgate prison and his spectacular procession to the gallows at Tyburn.

Even such a brief summary of a few key texts associated with the Newgate school indicates the variety of novels that are included in the genre. Newgate novels distinguish themselves from one another principally by the terms in which they deal with the circumstances of crime (ranging from outright glee to ominous sobriety), the weight they attach to the different determinants of criminality, and the ends to which they pursue their fascination with crime. That fascination, however, is shared by all. These texts are united by an unusually active interest—albeit one expressed in widely varying forms—in the agency and pleasure involved in social transgression.

The appearance of this shared interest in crime prompted critics to declare these texts part of a Newgate or “gallows school of literature” in order to denounce it as both reprehensible and largely unprecedented. Long before the emergence of the Newgate school, of course, novelists had found in the figure of the criminal
a productive locus in which to investigate the tension between internal impulses of aggression and desire and the constraints of social reality—a tension that became only more pertinent through the nineteenth century as an increasingly powerful notion of subjective interiority developed alongside a concomitant refocusing of the external world as inescapably prescriptive, stifling, and hostile. Hollingsworth suggests, nonetheless, that one of the differences distinguishing the Newgate novels of the 1830s from earlier crime fiction was their tendency to treat criminals sympathetically, if not to imbue them outright with the colors of heroism. A novel was unlikely to be “damned with the accusing name [of Newgate],” he observes, “unless it seemed to arouse an unfitting sympathy for the criminal” (p. 15).

It was not perhaps the expression of sympathy alone that raised the critics’ ire, but the Newgate novel’s domestication of romance patterns to ever lower segments of society in order to elicit that sympathy. Dismayed by the overnight sensation of Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard*, for example, *Fraser’s Magazine* argued in 1840 that the problem with the Newgate novel lay in its transformation of a “vulgar ruffian into a melodramatic hero, with all the melodramatic virtues and splendours about him.” Such marvellous transformations, *Fraser’s* cautioned, “will tend to fill many a juvenile aspirant for riot and notoriety with ideas highly conducive to the progress of so ennobling a profession as that of housebreaking.” Substituting the nineteenth-century construct of a low-born male reader and theatergoer for the eighteenth century’s idle female reader from the leisured classes, the Newgate school’s critics sounded a familiar alarm about the dangers of romance. Romance might foster less than salubrious tastes in the reading public, the argument went, and invite new, uncultured readers to form desires inappropriate to their understanding and station. And novel readers, in the instance of many of the new crime novels, posed only part of the problem: the swift adaptation of a novel such as Ainsworth’s to the stage, and the ubiquity in booksellers’ and printers’ windows of images of the criminal (reproduced, in the case of Jack Sheppard, from both eighteenth-century portraits and George Cruikshank’s illustrations to Ainsworth’s novel) significantly expanded the potential audience for a criminal’s romanticized exploits beyond those who would conventionally have formed the novel-reading public. A text such as Ainsworth’s would have further compounded romance’s social threat to the extent that the novel not only taught readers about crime and vice by depicting the acts of a petty thief.
but also more provocatively suggested that such a thief was likely to meet with fame and glory along with, and to some degree in compensation for, his punishment, should his crimes capture the attention and imagination of his age.  

Another key feature of the Newgate school that distinguishes it from earlier crime novels lies in its management of the subjective energy born of transgression. Newgate novels tend to accord a degree of primacy, licence, and pleasure to the exploration of criminality that exceeds that which is manifest in other fiction that was similarly interested in the force of the illicit, the enterprising, and the unconstrained. Most earlier texts had been careful to provide clear narrative restraints to the socially destabilizing force generated by the lawlessness and immorality of their protagonists. One thinks of any number of eighteenth-century novels—Moll Flanders, Jonathan Wild, The Castle of Otranto—that use justifications such as the frame tale, the moral case study, or the historical relic to neutralize the narrative representation of criminal conduct. One might argue that the invariable resolution to the Newgate plot serves much the same proscriptive, stabilizing function. With a few notable exceptions—in the case of characters such as Dickens’s Artful Dodger, who is transported, or Bulwer’s Paul Clifford, who escapes imprisonment to begin a new life in America—the dashing criminal of Newgate fiction almost always ends his adventures with a trip to the gallows. In the narrative space accorded to the criminal prior to that final trip, however, the generative, individualizing force of his transgressions starkly distinguishes the Newgate novel’s formulation of criminal agency from that of its predecessors.

The agency of the Newgate school criminal serves to underscore the genre’s relationship to nineteenth-century fiction more broadly. We might connect the transgressions of the Newgate criminal directly to the problem of heroic agency and of the gentleman-hero that is central to so much late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction: the narrative problem of a heroic subject increasingly unable to take action in the public sphere as a result of what Ian Duncan terms the “combination of morally antithetical class principles of gentility and self-making.”  

“[W]hat relation,” Duncan asks, “should the traditional, ‘heroic’ figures of masculine enterprise, force and cunning, bear to the romance plot of a new dispensation—if they were not to license all kinds of subversive conduct, from social climbing to insurrection?”  

