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6. Leonard Bast's Library: Aspiration, Emulation, and the Imperial National Tradition

Robert Fraser

In a famous passage from Chapter VI of E.M.Forster's *Howard's End* (1910), Leonard Bast, a very lower middle class clerk, has just hurt his hand on shattered picture glass in his rented flat in South London. To sooth his equally shattered nerves, he walks through into his mean living room, pulls out a volume and starts to read the Torcello chapter from Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*:

Then he went back into the living room, settled himself anew, and began to read a volume of Ruskin

“Seven miles to the north of Venice...”

How perfectly the famous chapter opens! How supreme its command of admonition and poetry! The rich man is speaking to us from his gondola. ‘Seven miles to the north of Venice, the banks of sand, which nearer the city rise little above low water-mark, attain by degrees a higher level, and knot themselves at last into fields of salt morass, raised here and there into shapeless mounds, and intercepted by narrow creeks of the sea.’

Leonard was trying to form his style on Ruskin: he understood him to be the greatest master of English Prose. He read forward steadily, occasionally making a few notes.

‘Let us consider a little each of these characters in succession; and first (for of the shafts enough has been said already), what is very peculiar to this church, its luminousness.’

Was there anything to be learned form this fine sentence? Could he adapt it to the needs of his daily life? Could he introduce it, with modifications, when he next wrote to his brother the lay-reader? For example –

‘Let us consider a little each of these characters in succession; and first (for of the absence of ventilation enough has been said already), what is very peculiar to this flat, its obscurity.’

Something told him that the modifications would not do; and that something, had he known it, was the spirit of English Prose. 'My flat is dark as well as stuffy.' Those were the words for him.[#]

We are not told which chapter from Ruskin is being sampled here; the assumption is that as, educated readers, we already know. Leonard, of course, does not. "As usual," remarks Frank Kermode in a 2007 Clark lecture on Forster, "Bast is not allowed to be comfortable with the middle-class culture to which he aspires."[#] The gesture is as much one of exclusion as of inclusion, and is at one with Forster's description of Leonard's ham-fisted piano playing since, as Kermode also observes, with each successive draft of the relevant sentences he plays worse, worse even than Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room With A View* (1908) with her enthusiastic rendition of the opening movement *Maestoso; Allegro con brio ed appassionato* of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 32 in C Minor, Opus 111[#]. But then Lucy, as she earlier confesses to Miss Lavish, lives in "only thirty acres" of Surrey.

But why, we may well ask, of all authors is Bast reading Ruskin? Because Ruskin is not only a great cultural diagnostician, but someone with a concern for the political welfare and education of the man in the street, the man in lawyer's phrase "on the Clapham Omnibus". But Leonard doesn't own Ruskin in even the minimal way of say Lucy Honeychurch, who in an earlier chapter of *A Room With A View* enters Santa Croce in search of a sepulchre much praised by this master in *Mornings in Florence*. Or as Marcel Proust owned Ruskin, translating him after mounting personal pilgrimages to French cathedrals, and eventually to Venice, in search of the authentic Ruskinean - or is it Ruskinesque? - ambiance. In Leonard's eyes, Ruskin is rich, and his style is inimitable, even if it is enviable. He reaches towards him in aspiration and emulation, but in the last resort Ruskin shuts him out. Or, at least, Forster does so on Ruskin's behalf. And Leonard, unlike Lucy, is unlikely ever to get to Italy. There is, as the novelist's writing is keen to emphasise, a horizon he is unlikely ever to cross.

What exactly is Leonard excluded from? First, from High culture, that is in terms of the novel from the Schlegel element. Second, from travel and from history: the Ruskin

element. Third, from power: the Wilcox element. In all of these respects he is quite typical of the class of reader to whom throughout the nineteenth century - and especially in its closing years - publishers aimed certain kinds of book series. His needs were part of the culture for which such series came to cater, and an important driving force in their development. In this chapter I want to take a snapshot of three rather different such series, aimed at different audiences and on the surface at least possessing rather different agendas, so as to tease this proposition out, to look at the balance between inclusion and exclusion, to assess the tradition that each constituted, and to situate as precisely as I can the horizon towards which each aspired.

