Romantic Fragmentation and Victorian Censorship: Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Authorship

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This essay examines how and to what extent the growth and professionalization of the publishing industry during the nineteenth century created inconsistencies between the text that was originally produced by an author and the text that eventually appeared as a published book. Drawing on contemporary literary theory's conflicting views on the status and significance of the author, it attempts a reconciliatory approach that views the author and the literary text as social entities that interact with the reader. On this ground, the essay discusses examples drawn from the publishing industry's interference with Romantic fragments on the one hand, and Victorian censored texts on the other in order to highlight the ways in which the publishing industry has shaped the nineteenth-century author and his/ her work; subsequently, this analysis helps explore the implications that the mediation of the publishing industry has for the consumption of nineteenth-century literature nowadays.

The birth of the modern publishing industry in the nineteenth century systematized the production and circulation of books, and thus contributed to the dissemination of Romantic and Victorian literature during the nineteenth and towards the twentieth and twenty-first century. Moreover, this development established the assembly line that activates the materialization of a literary text into a published book: this line—still at work nowadays—commences with the author, that is, the creator of the literary material who hands it over to the representatives of the publishing industry; with them the text will acquire the form of a book, and consequently be presented to the public, and more specifically to the reader who will consume, interpret, and evaluate its content. Self-evident though it may seem, the intervention of the publishing industry may disconnect the two ends of the line, casting doubt on whether the text written by the author is identical with the text that reaches the reader as a published book. Applied to nineteenth-century literature, this implication creates a contradiction, because it opposes Romantic and Victorian views of authorial agency, and by

extension challenges the contemporary appreciation of nineteenth-century literature which often attributes the text to the genius of a single author. At the same time, however, the potential incompatibility between the author's text and the book's text illuminates nineteenth-century publishing practices that rendered authors and their works vulnerable; for Romanticism, the intervention of the publishing industry draws attention to the movement's most readily identifiable formulaic feature, namely the fragment; for the Victorian era, where literature was largely distributed by means of circulating libraries which conformed to the strict Victorian regime of propriety, it alludes to the practice of censorship.

As manifested in instances of Romantic fragmentation and Victorian censorship, the rise of the publishing industry problematizes the author figure because it questions the validity of perhaps the most solid conviction underlying the reading process; namely that the bearer of the name on the cover of books of—in this case—Romantic or Victorian literature is the text's absolute authority and indisputable instigator of meaning. Consequently, the realization that the literary text reaches the readers having sidestepped not only the author but the editor or publisher as well can in principle vindicate contemporary literary theory's claims against the author as the agent who determines and guides a particular understanding of the text. Nevertheless, as a literary text is always identified by reference to the name of its creator, it is important to take into consideration any views that allow room for the author and enable an approach that regards the text and the construction or interpretation of its meaning as a process of collaboration, rather than competition, between the author and the reader. The reconciliation of these two agents can then provide the ground for the examination of the publishing industry's interference with Romantic fragments on the one hand, and Victorian censored texts on the other, and thus help us reevaluate the premises on which nineteenth-century literature is consumed nowadays: as I argue, Romantic and Victorian authors defy their traditional portrayal as godlike figures, and emerge, alongside the literary text, as social entities whose authorial intent has been influenced by the publishing industry, and whose apprehension and appreciation is eventually achieved through their interaction with the reader.

To begin with, the idea that an agent other than the author provides meaning to a text finds its most ardent expression in poststructuralist criticism, and particularly in Roland Barthes's argument about the death of the author and subsequent birth of the reader. Barthes acknowledges that in the public consciousness the deprivation of the author of any power or control over the text functions abortively for the text's reception and interpretation, because it refutes the readers' sense of communication with the author, and by extension obstructs any connection that readers establish between themselves and the literary work (147). However, this practice reveals a paradoxical approach to literature, in the sense that the reading process cancels literature's most acknowledged and appreciated quality, namely the promotion of imagination. Because, as Barthes explains, "[t]o give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final

signified, to close the writing" (147). The Author here occupies a godlike position in relation to the text, instigating the writing process and having complete authority over it, an assumption that in association with the very nature of the text finalizes but finally limits the range of a work's potential readings.