Duncan traces this generic problem from late-eighteenth-century gothic fiction to Sir Walter Scott’s Waverley novels, and from Scott
to Dickens. He pauses only briefly over the fiction that falls in
the interval between Scott and Dickens: he describes the Newgate
novel, along with the silver-fork school and other popular genres
in the period, as merely “a weaker lineage of literal imitation” of
the Waverley model. Such a summary dismissal obscures, how-
ever, the significance of the manner in which many of the novels
of this liminal era engage directly with the questions of narrative
heroic agency to which Duncan’s study attends. More than
simply taking up the same narrative questions, the novelists of
the late 1820s and ’30s who respond in particular to the legacies
of Scott and George Gordon, Lord Byron help to determine the
directions in which the novel develops later in the nineteenth
century. To examine the vicissitudes that the problem of heroic
agency undergoes as it is propelled by these novelists from the
late Romantic period into the fiction of the Victorian period is to
begin to realize that these texts oblige us to do two things: first, to
recast the narratives by which we have accounted for the novel’s
transformations across the nineteenth century, and second, to
interrogate the very forms of cultural work undertaken by fiction
that we are able to recognize.

JACK SHEPPARD AND THE SIGNS OF HISTORY

In thinking about the 1830s, I turn to the Newgate school,
and specifically to Jack Sheppard, in order to argue that the
genre’s response to fictional problems of heroic agency and his-
torical action opens a space to experiment, within the still highly
contested parameters of the novel form, with the ways in which
the subject in history might be conceptualized and rendered in
narrative. With the figure of the lowborn criminal hero, the New-
gate novelist displaces the structure of the romance hero onto a
protagonist whose very identity is premised on transgression of
the social order, and on the unleashing of ambitious, appetitive
energy. In Jack Sheppard, Ainsworth does more, however, than
simply engender an enterprising hero who is able and eager to
take action in the public realm. Although Hollingsworth has de-
scribed this text as “an essentially cheerful romance of escape,”
Ainsworth’s formulation of the criminal hero establishes a model
of self-determining, heroic agency that has wider repercussions
for the novel form in the nineteenth century (p. 177). Specifically,
in refiguring the patterns of individual transgression learned most
immediately from the narratives of Scott and Byron, Ainsworth
articulates in his novel an identificatory structure that moves
the hero away from character type and transforms the modes in which the individual’s relationship to history can be conceived of and narrated.

Without taking Ainsworth’s novel as exemplary of the Newgate school in its entirety, nor its hero as sole representative of the array of criminal protagonists who populate this genre, I will nonetheless insist that Jack serves as an emblem of the productive agency born of transgression that proves so potent and seductive to Ainsworth’s contemporaries and successors—especially to a novelist such as Dickens. Jack Sheppard is one of the most notorious texts affiliated with the Newgate school, and one in which the licence that Newgate authors tend to accord their criminals manifests itself in particularly spectacular form. This novel is sensational, comic, and lurid. It has a good deal of fun with its spirited protagonist, a petty London thief turned renowned prison breaker. Although it inevitably brings its hero to the gallows, the novel allows him to enjoy that final moment in a state not of contrition, but of sheer exultation. Because Ainsworth was willing to thumb his nose rather brazenly at the proponents of literary propriety, he provides us in Jack Sheppard with a purer example of this agency born of transgression than that articulated in other Newgate novels, which are, all the same, captivated by the criminal hero’s enterprising spirit. In a text such as Oliver Twist, for example, which attempts to put a respectable face on crime fiction, Dickens must shy away from the Artful Dodger at the same time that the narrative betrays its author’s enchantment with the pickpocket’s exuberant, youthful energy. Where Dickens cannot, Ainsworth places at the heart of his narrative the transgressive criminal subject, allows the criminal’s appetite and ambition to drive much of the plot line, and thus stages openly his productive agency. In the substantial latitude that Ainsworth’s novel extends to its protagonist to act on his impulses and take pleasure in his crimes, Jack Sheppard constitutes a limit point of the narrative arena for heroic action that is made imaginable in the Newgate school.

The extent of that arena for heroic action is established, moreover, as much through George Cruikshank’s remarkable illustrations for Jack Sheppard as through Ainsworth’s narrative. Cruikshank’s twenty-seven plates for the novel had such a notable impact that Thackeray remarked in the Westminster Review, “it seems to us that Mr Cruikshank really created the tale, and that Mr Ainsworth, as it were, only put words to it.” The question of creative priority in Jack Sheppard’s genesis is perhaps of less
consequence than the effect of the author’s and illustrator’s collaboration. Discussing the rise of illustrated novels in the 1830s, Richard Maxwell suggests that many of these texts “disrupt[t] the relation between primary text and supplementary image, so that one is no longer quite sure which element has priority.”32 In the case of Jack Sheppard, that equalizing interrelation between text and image contributed to the breadth of the novel’s popular appeal, and, as I will argue, to the significance of its exploration of the criminal’s heroic agency.