I would like to start in that haven for self-educators: Scotland. The name *Constable's Miscellany* may prove confusing because there were actually two series of that name. The one I have in mind was that launched in Edinburgh in 1826 - the year of his infamous bankruptcy - by Archibald Constable (1774-1927), publisher of Walter Scott, of *The Edinburgh Review* and of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The scheme had been mooted in May of the previous year in Scott's house in Abbotsford, and Lockhart's summary of Constable's prospectus is revealing of its ambitions: "I have now settled my outline of operations - a three shilling or half crown volume every month, which must and shall sell, not by the thousands, but by the hundreds of thousands - ay by the millions! Twelve volumes in a year...so good that millions will wish to have them, and so cheap that every butcher's callant may have them."[#] *Callant*, by the way, is Scots for a lad or stripling, so a butcher's callant is a butcher's boy, somewhat lower in the pecking order than even poor Bast. As *Constable's Miscellany of Original and Selected Publications in the Various Departments of Literature, Science and the Arts*, the series was launched in January 1827 when Constable appointed John Aitken (1793 - 1833), an elementary-school educated bank clerk from Stirlingshire, as its editor. When Constable died that June, the title was bought out by Aitken in association with Messrs. Hurst and Chance of London, with whom it stayed until 1831. Aitken continued the series much in the spirit of Constable's original scheme which, according to Scott, had been for "selling at a low profit, a great number of the most standard works in history, in belles letters, as well as in science, and the department of voyages and travels."[#] Through his choices, we can

moreover watch Aitken compiling a tradition, a particular vision of Scottishness.

The Scots are a peripatetic people, so it is little surprise that the third of Scott's categories – voyages and travels – looms large. Volume Three featured *Hall's Voyages. Extracts from a Journal written on the coasts of Chili, Peru and Mexico in the Years 1820, 1821, 1822* a recently compiled travelogue by Captain Basil Hall (1788-1844), an Edinburgh-born naval officer who had travelled widely in America, India, China and South America. One of the highlights of the book was his meeting with Napoleon with whom, strange to say, his father had once been at school. Volume thirteen was William Mariner's *Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands* (1827). This was another very recent and up-to-date offering. William Mariner (1791-1853) had joined a whaling ship in Wapping at the age of 13 and been marooned on Tonga at the age of 15, living there for four years, learning the language and getting to know the people and the social system. His travels had been written up by his friend John Martin, to whom he had recounted them, and include a dictionary and grammar of the Tonga tongue. They were to be of lasting influence, since almost a century later the Scottish anthropologist J.G. Frazer was to draw on them for the discussion of the nature of taboo and the institution of the sacrifice of the first fruits in the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*[#].

Indeed, bearing in mind the newness of the project, and Aitken's relative inexperience as an editor, the series had a happy knack of choosing relatively out-of-the-way works that just happened to hit an historical nerve. Volume eight, for example, was Michael Symes' *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava [=Burma] in 1795, to which is now added a narrative of the late military and political operations in the Burmese Empire* (1826). Symes had conducted the first embassy to Burma on behalf of the Directors of the East India Company, to whom he dedicates his book. He was thus able to report first hand on the background to the, then very recent, First Anglo-Burmese War, an event which after two more such conflicts was eventually to lead to the presentation of Burma as a New Year's Present to Queen Victoria in 1886 (Her reactions go unrecorded). Few of the choices indeed were ideologically neutral. Volume sixteen, for example, was Orlando Roberts' *Voyages and Excursions in Central America* (1827). A first edition, it

describes expeditions up the River San Juan and a trip across Lake Nicaragua. Dedicated to Bathurst, the anti-slavery campaigner, it possesses a strong anti-slavery sub-text, a strong clue to the political leanings the series as a whole.

For, despite its origins in the publishing house that had once produced the novels of the High Tory Sir Walter Scott, Aitken's *Miscellany* ploughed its own furrow politically. Once again, I think, a certain version or vision of Scottishness provides the essential clue. Aitken could rely on his impecunious readership to be loyally patriotic, but North Britons were not what he was aiming at. Quite to the contrary, there was throughout the series an emphasis on what you might call a native-born radical tradition, a demotic turn concentrating on key figures and events. Mary Queen of Scots, victim of an English monarch, could be relied on to stimulate the right sort of response, and so duly at Vol. XXV we have Henry Bell's *Life of Mary Queen of Scots* (1828), complete with its frontispiece, a portrait of Mary herself. Jacobitism was to supply another impulse, if not outright Jacobinism. So Volume XV gives us Robert Chambers' *Rebellion in Scotland, 1745* (1827), one of five volumes especially written for the series dedicated to the Scottish revolutionary tradition by the celebrated Edinburgh autodidact and bookseller, author it later transpired of that pioneering work of evolutionary theory: the anonymously published *Vestiges of Creation*. As his frontispiece to the Constable work Chambers provided an image guaranteed to enlist local sentiment: a portrait of Bonnie Prince Charlie. In 1827, let it be recalled, there would have been not a few readers, certainly in the Highlands, whose fathers had taken part in that campaign. In pre-Victorian Scotland, the Old Cause was a not too distant memory.

