

palgrave **key concepts**

# **KEY CONCEPTS IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE**

---

sean purchase



## KEY CONCEPTS IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

## Palgrave Key Concepts

---

**Palgrave Key Concepts** provide an accessible and comprehensive range of subject glossaries at undergraduate level. They are the ideal companion to a standard textbook making them invaluable reading to students throughout their course of study and especially useful as a revision aid.

Key Concepts in Accounting and Finance  
Key Concepts in Business Practice  
Key Concepts in Drama and Performance  
Key Concepts in Human Resource Management  
Key Concepts in Information and Communication Technology  
Key Concepts in International Business  
Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics (second edition)  
key Concepts in Management  
Key Concepts in Marketing  
Key Concepts in Operations Management  
Key Concepts in Politics  
Key Concepts in Psychology  
Key Concepts in Strategic Management

### **Palgrave Key Concepts: Literature**

*General Editors: John Peck and Martin Coyle*

Key Concepts in Contemporary Literature  
Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature  
Key Concepts in Victorian Literature  
Literary Terms and Criticism (third edition)

*Further titles are in preparation*

[www.palgravekeyconcepts.com](http://www.palgravekeyconcepts.com)

---

### **Palgrave Key Concepts**

#### **Series Standing Order**

**ISBN 978-1-4039-3210-5**

*(outside North America only)*

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in the case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

---

# Key Concepts in Victorian Literature

Sean Purchase

palgrave  
macmillan



© Sean Purchase 2006

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2006 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-4039-4807-6 ISBN 978-0-230-20419-5 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-0-230-20419-5

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06

*To Christelle, ma belle*

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>General Editors' Preface</i>	x
<i>General Introduction</i>	xi
<b>1 Contexts: History, Politics, Culture</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
Age of Victoria	2
Architecture	7
Body	12
Childhood	15
Cities and Urbanization	19
Class	22
Clothing	25
Consumerism	28
Crime and Punishment	31
Death	34
Decadence and Aestheticism	37
Disease	41
Domesticity	44
Drugs	48
Economics	50
Education	53
Empire and Imperialism	56
Evolution	60
Family	64
Food and Famine	67
Gaze	70
Gender	73
Gothic	78
Individualism	81
Industry	86
Law	89
Madness	92
Music	96
Nation	99
Orientalism	102
Other	105

**viii** Contents

Pre-Raphaelitism	108
Race	112
Reform	116
Religion	119
Science	122
Sex and Sexuality	125
Slavery	129
Transport	132
Travel	135
Violence	138
War	141
<b>2 Texts: Themes, Issues, Concepts</b>	<b>145</b>
Introduction	145
Children's Literature	154
Crime Fiction	158
Drama	161
Historical Novel	164
Mid-Victorian Novel	168
Non-fictional Prose	171
Penny Dreadfuls	178
Poetry	181
Realist Fiction	185
Sensation Fiction	188
Social-problem Novel	191
<b>3 Criticism: Approaches, Theory, Practice</b>	<b>195</b>
Introduction	195
Deconstruction	208
Feminism	213
Marxism	217
New Historicism/Cultural Materialism	221
Postcolonialism	226
Postmodernism	231
Poststructuralism	235
Psychoanalysis	240
Queer Theory	246
Structuralism	250
<i>Chronology</i>	257
<i>Index</i>	269



# Acknowledgements

A huge thank-you to John Peck, Martin Coyle, Carl Plasa, and to everyone who gave me friendship and encouragement during my time at Cardiff University. I am especially grateful to Irene Morra, for her immense knowledge of everything, her timely and spirited comments, and her remarkable supply of Jammie Dodgers (not always the cheap ones).

This book is also dedicated to my mother, Irene, and to the memory of my grandparents, Joyce Purchase, Albert Purchase, and Mabel Burdfield.

**S.P.**

# General Editors' Preface

The purpose of Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature is to provide students with key critical and historical ideas about the texts they are studying as part of their literature courses. These ideas include information about the historical and cultural contexts of literature as well as the theoretical approaches current in the subject today. Behind the series lies a recognition of the need nowadays for students to be familiar with a range of concepts and contextual material to inform their reading and writing about literature.

This series is also based on a recognition of the changes that have transformed degree courses in Literature in recent years. Central to these changes has been the impact of critical theory together with a renewed interest in the way in which texts intersect with their immediate context and historical circumstances. The result has been an opening up of new ways of reading texts and a new understanding of what the study of literature involves together with the introduction of a wide set of new critical issues that demand our attention. An important aim of Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature is to provide brief, accessible introductions to these new ways of reading and new issues.

Each volume in Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature follows the same structure. An initial overview essay is followed by three sections – Contexts, Texts and Criticism – each containing a sequence of brief alphabetically arranged entries on a sequence of topics. 'Contexts' essays provide an impression of the historical, social and cultural environment in which literary texts were produced. 'Texts' essays, as might be expected, focus more directly on the works themselves. 'Criticism' essays then outline the manner in which changes and developments in criticism have affected the ways in which we discuss the texts featured in the volume. The informing intention throughout is to help the reader create something new in the process of combining context, text and criticism.

**John Peck**  
**Martin Coyle**

*Cardiff University*

# General Introduction

## I

Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to her death in 1901, and her name has become synonymous with the age. For students starting to study English literature, the term 'Victorian' suggests a quite specific historical juncture, tending to connote a peculiarly rigid set of ideas, circumstances, values and attitudes. These revolve around a number of concepts and themes, not to say clichés, which are frequently attributed to the Victorians, and they can be misleading. The Victorians are typically described as having lived rather drab lives that were little more than combinations of puritan ethics and repressions: severe moral probity, restraint, reserve, family values, a certain dourness or lack of humour, uncomfortable attitudes towards sex, stony faces in photographs, and black clothes. They are equally notorious for their intolerance towards social 'deviants' of all types. Criminals, lunatics, homosexuals and stray women were all treated severely or punished, and masturbation was discouraged by cold baths. In a society in which middle-class norms and attitudes rose to dominance, the working classes were also approached with caution and contempt, and foreignness in any shape or form was treated with suspicion and hostility.