Jonathan Hill has discussed in detail the creative innovations that distinguish Cruikshank’s contribution to this novel. Hill observes that among the seven novels on which Ainsworth and Cruikshank collaborated, it was in Jack Sheppard “that Cruikshank first employed a particular illustrative style that must rank among his most distinctive contributions to the art of early Victorian novel illustration.”33 That style is tableau illustration, which “depicts moments of narrative climax in framed, static compositions, deriving its compositional characteristics from the widely used theatrical device of the dramatic tableau.”34 Distinct from the “vignette” style of illustration that Cruikshank used elsewhere in his work, most notably in the almost contemporary illustrations for Oliver Twist, his stylistic innovation in Jack Sheppard reflects the artist’s self-conscious employment of the “visual vocabulary of melodramatic acting,” then becoming increasingly popular on the London stage, as well as Cruikshank and Ainsworth’s shared interest in casting their tale in a manner perfectly suited for dramatic adaptation—and thus for commercial success.35

One example of such theatrical pictorial language will give some idea of the significance of Cruikshank’s illustrations for the audience’s perception of the novel’s criminal protagonist. In a plate from the third volume, “Audacity of Jack Sheppard” (Figure 1), we see the mature Jack, having recently escaped from prison, standing in a position of defiance before the family of his former employer. The interior setting in the image is shallow, with the principal figures ranged in relatively static postures across the front of the scene. The illustration itself, like the room it depicts, is carefully contained; as Robert L. Patten has observed of all the illustrations in the novel, this picture is “finished all the way to the margins, with a thin white frame between image and etched border.”36 In the midst of this circumscribed space, Jack himself stands, notably, with his back turned decisively to the door, the room’s one visible exit. Jack’s position in the room, like his bodily posture, bespeaks a figure sure of himself and confident in his
action. As Matthew Buckley points out, Cruikshank’s emphasis on a single, self-contained figure within a comparatively static scene marks a sharp difference from much of his earlier work: “Unlike the churning, unstable vignettes that characterize his Regency work, these tableaux regularly offer the viewer a stable, balanced, often immobile position within the action of the scene, drawing the viewer’s eye repeatedly to the strongly delineated figure and defiant, composed profile of Sheppard himself.”

Hill similarly
remarks that “no figure is more highlighted by the tableau style than Jack Sheppard himself . . . Time and again he is presented in profile or half-profile, drawn with a linear clarity which stresses the relief nature of the tableau style. Even when not centered in the plate, he is naturally the center of attention.”38 The “cumulative effect of the tableau illustrations,” Hill contends, “is the progressive and subversive heroization of the youthful criminal.”39

In order to elaborate my reading of Jack’s heroic agency and to expand on Cruikshank’s contribution to this aspect of the narrative, I must recap the fairly convoluted plot lines of this novel. Jack Sheppard is characterized, first and foremost, by a persistent interest in the transmission and contingency of inheritances in all forms: genetic, financial, and cultural. At the heart of most of these contingent legacies is the resilient criminal protagonist, Jack. He is born in Newgate prison to an erstwhile prostitute and a criminal hanged on the day of his son’s birth. Jack is marked as well by a pair of ominous birthmarks: he has a mole in the shape of a coffin on his neck and a line in the shape of a noose on his thumb. Given this unpropitious beginning, he spends most of his short life convinced that in order to descend into a life of crime, he need not sink far down the social ladder. That conviction falters, however, when the hero learns much later that he is in fact the grandson of a baronet and his mother is the baronet’s long-lost daughter, stolen in infancy by a gypsy. Prior to this discovery, the fatherless Jack is apprenticed to a kindly carpenter, who adopts another young orphan, Thames Darrell, who will play the industrious to Jack’s idle apprentice.40 The two boys, who are later revealed to be cousins, are kept from their true identities and inheritances by the machinations of their uncle, Sir Rowland Trenchard, an ardent Jacobite whose Whig father has demoted him to heir presumptive, as well as by the vengeful plotting of the nefarious thief-taker and criminal mastermind, Jonathan Wild, who seeks to repay a grudge against the Sheppard family and to secure the Trenchard estate for himself. All schemes against the family inheritance ultimately fail. Once Jack is finally hanged, after escaping from prison on four different occasions, and Thames Darrell learns that he is in fact a French marquis, the industrious apprentice turned nobleman is left to marry the carpenter’s daughter and ride off at the end of the novel with all the appropriate rewards of romance.

In its extended consideration of the disruption of the Trenchard genealogy, together with its attention to Jack’s response to the prescriptive legacies from the past that threaten to determine his
identity, Jack Sheppard moves beyond the two leading models of subject formation that Ainsworth and his generation inherit from a received Romanticism: on the one hand, the model of a self-generated subjectivity that Byron, and before him William Wordsworth, establish by asserting control over the contingency of history through memory; on the other, Scott’s notion that individuality takes form through subjection to fully externalized, world-altering historical forces. Ainsworth’s engagement of these literary legacies differs from that of a text such as Sartor Resartus, moreover, insofar as Jack Sheppard eschews the ideal of subjective autonomy that distinguishes Carlyle’s influential narrative.

By comparison to the criminals and outlaws of many Romantic narratives—the dark agents who occupy secondary ranks in the Waverley novels; the pirates, outcasts, and rogues who populate Byron’s verse; and the villains of so much gothic fiction—Jack appears simply a social underdog fighting to get out from under innumerable social and historical disadvantages. From infancy he is hounded by his unfortunate lineage, constrained to an uninspiring range of future prospects and hampered by a wily visage that earns him little trust. The staggering weight of these social determinants occasions, nevertheless, one of the novel’s most fascinating formulations: Jack’s transgressions become signs less of a wholesale challenge to civil order, than of a mode of dealing with his own personal history, a defiance of the predetermination of his identity. The novel successfully transforms this unlikely character into an enterprising hero of romance, yet paradoxically refuses to release him from the full current of social mediation that threatens at every turn to swamp his identity. Jack Sheppard denies its hero the fantasy of social autonomy typically enjoyed by the gentlemen-heroes of earlier romance adventures, whose birth alone promised them a social legitimacy unimaginable to a lowly carpenter’s apprentice, and reminds him instead of the class and kinship structures in which his identity is inextricably enmeshed. In the process, Ainsworth’s novel engenders a model of subject formation remarkably more nuanced than one might expect of a cheerful romance of escape.