INSERT NEAR HERE FIGURE 1: *Constable's Miscellany of Original and Selected Publications in the Various Departments of Literature, Science and the Arts: Volume XV, Robert Chambers "Rebellion in Scotland"* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1827), Volume One, title page with frontispiece of Charles Edward Stuart.

But insularity was not the point. For Aitken, as for Constable himself, the radical tradition was something that internationalised Scotland, joining it like a continental shelf

to great movements in Europe and beyond. Several items on the list were histories of revolutions culled from around the world. They are epitomised by three volumes of a work that seems to want to pull all of these strands together and to relate them to a demotic trait, both regional and universal, for which these butcher's apprentices and the like could be expected to feel some affinity. This work was Christophe Guillaume de Koch's *History of the Revolutions in Europe from the Subversion of the Roman Empire in the West till the Abdication of Bonaparte*, translated by Andrew Crichton and published in the series in 1828. Like many of the translations, this was original to the series. Scotland, so the implicit argument ran, pertained to a European radical tradition.

What did these careful choices amount to? The combination by and large is of Scottish and European texts suggestive of a common revolutionary tradition within a frame of, mostly very recent, travel writing. Here is Scotland – a radical though Christian Scotland – standing and hoping in relation to the World. Significantly, I think, the only text on English history was a life of Oliver Cromwell. There is a biography of Napoleon and one of the Empress Josephine, but none of Wellington, or indeed of any loyalist English general or leader. There is no fiction. When not explicitly Scottish, the action, both of the travels and the history, is for the most part set far away, over a geographical horizon that Aitken, Constable or their readers had never crossed. In the long run, however, it fed an appetite. It is no coincidence, I think, that so many of those who sailed overseas to man the Empire, or to expand its borders, in the long nineteenth century, were to be Scots. The impulse may have stemmed from a sort of high-minded Bovaryism, a hankering for the unobtainable. The result, however, was what the late Angus Calder, a fine twentieth century exemplar of indigenous Caledonian radicalism, was to call a Revolutionary Empire.

This raises a larger question. Constable's readers were Scottish and English. What would happen when publishers in Britain turned their attention to envisaged audiences located overseas? Were the action, and the interest, to be set overseas too? Or did the logic of horizons I seem to be expounding stimulate an equivalent but countervailing exoticism? It is with this query in mind that I turn to my second example: Macmillan's Colonial

Library, launched on March 1, 1886. The series would issue 1,738 titles between that date and 1960. What did it concentrate on? Let us look at the first fifty titles:

1. Mary Anne Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand*.
2. Mary Anne Barker, *A Year's House-keeping in South Africa*.
3. William Black, *A Princess of Thule*.
4. Hugh Conway, *A Family Affair*.
5. F. Marion Crawford, *Mr Isaacs: A Tale of Modern India*.
6. F. Marion Crawford, *Dr Claudius: A True Story*.
7. F. Marion Crawford, *A Roman Singer*.
8. F. Marion Crawford, *A Tale of a Lonely Parish*.
9. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*.
10. Frederick William Farrar, *Seekers after God*.
11. Archibald Forbes, *Souvenirs of some Continents*.
12. P. G. Hamerton, *Human intercourse*.
13. Annie Keary, *Oldbury*.
14. Henry James, *Tales of Three Cities*.
15. A. B. Mitford, *Tales of Old Japan*.
16. Margaret Oliphant, *A Country Gentleman*.
- 17, 18, 19. Margaret Oliphant, *The Literary History of England in the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th Century*. 3 vols.
20. Alfred St. Johnston, *Camping Among Cannibals*.
21. D. Christie Murray, *Aunt Rachel*.
22. Charlotte M. Yonge, *Chantry House*.
23. Frederick Harrison, *The Choice of Books*, etc .
24. "The Author of John Halifax, Gentleman" [viz, Dinah Maria Mulock, later Craik], *Miss Tommy: a Medieval Romance*.
25. Lucas Malet, *Mrs. Lorimer: A Sketch in Black and White*.
26. Hugh Conway, *Living or Dead*.
27. Margaret Oliphant, *Effie Ogilvie*.
28. Joana Harrison, *A Northern Lily*.
29. W. E. Norris, *My Friend Jim*.
30. Emily Lawless, *Hurrish: A Study*.
31. "The Author of John Halifax, Gentleman" [viz, Dinah Maria Mulock, later Craik] *King*

Arthur: Not a Love Story.