As part of their complex middle-class ethos, the Victorians are just as famous for their liberalism and sense of industry. Concepts such as hard work, bustle, determination, energy, purpose and progress are all frequently attached to the Victorians, as are practical philosophies such as 'self-help' and 'philanthropy'. As these last two concepts suggest, however, the clichés surrounding the Victorian age, being clichés, turn out to be somewhat contradictory upon closer inspection: 'self-help' describes an ethos of self-sufficient individualism, while 'philanthropy' denotes an idea of charity or goodwill to others. As mutually defining oppositions, they are concepts which unsettle the clichés ascribed to the Victorians by operating as simultaneous attributes of the middle-class ethos. Similar contradictions appear when we consider the issue of sexual modesty. The general view is that the Victorians were prudish about the human body: everyone has an opinion, for example, about their reluctance to enjoy sex or reveal bits of their bodies. But this was an age when prostitution and pornography were rampant, homosexuals were jailed, transvestites roamed the nation's parks, population figures

swelled, particularly in the crowded cities, and sex was discussed everywhere.

The contradictions and complexities of the Victorian period also have to be seen in the context of technological, and consequently social, change. In the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, nineteenth-century Britain changed rapidly from a largely rural to a predominantly urban society, and the Victorians were unparalleled as innovators in the sciences and technology. Important engineering feats came to symbolize this change, especially the development of the railways from the 1830s onwards, one of the most singular and striking achievements being Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western Railway linking London and Bristol, which was opened in 1835. A London to Birmingham railway was also in operation by 1838, and by the early 1840s the popular holiday destination of Brighton was served by a London to Brighton railway which cost around eight shillings (40p) for a cheap day return. By 1850, in fact, there were around six thousand miles of railway lines across Britain. For many Victorians, a better and faster railway system marked a better and faster Britain. The trains gave rise to greater efficiency in transport and communications, and enabled the swifter movement of vital resources and materials between the nation's core industrial centres.

Along with the railways came the new timetables drawn up to meet the increasing network of lines criss-crossing the country. British time was consequently forced to become synchronized and standardized, and this regulation determined a new sense of hourly structure and routine in daily life throughout the country. From that point onwards, Victorians would have to keep time with both the new trains themselves and the relentless chug of the modern world they inaugurated. Victorian engineers also undertook the construction of a series of massive bridge, tunnel and viaduct projects, primarily to facilitate better routes for the trains, and developments in communications technology enabled them to lay down longer and longer telegraph lines. After 1855, large-scale changes were also afoot in areas of health and sanitation. Engineers such as Joseph Bazalgette, for example, designed and constructed a sewerage system in London which eventually helped eradicate lethal diseases such as cholera. His project was encouraged by the outcry following the 'Great Stink' of 1858, which was caused by the pumping of raw sewage into the Thames.

Radical intellectual achievements were also beginning to shape and change the age. As with the railways, many Victorian theories and ideas would have an immeasurable impact on the way that people came to understand and live their lives. To draw upon only a few of the more

obvious achievements, in chronological order, there was, for example, the publication of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's work on the historical relationships between classes in *The Communist Manifesto*, which appeared in 1848 during a series of revolutionary upheavals throughout Europe. Eleven years later, in 1859, Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution in *The Origin of Species*. Although evolutionary ideas were not new to the Victorians (the work of Charles Lyell in 1830–3 and Robert Chambers in 1844 both held that organisms evolved from an original being created by God), Darwin's radical contribution was his theory of 'natural selection' and his stress upon the godless element of chance involved in evolutionary variation. His work posed the most lucid and persuasive challenge yet to religious orthodoxies, especially to the biblical idea of 'Creationism' and the notion of time, undermining centuries of Christian ideas about life on earth and the hierarchy of species. Towards the end of the century, Sigmund Freud's revolutionary ideas about psychosexual development, repression and the unconscious also began to receive recognition (and criticism). As with Marxism, psychoanalysis would have more impact in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and it originated in Continental Europe, not Britain. But, like Marxism, it is important to remember that it is a discourse rooted in nineteenth-century attitudes and anxieties, and that Freud's ideas germinated and came together in key publications such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), when Victoria was still alive.

To underline the influence of one of these intellectual achievements here, and its implications for modern literary criticism and theory, we can focus on Marxism. The construction of huge factories and mass industries throughout Britain in the Victorian period helped cultivate an increasingly class-conscious nation, and it is out of this context that Marx and Engels's ideas about the fundamentally exploitative nature of industrial capitalism became important for understanding the modern world. Their theories also, inevitably, informed the critical discussion of what is happening in, and how we interpret, Victorian literature although this has proved to be a far from simple story. It is, however, a far from simple story. In the early 'hungry forties', Engels witnessed at first hand what he described as the poverty and oppression endured by the British working classes in Manchester, then the centre of Britain's massive textile industry. He subsequently condemned the industrial-capitalist system in his polemical *Condition of the Working Classes in England* (1844). This text helped shape his collaboration with Marx, and the manner in which class relationships – which Marx and Engels saw as the driving force behind the history of the Western world – would be thought about and interpreted in the future. But Marx also developed

theories about the way literature and culture participated in the spread and consolidation of 'ruling-class ideas'. One of the aims of this book, in this respect, is to demonstrate the various historical and theoretical ways in which Marx and modern Marxist literary critics have re-examined both 'ruling-class ideas' in Victorian literature and the tenets of basic Marxism.

The premise of basic or 'vulgar' Marxism is that the history of human relationships is governed entirely by the economic infrastructure of society. For some modern critics, especially postmodern critics, such an argument is reductive because it offers a far too sweeping 'grand narrative' of life and everything. Such reductionism, they maintain, fails to take account of the complex and ambiguous *other* movements of history, those which are made up, for example, of the numerous sexual, gender, or racial dimensions which cannot be simplified into a rigid, economic opposition between 'us' (the oppressed class) and 'them' (the dominating class). As with other critical and theoretical fields such as feminism, deconstruction, new historicism and psychoanalysis, and indeed the major Victorian ideas and attitudes themselves, *Key Concepts* provides crucial information on these complexities and some ideas about the various ways of approaching them. In doing so, the book demonstrates how and why a more complex approach to these ideas is important in any attempt to understand, and do justice to, the complexities of Victorian literature and culture.