In this respect, textual elements are "to be *disentangled*," instead of, or perhaps prior to being "*deciphered*," a procedure which is restricted to decoding when executed in line with traditional views on the author (147 italics in the original). For Barthes though, "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination," and this is why he recruits the reader to apprehend the text in its totality, recognizing all the different strands and eventually becoming "that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted" (148 italics in the original). Interestingly, the validity of this argument lies in the quality of the reader as a layperson who does not approach the text by means of any preconceptions or fixed ideas about its creator, and can therefore creatively engage with it: namely, away from the restrictions of biographic reductionism that limits the experience of literature by equating the text's contents with the actual life of the author. And yet, the introduction of the publishing industry's mediations into Barthes's argument reveals a paradox, because any alterations made on the text by editors or publishers are triggered by their function as readers. Consequently, their engagement with the text confirms the power of the reader, but at the same time imposes new limits both on the text and on the author, and reveals that publishing practices manipulate the public's interaction with the published text.

This manipulation can best be understood by examining the figure of the critic who writes *about* the text, and thus has the power to shape the reading public's opinion of the literary work and its creator. Being first and foremost also a reader, but, in fact, always a reader of a published text, the critic, or reviewer, is susceptible to taking at face value the text's content in relation to the author. As Jerome McGann observes in *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, the idea of the author as "the ultimate locus of a text's authority" persists in the field of literary criticism, but is rather problematic precisely because it reduces and tailors the identity of the author to the literary work (81). Consequently, critics fashion and impose "critical identities" over the actual lives of authors, depriving the latter of "the social relationships which gave them their lives (including their 'textual' lives) in the first place, and which sustain them through their future life in society" (81). In this sense, the author that readers familiarize themselves with is introduced by means of the text in an indisputable one-to-one interaction, and as such "is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate" (Barthes 145). Nevertheless, the acknowledgment of the editor or publisher renders the textual birth of the author highly suspect, pointing to the fact that the published text may mislead the reader/critic to fashioning an author figure as imagined by the publishing industry and shaped by its interventions.

On a first level, if the contents of the text do not constitute a passage to the author, then the author, editor, and reader emerge as distinct agents. And yet, it is the various stages that identify a published text as such, namely the production, finalization of form, and reception of the work that can account for the interaction among these agents. In fact, defining in *The Textual Condition* the text as "a social text," namely "produced and reproduced under specific social and institutional conditions" (21), McGann attributes to the author and the reader the task of reflecting the text's social context, either upon its initial production, or upon any subsequent reading across time. In this sense, the "birth of the reader" does not empower this agent "at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes 148), but rather instigates the rebirth of the text as a social product. By extension, the author emerges as a social agent, a representative of a particular context that may then engage in dialogue, comparison, or juxtaposition with the contexts introduced into the text by its readers.

Still, because this interaction between the author and the reader takes place by means of a published text, it is important to consider the crucial, though controversial, role of the publishing industry. In this direction, and enhancing his argument about the social character of the text, McGann notes that

> an author's work possesses autonomy only when it remains an unheard melody. As soon as it begins its passage to publication it undergoes a series of interventions which some textual critics see as a process of contamination, but which may equally well be seen as a process of training the poem [sic] for its appearances in the world.
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> (*A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* 51)

The meaning of this statement alters, of course, according to the point of view adopted; if the publishing industry's modifications are infectious, then the process of publication violates the superior image of the nineteenth-century author, and the published text is inevitably of an inferior quality. If, however, these modifications verify and upgrade the text's social character, then the reader's status as an authoritative figure is asserted, and enriched with the task of imaginatively collaborating not only with the author, but also with the publishing industry's "trainer" for the text's interpretation. McGann's observation reflects the complexity of the interaction among authors, publishers, and readers, and constitutes a solid basis for the following discussion of nineteenth-century fragments and censored texts.