32. Thomas Hardy. *The Mayor of Casterbridge.*
33. John W. Graham. *Neaera: A Tale of Ancient Rome.*
34. Fayr Madoc. *Margaret Jermine.*
35. Charlotte Yonge, *A Modern Telemachus.*
36. J. Henry Shorthouse, *Sir Percival.*
37. Margaret Oliphant, *A House Divided Against Itself.*
38. “The Author of John Halifax, Gentleman” [viz, Dinah Maria Mulock, later Craik], *About Money, and Other Things.*
39. William Black. *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton.*
40. Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism.*
41. Thomas Hughes. *Tom Brown’s Schooldays.*
42. Charlotte Yonge, *The Dove in the Eagle’s Nest.*
43. Margaret Oliphant. *A Beleaguered City.*
44. John Morley, *Critical Miscellanies.*
45. Bret Harte. *A Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready, etc.*
46. F. Marion Crawford. *Saracinesca.*
47. Margaret Veley. *A Garden of Memories; and other Stories.*
48. William Black. *Sabina Zembra.*
49. Thomas Hardy. *The Woodlanders.*
50. Amy Elizabeth Dillwyn. *Jill.* #

One or two lurid personalities lurk behind the, often female, aliases here. Marion Crawford was, of course, a commercially successful masculine peddler in, for the most part Orientalist, exotica. “Lucas Mallet” was the late Reverend Charles Kingsley’s Catholic (and probably Lesbian) youngest daughter. Dinah Mulok later married a senior member of Macmillans’ editorial staff, the one-legged George Lillie Craik. Margaret Oliphant is referred to everywhere in the lists as “Mrs Oliphant”, which sounds like a pseudonym but is in every sense not one, since she had married her own first cousin, her full name therefore being “Margaret Oliphant Oliphant”. The Irish writer Emily Lawless was her protégée. And the Swansea-based novelist and suffragette Amy Dillwyn must rank as the only author in British history ever to manage a zinc works[#].

For a book historian, however, it is the selection of titles that is instructive. The list starts with what I can only describe as a kind of editorial wobble. Clearly the architects of the series are at a bit of a loss where to begin: the first twelve titles, indeed, they look as if they are being organised alphabetically by the name of the author. Beyond that possibly coincidental fact, however, there seems to be an assumption that readers in the colonies will be interested primarily in colonial themes, and in books with contiguous settings. So the first two titles are settler's memoirs[#], then we get a run of stories by the American and, yes, male writer of romances - and Sanskritist - Francis Marion Crawford, with Indian or else Italian backdrops. By title 16, with the entry of Mrs Olliphant, something has happened. In fact, the imperial penny has dropped. These readers may be situated in Asia or Australasia, but as far as their literary tastes are concerned, they are hungry for home, either real or imagined. For the Memsahibs of the Raj home, of course, was a matter of nostalgia, but for say the large Eurasian readership in India, it was much more likely to have been a locus of fantasy, aspiration or possibly misdirected sentiment. The fact is that titles 17 – 19 comprise Mrs Olliphant's *Literary History of England*, and then the series settles down to a staple diet of middlebrow contemporary novels produced by and large in the form of cheap reprints of Macmillans' domestic fiction list, eventually to include Charlotte Yonge, Thomas Hardy and the rest. There are, of course, notable exceptions to this rule, though whether Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* issued in both the British and on the colonial list in 1901 is one of them, depends on the way you view Kipling. A more unmistakable exception is Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* published in 1889. This not, of course originally a Macmillan title but was bought in by them. It was first published in London by Remington in 3 volumes in 1888 when after originally being printed as a serial in the *Sydney Mail* in 1881. Acclaimed in London when issued as a three-decker, it was then reprinted by Macmillan in one volume for the home market and as no.94 in the Macmillan Colonial Library in 1898.