Furthermore, in its exploration of the criminal hero’s relationship to his own lineage, the novel registers an important shift in narrative articulations of history, specifically of the mode in which individuals experience the force of history in their own lives. Jack Sheppard’s interest in its protagonist’s individuation in the face of determining forces not only calls to mind silver-fork novels of the same period such as Catherine Gore’s Cecil; or, the Adventures of
a Coxcomb (1841), a text that similarly insists on the social limits to autonomous self-fashioning, but also moves us several steps closer to the personalization of history that becomes a central premise of much canonical fiction later in the Victorian period.

Before considering in detail the ways in which Jack cultivates and works over the surfeit of signs through which his identity circulates, we might remark first the significance of Ainsworth’s pairing of his criminal protagonist with Thames Darrell, who stands in the novel as a much more conventional figure of the honorable, respectable gentleman-hero. Thames’s problem, however, is that he is thoroughly ineffectual. He identifies in adolescence with glorious military heroes of antiquity and styles himself in adulthood a courtly gallant of the Restoration—albeit fifty years after the fact. He would be the hero and commander of civil society, yet he proves himself not only anachronistic but also repeatedly incapable of taking action. An impotent placeholder for a superannuated aristocratic heroism, Thames pales next to the masculinized rogue Jack, who emerges as the true romance hero of the novel. Ainsworth’s insistence on the civilized gentleman-hero as cipher, and his doubling of that ineffectual figure with the doomed rebellious friend who will facilitate the gentleman’s agency, hearkens back to the heroic patterns of the Waverley novels and also anticipates, importantly, a particular inflection of the crisis of heroic agency that characterizes later Victorian fiction: one thinks, for example, of characters such as David Copperfield and William Dobbin, who thrive on devoting themselves to more vital, appetitive, and ultimately dishonorable compatriots. Much like James Steerforth or George Osborne, Jack serves in this text as the double who needs to be shed in order for the honorable but impotent gentleman to step into the heroic role that his rebellious friend has engendered for him. Unlike David Copperfield or Vanity Fair, though, Jack Sheppard requires its civilized gentleman to occupy only a subordinate narrative position and to assume his heroic function only in the novel’s closing pages. Ainsworth thus avoids some of the narrative difficulties that trouble the later chapters of Vanity Fair and especially David Copperfield once the honorable protagonists have been obliged to relinquish their transgressive counterparts. Ainsworth’s doubling of Jack and Thames also differs from these later Victorian pairs insofar as it lacks the inflection of homoerotic desire that distinguishes Dobbin’s devotion to George and David’s to Steerforth. In their hearty, homosocial camaraderie, Jack and Thames share something far closer to that which Thackeray will develop in
Pendennis between Pen and George Warrington, and that which characterizes the boyhood friendships of a text such as Thomas Hughes’s Tom Brown’s Schooldays and the whole genre of boys’ adventure fiction that follows it.

To register fully the implications of the model of heroic agency that Ainsworth develops by placing his criminal at the center of the narrative, we need to return to the question of Jack’s criminality. Interspersed with the complicated lines of the Trenchard inheritance plot, specifically, is the novel’s obsession with the potency of Jack’s genetic legacy from his criminal father. Throughout the length of its hero’s adventures, the text questions incessantly the origin of his criminality and the source of his inexhaustible, independent spirit. From his infancy to the moment of his hanging, Jack’s destiny and character—the motivations that drive his actions and determine his behavior toward both friends and foes—are objects of ongoing speculation for almost every character in the novel, including the protagonist himself. The many explanations entertained along the way, which range from genetic determinism to social mediation, remain indeterminate at the novel’s close. The text’s production of this surfeit of contradictory narratives of origin nonetheless gives rise to the process by which Jack forges for himself an identity distinct from that to which he is ostensibly predestined.

The novel offers myriad explanations to account for its hero’s character and unfortunate fate, only a few of which need to be rehearsed here. From his earliest childhood, Jack is told repeatedly that he absolutely must not—but certainly will—become a criminal. In addition to his ominous birthmarks, his ignominious parentage, and the circumstance of his birth in Newgate prison, Jack’s physiognomy persistently tells against him. He is the very image of his father the criminal and is said equally to possess all the features of an early Spanish picaroon: he has one of those faces “that almost make one in love with roguery, they seem so full of vivacity and enjoyment. There was all the knavery, and more than all the drollery, of a Spanish picaroon in the laughing eyes of the English apprentice; and, with a little more warmth and sunniness of skin on the side of the latter, the resemblance between them would have been complete” (pp. 54–5).