Examining, first of all, the Romantic fragment, it can be argued that the production and reception of this poetic form may in fact encapsulate traditional views of authorial superiority, as well as the complementarity of the author and the reader. In fact, being suggestive of incompleteness, emptiness, and disarray, the fragment appeals to the reader for its restoration; William St Clair talks about readers entitled to "[fill] in the gaps," and subsequently interpret the literary work by means of "their previous base of knowledge and expectations" (4), confirming the

poem's, as well as their own operation within a social context. Similarly, Timothy Bahti assumes that comprehension of a fragmentary poem "[lays] claim to totalization" (1035); it invests, in other words, the text with a sense of completeness. Things are complicated, however, once the production of the fragment emerges as a conscious choice on the part of the poet. F. D. Rauber mentions in fact two nineteenth-century views that principally regard the fragment as an indispensable and de facto indicator of great literature: the first one belongs to Herman Melville who argues that "small erections may be finished by their first architects; grand ones, true ones, ever leave the copestone to posterity" (qtd. in Rauber 217) and thus ensure that both the work and the poet will outlive their time.

A similar view is proposed by Percy Bysshe Shelley, who envisions the fragment as a "necessity" (Rauber 217): "when composition begins," writes Shelley, "inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the Poet" (78). For Shelley then, it is the very act of writing poetry that compromises the imagination of the Romantic poet, trivializes the initial impression, and subsequently forces the poet to leave the work incomplete, in order to prevent it from being disrespectful or inferior to its original stimuli. An interesting example where fragmentation does not require restoration, because it verifies the equation of the fragment with great literature is Byron's most famous fragmentary poem, *The Giaour*. Subtitled *A Fragment of a Turkish Tale*, the poem is conscious of its form, and its publication history highlights Byron's acknowledgment of the fragmentary form's potential for the illustration of the content. As Martin Garrett notes, the poem was published in seven successive editions from June to December 1813, each later edition being significantly longer than the previous one (117); and yet, although Byron essentially composed and enriched the poem gradually, this remains "deliberately fragmentary and unchronological" in terms of structure, so as to weave a veil of mystery around the hero, and effectively convey the impression that it is, in fact, a "compilation of speeches by several different people" (119, 117).[1]

And yet, despite the fact that in *The Giaour* the utilization of the fragmentary form empowers the poet to create an intricate work, the fragment, as discussed by Shelley, eventually allows room for the dismissal of the author. The ends to which Byron employs the fragment are visible in the actual text of *The Giaour,* and in this way deliver the poet's intentions to the reader. However, a poem that has remained fragmented for fear of disrespecting the poet's perception calls

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1. Byron's work included many fragments, of which particularly interesting are the prosaic ones, which can actually be used as supplements either to his work or to that of others. For instance, Garrett mentions "Donna Josepha," an 1817 fragment, which "'may fairly be regarded as a prose sketch' for elements of *DJ* [Don Juan]" (Nicholson qtd. in Garrett 89). Correspondingly, when in 1816 Byron urged Percy, Mary Shelley, and Polidori to "each write a ghost story" (qtd. in Garrett 11), he produced an "untitled fragment" which then constituted the basis for Polidori's novel *The Vampyre* (Garrett 11).

upon the imagination of the reader to reach back to the poet's initial stimuli, and thus attempt to restore their grandeur on the incomplete poem. Similarly, Melville's assertion that the fragment is a "temporary state," "something to be completed in time" (Rauber 217), disconnects the poem from the poet, and opens up the work to a variety of possible completions which remain on an imaginary level if performed by the reader, but may actually modify the text if instigated by the publishing industry.

The implications of this possibility for the text and its author shall now be examined in relation to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who has been characterized as "*the* fragmentary poet of English romanticism" (Bahti 1036 italics in the original) as, with the exception of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner " (1798), his work has remained fragmentary. Unlike Byron, who was frequently involved in the editing stages of his works, and did not hesitate to strongly express his opinion about John Murray's interventions, Coleridge "often left textual matters to others –as in the case of the *Biographia*, which was committed to paper by John Morgan when Coleridge could not bear to hold a pen," as Alison Hickey notes (134). It is possible that the reason behind his work's incompleteness was intended as a depiction of the poet's apprehension of the "fragmentation and conflict involved in everyday experience and social relationships," as David Vallins mentions (5), but the poet's daughter, Sara, attributes in her introduction to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* "the quality of her father's writings [to] his 'deranged' health" (qtd. in Hickey126). In any case, the editing that Coleridge's work demanded proved to be more challenging than the expected arrangement and correction of fragments. When Sara succeeded her late husband as the main editor of her father's works, she was presented with a crucial contradiction: in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge talks about the

> poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. (300 italics in the original)

Coleridge defines the poet as an advocate and agent of unity, and as such as capable of mastering imagination, but his fragmentary legacy fails to address the text as the concrete manifestation of the poet's virtues, and by extension as the channel through which the poet's imagination communicates with the reader's; consequently, Sara's task is transformed, and her objective is to project Coleridge's definition of the poet onto his texts, thus reviving not only the poems, but the poet as well (Hickey 134).

In fact, though it may remain utterly "invisible" and therefore unacknowledged, the importance of Sara's work is validated by its result, namely by the

association of the name "Coleridge" with "S.T. Coleridge as a single author" (133). Managing to "individualize" her father as a poet, Sara's intervention associates Coleridge with the Romantic image of the author as a genius, which was also advocated by Coleridge himself, and in this sense reinstates the importance of the author figure as a lastingly glorified literary convention; at the same time, however, her work proves that it is possible for an author's name to "[em-body] the tension between individual authorship and collaborative textual production" (133). In Coleridge's idiosyncratic example the author emerges as fashioned by the editor, whose valuable work essentially "trains" the text and its creator for their appearance to, and subsequent interaction with the reader.[2] As the editor's intervention is silently absorbed by the poet, the literary work manifests its social character in the interaction between the author and the reader, and therefore does not upset the authority of the published book as a passage towards the author.

Literary authority is further challenged by the more practical, though perhaps more vicious, side of editorial and publishing interventions, namely the market. Already in the Romantic period, the flourishing of the publishing industry resulted in the incorporation of authors "within a commercial system in which they, their advisers, and their publishers attempted to judge what the market wanted and how best to apply it" (St Clair 161). Paradoxically, as Florian Schweizer notes, although eighteenth-century publishers "professionalized the world of letters," "writers were not recognized as professionals," a fact that obviously resulted in them being regarded as inferior or insignificant (117-18), and apparently took its toll on the power that each group exerted over the text. Taking into consideration that many authors, especially in the Victorian era, were struggling to "secure a literary income" (120), their cooperation with the publishing industry would not only involve benign refining; it would also become a compromise that could radically transform the text included in the author's manuscript, and, tailoring it to the market-dictated publisher's tastes, produce a text suitable for publication.

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2. A similar case in point is the Greek national poet Dionysios Solomos. During his life, the poet published only very few of his works, the rest of which remained heavily fragmented. The form in which Solomos's works have been posthumously published belongs entirely to his editor, Iakovos Polylas, whose editorial work essentially created, as Vassilis Lambropoulos notes, "the national poet […] out of scattered fragments" (30). Linos Politis records a characteristic example of the editor's work namely Solomos's poem "Lambros," for whose manuscript Polylas notes that it contained "apart from the poem's actual lines, various drafts and thoughts about the poem written in Italian. From these, I formed the Storyline and ordered the fragments. I translated from Italian [into Greek] everything that could be employed to complement the poem's lines" (qtd. in Politis 349 my translation). Although in this case doubt is cast on whether what is described as Solomos's poetry is actually his, Lambropoulos adds that Polylas's Solomos "has been (and still remains for most of us) the only one possible," precisely because the editor's choices, changes, and arrangements rendered the poet "readable" (40).

