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Assuming the role of editor

From soliciting articles, managing a magazine's finances and employees, and overseeing production, to maintaining a house style, proof-reading articles, providing contributions, and corresponding with readers, an editor's responsibilities were complex and varied across different sectors of the press. The term "editor" itself only came to imply what this chapter addresses as its primary meaning – the conducting of a newspaper or periodical – early in the nineteenth century. Before 1800, an editor was someone who published or prepared the work of other writers, and such work is, of course, part of a newspaper or magazine editor's remit. After 1800, the meaning of editorship, always elastic, might encompass roles that included financial investment, social networking, and the use of business skills as well as literary acumen.

Throughout the nineteenth century, however, many of the qualities of good editorship were characterized as masculine. Books and articles advising young women journalists how to succeed in the industry almost universally assume that the editor of periodicals (and other publications) will be a man. In *Journalism for Women: A Practical Guide* (1898), Arnold Bennett suggests that young women writers should "resolve to see your editor face to face" because it will be more difficult for him to say no "especially to a woman."¹ Even the female writer Frances Power Cobbe, while encouraging women to take up journalism, makes the same assumption. She cautions that "the disappointment and worry to an editor of erratic attendance and imperfect work must be enough to disgust a man with female contributors once and forever."²

Even so, editing was in many ways well suited to the careers of women of letters in the Victorian period. Editing a magazine, unlike practicing a traditional profession – for instance, law and medicine, from which women were still chiefly excluded – could be carried out in domestic spaces or alongside familial duties. Rachel Beer (1858–1927), for example, often edited the *Sunday Times* (1821–) newspaper from her home in Mayfair in

the mid-1890s, and Ellen Wood (1814–87) edited and wrote much of the *Argosy* (1865–1901) confined to her invalid setting. Editing could also be combined with other jobs, and working methods could be tailored to an individual woman's needs. One contributor was surprised at being summoned to see Charlotte Riddell (1832–1906) at her husband's shop where she was "engaged in making out invoices" for his business while conducting her editorial work for *St James's Magazine* (1861–1900).³ Some female editors adopted more professional spaces for their work. Henrietta Stannard (1856–1911) produced *Golden Gates* (1892–95, renamed *Winter's Weekly*) from her office in Fleet Street, and the Langham Place Group had its own lively central London offices, which included a reading room and meeting spaces. Thinking about female editorship requires a relatively fluid understanding of professionalism in which the commercial and the social are interwoven.

If editors carried out multiple and shifting roles, how might we begin to further investigate female editorship in the Victorian period? What motivated women writers to assume editorial positions? How did women make and maintain networks of contributors – in the same way as men or differently – through family, friendship, and professional connections? Was the female editor, sometimes called an "editress," exposed to different expectations from her male counterparts? Was she more likely to work in a niche market of the press than to edit a magazine or newspaper aimed at a general readership? Perhaps most problematic for the scholar is a question that applies both to male and female editorships: how to uncover editorial practices that are often concealed beneath the finish of a published magazine or newspaper. Publisher's archives, editorial correspondence, and the visible work of editors (opening remarks, editorials, reviews, and answers to correspondents) all help the modern scholar reconstitute the work of the editor, but such sources are not always available. The editorial correspondence of a canonical male author such as Charles Dickens is much more likely to have been kept and catalogued than that of a little remembered female editor working in a specialist area of the press, such as Mary Anne Hearne (1834–1909) of the evangelical weekly *Sunday School Times* (1860–1925). Despite these difficulties, piecing together editorial activities, policies, and methods is worthwhile as it helps modern scholars understand a periodical's goals and ideological position, for which the editor is ultimately responsible. In attempting to address these questions, this chapter introduces some classifications of editorship – celebrity, political, and collaborative – that aim to give a sense of the multiple ways in which women navigated this significant and complex role in the literary landscape of nineteenth-century Britain.

Celebrity and author-editors

The Victorian period saw many celebrity writers take on editorships: Frederick Marryat with the *Metropolitan* (1831–50), Charles Dickens with *Household Words* (1850–59) and *All the Year Round* (1859–95), W. M. Thackeray with the *Cornhill* (1860–1975), and women such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835–1915) with *Belgravia* (1867–99), Anna Maria Hall (1800–81) with *St James's Magazine* (1861–1900), and Florence Marryat (Frederick's daughter, 1833–99) with *London Society* (1872–98). In different ways, author-editors such as these bolstered their literary profile, decided what material would best complement their own work, and usually gained monetarily either directly through an editorial salary or by boosting the earnings from the serial (and later volume) editions of their novels.