## II

Around the same time that Marx and Engels were establishing their social critique, Victorian writers also took up the cause of ordinary working people. In the 'Condition of England' or 'Social Problem' novels of the 1830s–50s, especially, the miseries and deprivations suffered by the British working classes came under increasingly heavy criticism. Two of the most famous and popular novels of this sub-genre were Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854). Gaskell's work is subtitled *A Tale of Manchester Life*, and Dickens's novel, although set in the fictional 'Coketown', is also a rendering of Manchester. Both novels deal with hardship, hunger, injustice and despair, and it is indicative of the changing role of fiction in the period, and the peculiarly Victorian confidence shared by Gaskell and Dickens, that they intended their works to be agents of social and economic reform.

In *Hard Times*, the weaver Stephen Blackpool is mistreated by the aptly named industrialist Josiah Bounderby, and just about everyone else

in the novel (including his unpredictable wife). He is wrongly accused of theft, exiled by his union, made redundant, falls down an old mine shaft, and dies. And yet, as brutal and as unjust as conditions were, and however accurate Gaskell and Dickens were in reflecting these problems, in reality the new industrial systems proved to be hugely successful in terms of their overall contribution to the Victorian economy and the way that they sealed Britain's reputation around the world. Victoria's factories mass-produced a vast range of goods made from diverse natural and metallurgical resources – textiles (particularly clothes), steel, coal, hardware, household goods, pharmaceuticals, luxury goods – for a growing world market, and they ensured that the Queen would preside over the most powerful nation in history. With the Victorian industrialist and middle classes profiting from such growth, at the expense of workers such as Stephen Blackpool, Britain quickly became renowned as the 'workshop of the world'.

Given the importance of industry and trade, important shifts in the economic infrastructure of Victorian society are something that every student of the period needs to be aware of. In 1846, in the middle of the 'hungry forties', a new economic confidence slowly emerged in a climate of free trade heralded by the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846). Since 1815, the Corn Laws had imposed restrictive tariffs on imports of corn, and these led to inflated prices for domestic grain and home-baked bread. It was the Victorian poor who paid the price, in terms of deprivation, but also the poor who agitated against a law so weighted against their basic needs. The repeal of the Corn Laws signalled the slow retreat of some of the worst excesses and deprivations of the period, although not those associated with the concurrent Irish Famine (c.1845–52), which led to the starvation and emigration of millions from Ireland. However prematurely, a new decade, the 1850s, also indicated an era of prosperity after the 'hungry forties'. With a new spirit of confidence in place, in 1851 the Victorians undertook a grandiose project which seems largely to have been designed to show off their new-found prosperity to the world, and the 'workshop' of British superiority which made it possible.

The Great Exhibition (1851), heavily promoted by Prince Albert, took place fairly early on in Victoria's reign. It was a building which at once paraded Britain's economic success and imperial pre-eminence, and summed up the country's sense of a united purpose and identity. Housed in a Crystal Palace made almost exclusively of glass and iron, the exhibition dominated Hyde Park with all the robust British clarity, common sense and strength that the materials of its construction suggest. It was, to all intents and purposes, a kind of museum of modernity – British

industrial-capitalist modernity – containing some 100,000 exhibits from around the world, and indeed it was British showpieces that dominated the floor space. On display were many of the instruments, apparatuses, designs, machines and tools (such as telegraphs and newfangled gadgets such as early cameras), which Victorians thought were making Britain ‘great’. These included cotton-spinning and printing machines, industrial hammers, engines, locomotives, and the many other engineering and technological ‘miracles’ which were used in the nation’s factories and mills. Records of the exhibition’s floor plan indicate that although the nation’s working classes were permitted entry, the exhibits were laid out in such a way that the role of the many Stephen Blackpools who operated them in reality was effectively downplayed. The Great Exhibition all but ignored, in other words, the human cost of Victorian industrialism.

Elsewhere in the exhibition, there were a range of international artefacts and curiosities on display, including the paraphernalia of empire such as Bengal ivories and stuffed elephants. All of the exhibits glamorized Britain’s domestic and colonial achievements around the globe, and the stuffed elephants were, in this respect, more emblematic of British dominance in India than any celebration of Indian culture. Nonetheless, millions paid to come and see the exhibition over the six months it was open to the public. At the same time, the fact that Britain’s economic gains and successes throughout the period, on the back of the Industrial Revolution, were also attributable to its prowess in world trade, is a significant factor in any understanding of the Victorians and their literature. The Great Exhibition celebrated an increasingly global market, but it also underlined the ambition, on the part of the Victorians, to establish the greatest empire the world had ever seen. By the time of Victoria’s death in 1901, a full generation after she had been crowned Empress of India in 1876, the Victorians had succeeded in realizing this ambition. Following the last phase of the ‘Scramble for Africa’ campaigns, during which Britain carved out the lion’s share of that continent, the British Empire had begun to govern around a quarter of the population of the globe. Back at home, meanwhile, as if pointing towards the hollowness of everything the Victorians achieved, both in Britain and abroad, the Crystal Palace was dismantled and relocated to South London. There it languished as a popular destination for day trips, before finally being destroyed by fire in 1936. After its months of glory in 1851, Joseph Paxton’s tribute to Victorian might had become an empty and vulnerable shell.

If 1851 provides one key point of reference, we also need to be aware of the longer picture. Most commentators describe the Victorian era as



part of a broader historical period known as the 'long nineteenth century'. This period, approximately 1815–1914, includes all of the events and affairs which distinguish British history throughout these years, from the end of one great European conflict, the Napoleonic Wars, to the outbreak of another, the First World War. In this respect, although this book deals specifically with key concepts in Victorian literature, the important point to make at this juncture is that this more extensive historical scope needs to be remembered when approaching the period. Quite obviously, many of the significant political and cultural events which shaped the age cannot easily be contained by the specific years defined by Victoria's reign. Neither did Victorian writers begin being 'Victorian' in 1837 and start being 'modernist' in 1901. Put another way, the Victorian age, its culture, ideas, problems and anxieties, the key concepts of its literature and their implications, are simply not as neat as the years 1837–1901 would suggest. When, otherwise, does the immediately preceding age of Romanticism (c.1789–1830) end, exactly, and to what extent do the ideas and concepts that characterize Romanticism still inform the Victorian age? Are there really discernible cut-off dates or points, and if there are, how do we account for the intervening years between 1830 and 1837, during William IV's short reign? For some critics, it is indeed the decline of the long 'Georgian' period (1714–1830), evidenced as early as the late eighteenth century in the so-called 'Romantic' decades, and not simply Victoria's accession to the throne, which marks the beginnings of 'Victorianism' as a definable concept. These were the tumultuous years of the French revolution (1789) and Britain's wars against Napoleonic France (1800–15). They were also the years leading up to the first great Reform Act (1832) and the New Poor Law (1834), when the notion of fundamental changes to the British constitution first seemed a real possibility and the nation's electorate was slightly expanded. At the other end of the nineteenth century, some commentators argue that the period considered by many to have succeeded Victorianism in literature and culture, modernism (c. 1890–1939), probably has origins as far back as the 1870s, more or less in the middle of Victoria's reign.