This mere sprinkling of titles with colonial backdrops, however, cannot really disguise the basic rule: this is a collection of contemporary middle-brow British novels intended for readers living far away, who at moments wish they were not. What after all, was the journalistic pabulum of the colonial clubs? It was *The Illustrated London News* or

perhaps *Country Life*. In Rawalpindi you needed the illusion that you were *au fait* with what people might be gossiping about in Mayfair or Tonbridge Wells, and the review columns of newspapers, both imported and local, fed this appetite for what lay so tantalizing across the mental and spiritual horizons of those displaced, or believing themselves to be displaced. The remoteness, the aspiration, the longing were surely the very point. At first sight, then, Macmillan's Colonial Library looks as if it might be cancelling out of the earlier example of *Constable's Miscellany*, until you realize that here we are faced with an advanced case of cultural Bovaryism in reverse. Wherever their situation in life, people like to read about what they do not have.

It is in relation to these two polar instances that I want to examine my third and central example: Cassell's National Library. There is, however, a missing piece to the jigsaw here: the short-lived *Reynold's Miscellany* of 1846-69, the historic link I imagine between Constable and Cassell, and certainly an inspiration behind successive ventures into popular educational publishing by John Cassell (1817-1865), Mancunian, former carpenter's apprentice, reformed drunk, onetime Temperance Campaigner, idealist and founder of the firm[#]. Cassell campaigned against stamp duty on publications in 1851 on the grounds that he had entered the profession "for the purpose of issuing a series of publications which I believed were calculated to advance the moral and social well-being of the working classes"[#]. He published the first British edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the title of his periodical *The Popular Educator* provides an important clue to his philosophy. Like *Constable's Miscellany*, however, Cassell's National Library came to fruition after the death of the man from whom it took its cue, and after which it was named.

John Cassell had been an autodidact, minimally educated at the British and Foreign Bible School in Stockport and passionately devoted to the spreading of both literacy and literature among the proverbial Bastards. A succession of series were named after him and designed in his egalitarian image, both before and after his death in 1865; the series of which I am speaking, however, took its immediate character from the man employed as its editor from 1887, Henry Morley.

INSERT NEAR HERE FIGURE 2: Professor Henry Morley (1822-1894)

Morley was Professor of English at University College, London at the time but had found his way to academic English via a circuitous route, including training as a doctor, working as tutor to Elizabeth Gaskell's children in Manchester, compiling the sanitary column for Dicken's *Household Words* and *All The Year Round*, mentorship by Dickens' friend and biographer John Forster, and assorted freelance journalism.[#] After his appointment to UCL in 1865 he needed to work for publishers on a regular basis, since his post there was unpaid. Morley took his responsibilities seriously, editing with introductions more than 300 texts, either for Cassell's or for another comparable series that Routledge had christened after him as Morley's Universal Library. Both of these publishers afforded him *carte blanche* in the selection of titles; his shaping hand is to be seen everywhere in the resulting books.

The books that he edited for Cassells were pocket size (4" x 5 1/2"), produced plainly with simple red, beige or blue covers and with no illustrations of any kind. They were issued weekly at a cost of 3d or 6d cloth. Acquired either by mail order or though selected booksellers, they were 192 pages long (23 lines a page averaging 10 words per line). The uniform length must have been achieved by adjusting the size of Morley's introduction: in other words there was a weekly diet of slightly under 45,000 words. Not long enough for a novel (which, in any case, were issued in Cassell's "Red Series" at a shilling), but just right for, say, one Shakespeare play, like *The Taming of the Shrew* which the series brought out in 1888 under the same covers as *A Pleasant Conceited History called The Taming Of A Shrew*, one of Shakespeare's own sources. Just the right length too for two Platonic dialogues, like *The Crito and the Phaedo*, which came out together in 1894. Or just the right length for one pair of lives (one Greek and one Roman) from Plutarch, such as *Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar*, who made a double appearance the following year. Just the right length again for one of Hakluyt's Travels, such as *Hakluyt's Discovery of Muscovy*, which came out in 1889.

But what was the orientation of the series? What tradition did it represent for aspirants

and emulators? Below, to place beside the list of fifty Macmillan colonial titles displayed above, are the first fifty-two of Cassell's, representing the first year's output as it appears in early advertisements.