The longest-serving novelist-editor of the nineteenth century was Charlotte Yonge (1823–1901), a woman who was not interested in celebrity for its own sake but for what it could do to help promote her Tractarian belief in the importance of the established Protestant church. She launched her *Monthly Packet* in 1851 and stayed in the editorial chair for thirty-nine years. When Yonge's early novel became a best seller on publication in 1853, she soon capitalized on her newfound fame by asserting that the *Packet* was edited by "the author of *The Heir of Redclyffe*" (Yonge officially revealed her name as editor in 1881, but readers would have known her identity much earlier). Yonge's celebrity was characterized by the creation of a direct and even intimate relationship between herself and her readers. Unlike many literary celebrities, she did not move to London or attend fashionable parties. Her life revolved around her writing and her parish duties, and she used her magazine to reach out to girls and young women across the country living similar lives. This sympathetic principle comes through clearly in the editorial introduction to the *Monthly Packet*:

It has been said that every one forms their own character between the ages of fifteen and five-and-twenty, and this Magazine is meant to be in some degree a help to those who are thus forming it, not as a guide, since that is the part of deeper and graver books, but as a companion in times of recreation, which may help you to perceive how to bring your religious principles to bear upon your daily life, may show you the examples, both good and evil, of historical persons, and may tell you of the workings of God's providence both here and in other lands.⁴

By framing this highly companionate prefatory piece as an "Introductory Letter," Yonge encourages a sense of dialogue between reader and editor, a sense that would be confirmed by the "Notices to Correspondents" on the

last page of each issue, which offers a monthly reminder that correspondence is valued and responded to. Features such as the long-running “Conversations on the Catechism” or “Aunt Louisa’s Travels” continue the dialogic tone of a friend, mentor, or female relation. The first features a “Miss O” guiding, questioning, answering, and encouraging her pupils Helena, Audrey, and Mary in their religious enquiries; it is easy to imagine Yonge drawing on her own role as Sunday-school teacher while writing these features.

Within a short time of taking up her editorship, Yonge also assumed the role of literary mentor to many young women ambitious to become women of letters like her. She fostered a generation of contributors to the *Monthly Packet* by acting as “Mother Goose” for a young women’s writing society and helping them produce their own manuscript magazine entitled *The Barnacle*. Christabel Coleridge was one of the “goslings” who developed into Yonge’s protégée and later coeditor. She summarizes Yonge’s qualities as an editor:

I think her relation to us precisely exemplified that in which she stood to numberless other girls and young women who only knew her through her writings. The pleasure she took in all that pleased us, the guidance she gave without seeming to preach, the enthusiasm with which we regarded her, also inspired her readers and made them all her life a circle of friends.⁵

Key to her longevity was this sense that readers of the *Monthly Packet* felt as if they knew Yonge personally and were encouraged by the moral guidance and educational direction she offered. Aligning the magazine so closely with her own moral values and religious persuasions meant that the magazine, despite making some modernizing changes under new editorship, could survive only briefly without Yonge at the helm.

It was not just novelists but poets, too, who created celebrity through editorship or capitalized on their existing literary fame. Editorship of the expensive and lavishly illustrated early Victorian annuals was often reserved for literary celebrities, often female poets. Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–38), Caroline Norton (1808–77), Louisa Henrietta Sheridan (?–1841), and the Countess of Blessington (1789–1849) are notable examples. The Countess of Blessington had become famous when her memoir *Conversations with Lord Byron* was released in 1834, capitalizing on his notoriety and bringing her into the social and literary spotlight. She edited both *The Keepsake* (1827–56) and *The Book of Beauty* (1833–47) for several years and contributed widely to other periodical publications. The first *Book of Beauty* she edited in