Evidently, the problems attendant on periodization underline why the many clichés and shibboleths ascribed to the Victorians need to be approached with caution. The entries in this book and the period covered by the chronology (1800–1914) have been selected with these problems specifically in mind. To that end, the book does not simply dispense with the clichés and the shibboleths. Rather, it re-examines them, in order to provide a more thorough research tool for twenty-first-century students of the period. Victorian Britain in the 1830s undoubt-

edly did undergo what Edward Bulwer Lytton, in *England and the English* (1833), described as an 'age of transition – an age of disquietude and doubt'. But this is not to suggest that other periods were not equally unsettled or transitory. More to the point, the reasons for these transitions and their implications are as many and complex as they are difficult to affix reliable dates to.

### **III**

A few points about the structure and method of this volume are also required here. Over three sections, *Key Concepts* provides a series of small essays on a range of problems and issues associated with Victorian literature and its criticism. The first part, 'Contexts', deals with the numerous historical, political and cultural concepts which shaped the literature, and its scope is as broad as these categories suggest. Following the entry 'Age of Victoria', readers will find in the section alphabetical entries on a number of quite specific issues ranging from 'Architecture' to 'War'. Each of these will equip the reader with a three-step approach to the concept in question: the important historical and cultural facts required in order to contextualize a concept such as war in the nineteenth-century; the significant ideas surrounding the impact of war on Victorian consciousness; and lastly, by means of a series of close, theoretically informed readings, the ways with which to apply these facts and ideas to Victorian literature.

The same approach applies to the second and third parts of the book. Part 2, 'Texts', comprises discussions of the various literary genres and forms which make up Victorian texts. In this section, however, the emphasis is very much on genres, sub-genres and forms, rather than individual texts or authors. Hence there are a number of entries on subdivisions of the novel form but only one entry each on Poetry and Drama. The huge and diverse forms which make up Victorian poetry and drama cannot possibly be contained within a few paragraphs, and I have not tried to take on such a task in this section. It was, nonetheless, with some reluctance that due to restrictions on space and a need to prioritize what students are most likely to be interested in reading about, I allocated these concepts only two separate entries. Readers will, on the other hand, find discussions of Victorian poetry and drama integrated into various entries elsewhere in the book. The 'Contexts' section, for example, contains a separate entry on the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, one of the major poetic and artistic movements of the day, and the entry on 'Decadence and Aestheticism' incorporates a discussion of Oscar Wilde's dramatic works. Otherwise, as the entry on Poetry

in 'Texts' attempts to show, many Victorian poets were great innovators in poetic form, and the 'dramatic monologues' form experimented with by major figures such as Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning were especially significant. Similarly, as I demonstrate in the entry on Drama, the theatre was immensely popular with the Victorian public. Although nineteenth-century plays were very much dominated by the genre of melodrama, social problem theatre also proved to be popular, and more controversial, towards the end of Victoria's reign.

Unavoidably, however, the preponderance of fiction in this section of the book also reflects the rise of the novel as the major form in Victorian literature. By mid-nineteenth century, after its emergence in the early eighteenth century, the novel had become truly pre-eminent, and for the first time its popularity eclipsed the previously dominant form in English literature, poetry. For the Victorians, fiction seems to have become the most suitable medium with which to reflect the 'age of transition' to the modern industrial world that they were building, and it is part of the task of Part 2 of this book to examine the historical and cultural reasons behind this development. The 'Victorian novel', at least as we have come to know it, has some of its roots in the early works of one of its great innovators, Charles Dickens. Intriguingly enough, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836–7) and *Oliver Twist* (1837) were even published during the first year of Victoria's reign. The novel's rise was then consolidated in what critics often describe as the peak years between 1847 and 1852, a period which the entry in this section on the Mid-Victorian Novel attempts to cover. At a glance, these years were certainly prolific for Victorian novelists. Publications included Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Shirley* (1849), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847), as well as Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848) and *David Copperfield* (1850). *Key Concepts* sets out to explore the historical and cultural upheaval in which such a proliferation of novels were produced, and the many sociopolitical tensions and problems that resonate within them.

These days, Victorian studies are inseparable from modern developments in literary and critical theory, and this is why Part 3 of this book turns to 'Criticism'. Approaches to the period now come armed with an array of critical practices and 'isms', some of which can be bewildering for readers encountering them for the first time, and any list of them sounds exhausting: cultural materialism, new historicism, feminism, Marxism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, structuralism, not to mention deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and queer theory. It is my intention in this section to clarify and explain these

approaches, but also to seek ways of applying them to Victorian literature. As with the preceding sections, each entry has a three-part structure. The concept of feminism, for example, is explained in terms of its historical development (its rise in the 1970s, but also its origins in the Victorian period); the major ideas underpinning feminism (its challenge to patriarchal ideology); and some of the ways in which feminist critics and theorists have approached Victorian literature (particularly the portrayal of women by the literature of a male-dominated culture and society). Each entry points out the distinguishing features of the separate critical approaches and, where appropriate, their points of overlap. My aim is to disentangle these approaches without reducing them, thereby using them to read Victorian literature as closely, clearly – and politically – as possible.