This aspect of the publishing industry's growing power is especially evident in cases of literary censorship, which can initially be read as instances of "contamination" for the literary work, precisely because they intend to make profit out of the work, rather than illuminate its quality. An effective example in this respect is presented by the original publication and stage production of Byron's play *Marino Faliero* (1821). In fact, as Thomas L. Ashton observes, although "*Marino Faliero* was written *for* the stage," there is no certainty that indeed "it was *Byron's* drama that eventually reached the stage" (29 italics in the original). Murray feared that the play's "revolutionary politics" would severely affect its theatrical reception, and thus limit the financial success of its publication, a fact that led to the play being scrutinized on the basis of "[p]olitical and moral considerations –Crown, Country, Church, and Chastity," and severely censored (31, 38). The direct impact of the act of censorship on the play's quality is primarily evident in the responses that it triggered: *The Times* wrote on April 26, 1821 that "fragments violently torn from that noble work, were presented" (qtd. in Ashton 42). Similar were the remarks that John Larpent's second wife recorded in her diary, having read both the censored version of *Marino Faliero* that Larpent authorized for production, and a complete version of the play: unsurprisingly perhaps, what she initially found "absurd, heavy, dull" was then replete with "fine ideas […] beautifully expressed" (qtd. in Ashton 44).

Instances of censorship may invariably entail the possibility of compromising the quality of the work, but stage censorship in the Victorian era can actually be read as accentuating the social character of the literary work, proving that it always operates within a social context. More specifically, the theater's relation to politics proves the complex interactions that underlie the Victorian society, as a political play and its treatment by the era's licensing authorities can reflect different appreciations of society, such as the monarchy's desire to preserve the status quo which may oppose the playwright's and the audience's need for change. Indicatively, Dawn S. Bova mentions James Haynes's play *Mary Stuart* (1840), which was authorized for performance after the removal of several passages on the grounds of "political expediency" (168). The play's harsh language against foreigners was seen as destabilizing, because the original performance took place amidst the preparations for Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert; the latter's German origins led to the dissatisfaction of the British, who regarded this marriage as allowing for foreign interference with their affairs (168). Despite the modification of the play, audiences were able to draw parallels between the characters and the forthcoming royal wedding owing to the fact that actor William Charles Macready had "conveniently forgotten to omit several of the officially prohibited passages" in his performance (168-69). Another example where the power of the censors is resisted is William S. Gilbert and Gilbert á Beckett's play *The Happy Land* (1873). What is particularly striking here is the fact that once Gilbert ensured authorization for performance, he altered the text's acceptable "general satire into specific and pointed criticisms of the English government" (115). The audience enjoyed the performance, but since Queen Victo-

ria's son, Edward, read the play as condemning his mother's government, the performances were suspended and were allowed to resume only on condition that they would exclusively produce the censored version; the authors complied, but proceeded with publishing the complete version of the play, where they capitalized, and thus highlighted, all censored parts (115-16).

Furthermore, acts of theatrical censorship prove the authorities' concerns about the preservation of social norms and moral standards, as it becomes evident with Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). After several months of successful performances the play was banned from the stage due to the revelation of Wilde's relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, which led the playwright to trial and incarceration (124). The scandal forcefully impacted on the play which was now read "as a metaphor for Wilde's moral delinquency," and as such as an attack on the valued Victorian notion of propriety (Bova 125). Interestingly, although the ban on *The Importance of Being Earnest* reduces the play to its author's life, the absence of an alternative, in the sense of acceptable or appropriate, version of the play, proves that the author remains in charge of the text's meaning; Wilde, who frequently attacked Victorian norms and standards, employs his play in order to present a suppressed, though still existent, aspect of the Victorian society. Thus, in retrospect it becomes clear that he exposes the hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness of his contemporary social context, which are, of course, further accentuated by the very act of censorship on the play.