1834 featured her own portrait as its frontispiece. This clever move by Charles Heath, her publisher, created a strong link between the title, the new editor, and an image of beautiful, feminine gentility, which catered to the aspirations of its mostly female readers. But the Countess of Blessington was not just a figurehead editor; she contributed much poetry to the annuals she edited, and she relied on the remuneration she received as editor to alleviate financial difficulties. The Countess of Blessington's celebrity status, along with her impeccable social skills, helped her acquire many sought-after writers. She entertained potential contributors personally at her dinners and soirées. The poet Thomas Moore found it hard to resist an invitation to contribute to one of her publications despite his horror of "*Albumizing, Annualizing, and Periodicalizing*": "When persons like you condescend so to ask, how are poor poets to refuse?"⁶ Even when requesting contributors to make changes, she managed to soothe their egos. Frederick Marryat's acquiescence equates her genteel femininity with her editorial expertise: "you may alter it [his story] in any way you think fit, as you have a nicer sense of what a lady will object to, than a rough animal like me."⁷ Her editorial influence extended to female writers also; fellow editors Anna Maria Hall and Letitia Elizabeth Landon attest their willingness to produce their best work for an editor who balances high professional standards with elegant sociability.⁸

Several women writers used the currency of their well-known names to link to their own magazines. *Mrs Ellis' Morning Call* (1850–52) provided further definition and exemplification of respectable female conduct, albeit in less didactic terms than publications such as *The Women of England* (1839) that had made Sarah Stickney Ellis (1799–1872) famous. Later in the century, the novelist Annie Swan (1859–1943) lent her name to the subtitle of *Woman at Home: Annie S. Swan's Magazine* (1893–1920), although her publication reflects more visibly than Ellis's the conflict inherent in a professional female editor advising women readers that domestic duties should surmount all others. The pulling power of an editor's name might trouble social conventions, too. Eliza Cook capitalized on her enormous popularity as a poet to launch *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849–54) with the aim of educating and empowering men and women of the working classes. Henrietta Stannard, who served as the first president of the Society of Women Journalists, used her celebrity pseudonym as the writer John Strange Winter to raise issues of gender equality in *Winter's Weekly*. Strong ideological convictions were often a prerequisite for female editors in a competitive publishing world in which periodicals might struggle to survive without a truly committed editor.

Political editorships

Membership in a political or activist group often presented opportunities for women to extend their personal convictions through editorship. Groups campaigning for sanitary reform, suffrage, and educational or employment opportunities often founded their own publications to promulgate their activities. Clementina Black (1853–1922), for example, worked for the Women’s Industrial Council, which in turn led her to become editor of its *Women’s Industrial News* (1895–1919), a magazine reporting on conditions in women’s work and campaigning for unionization, fair pay, and a minimum wage. Josephine Butler (1828–1906) took on several editorships associated with her reformist projects including the *Shield* (1870–1933) in connection with her campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act and *Dawn* (1888–96), the publication of the General Federation for the Abolition of the State Regulation of Vice. Editors of these kinds of magazines often enjoyed the advantage of working with like-minded individuals for a target audience whose preferences in their reading material could, to some extent, be predicted by their political bent. But editors of specialized political magazines also faced the challenges of small circulation and could rarely attract prestigious contributors with high fees, having instead to rely on the variable talents of their colleagues and friends. The editors of political magazines seldom came from literary or publishing backgrounds; they had to learn the working practices of editorship on the job, and they worked with the reward of reform rather than remuneration in mind. Lydia Becker’s (1827–90) commitment to suffrage for women was expressed not only in her co-founding and editing of the *Women’s Suffrage Journal* (1870–90) but also her frequent subsidies that kept the publication afloat.

Eliza Sharples (1803–52), perhaps the earliest politically active woman editor, was committed to conveying her radical ideas to the widest possible audience. To that end, the “Discourse[s]” on subjects such as “A View of the Existing Human Mind” that opened each issue of her *Isis* (1832) were also delivered as lectures at the Rotunda, an important meeting place for freethinkers of all kinds in London. Sharples’s social, political, and religious reformism chimed precisely with those of her lover Richard Carlile, whose work she continued while he was imprisoned for publishing Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason*. Another early political editor, Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781–1857), was much less likely to demonstrate her ideological commitments through ardent editorial polemics. Instead, when she took over editorship of the reformist *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* (1832–61) in 1834, she expressed her convictions on class reform and gender equality by encouraging contributions from the artisan classes and from female writers such as Mary Russell Mitford and Eliza Meteyard.