By way of example, let us say that the reader is researching the representation of 'food' in the mid-Victorian novel, and that he or she is also interested in the broader historical problem of empire. The reader will, to begin with, find an entry on Food and Famine in the 'Contexts' section of this book. This situates the concept of food in Victorian literature against its historical contexts, including the economic and industrial crises of the 'hungry forties', the epoch-making potato famine in Ireland (c.1845–51), and British colonialist ideas about the Irish that grew out of centuries of tension between the two nations. With the aid of post-colonial theory, the entry then applies these ideas to a mid-Victorian novel, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, which refers, often obliquely, to all of these problems and issues. As the structure of Food and Famine suggests, *Key Concepts* is designed to work in a fairly specific kind of way, and the entry can be read separately from other entries. Alternatively, any reader wishing to expand his or her research on this topic will also find entries from the other two parts of the book useful and instructive. He or she can then, for example, cross-examine one entry from 'Contexts' (Food and Famine), two related entries from 'Texts' (Mid-Victorian Novel and Social-problem Novel), and one entry from 'Criticism' (Postcolonialism). The information contained at the foot of each entry, under *See also*, is designed to indicate where the reader might find an entry on another concept helpful. The section on Further Reading should be self-explanatory.

A second example will clarify the way this book works. The entry on Slavery, in the 'Contexts' section, begins with the significant dates and events which defined British involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. This information will furnish readers with the crucial facts about the origins and abolition of the British trade (c.1562 to 1807), and the abolition of slavery as an institution throughout the British colonies (1833–4),

just a few years before Victoria's accession to the throne. As with the entry on Food and Famine, the important point to bear in mind here is that any representations of slavery in Victorian literature are better understood when the historical, conceptual and theoretical circumstances behind the topic are first clarified. Readers can then enrich their research by drawing on the information provided by related entries in 'Contexts', such as Empire, Nation, and Race, before turning to Postcolonialism or another such as Marxism, in the third section, on 'Criticism'.

The fact that Victorian literature is haunted by images of slavery has become increasingly important to modern critical approaches to the period. That such images appear so soon after the British government in 1833 dismantled the formal institutions that made slavery possible, begins to make more sense when Britain's status as one of the major slaving nations in modern history is explained. Postcolonial critics and theorists are then better-positioned to ask what this suggests about the Victorian imagination and its colonial consciousness, or about the peculiarly oppressive nature of the power struggles between men and women that form such a prominent feature of Victorian literature, and which some feminist and Marxist critics have suggested are akin to those relationships which underpin slavery. Researchers will also be in a better position to understand how Victorians understood and approached another important concept which finds an entry in 'Contexts', Race, a topic which is also, inevitably, touched on in entries on Slavery, Empire, Nation, Other, and so on.

In brief, postcolonial theory attempts to understand the ways in which Victorian literature can be read and interpreted in the light of nineteenth-century Britain's status as a colonial world power, of which slavery was pivotal. Postcolonial theorists and critics are also interested in the complex manner in which Victorian texts represent foreigners and foreign lands, especially, but not exclusively, those nations and territories colonized and enslaved by the British. The fact, at the same time, that the literature of the period is also bound up with what many critics describe as the Victorian 'invention' of British identity is also integral to the problem. Indeed, the chief aim of this book is to encourage the reader to read and think across a number of contextual, textual and critical categories. The researcher into a key concept such as slavery will then be poised to ask what the implications of all these problems are for the construction of British identity and the British Empire in Victorian literature, and how it might all be most intelligently and persuasively understood.

# 1 Contexts: History, Politics, Culture

## Introduction

The logic of this section has to some extent been explained in the introductory essay to this volume. Here I want to clarify the scope – and the basis of selection – of the entries that appear in Contexts, and how they relate to what follows in the next two sections. In any historical period there are ideas, of a social, political, economic and ideological nature, that are central to people's thinking. In broad terms, we refer to the sum of these ideas as the cultural context in which people live. In the medieval period, for example, religion would have been a key factor in people's lives, and this continued to be the case in the Victorian period. But the Victorians experienced a different kind of religious faith, one which competed with a whole range of other key concepts: industrialism, capitalism, science, evolution, consumerism, the law, the nation, the ideology of family, to name only some of the most significant or obvious. All these concepts (and more) vied with religion for the hearts and minds of private individuals and public opinion alike, and it is these central aspects of Victorian life that are discussed in the essays in this section.

Contexts provides a starting point for a fairly specific kind of investigation. As comprehensively as possible, it covers the many ideas and concepts the Victorians clung to, or rather the complex array of issues and problems which underpinned their cultural framework and which both reassured them and caused them anxiety, often at the same time. The section ranges across obviously significant contexts, including Class, Religion, Science, Sex and War, to those less obvious, at least perhaps to literary critics, such as Architecture, Body, Clothing, Drugs, Madness and Music. Although it is, it need hardly be pointed out, within such contexts that literary texts are produced, literature is also our principal means of gaining access to the culture of attitudes and neuroses which have contributed to our understanding of the Victorians. At the same time, the section is designed to work in such a way as to encourage readers to think about the Victorians and their age from a combination of perspectives which should be construed as inseparable. The first is in terms of

## 2 Contexts

the broader historical picture of the nineteenth century provided by the section; the second is in terms of the endless churning of ideas, attitudes, contradictions, nuances and idiosyncrasies which made the Victorians tick and which are, crucially, such an integral and exciting feature of their literature. To that end, the entry on Childhood, for example, provides readers with vital information on the horrors facing Victorian children – especially poor Victorian children – such as infant mortality rates, child labour systems, prostitution, and the enduring miseries of nineteenth-century education systems. It proceeds from these facts to the highly sentimentalized and often paradoxical idea of childhood in Victorian consciousness, and from there to representations of childhood in Victorian literature. Each entry offers, along these lines, a detailed and thorough explanation of the key concept or context under discussion. Each, similarly, within the limited space provided, has the aim of arriving at as full a picture of the Victorians and their literature as possible.

‘Contexts’ is not, however, intended in any way to be encyclopaedic or comprehensive. On the contrary, it is intended to give readers a historical and contextual framework through which to approach Victorian literature, but with the added aim of encouraging readers to work out from each entry and pursue their research further. Readers of the section (as with the other two sections in the volume) can, with these objectives in mind, expect to find each entry supplemented by two sub-sections. The first is the ‘See also’ feature, which indicates where other entries elsewhere in the volume might be useful or helpful, either within the Contexts section itself or in the Texts and Criticism sections. The second, ‘Further reading’, provides suggestions for research outside of this volume. Both sub-sections can be found at the foot of each entry, and, as with the section as a whole, they have two major aims. One is to enrich the depth and scope of the reader’s understanding of Victorian contexts, by encouraging a method of cross-examination, and the other is to urge readers to read Victorian literature critically and theoretically at all times. The suggestions for further reading, in particular, point readers towards the wide and ever-expanding world of modern literary studies and criticism. This is a world which, in its own richness and complexity, has contributed significantly to the rich and complex way in which the Victorians and their age must be understood.