1. <i>Warren Hastings</i>	Lord Macaulay
2. <i>My Ten Years' Imprisonment</i>	Silvio Pellico
3. <i>The Rivals and The School for Scandal</i>	Richard Brindsley Sheridan
4. <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i>	
5. <i>The Compleat Angler</i>	Isaac Walton
6. <i>Childe Harold</i>	Lord Byron
7. <i>The Man of Feeling</i>	Henry MacKenzie
8. <i>Sermons on the Card</i>	Bishop Latimer
9. <i>Lives of Alexander and Caesar</i>	Plutarch
10. <i>The Castle of Otranto</i>	Horace Walpole
11. <i>Voyages and Travels</i>	Sir John Maundeville
12. <i>Plays</i>	Oliver Goldsmith
13. <i>The Lady of the Lake</i>	Sir Walter Scott
14. <i>Table Talk</i>	Martin Luther
15. <i>The Wisdom of the Ancients</i>	Francis Bacon
16. <i>Francis Bacon</i>	Lord Macaulay
17. <i>Lives of the Poets</i> (Waller, Milton, Cowley)	Samuel Johnson
18. <i>Thoughts on the Present Discontents, etc,</i>	Edmund Burke
19. <i>The Battle of the Books, etc.</i>	Jonathan Swift
20. <i>Poems</i>	George Crabbe
21. <i>Egypt and Scythia</i>	Herodotus
22. <i>Hamlet</i>	William. Shakespeare
23. <i>Voyagers' Tales</i>	Richard Hakluyt
24. <i>Nature and Art</i>	Elizabeth Inchbald
25. <i>Lives of Alcibiades and Coriolanus.</i>	Plutarch
26 & 27. <i>Life and Adventures of Baron Trenck</i> 2 Vols.	
28. <i>Essays</i>	Abraham Cowley

29. <i>Sir Roger de Coverley</i>	Steele and Addison
30. <i>Voyages and Travels</i>	Marco Polo
31. <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	William. Shakespeare
32. <i>Religio Medici</i>	Thomas Browne
33. <i>The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 1660-1661</i>	
34. <i>Earlier Poems</i>	John Milton
35. <i>The North-West Passage</i>	Richard Hakluyt
36. <i>The Sorrows of Werter</i>	Goethe
37. <i>Lives of Poets</i> (Butler, Denham, Dryden, etc.)	Samuel Johnson
38. <i>Nathan the Wise</i>	Lessing
39. <i>Grace Abounding</i>	John Bunyan
40. <i>Macbeth</i>	William Shakespeare
41. <i>The Diary of Samuel Pepys-1662-1663</i>	
42. <i>Earlier Poems</i>	Alexander Pope
43. <i>Early Australian Voyages</i>	John Pinkerton
44. <i>The Bravo of Venice</i>	M.G. Lewis
45. <i>Lives of Demetrius and Mark Antony</i>	Plutarch
46. <i>Peter Plymleys's Letters, etc.</i>	Sydney Smith
47. <i>Travels in England in 1782</i>	C.P. Moritz
48. <i>Undine, and The Two Captains</i>	La Motte Fouqué
49. <i>Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, etc.</i>	Samuel Taylor Coleridge
50. <i>As You Like It</i>	William Shakespeare
51. <i>A Journey to the Hebrides</i>	Samuel Johnson
52. <i>A Christmas Carol, and The Chimes</i>	Charles Dickens

From comparing Cassell's home-orientated list with Macaulay's colonial one we can perhaps glean some sort of impression of the respective tastes of these two readerships, as well as the "horizons" towards which the publisher in each case was inviting its target audience to aspire. Note, for example, the range and density of Cassell's list, and its catholicity of genre. Clearly it served for its late nineteenth-century subscribers as the Open University of its own day, except that if I was to turn up to a departmental meeting

and propose a course featuring one set book per week, I think I can predict the comments around the table. Has this something to tell us about standards then and since? But there is one more element to which I would like to call your attention. At the foot of the flyleaf on which these titles were advertised towards the end of the first year of publication, a special promotional offer was made. All fifty-two might now be acquired in a specially designed miniature oak bookcase, the whole at a bargain price of 31s 6d. I will return to the bookcase in a minute.

Before that, I would like to point to certain not altogether predictable elements in the ensemble. It represents, for example, a far more male list of authors than does Macmillan's, reflecting a shift from the contemporary to the classic, and perhaps too an editorial perception of the priority of instructive non-fiction over recreational fiction. On the face of it moreover, the very first text provides a surprising corner stone. Macaulay's *Life of Warren Hastings* is not the first text that springs to mind when putting together a collation of English classics. At least, not to us. But I think you have to consider the mindset of men and women schooled firstly on the cult of the great man – what I think we would prefer to call the “role model” – evidenced for example by Thomas Carlyle's lecture series of 1849, *Of Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, a text that enjoyed a wide currency in the later decades of the nineteenth century. As did Carlyle himself, especially as it happens among autodidacts, a literary cult epitomised in Forster's *A Room With A View* in the person of the aptly named Mr Emerson. Warren Hastings, for all his blemishes, had been just such a hero, the ups and downs of whose career recall the protagonists of Shakespearean tragedies, most of which would in due time appear later in the series.