Even though deferred, the play's withdrawal from public life proves that literary censorship in the Victorian era was a social phenomenon. However, more characteristic are the cases where literary texts were censored before publication, owing to the main modes of literature's dissemination; namely, the circulating libraries and serial publication which mirror the era's attachment to propriety, as well as the systematization of the publishing industry and the literary market. To be more precise, the circulating libraries are closely associated with the assumption that censorship was necessitated by the increase of female readers ever since the eighteenth century (St Clair 10). As Gail Cunningham observes, the novel emerged in the Victorian era as the dominant literary genre, and, being immediately related to "life," without poetry or drama's intervention of form, it largely appealed to a female audience (93, 95). This readership, however, was, as Troy J. Bassett notes, "in constant danger of being corrupted or undermined by outside forces such as novels," because women were uneducated, inexperienced, easily manipulated, and regarded as "sexually innocent" in accordance with Victorian ideals of femininity (77). Hence, novels had to assume a protective function, and were therefore under "[e]xtreme circumspection […] often with ludicrous results": several Victorian critics accused *Jane Eyre*'s (1847) protagonist of "coarseness," and Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) had to be "condemned as a neglectful mother, adulteress and, possibly, a murderer," in order to ensure that the respective novels would convey an "appropriate moral lesson" (Cunningham 95-96).

Motivated by this obsession with morals, the circumspection of novels eventually became the task of the circulating libraries which bought the three-volume-versions of published novels, closely examined the text before proceeding with a purchase, and rejected novels that were not deemed "safe for family consumption" (Bassett 78). However, it is worth noting at this point that even novels published in a single-volume format had to conform to the standards set by these libraries. This becomes evident in the reviews that followed the publication of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847): the novel escaped censorship or alteration, but as Miriam Allott reports, the great majority of reviewers ardently condemned it, deeming, for example, the plot "too coarse and disagreeable to be attractive" (*Spectator* qtd. in Allott 39), or even urging readers to "burn *Wuthering Heights*" as was the case with the American *Paterson's Magazine* in 1848 (qtd. in Allott 50). Even *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* which published an overall positive review that concluded with a recommendation, eventually warned the readers that there is "great power in this book, but it is a powerless power" due to the lack of a straightforward moral (qtd. in Allott 44).

Wuthering Heights presents a case where readers will ultimately determine the acceptance or condemnation of the literary text, but the solid presence of the circulating libraries in the dissemination of literature reopens the debate around the manipulation of meaning, and complicates the motives for acts of censorship. In fact, women's protection from indecent publications was merely the pretext concealing the financial criteria by means of which the circulating libraries, and most notably Mudie's Select Library, became the "unofficial censors" in the Victorian era (Bassett 78). This close relationship between economics and the distribution of literature is particularly exemplified in the case of George Moore's novel *A Modern Lover* (1883): although in contemporary reviews the novel was acquitted of immorality, Mudie's rejected the novel on this exact charge, condemning therefore its commercial success, since three-volume novels were not widely affordable (74-75). Hence, when Moore visited Mudie personally on the matter, he left the librarian with the warning that "[m]y next novel will be issued at a popular price … I will appeal to the public" (qtd. in Bassett 75). Self-evidently, the Victorian era greeted a closer collaboration between libraries and publishers, the latter becoming more and more skeptical and reluctant towards publishing "any book that the libraries might refuse to buy, refuse to circulate, or return after complaints. In turn, authors, either by choice or necessity, accommodated their works to their publishers' and libraries' requirements" (78). The author then, who in a Victorian context is basically understood as a novelist, was transformed into an agent that, as Richard Salmon notes, oscillated between "the ideal and the material; between the consecrated ground of the 'poet-prophet' and the disenchanted world of print culture" (136).

In this sense, the Victorian author emerges as a representative of the social reality in which s/he operates, reflecting the fact that instances of censorship could shape not only literary trends and careers, but the entire lifestyle of the

Victorians. As John Stuart Mill insightfully observed in his essay "On Liberty" (1859):

> In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest, every one lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others, but in what concerns themselves, the individual or the family, do not ask themselves –what do I prefer? or, what would suit my character and disposition? or what would allow the best and highest in me to have fair play, and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? (70)

For literature, this view is best expressed when considering the role of the Victorian author in relation to the other major form of dissemination, namely serial publication. As novels appeared in sequences, editors and publishers used the intervals between successive issues to observe and interpret the readers' responses, subsequently urging authors to manipulate the development of the plot accordingly, so as to ensure commercial success (Cunningham 97). Thus, the Victorian publishing industry fashioned a new, more professionalized identity for the author which is indeed closer to the contemporary image of the author, and to the largely profit-oriented production of literature; at the same time though, it proves how the transformation of the creative individual into an employee of the publishing industry functioned restrictively for literature, forcing imagination into narrow moulds, and imposing "a form of guilty self-censorship" on authors (97).