### **Age of Victoria**

Commentators tend to separate the Victorian age into early, mid and late periods. Victoria’s reign (1837–1901) began shortly after the establishment in 1829 of Robert Peel’s Metropolitan Police Force and the

passage of the first great Reform Act of 1832. The police force heralded the new Victorian age of greater state discipline and a clampdown on crime, while the Reform Act, the first of three (one, it seems, for each of the early, mid and late Victorian periods) doubled a very small electorate. Although the proportion of Victorians eligible to vote rose again, following the subsequent great reform acts of 1867 and 1884–5, only around 12 per cent of the population were enfranchised in 1886, and women were all but excluded until 1918. Poor and destitute early Victorians also suffered under the Poor Law (Amendment) Act (1834), which forced more of them into the workhouse systems and orphanages famously condemned in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837). Meanwhile, early Victorians witnessed the dismantlement of slavery in the British colonies (1833–8), the age of working-class radicalism and the democratic reforms called for by the Chartist movement (c.1830s–40s), and momentous engineering and technological achievements such as the establishment of the railway system.

The economic depressions and the resultant socioindustrial crises of the 'hungry forties' and the Irish Famine (c.1845–1852), brought about other momentous events such as the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846). These laws, since 1815, had set British corn prices at an artificially (and unfeasibly) high rate, and they were blamed for causing much of the hunger and unrest in the period. Although Robert Peel's Corn Laws repeal legislation tends to sound somewhat insignificant in the more grandiose story of Victorian achievement and progress, it is important to stress that it did lead to two major developments, the impact and implications of which are obvious: cheaper bread (eventually) for starving Victorians, and the triumph of Britain's free-trade system. Indeed, the political and economic debates surrounding the repeal of the Corn Laws proved to be hugely influential. They had a direct bearing on the way the balance of power in nineteenth-century Britain was beginning to shift from the old landowner class to a burgeoning class of industrialists, manufacturers and tradesmen, who were spurred on by the new spirit of *laissez-faire* (non-state interference) economics heralded by repeal. Such a shift, albeit gradual, transformed Victorian Britain from a largely rural and agricultural society, based on a monopoly of landed and state-controlled interests, to an urban and industrial society, based on an increasing culture of individualism and capitalism. The change further ensured that Victoria reigned over a nation which, temporarily at least, had by the 1850s–60s begun to enjoy a period of relative prosperity and peace.

The new balance of power in society also intensified class tensions. Despite the creation of a disaffected but increasingly well-organized –



## 4 Contexts

and in some quarters militant – working class, it was not, however, until 1871 that government legislation permitted the establishment of Trade Unions (the first Women's Trade Union League was formed in 1874). This legislation followed a history of complex 'Combination' laws typified by those promulgated before Victoria's reign. One, for example, in 1824, permitted the peaceful 'combinations' of some workers, while another, in 1825, swiftly prohibited them. A Factory Act of 1874 further recommended the relative leniency of a 56-hour week for the nation's workforce, although children under the age of 12 were still working in Britain's factories and industries as late as 1901 (the year of Victoria's death), when another Factory Act made this particular form of exploitation illegal. Although, then, the general story of the Victorian period is one of astonishing economic progress, the vast majority did not enjoy the benefits of prosperity. Indeed, by the last third of the century it begins to become clear that the Victorians lived under a capitalist system of free-trade economics which was at the increasing mercy of periodic booms and slumps. The most notable slump began in the early 1870s, when the 'great depression' set in, a downward trend which was to last well into the mid-1890s.

The economic changes of the Victorian period affected every aspect of life. Most obviously, Victoria presided over a population which after decades of industrialism and urbanization had swollen from around 9 million in 1801 to around 18 million in 1851. At her death in 1901, this figure had risen again to around 30 million. Intriguingly, though, the religious consensus of 1851 revealed that only a third of Britain's mid-century population attended church regularly. Although such figures do not necessarily mean that religion was less important to everyday British lives at a personal level, the faith of Victorians would nonetheless be increasingly shaken as the century wore on. It is illuminating, in this respect, to juxtapose these attendance figures with the fact that the 1851 census was carried out in the same year of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, that most visible monument to Victorian industrialism and capitalist might. That is to say, if Victorians were not worshipping at church, they were certainly worshipping their own less spiritual and more material achievements, and over 6 million paid to walk through the doors of the Crystal Palace in the half-year it was open to the public. Other Victorians adopted a more conservative religious stance in the period. The assertiveness of the Oxford Movement of Tractarians (c.1830s–40s) for example – a complex but devout group that campaigned for greater spiritual observance in the face of industrial modernity, and which saw leading exponent John Newman's controversial conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845 – reflected a grasping after traditional values. Such

values were something perhaps particularly to be desired when the public and private consciousness of all Victorians, either consciously or otherwise, became subject to the increasing sway of more rationalist and scientific ideas and practices. Eventually, these influences led to the steady retreat or rather the displacement of faith, and the emergence of a more secular British society overall.