The *Westminster Review* (1824–1919), another distinguished reformist publication, similarly benefited from the hard work of a female editor, Marian Evans (1819–80), before her career as the novelist George Eliot began. Evans did the majority of the editorial work between late 1851 and 1854, although her friend and publisher John Chapman was the official editor at mid-century. Working on the review, Evans associated with reformers and intellectuals during the early 1850s and sought contributions from such stars as Harriet Martineau, J. S. Mill, and the Italian political exile Giuseppe Mazzini, writing to a friend in January 1852, “We are trying Mazzini on Freedom V. Despotism.”⁹ These writers, and others like them, were in sympathy with the *Westminster*’s political perspective; all could have sold their contributions for greater remuneration to other publications but chose the *Westminster* because of its political goals. Evans herself worked for nothing while staying in Chapman’s house on the Strand in London, something of a social hub for liberal intellectuals and women activists such as Barbara Leigh-Smith, who later helped found the Langham Place Group. Despite working without remuneration, Evans took the job very seriously, “stamping with rage” at typographical errors and offering Chapman detailed advice on all aspects of the periodical’s production from its prospectus onward.¹⁰ She did not, however, have control of the review’s finances and sometimes found Chapman’s disorganized business practices frustrating. Evans left the editorship in 1854 (to spend time in Germany with G. H. Lewes) but continued writing for the *Westminster* while her career as a novelist began to blossom. Editorship of a reformist magazine introduced the writer to people and ideas she may not otherwise have encountered.

Evans’s experience put her in a position to proffer advice when members of the Langham Place Group began their own periodical publications. She suggested to Bessie Parkes, editor of the *English Woman’s Journal* (1858–64), that “the more business you get into the Journal . . . and the *less literature* the better.”¹¹ The *English Woman’s Journal* did contain some literary content, whereas its successors, the *Englishwoman’s Review* (initially edited by Jessie Boucherett, 1866–1910) and the *Victoria Magazine* (edited by Emily Davies and Emily Faithfull, 1863–80), took oppositional opinions on the compatibility of entertainment and serious-minded reformism. Although none of these publications was the official journal of a specific reform organization, the Langham Place Group had links with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences, the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women, and the Female Middle Class Emigration Society. Meetings and activities of these organizations were reported in Langham Place productions, particularly in the *Englishwoman’s Review*, and because they shared offices, opportunities for

personal interactions between activist readers and editors arose. “A Woman’s Struggles: the True Account of an American Shorthand Writer” is prefaced by a headnote from the editor that gives a sense of an open and sympathetic editorial policy:

[Its writer] called at this office, and in the course of conversation gave a rapid sketch of her early difficulties. We urged our visitor to allow us to publish it in the *Victoria Magazine*, believing it impossible to estimate the good sometimes achieved by the simple narrative of another person’s persistent courage and ultimate success in some new business or profession.¹²

Emily Davies (1830–1921), at work on the *English Woman’s Journal* in the 1860s, however, found it less easy to find contributions. Letters to colleagues express her anxieties about the journal’s financial situation, which forced her to find a large percentage of the magazine’s content from contributors willing to write without remuneration. Other such financial difficulties pressed on the editorial team of the *English Woman’s Journal*; when it ceased publication, Davies worked instead on the *Victoria Magazine*, a vehicle that she and Emily Faithfull conceived as more likely to make a profit by giving its readers popular literature, as did the shilling monthlies with which they were competing.

This activist route had, by the end of the century, become a relatively well-trodden pathway into editorship for politicized women of the middle and upper classes – representing a trend of increasing importance for professional women. When Annie Besant (1847–1933) wrote to Charles Bradlaugh’s *National Reformer* (1860–91) seeking further information on the National Secular Society after losing her Christian faith, she set herself on a trajectory toward political editorship. On their first meeting, Bradlaugh saw that Besant was a committed reformer and encouraged her writing for the magazine. In her autobiography, she tells us that from 1877 until Bradlaugh’s death in 1891, she subedited “so as to free him from all the technical trouble and the weary reading of copy, and for part of this period was also co-editor.”¹³ Both Bradlaugh and Besant tied their publishing work to a dynamic activism that involved relentless speaking at institutions and lecture halls around the country. The two strands of her political career, she believed, worked together: “The written and the spoken word start forces none may measure, set working brain after brain, influence numbers unknown to the forthgiver of the word, work for good or for evil all down the stream of time.”¹⁴