Thomas Hardy constitutes an interesting example in this respect, because his attitude towards the publication of his novels incorporates both the influence of the publishing industry, and the resistance of the author. Hardy would often modify his novels by altering or deleting improper scenes, as it is the case with *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), for example, so as to ensure serial publication. At the same time though he would venture for single-volume publications that would allow him to present his works as he originally intended to (95, 98).[3] This, however, was not the case with Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860-61); as Philip V. Allingham observes, when the novel's serial publication was reaching its end the author was urged, and obviously persuaded, by his friend Edward Bulwer to dismiss his intended "(unhappy) ending," and provide instead the "romantic closure" that is widely recognized as the novel's finale. Interestingly, this inconsistency between Dickens's intention and the published

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3. As Andrew Nash remarks, for *Tess of the Urbervilles* Hardy produced "a bowdlerized version that ran in the *Graphic* form July to December 1891" (47). Similarly, the conception and writing of *Jude the Obscure* (1895) was "undertaken with two versions of the text and two audiences in mind," namely a bowdlerized serial version, and a complete one for a single-volume publication (48).

version of *Great Expectations* has recently been accentuated on occasion of a 2011 edition that prints the novel's manuscript. As Alison Flood remarks, this "facsimile" version discloses the author's revisions, whereas "the last page […] reveals part of Dickens's original ending to the novel, in four lines crossed out by the author." Manifesting the acceptance of Bulwer's suggestion, the manuscript may on a first level compromise Dickens's authority, but the very fact that the author crossed out the original ending indicates that Dickens consciously altered the course of his story, in order to produce an ending that would please his readers.

As I have tried to show in this paper, instances of fragmentation and censorship in Romantic and Victorian literature highlight the complex interactions between authors, publishers, and readers, and therefore call for a reconsideration of the question: do the interventions of the publishing industry corrupt or educate the literary work and its author? In light of the preceding discussion, it can be argued, first of all, that the presence of the publishing industry is indispensable, precisely because its primary function is to make the text available to the public, and thus enable its interaction with the reader. Subsequently, the acknowledgement of the fact that the publishing industry may have intervened with the author's intentions can account for the need to examine whether the published, and the originally produced version of the text are identical. Access to the author's manuscripts may prove particularly valuable in this case, as it can, in principle, directly juxtapose the author's text to the published book. There can be, however, no certainty that manuscripts are in fact available at all; and if they are, they might have acquired over time value equivalent to museum exhibits, a factor which may restrict or impede accessibility; they might be illegible and therefore at parts inconclusive about the original text; and they might even be compromising the author's artistry, as it could be the case with authors such as Coleridge.

And yet, any indication or proof that Romantic fragments and Victorian censored texts expose the workings of the publishing industry and, therefore, obscure the intentions of the author, can be merely informative, because it cannot interfere with the content of the published book. It becomes, thus, clear that authors are essentially approached and constructed inductively, namely via the published text, both within the more theoretical field of literary criticism, and in terms of actual reading practices. Examining then how nineteenth-century publishing practices can inform the consumption of Romantic and Victorian literature in our day, it can be argued, first of all, that they reevaluate the notion of authorship; they dismiss it as single, and expand it to embrace all those agents who have contributed to the formation of the text that became a book. Furthermore, the very act of reading, and any textual analysis that follows are enriched by means of a hypothesis that speculates on how the text's meaning would have altered if it had been published as the author intended. Interestingly, however, the significance of the reader and the authority s/he can exert over the text are retained even when traditional reading patterns are adopted; when, in other words, the book is regarded as strongly associating the author's name with the title, and by

extension with the text found in its pages. Communicating to the reading public an instance of publishing intervention, *Great Expectations* aptly demonstrates both possibilities; because eventually it will be the readers who will decide whether they will venture for the facsimile edition that may enrich or totally transform their experience of the text, or whether they will settle for the standard, published version and its happy ending.

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