Underlying everything, however, was the economic strength of the nation. The early to mid-Victorian years, between roughly 1830 and 1875, were the triumphant years of British self-confidence, and in these decades the Victorians established a buoyant but increasingly productive economy, which ultimately created greater prosperity for a larger proportion of society. But they were also decades that witnessed a period of British isolationism from European affairs, a situation which, according to some commentators, only really came to an end after Victoria's death in 1901, with the *Entente Cordiale* (1904) between Britain and France. By that stage, in a context of increasing national hostilities and empire building, Britain had again started to cast about for European allies against the perceived new threat to national security posed by Germany. Although Victoria's 'dear soldiers', as she called them, fought in numerous imperial skirmishes and wars of conquest throughout the nineteenth century, in Europe they were involved in only one major conflict during her reign, the disastrously mismanaged Crimean War (1853–6). In this war, Britain allied itself with its historical enemy, France, against Russia, largely to prevent what the allies feared to be Russian expansionism south into Europe, Britain being largely concerned with protecting its maritime routes to its Eastern empire. In the British Empire itself, Victoria's armies became embroiled in other major incidents, especially, again, in the earlier period, and most notoriously during the Indian Mutiny (1857). But they were also involved in the later contexts of European nationalism and colonialism, in tumultuous events which were to reach their climax in the Boer Wars (1899–1902) in South Africa, between British forces and settlers of Dutch descent. At home, in the same period (c.1899), Victoria's shipyards and armaments factories had begun manufacturing again in earnest, primarily to keep up with Germany's increasingly dangerous-looking battleship programme. The subsequent naval race between Britain and Germany underlined the growing threat of national crises and conflict in nineteenth-century Europe, which would culminate in the First World War of 1914–18.

On the domestic stage, political affairs were dominated by tensions and rivalries which also climaxed in the late Victorian period. As if to underline the radical uncertainties and sociopolitical upheavals which would come to define the nineteenth century, in fact, between 1868 and

## 6 Contexts

1892 virtually alternate governments were formed by the Liberal and Conservative parties, and by two of the most influential statesmen and individuals of the age: the Liberal William Ewart Gladstone, and the Conservative Benjamin Disraeli. When, for example, Gladstone succeeded Disraeli as prime minister for the second time in 1880, he inherited, (along with a series of complex foreign affairs), one affair which was much closer to home, the implications of which would dominate British politics in the twentieth century and beyond. During the so-called 'Home Rule' crisis, late Victorians were repeatedly asked to reconsider Britain's long history of involvement and colonial settlement in Ireland. In the face of growing demands from Irish nationalists for Ireland's secession from Britain, Gladstone's mission was to disestablish the Irish church and 'pacify Ireland'. His 'Home Rule' bills were, however, successively defeated in parliament, first in 1886, and again in 1893, five years before his death in 1898.

Other important shifts in the sociopolitical and cultural contexts of the later Victorian period were signified by W. E. Forster's Education Act of 1870. This legislation eventually ensured that elementary education for all British children was compulsory, and it was instrumental in helping them out of the nation's industries and factories. In the same year, women gained better monetary rights (after marriage) over wages earned, and in 1878, after the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act, they were permitted separation from their husbands on the grounds of assault or cruelty. Following the Married Women's Property Act (1882), women also gained full rights over their property. This act overturned a timeworn legal concept and custom known as 'coverture', which for centuries had effectively placed the woman – and everything she owned – under her husband's 'protection'. In 1886, women were also granted more equitable custody rights over their children, although only in the event of the father's death, and by the early 1870s–1880s, the so-called 'Woman Question' had increasingly come to the foreground in Victorian popular consciousness. Politically, the plight of women was made most visible (and audible) by the suffragette movement's calls for the women's vote, and culturally by the changing social roles and economic status of women dealt with in the controversial 'New Women' drama and literature of the day. Moreover, the late Victorian period, even more so than earlier periods, was marked by growing anxieties about gender roles, promiscuity and sexuality in general. Such anxieties were signified, most obviously, by the raising of the age of consent to 16 in 1885, most violently, by the furore surrounding the 'Jack the Ripper' murders of prostitutes in Whitechapel in 1888, and, most controversially, by the Oscar Wilde trial for homosexuality in 1895.

In an age of conflicting ideas and changing attitudes, a range of celebrated social and political commentators emerged. The Victorians produced critics, essayists, historians, rhetoricians, polemicists, satirists, wits and moralists, most of whom seemed capable of holding forth on just about everyone and everything. Certain individuals did, more importantly, have a massive influence on the intellectual and cultural contexts of the age. Amongst the names which made such an essential contribution are: Thomas Carlyle, with his diatribes on everything from the so-called 'Condition of England Question', to the French Revolution, God, work, Chartism, the idea of the hero, the 'negro question', race and slavery; John Ruskin, with his influential criticisms of art, architecture and morality; the educationist and poet Matthew Arnold, with his speculative and satirical ideas about high and low culture; the utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill, with his writings on individual liberty and women's subjection; and Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was, amongst other things, a reactionary advocate of political 'evolution' or 'gradual' – and above all peaceful – progress. One must, inevitably, add to this list the ground-breaking scientific work of Charles Darwin, especially the publication of his *On the Origin of Species* (1859); the revolutionary writings of Karl Marx; and Sigmund Freud's controversial ideas about psychoanalysis towards the end of the century. All of these writers and thinkers (mainly, but not exclusively, men), form an integral feature of the intellectual, philosophical and ideological contexts of the Victorian period, and much of the social and political conflicts they gave rise to. It is, indeed, against the fervent and complex historical backdrop of such conflicts that we need to contextualize the broad changes and movements in Victorian literature.

**See also** General Introduction; *Contexts: Economics*; *Criticism: Introduction*.

### Further Reading

Roberts, Adam C., *Victorian Culture and Society: The Essential Glossary* (London: Edward Arnold, 2003).

Wilson, A. N., *The Victorians* (London: Hutchinson, 2002).

### Architecture

Architecture in nineteenth-century Britain is full of contradictions. On the one hand, the Victorians built largely to accommodate what was, by Queen Victoria's accession in 1837, the first and most heavily industrialized nation the world had ever seen. Their innovative designs for factories, railway stations, civic buildings and working-class terraced

housing in industrial centres earned them their reputation for utility, purpose, common sense and functionalism. On the other hand, for all the British 'strength' and 'solidity' associated with Victorian building materials, such as red brick and ferroconcrete (concrete fortified with steel), and despite the fact that many Victorian architects removed stuccoed façades in order to expose the 'truth' or 'reality' of the rawer materials beneath, much of Victorian architecture remained elaborate, not to say fanciful. Many of the more functional designs were mixed with a rich sense of indulgence, flamboyance and some sentimentality. Richer Victorians, like their eighteenth- and seventeenth-century forebears, enjoyed splashing out on Tudor or Gothic manor-house retreats, and in major cities, such as London, an intricate array of fine Victorian public buildings and pleasure parks sprang up. At the same time, many British cities boasted a similarly eclectic mix of Georgian, Gothic-revivalist, Venetian and Dorian buildings, resplendent with their ornate facades, tall chimneys, formidable-looking gables, and porches.