The narrator suggests on other occasions that Jack’s fate has been determined by a range of deleterious influences: he suffers repeated abuse at the hands of his master’s wife and has been initiated early in life into the debauchery common in London’s criminal neighborhood, the Mint (pp. 91, 140). In a decidedly
gothic turn, the novel simultaneously pins the source of Jack’s criminality on the text’s most formidable villain, Jonathan Wild. The thief-taker declares himself the one true origin of all the evil that befalls both Jack and his parents: Wild claims responsibility for the criminal careers of both Sheppards, father and son (p. 147). In a lengthy speech to his coconspirator, Sir Rowland Trenchard, Wild explains his intricate plot against the young Jack:

I have suffered him to be brought up decently—honestly; because I would make his fall the greater, and deepen the wound I meant to inflict upon his mother. From this night I shall pursue a different course; from this night his ruin may be dated. He is in the care of those who will not leave the task assigned to them—the utter perversion of his principles—half-finished. And when I have steeped him to the lips in vice and depravity: when I have led him to the commission of every crime; when there is neither retreat nor advance for him; when he has plundered his benefactor, and broken the heart of his mother—then—but not till then—I will consign him to the fate to which I consigned his father.

(p. 147)

Much like the birthmarks that inscribe Jack’s fate on his infant body, Wild suggests that his mark is on the young criminal—is in him—from the very outset of the boy’s career. Insisting that he is the origin of Jack’s criminal drive and even of his individuality, Wild maintains that he has made Jack all that he is (p. 37). With Wild’s speech, Ainsworth resuscitates the conventional moment of horrific revelation, familiar from texts such as Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *The Cenci* (1819), when the protagonist learns that her actions have been invisibly corrupted, her very being authored, by an omnipotent, evil agent. Ainsworth importantly engages this gothic pattern but he does not let it stand as the decisive explanation of the hero’s criminality. The text as a whole gives no greater credence to this causal narrative than to any other of the many explanations that it keeps in circulation.

The sheer number of explanations of Jack’s criminality that the text offers up signals that these accounts necessarily exceed the object they attempt to capture in narrative form. None of these stories decisively accounts for, nor renders fully present, the identity that Jack assumes for himself. In order to make sense
of the process through which his identity takes form, we must consider Jack’s self-realization through crime. When we encounter our hero in his adolescence, he is apprenticed to the carpenter, has proven himself to possess the skills of a “first-rate workman,” but shows signs of the delinquency to which he will soon abandon himself (p. 58). Caught neglecting his tasks in order to play cards and sing flash songs, Jack replies that the work assigned to him is too easy. Thames agrees: “You trusted too much to your own skill, Jack,” he remarks (p. 59). “If I could work as fast as you, I might afford to be as idle” (p. 59). Thames suggests that, because Jack has capabilities that exceed the tasks set before him, he casts about to find other interests to engage him; the legitimate outlets for his energy that are available to him provide Jack with little challenge. Thames entreats his friend, though, to avoid further trouble by completing the assigned task with dispatch: “if you really wish to oblige me, you’ll get that packing-case finished by six o’clock. You can do it, if you will.’ ‘And I will, if I can, depend upon it,’ answered Sheppard with a laugh” (p. 61).

The narrative emphases here are significant: Thames intimates that Jack’s ability to complete the task is certain; it is the latter’s will to apply himself that remains in doubt. Jack’s response, by contrast, reverses the implied judgment of his character: faced with a challenge to which he can rise, he will do it, invariably. For Jack, it is not his will that is in question; he has will to burn. Rather, it is the appropriate circumstances in which to exercise his will that seem to elude him.

The narrative construct of a young hero unable to find a suitable outlet for his talents immediately echoes Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus. So much of Teufelsdröckh’s unease in the middle chapters of Sartor Resartus arises from his inability to correlate what Carlyle calls the young man’s “inward . . . Capability” with the “outward Environment of Fortune,” the “new time,” and “new conditions” of the society in which he finds himself. A “young man of high talent, and high though still temper,” Teufelsdröckh “breaks off [the] neck-halter” that would enslave him in “the grand corn-mill . . . of Economic Society”—that is, he casts off the profession for which he has trained—in order to make his own way on his own terms. Although the narrator acknowledges that this show of independence may promise greatness, it also leaves the young Teufelsdröckh without direction or guidance. The lesson that he must learn, famously, is to “know what thou canst work at.” Much as Teufelsdröckh does before him, Jack determines early in life that to follow the path to social respectability that
his apprenticeship represents will exact from him too high a cost: there will be no self-satisfaction gained from works that fail to cultivate his “inward Talent.” Instead, he directs his energies toward something at which he can excel. Jack’s self-realization through crime—his casting off of the legitimate, though highly circumscribed, opportunities that have been offered generously to a youth “without connexions”—thus presents itself as a perverse assumption of Carlyle’s doctrine of work as a means to self-formation.