When Besant became a socialist in 1887, however, she created an ideological rift between herself and her coeditor and recognized that she would need to sacrifice her editorial role for the *Reformer* to avoid the

“inconvenience and uncertainty that result from the divided editorial policy of this paper on the question of Socialism.”¹⁵ Besant continued to write for the *National Reformer*, but she developed another editorial outlet that, although published from the same offices, was under her sole charge and could therefore more fully reflect her changing political convictions. In its early issues, *Our Corner*, a 6d magazine, was less radical in tone than audiences might have expected from Besant. Its sixty or so pages of content and illustrations contained much that was similar to many of the nonpolitical family monthly magazines available in the 1880s; it even set out a series of domestic features such as the “Gardening Corner,” “Chess Corner,” and “Young Folks Corner,” which addressed themselves to special interests within the family group. By the last two or three years of publication, however, Besant’s socialism had crystallized, and this commitment comes across much more strongly as the editorial underpinning of the magazine. The general interest and domestic features disappear to be replaced by verbatim reports of socialist lectures by activists such as Sidney Webb, articles such as “Comtism from a Secularist Point of View” and “The Transition to Social Democracy,” and prospectuses for the Fabian Society. The five-year run of the magazine tracks its editor’s shifting political convictions, although Bradlaugh himself remained a stalwart contributor.

Collaborative editors

In many ways, any and every editor is a collaborative worker. Thinking about editorship (and the production of periodicals more generally) as a collaborative process enables us to reconsider the sense of hierarchy that is often implied by the idea of single editors and their stable of contributors. Yet marital and maternal relationships were the basis for many strong editorial partnerships during the nineteenth century. Margaret Gatty (1809–73) was editor of the juvenile periodical *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (1866–85), and her children, Juliana and Horatia, acted as contributors before assuming joint editorship at her death. Their first issue is touchingly prefaced by an endorsement of their mother’s editorial principles, which they “have endeavoured to follow ... throughout these pages, in the service of those young readers whom she delighted to teach and to amuse.”¹⁶ Margaret and Beatrice de Courcy were another mother and daughter editorial partnership behind the *Ladies Cabinet of Fashion, Music and Romance* (1832–70), of which they were also the main contributors. One of the best-known editing teams of the nineteenth century was Samuel and Isabella Beeton (1836–65) who coedited the very successful *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* (1852–79) alongside their other publishing enterprises.

Some collaborations and networks seem rather nepotistic. For example, when Mary Cowden-Clark (1809–98) took up editorship of the *Musical Times* (1844–) in 1853, she was taking control of a journal founded by her brother, J. Alfred Novello. Her work was also closely connected to that of her husband, Charles Cowden-Clarke, who briefly edited the *Musical World*, published by Mary's father, the musician Vincent Novello. These sorts of familial arrangements were not unusual, and nepotism was a general feature of the press, regardless of gender. The long-running and influential *Blackwood's Magazine*, for example, passed its editorship down the male line throughout the century, precluding the possibility that the prolific and loyal contributor Margaret Oliphant be given editorial responsibility for a major, general-readership magazine that she sought. For one unconnected writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*, purporting to give "The Experiences of a Woman Journalist," the insularity of the press debarred her entry entirely. Every editor she approached "had relatives and friends and fellow-workers of their own, ready and willing to take anything they had to offer. Why should they bother about outsiders?"¹⁷

But collaborative editorship could also be a valuable means by which women entered into editorial positions and wielded literary control. Looking back on their literary lives after his wife's death, Samuel Carter Hall actively emphasizes the closely entwined nature of his work with Anna Maria Hall:

It is not easy for me to separate that which concerns her from that which belongs to me. We were so thoroughly one in all our pursuits, occupations, pleasures, and labours . . . producing our books not in the same room, but always under the same roof, communicating one with the other as to what should be or should not be done . . . It is no wonder that I find it difficult to separate her from me or me from her.¹⁸