The cult of the hero was the spur behind several other series at the time framing processions of eminent worthies: in Britain Macmillan's “English Men of Letters” (1877-97) edited by John Morley, Liberal statesman, biographer of Gladstone and future Secretary of State for India; and in India itself “Makers of India” launched by Oxford University press the year after Cassells had launched their National Library. (In his novel of 1901 Rudyard Kipling depicts Kim receiving a volume of Rulers of India as a school

prize in Lucknow for his accomplishment in that imperially useful skill, mathematics). Macaulay had been both one such Man of Letters and one such Maker of India: someone who, in tune perhaps with a Whig Interpretation of History, had been experiencing something of a revival in Gladstone's England. Witness for example the extraordinary success of George Otto Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, written by the subject's nephew and soon to be made available to lower income British families in Longman's "Popular" Edition of 1889, just as it had been flaunted for continental admiration in the Tauchnitz Edition of 1876. To us this success may seem inexplicable, so grounded does Trevelyan's prosaically composed book appear to be in the traditions of late Victorian hagiography. To scoff, however, is to miss the point. Warren Hastings, whose life Macaulay wrote, provided readers with an indigenous Plutarchian narrative, an English/Greek tragedy played out on a Liberal Imperial Stage. Hence, if *Constable's Miscellany* had once served up for Caledonian emulation a Scottish/European radical tradition in an international frame, Cassells was now manifestly offering an English Whig tradition set in a context of Liberal Imperialism. In effect an imperial national tradition.

But what tradition did it precisely represent? Clearly this was a series whose most glaring horizons were much as much educational as geographical. It catered in fact for the needs of the elementary school educated-products of Forster's 1870 Education Act who wished to better themselves. For 3d or 6d a week they got a pick of Greek and Roman classics in translation, most of Shakespeare, much of Plutarch, much of Hakluyt, Bacon's Essays, Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* and so on and so forth. All this, far from irrelevantly, at the very period when English Literature was beginning to establish itself as a discipline in the universities. Cassell's readers could in effect watch that process of canon-formation taking place before their very eyes, even if they were not precisely aware that this was what was happening. There was also a heavy input of travel writing since, like *Constable's Miscellany*, the National Library early established a rhythm of alternating home-grown classics with travel, especially the classics of British exploration and empire building: in a widening circle beginning with Defoe's English travels, and then broadening the horizon outwards to include Raleigh, Mungo Park's *Travels in Africa*, Fielding's account of Lisbon, and Sir John Macolm's *Sketches of Persia*. The inflection

from the one to the other was effortless; there was a continuum of interest across what I have ventured to call the imperial national tradition.

It may be helpful at this point to examine this series and the tradition it represents through the eyes of one particular reader. The individual I have selected is Alfred Horace Gittins, born in Liverpool in 1872, impecunious maternal grandson of James Pilkington, the St Helens Glass Manufacturer[#]. Almost certainly, however, his formal education had ended at fourteen after elementary school, as it did for so many millions of gifted young men at the time. Gittins, though, had professional ambitions: eventually, at the age of twenty-five, he moved to South Wales where he became a legal clerk, ultimately Managing Clerk, in a long-established family firm of solicitors in Pontypool[#]. Perhaps in order to prepare himself for such a role, he had been from his mid-teens an inveterate self-educator. Accordingly he invested in Cassell's National Library weekly over a nine-year period between its inception in 1885, when he was 13 and almost ready to leave school, and 1894 (the year incidentally of Henry Morley's death), when he would have been twenty-two, purchasing the cloth edition at 6d every week from the stationers and booksellers James Woollard at 54 Castle Street, a stone's throw from the river Mersey. These are precisely the years he would have been in the higher forms of secondary school and at college, had either avenue been accessible to him. In a very meaningful sense Cassell was his university.