The works that Jack produces are, specifically, acts of transgression. He works to break out of or surpass every constraint, both literal and figurative, with which society attempts to limit him. The weight that the novel attaches to Jack’s drive to transgress makes itself felt in the amount of detail that Ainsworth devotes to the protagonist’s crimes and his various escapes from prison, and equally in Cruikshank’s distinctive illustrations of Jack’s actions. Each of the three plates that represent Jack’s principal escape from Newgate prison, for example, focuses exclusively on the sequence of obstacles—fetters, locks, doors, and walls—that blocks the protagonist’s path to freedom, and his single-minded, remarkable efforts to overcome each one in turn (Figure 2). Thackeray called these illustrations “the gems of the book,” notable for their “reality and poetry,” as well as for the “extreme loneliness of them all.” The pared-down simplicity of these images emphasizes the hero’s isolation in an imposing architectural landscape. It also privileges the autonomous force of his movement through and beyond the spaces in which he has been confined. The multi-image plates set apart each of his transgressive actions, underscoring his skill and potency: the borders that circumscribe all the Sheppard illustrations here mirror the confines of each space from which Jack must escape. As Buckley suggests, “in the spare, coldly rational prison frames . . . Sheppard’s escapes literally enact [a] visual liberation” from the prisonlike confines of the image. As if neither prison cell nor illustrated plate could contain him, Ainsworth and Cruikshank present us with a hero who cultivates his “inward talent” by exceeding every limit with which he might meet.

Once Jack is armed with a resolve to realize himself through his crimes, the many identities that others map onto him become so many disparate signifiers of himself that he might stitch together to form a spectacular surface on which to perform himself for his public. Like the dandy of the silver-fork novel, Jack fashions the positive content of his identity out of that which he
Thriving on the speculations about his destiny, and on the surveillance to which, as an object of suspicion, he is endlessly subjected, Jack uses the force of this specular exchange that takes place around him to perform himself to excess. He overidentifies with the signs of his predestined identity in order to establish for himself a modicum of agency on his own terms, according to the dictates of his own desires.

From the moment that Jack identifies the one mind in his world as clever and calculating as his own—that of Jonathan
Wild—the young hero’s energies find their focus and his exceptional skills begin to manifest themselves. The thief-taker serves as an important spur to Jack’s ambitious drive, but that function is not filled by Wild alone; any obstacle, any challenge that presents itself becomes an opportunity for Jack to test and refine his capabilities. As he moves into the prison-breaking phase of his career, it becomes clear that it is specifically the pleasure that he takes from transgressing prescribed limits and from surpassing his own accomplishments that all along has fueled his ambitious drive. During his final, remarkable escape from Newgate prison, the “inexhaustible energy of his character,” which has driven him to each new feat, takes on a different inflection: namely, it manifests as a desire to set himself apart from others, and from that which others would make him (p. 311). “‘My name will only be remembered as that of a robber,’” he reflects, “‘but it shall be remembered as that of a bold one; and this night’s achievement, if it does nothing else, shall prevent me from being classed with the common herd of depredators’” (p. 289). Far from refuting the fate to which he has been predestined—the certainty of his criminality, which the novel blatantly overexplains—Jack readily assumes the identity that this fate prescribes: he will be remembered as a criminal, and “a bold one” at that. At the same time, though, he actively seeks out ways to exceed the negative prophecies to which he is perpetually subjected. It is precisely in being a more flagrant, excessive transgressor than the direst predictions could have foretold that Jack is able to work over the images of selfhood that have been projected onto him.

The self-spectacle entailed in this process of overidentification with the signs of his history makes itself felt most palpably in the novel’s closing scene: that of Jack’s procession to Tyburn (Figure 3). As he is led from Newgate prison to the gallows, Jack contemplates the immense, supportive crowd that has gathered to witness the cavalcade. The singular object of this spectacle, Jack flourishes under the ravenous gaze of his audience: the narrator reports that “he looked around, and as he heard that deafening shout—as he felt the influence of those thousand eyes fixed upon him—as he listened to the cheers, all his misgivings—if he had any—vanished, and he felt more as if he were marching to a triumph, than proceeding to a shameful death” (p. 338). The moment of Jack’s greatest exultation thus occurs when he is most publicly displayed. He thrives precisely because he has been made the object of a grand spectacle—because he can feel “those thousand eyes fixed upon him.”
Figure 3. George Cruikshank, “The Procession of Jack Sheppard from Newgate to Tyburn,” in William Harrison Ainsworth, Jack Sheppard (1839). Image courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.
From his earliest childhood, Jack has been cautioned to avoid the kind of behavior to which, he is repeatedly reminded, history has destined him. Constantly under suspicion of disobedience, if not greater crimes, and therefore the object of continual surveillance throughout his youth, Jack learns to flourish under these restrictive, specularizing conditions. He openly defies those who would warn him away from a subjection defined by crime, for he seems to recognize that the historical legacies that inevitably mark his life leave him little possibility for agency along a path of upright behavior. This act of self-spectacle allows Jack to fashion himself as he will, out of the materials—the material conditions, the circumstances, the signs of his identity—with which a determinist society would delimit his identity.

The challenge that *Jack Sheppard* poses for later fiction comes into focus in the context of this negotiation that its hero undertakes of his genetic, familial, and social inheritances. Ainsworth’s contemporary critics insisted that the novel posed a grave threat to society because the romanticized escapades and spectacular demise of its criminal protagonist might inspire young boys to a life of crime. The novel was denounced, Hollingsworth notes, “as a book that would create a lust for cruelty” (p. 147). Rather than lying in the corrupting influence it might have had on young readers, the substantial legacy of this text, and especially of its engagement of a novelistic heritage of formulations of heroic agency, arises from its rewriting of a Romantic notion of history as a forward-moving force that promises just social recompense for the losses it inevitably occasions. In *Jack Sheppard*’s articulation of history as an increasingly personal force, where its limitation is felt in the severe circumscription of individual circumstance, Ainsworth’s text remarks a shifting cultural terrain that will have significant repercussions for the Victorian novel.