Both husband and wife held several editorial roles: they coedited the *Spirit and Manners of the Age* (1826–29, continuing as the *British Magazine*, 1830), and Anna Maria Hall controlled a number of annuals and periodicals as solo editor, including *Finden's Tableaux* (1837), the *Juvenile Forget Me Not* (1826–34), *Sharpe's London Magazine* (1845–70) in the 1850s, and *St James's Magazine* in the 1860s. Nonetheless, in his memoir Samuel Carter Hall somewhat patronizingly credits himself for finding his wife's talent and providing her with an outlet for much of her early writing in his many editorial projects. He also places himself as her ultimate editor, suggesting that "whatever she wrote she rarely read after it was written, leaving it entirely for me to prepare it for the printer and revise proofs, never thinking to question my judgement as to any erasure or addition I might make."¹⁹

Anna Maria Hall's own writing often seeks to place her husband as a significant authority at the expense of her own fame, although we do get the occasional glimpse of disharmony between the two. She tells us,

I can also remember, how fearful my husband was that literature—its care, its claims, and its fame—would unfit me for the duties which every woman is bound to consider only next to those she owes her Maker. I daresay I was a little puffed up at first, but happily for myself, and for those who had near and dear claims upon my love and labour, I very soon held my responsibilities as an author second to my duties as a woman; they 'dovetailed' charmingly, and I have never found the necessary change to domestic from literary care, though sometimes laborious, not only heartfelt, but pleasant.²⁰

Anna Maria Hall's emphasis on her domesticity was not just a sop to please a husband anxious to assert his authority over their marital and professional lives. It was a strategic tactic in the publishing industry that highlighted her domesticity to readers to reassure them that her editorial priorities were compatible with those of wife and mother. In the introduction to the first volume of *Sharpe's London Magazine*, she not only affirms the excellence of the contributions and the magazine's good value but also states: "The Editor would entreat the attention of Parents to the fact that she watches every page with minute care, so that nothing can creep in that may not be read aloud in the domestic circle."²¹ Here, and elsewhere in her editorial introductions, Anna Maria Hall places herself in a network of cooperative relations (with coeditors, contributors, publishers, and crucially readers). She does not wish to be seen as an editor functioning alone from the top.

Although Anna Maria Hall was not a supporter of women's rights, the content of her journals frequently undermines any anxiety we might notice about professional female authority. She frequently sought to represent female capability and cooperation in her magazines. For example, in her own novel *Can Wrong be Right?*, (serialized in *St James's Magazine*, 1861–62) the young heroine is beautiful, but her poor schoolmaster father refuses to let her rely on her feminine attractions, arguing,

I would give every girl a trade, a pursuit—yes, I would to the highest lady give what she can proudly rest upon, and say, "By *this* I can live—*this* art can save me, if the world goes mad, as it has done often . . . by **THIS** I can stand, and save myself from the degradation of want or dependence."²²

This message is replicated in nonfiction pieces such as "Something of What Florence Nightingale Has Done and Is Doing," which argues that for women, as for men, "The first great principle of nature is **WORK**."²³ Perhaps most importantly, Anna Maria Hall followed these principles in

her encouragement of younger women authors and editors. She provided valuable training for Mary Elizabeth Braddon, who went on to edit the shilling monthly *Belgravia*, and for Charlotte Riddell, with whom she jointly edited *St James's* for the final year of her editorship before Riddell took full control and proprietorship in 1868.

Mary Howitt (1799–1888) took collaborative editorship even further than the Halls, coediting *Howitt's Journal* (1847–48) with her husband and involving their entire family in its production. Writing to her sister just before the first issue appeared, she describes the plurality of the magazine's production and the harmonious familial excitement it has engendered: "We are very, very busy, as on the 1st January comes out our *own Howitt's Journal* . . . we are all in high spirits; and it is perfectly cheering to see how warm and enthusiastic people are about our journal."²⁴ Husband and wife wrote and solicited contributions while also arranging production and distribution; their daughter Anna Mary provided some of the illustrations for *Howitt's*; and Mary Howitt used her regular feature "The Child's Corner" to chronicle the early lives of her own younger children. Linda Peterson sees these examples of collaboration as part of Howitt's attempt to "re-envision collaborative work and create a new kind of writing project that could encompass every family member."²⁵