There was conflict and considerable confusion in architectural debates surrounding public buildings of the period, with tensions between neo-classical and Gothic-revivalist ideas being particularly pointed. In short, some nineteenth-century architects, like their predecessors, tended to favour the rationalism of perpendicular angles and symmetrical lines over the often more asymmetrical designs associated with Gothic/mediaeval buildings, and there were instructive reasons behind their preferences. Greco-Roman façades, for instance, with their almighty pillars, dignified pediments and marble-white purity, lent buildings of the British Empire the lustre and splendour of classical empires, and this gave them an historical and forward-looking aspect. Alternatively, neo-Gothic architecture suggested a more romanticized and complex layering of the nation's relationship to its past. The 'Gothic revival' was part of the broader obsession with mediaevalism throughout Victorian culture and literature. Following the Church Building Act of 1818, the majority of British churches, including London's Church of All Saints (1859), were built or rebuilt in a Gothic or neo-Gothic style, only partly because this style was cheaper. The revival marked a return to those architectural designs which typify the Western Gothic tradition: pointed arches (rather than rounded), asymmetrical planning, mediaeval towers, long galleries, ornamental traceries, rose windows and gargoyles. Many Victorian houses also experienced a Gothic make-over throughout the century, as did numerous public buildings, and architects and builders of the mid-Victorian period, were particularly prolific. Although the fashion for neo-Gothic slowly declined towards the end of the century, it was this period which saw the erection of many of the

Gothic-inspired cathedrals and public buildings which dominate British townscapes to this day.

The Gothic revival was championed by the influential social commentator and art critic, John Ruskin. It was Ruskin who, in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), underlined the significance of the relationship between architecture and nationhood: ‘All good architecture is the expression of national life and character.’ The problem, however, lies in ascertaining what kind of nation, exactly, is ‘expressed’ by Victorian architecture, and what its implications are. To take just one famous example, one of the more famous and grandiose neo-Gothic projects undertaken by the Victorians was the Houses of Parliament, which after a fire in 1834 was redesigned and rebuilt by Charles Barry, with decorations and embellishments applied by the devout Augustus Pugin. Built during the early years of Victoria’s reign (c.1837–60), this extravagant Gothic pile has dominated the London cityscape along the Thames embankment ever since. In many ways, Barry’s architecture encapsulates the way in which the Victorians were masters at moving ‘Britishness’ forwards by constantly looking backwards (in Barry’s case to mediaevalism). With all its robust stateliness and imploring spires and pinnacles, the building displays a conspicuously Victorian sense of ascendant world power and optimism. And because the building also resembles a church, Barry’s monument to democracy has an air of religious grandeur which disguises its manifestly secular function. The Houses of Parliament consequently stand as a firmly modern achievement, but one which still seemed traditional for those Victorians who were determined to retain the nation’s material connection with the past. Similarly, the Gothic revival and the testament, on the part of such buildings, to the power and might of Victorian Britain is characterized by the sheer size and presence of the other functional and secular projects the revival inspired, particularly London’s daunting St Pancras Hotel (1868–74), and Alfred Waterhouse’s colossal Manchester Town Hall (1868–77). All of these buildings reflect a nation that would, by the time of Victoria’s death in 1901, form the hub of the most powerful empire in history. They are the bricks and mortar, in other words, of nineteenth-century capitalism and modernity.

The impact of architecture on Victorian consciousness is difficult to quantify. However, because its impact is invested with political dimensions, its implications for the literature of the day are far-reaching. Time and again, for example, a writer such as Charles Dickens places his individual heroes, such as *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* or *David Copperfield*, in gloomy and oppressive buildings, in the architecture of Victorian discipline signified by the workhouse, the court, the prison, the ragged school and the factory. *Oliver Twist* is also led by the Artful

Dodger into the working-class disorder of labyrinthine streets and 'knots of houses', on the way to Fagin's den of pickpockets. He is then steered into the safe and more ordered interiors of the middle-class Brownlow and Maylie households, where he is eventually saved: 'a neat house, in a quiet shady street near Pentonville'. Buildings shaped the sense of space inhabited by individuals in Victorian literature. Their layout as *Oliver Twist* suggests, created and maintained the space between Victorian upper and working- or under-classes, just as it established a division between private and public space. As the century wore on, the space of work for most Victorians moved out of the home and increasingly became part of 'public' life, a separation marked by striking architectural differences between, for example, house and factory. It was a separation which was to have important implications for the domestic division of labour in Victorian society, particularly in terms of the role of women and the family.

One major effect of this division was that the integrity of 'home' as a space of privacy and intimacy became deeply enshrined in Victorian culture. Architects of the period ensured that middle- and upper-class households, at least, were divided into separate rooms to suit each function of the day: dining rooms, bathrooms, bedrooms, studies and so on, rooms that also acted as refuges for individuals. Yet whereas the popular novels of the day, like *Oliver Twist*, underline the Victorian ideals of domesticity, family and the sanctity of 'hearth and home', the idea of an individual space is taken to satirical extremes elsewhere in Dickens's work. In *Bleak House* (1853), for example, there is a 'Growlery', a room in which Mr Jarndyce goes, 'when I am out of humour', and in *Little Dorrit* (1857) there is a 'Snuggery', a Marshalsea prison 'tavern establishment'. Inmates would be snug, one presumes, in a Snuggery, away from the hurly-burly of Victorian prison life, and the room is described as 'convivial' in the novel. But the Snuggery is also, as Dickens puts it, as 'hot and strong' as 'grog for the ladies', and ironically, 'defective: being but a cooped-up apartment'.

The seclusion of space and the sanctuary held out by the reassuring idea of 'house and home' is rendered more complex by other works of Victorian literature. This is particularly the case with those novels written by women, whose role in the period was very much confined to the private and domestic sphere of 'house and home'. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), 'homes', and especially middle- and upper-class homes, often resemble prisons and asylums; they are, if anything, more like extensions of the architecture of discipline seen in Dickens's work than refuges for individuals. That the comfort and shelter provided by the house might also mean it is a place of restriction and correction