On *Jack Sheppard*’s representation, the individual comes face to face with history, not as an abstract, world-altering force, but as the much more immediate limitations of his own life: the constraints posed by his origins, family, and physiognomy. The novel explicitly moves away from both a Scottian faith in linear historical progress and a Carlylean ideal of the individual’s self-determining, social autonomy. What a novelist such as Gore demonstrates in the context of high society, Ainsworth makes clear among the ranks of criminals and prostitutes: enterprising self-spectacle and self-fashioning seem to constitute the only response possible, should one choose not to resign oneself passively to the cheerless prospect imposed by a determining society.
There can be no subjective autonomy apart from the forms that society provides, and in which each individual must traffic. The problematic legacy that Newgate novels leave for those contemporary novelists—Dickens and Thackeray primary among them—who would at once eschew the threat of individual self-fashioning, the weight of a stagnant history, and the taint of romance, is a model of heroic agency that has become increasingly unimaginable on any other terms.

NOTES

I am grateful to Kim Michasiw, Ina Ferris, Julie Murray, Craig Gordon, and Peter Sinnema for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.


5 Ibid.

6 In a memorable quotation from Thomas Carlyle’s 1838 review of J. G. Lockhart’s biography of Sir Walter Scott, for example, he describes the age of Scott and his contemporaries as the “sickliest of recorded ages, when British Literature lay all puking and sprawling in Werterism, Byronism, and other Sentimentalism tearful or spasmodic” (“Sir Walter Scott,” in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, 4 vols. [London: Chapman and Hall, 1864], 3:167–223, 181). In Sartor Resartus’s chapter on “The Dandiacal Body,” Carlyle offers a similar repudiation of dandyism in general and fashionable novels in particular, leveling his critique at Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s 1828 silver-fork novel, Pelham (Sartor Resartus, ed. Rodger L. Tarr and Mark Engel [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000], pp. 200–10).


8 Charles Dickens articulates his most famous denunciation of popular crime novels in his Preface to Oliver Twist, where he differentiates his own realistic depiction of “the every-day existence of a Thief” from the romanti-
cized portraits of criminals offered in most fiction of the period (“The Author’s Preface to the Third Edition,” in Oliver Twist, World’s Classics edn. [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982], p. xxvi). In his first novel, Catherine (1839–40), Thackeray offers a similar critique of romanticized crime novels but seeks to develop a realistic portrait of crime by different means. Thackeray parodies the Newgate school by taking its violence to the extreme, using the horrific brutality of Catherine’s villainy to alienate readers from her character, and thereby squelch the public appetite for criminal heroes once and for all. Frank Wadleigh Chandler suggests, however, that this effort to improve the public literary taste was less than successful: “This brutal fiction . . . was far worse as a medicine than the disease it sought to cure. In the endeavor to make roguery detestable Thackeray only made a detestable tale” (The Literature of Roguery, 2 vols., Types of English Literature [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1907], 2:454).


14 Bender, p. 252.

15 Buckley attempts to broaden such historical and political accounts of the school by considering the influence of the theater and the print revolution of the 1830s on the Newgate phenomenon; see pp. 430–7. In characterizing the school, however, he distinguishes the Newgate novel up to the mid-1830s, which he describes as largely adventure filled and escapist, from the more critically engaged fiction that develops from the mid-1830s on. Fueled in part by “large-scale dislocation of the poorest members of . . . [the working]
class (by the New Poor Law of 1834),” he suggests that the Newgate novel “evol[es] from adventure tales into a more substantive literature of social critique” in the second half of the decade (p. 431). While such an evolution is apparent in certain novels affiliated with the school—Oliver Twist is the most obvious example—the scathing social critique of an early Newgate novel such as Bulwer-Lytton’s Paul Clifford complicates such a neatly defined, two-stage generic trajectory.

16 Of particular insight is Hollingsworth’s concise analysis of criminal law reform in the early nineteenth century: see pp. 19–27.

17 Hollingsworth designates the publication of Bulwer-Lytton’s Paul Clifford in 1830 as the inauguration of the Newgate school, and that of Vanity Fair in 1847 as its termination (pp. 65–82, 214–5).


21 Ibid. Attending to the class anxiety evident in many critics’ concerns about the Jack Sheppard phenomenon, such as those voiced by Fraser’s Magazine, Martin Meisel takes issue with Hollingsworth’s claim that the “temper of the Sheppard enthusiasm . . . was fundamentally gay” (Hollingsworth, p. 141). Meisel insists, by contrast, that “contemporary middle-class critics” perceived the popular phenomenon as “Chartist, working-class, or even reformist”: “For the alarmed, if the Jack Sheppard craze was not directly Chartist or republican, it was a parallel expression, responding to the same social distempers that generated those radical movements” (Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983], p. 265).

22 See Ina Ferris on the dogged persistence in the nineteenth century of the “critical concern,” formed in the eighteenth century, over the intersection of “women, novels, and reading” (The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991], p. 35). Clifford Siskin helps to explain the persistence of such a concern when he observes that eighteenth-century anxieties about novel reading turned not only on changes in readership and reading matter, but fundamentally, on the capacity of writing itself “to produce that change” (The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830 [Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998], p. 3).