Conclusion

The historical evidence shows that it was, then, feasible for women of letters to inhabit the role of editor while shaping it to suit their own working practices, ethics, and ideological commitments. Women editors of the nineteenth century were strategic operators in a shifting landscape of annuals, periodicals, and newspapers. All competed for an expanding base of potential readers and needed to keep pace with developments in technology and communications that were changing the shape of the publishing industry. These women made choices about how best to use any status they had; how to express literary, political, or religious convictions to their readers; and how to go about the daily work of editing to ensure a publication's success (whether we attempt to gauge success in terms of sales, longevity, or influence). Irrespective of such measures, an editor's choices affected the ways in which texts and images in their publications were received and understood by their readers.

Editors used their magazines to help make abstract concepts or identities concrete to their readerships: what it was to be Tractarian in one's religious beliefs, what it was to abandon religion altogether, how one might turn political convictions into actions, or what being a leisured lady of the middle

classes involved. But even with a periodical that had a coherent editorial policy and a relatively homogeneous readership, as with Yonge and her *Monthly Packet*, the periodical editor was always working within an ultimately miscellaneous format. For the modern scholar, the tensions and inconsistencies that sometimes spring from an editor's selections are as important as any attempts at uniformity; indeed, such ideological tensions are part of what makes periodicals interesting and worthy objects of study. As we have seen, editors always worked in networks and often occupied other literary positions, and the content they were editing linked outward from serial novels or individual poems to volume editions, from reviews to the books reviewed, and from the current issue to the next week's, month's, or year's. Exploring the work of a female editor will always open up new connections within the Victorian literary landscape and lead to unexpected avenues of research. As Besant suggested, editors spark interests and ideas; the best of them feed and shape those interests for their readers over periods of months and years, while simultaneously listening to what readers themselves want from the Victorian press.

NOTES

1. Arnold Bennett, *Journalism for Women: A Practical Guide* (London and New York: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1898), p. 76.
2. Frances Power Cobbe, "Journalism as a Profession for Women," *Women's Penny Paper* 1 (1888), 5.
3. *Memoirs of Sir Wemyss Reid*, ed. Stuart Reid (London: Cassell & Co, 1905), p. 141.
4. Charlotte Yonge, "Introductory Letter," *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church* 1:1 (January 1851), i-ii.
5. Christabel Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1903), p. 203.
6. *The Literary Life and Correspondence of The Countess of Blessington*, 3 vols., ed. R. R. Madden (London: T. C. Newby, 1855), vol. 1, p. 296. Emphasis in original.
7. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 226.
8. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 229; vol. 2, pp. 304-5.
9. George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, [January 21, 1852], *The George Eliot Letters*, 6 vols., ed. Gordon Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) vol. 2, p. 5.
10. George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, [September 1852], *George Eliot Letters*, vol. 2, p. 58.
11. George Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, September 1, [1857], *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 379. Emphasis in original.
12. Anon., "A Woman's Struggles: the True Account of an American Shorthand Writer," *Victoria Magazine* 30 (December 1877), 126.
13. Annie Besant, *An Autobiography* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), p. 180.

14. Ibid., p. 189.
15. Qtd. in *ibid.*, p. 320.
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17. [Charlotte O'Conore Eccles], "The Experiences of a Woman Journalist," *Blackwood's Magazine* 153 (June 1893), 834.
18. S. C. Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life: From 1815 to 1883*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1883), vol. 2, pp. 421–22.
19. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 426.
20. Mrs. S. C. Hall, *Sketches of Irish Character* (London: Nattali & Bond, 1854), p. xvi. Emphasis in original.
21. A[nna]. M[aria]. Hall, "Preface," *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading* 1–2 (1852–53), n.p.
22. Anna Maria Hall, *Can Wrong be Right? St James's Magazine* 1 (April 1861), 13. Emphasis in original.
23. "Something of What Florence Nightingale Has Done and Is Doing," *St James's Magazine* 1 (April 1861), 40.
24. Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography*, 2 vols. (London: W. Isbister, 1889), vol. 2, p. 41. Emphasis in original.
25. Linda H. Peterson, "Collaborative Life Writing as Ideology: The Auto/biographies of Mary Howitt and Her Family," *Prose Studies* 26 (2003), 180.