Lecture 20: the book as commodity in 19\textsuperscript{th} ct England


\textbf{N.B.12d (pence) to the shilling; 20s to the pound; guinea=21 s; worker makes 2s/wk}

I. Readership among workers (from Altick)
- Cultural factors: leisure, sabbatarianism, lighting, railways
- Workers reading seen as threat--religious mmts to control it (\textit{Cheap repository tracts}, Soc for diffusion of pure lit among the people…); bowdlerization; wholesome extracts of classic lit (e.g. Shakespeare)
- Growth of education (Foster Act of 1870); of literacy: 1841 67%-51% male-female; 1870: 80%-73%; 1900: 97%-96%
- Mechanics’ Institutes founded 1825 (700 in 1850!); libraries; libraries in factors; workers hiring readers in small workshops

II. 19\textsuperscript{th} ct fiction—a high % of the market:
- high prices: 31s for a new Walter Scott novel!
- Three-decker dominant form 1820s-1895: for purchase by circulating libraries (e.g. Mudie’s, annual membership: 1 1/2 guineas after 1850)
- serial publication: in part-issue or magazine. Part-issue: Typically 1s for monthly instalment of 32pp, over 18 months. Serialization, common in 18\textsuperscript{th} cheap fiction, spreads to middle class audience with Dickens, \textit{Pickwick papers} (1836)—massive success (“everyone is reading Dickens,” promotional tours). Magazine serial e.g. \textit{Middlemarch} in 8 parts for 2 pounds.
- After 1850 cheapening: deregulation of bookselling; American reprints for sale cheaply; yellow backs for railway travel. Paperback now 6d. penny novels sell in the millions
- The novelists (from Sutherland): 42000 novels by ca 3500 authors; women and men equally (though often under pseudonyms); from many walks of life
- In France too: serialization (feuilleton); lots of fiction
- Demise of the 3-decker in 1890s: shorter fiction (novellas) marketed directly to a broader readership; demise of the circulating libraries; net book agreement of 1899—agreement not to undersell a net price

IV. George Gissing (1857-1903)—had never earned more than 150pds/yr \textit{New Grub Street} (1891)—well received; range of lit types described