On *Jack Sheppard* and celebrity culture, see Buckley’s fascinating analysis of the novel’s participation in the print revolution of the 1830s and in the period’s “crucial shift from political to perceptual modernity” (p. 426). Buckley argues that the new journalism “fostered . . . the powerfully modern feeling ‘that the everyday might be transformed into the shocking and sensational,’ that ‘ordinary people’ might be ‘lifted from the anonymity of urban life and into the realm of spectacle’” (Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998], p. 36, qtd. in Buckley, p. 436).


Ibid.


Revising his position, Duncan has written more recently that the “example of Newgate fiction shows us what is missing” from an account of the nineteenth-century novel that privileges “a normative, middle-class kind of novel represented by Scott and Austen: radical, demotic, disruptive, even pathological styles and energies of narration, surfacing in these new, unspectable genres from urban popular culture” (“The Victorian Novel Emerges, 1800–1840,” in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack [Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2002], pp. 3–13, 12).

Much of the novel’s notoriety arose from its remarkable popularity; part, however, stemmed from its unfortunate association with an actual murder. In May 1840, a London valet named B. F. Courvoisier murdered his employer, Lord William Russell, by cutting his throat. As Hollingsworth notes, Courvoisier claimed that the idea for the crime “had come to him upon reading *Jack Sheppard*” (p. 145).

The real Jack Sheppard escaped from prison four times, including two remarkable escapes from Newgate prison that cemented his fame, before being hanged at Tyburn in 1724 at the age of twenty-one. Ainsworth represents the escapes themselves with significant historical accuracy. On the details of the real Sheppard’s career, see Hollingsworth, pp. 132–4; Lucy Moore, *The Thieves’ Opera* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997), pp. 158–70; and Horace Bleackley, *Jack Sheppard* (Edinburgh: William Hodge, 1933).


Hill, p. 429.

Hill, p. 430.


Patten, 2:100. Patten notes how different this framed tableau composition is from the “roughly oval *Oliver Twist* vignettes, which radiate from the
energy of the figures and fade off into the surrounding white paper . . . By virtue of their imagistic power they [the Sheppard plates] exert a powerful attraction, drawing the viewer into their world” (ibid.).

37 Buckley, p. 440.
38 Hill, p. 453.
39 Ibid.

40 The allusion to William Hogarth is not accidental: Ainsworth, who once referred to Jack Sheppard as his “Hogarthian novel” (Ainsworth to James Crossley, Kensal Lodge, 29 May 1837, qtd. in S. M. Ellis, William Harrison Ainsworth and his Friends, 2 vols. [New York: John Lane, 1911], 1:328), includes in the novel a fictionalized version of the real-life visit paid to Jack Sheppard by Sir James Thornhill shortly before the prison breaker’s execution. Moore remarks that it is not known whether Thornhill’s son-in-law, Hogarth, “accompanied him on this assignment”; regardless, “Hogarth must have seen the portrait . . . The features of Tom Idle, the idle apprentice in Industry and Idleness, are supposedly derived from Thornhill’s portrait of Jack Sheppard, and Tom’s life mirrors that of the real Jack” (p. 229). In Ainsworth’s scene, both Hogarth and John Gay accompany Thornhill to Newgate prison, the latter ostensibly to draw inspiration for The Beggar’s Opera. The narrative allusions to Hogarth, moreover, constitute only part of Jack Sheppard’s debt to the artist: Hill, Meisel, and Patten offer extended analyses of Hogarth’s influence on Cruikshank’s tableau illustrations. See Hill, pp. 435–7; Meisel, pp. 267–71; and Patten, 2:98–9, 109–12.

41 Ainsworth invokes the performative refrain of “five years” with which William Wordsworth begins “Tintern Abbey” (Lyrical Ballads 1798 and 1800, Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge [Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008], pp. 142–7), as well as George Gordon, Lord Byron’s cynical rewriting of that refrain as “eight years” in Don Juan’s Canto 11 (The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986], vol. 5, 11.76–86), in a narrative musing on a retrospect of “Twelve years!” at the opening of Jack Sheppard’s second epoch (Jack Sheppard: A Romance [London: Routledge, 1895], p. 52). Subsequent references will be to this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text by page number). The narrator’s bleak vision of the historical landscape is entirely consistent with the novel’s recasting of the terms in which, as I will argue below, history makes itself felt: from this prospect, the private passions that once fired us become the sites which now bear the marks of history’s blighting force. In reference to Scott, I refer to the critical commonplace that identity is largely determined, in the Waverley novels, by the particular historical moment in which an individual lives, and by the social and historical forces to which he or she is subjected. See Georg Lukács’s remarks, for example, on the historical and social typification of Scott’s characters in The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 34.

See Duncan’s reading of The Monk’s Matilda as a figurative “serpent-in-the-garden” (Modern Romance, p. 34), and James Chandler’s analysis of Beatrice Cenci’s slow slide into casuistry to justify her parricide; as Chandler argues, the logic by which Beatrice resolves herself to the murder bears all the marks of her father’s monstrosity (England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998], pp. 498–515).

43 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 92.
44 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 93.
45 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 123.
46 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 92.
47 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 94.
48 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 94.
49 [Thackeray], “George Cruikshank,” p. 57.
50 Buckley, p. 440.