Alfred's later career accords with several paradigms of self-improvement within the then class structure of South Wales, with its small and fairly precarious Middle Class positioned just above a far larger working class, principally a mining community itself struggling at the period towards difficult corporate self-expression. His social milieu included a leading lay role in the Anglican church, widely associated at the time with the resident English community and the professions and, as such, set in vivid contrast with the plethora of local chapel-going nonconformism with its multifarious Welsh- or English-speaking denominations. (The Church of Wales would be disestablished in the 1920s, after which it still retained in the public mind strong English roots). After a couple of years in Montmouthshire he also joined the Freemasons, their elaborately structured -

almost feudal - hierarchy providing a measurable standard of self-advance for such an upwardly mobile, conscientiously respectable, young man[#]. Because of surviving photographs taken in Masonic regalia this is one of several ways in which I remember him: as the Worshipful Brother A. H. Gittins, Provincial Grand Organist for the Masonic chapter of South Wales, Provincial Grand Standard Bearer, Provincial Grand Sojourner and Third Provincial Grand Principal. To the very end he kept and referred to his carefully preserved set of Cassell's National Library, which served much the same function in his household as is fulfilled in other homes by framed graduation certificates. He was, as you may have guessed, my own maternal grandfather.

The fact that he preserved these books for so long is to my mind one of the most noteworthy aspects of his collection. Relatively inexpensive they may have been, but these slender volumes were clearly not to be regarded, either by the publishers or by their customers, as dispensable. They were cultural stock in which to invest, yielding intellectual, professional, arguably even financial dividends. Which leads me to my closing question. What ultimately is the distinction between a publisher's series and a self-styled "library"? One surely is to be considered as consecutive, a procession of acquisitions, the other as simultaneous and potentially permanent. One is sequential or diachronic, the other is synchronous, to be regarded as an impressive and coherent whole: a possession, an inheritance.

In advertising their wares as a "library", publishers such as Cassell were therefore half-snobishly inviting their patrons to lay hold of cultural capital in a palpable form: in effect to adopt a miniature of the walk-in gentleman's libraries towards which the Basts of that age naturally aspired. This was surely the purpose behind the handsome oak bookcase that Cassells offered as an accessory to their series at the end of the first year of production, a polishable frame in which these well-bound books could be displayed, savoured, consulted, even handed on to later generations. It is perhaps no coincidence that this was the period of British culture that gave rise to the phrase "a well-furnished mind". For books can furnish a mind as well as a room, even one as spare as Leonard Bast's. So here to end the chapter is Alfred Gittins' own Cassell's oak bookcase,

complete with fifty-two of the early titles, just as that fourteen-year-old and - in his own sphere - fairly eminent Victorian acquired it from James Woollard booksellers in Liverpool for 31s 6d in the year of our grace 1886. Just too as it now stands in our bedroom in South London, a room both spacious and, I am happy to report, brightly luminous.

INSERT NEAR HERE FIGURE 3: “Handsome Oak Bookcase”, 1886 for Cassell’s National Library, displaying fifty-two early titles.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. E.M.Forster (1910), *Howards End* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 61-2.
2. Frank Kermode, “Fiction and E.M.Forster”, *London Review of Books*, 10 May 2007, 18.
3. E.M.Forster (1908), *A Room With A View* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 50-2. Kermode’s lecture on Forster and music was delivered on 12 March 2007 in the Mill Lane Lecture Rooms, Cambridge as the last of a mini-series delivered as part of the Clark Lectures for that year. The successive typescripts of *Howard’s End* may be consulted in the modern archives of King’s College, Cambridge, GBR/0272/PP/EMF/1/3 ff. 1-494.
4. J. G. Lockhardt, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: A. and W. Galignani, 1837-8), vi, 31.
5. H.J.C.Grierson et al., *Letters of Sir Walter Scott* (London: Constables, 1932-79), ix, 262-3.
6. J.G.Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* Third Edition (London: Macmillan, 1906-15), iii, 140; viii, 128 seq.
7. For the careful compilation of this list, I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Shafquat Towheed. The complete listing of all volumes in the series was first given in Graeme Johanson, *Colonial Editions in Australia, 1843-1972* (Wellington, N.Z., Elibank Press, 2000).
8. Meic Stephens, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford University Press, 1986), 148. The business that she managed after the death of her father, a local Liberal MP, was the Dillwyn Spelter works near Swansea. They no longer exist, but her house in Swansea itself, *Ty Gwyn* [The White House] does. In 1883 Dillwyn was

among the first to recognise the genius behind Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, which she reviewed in *The Spectator*.

9. Mary Anne Barker had quite a convoluted life. Born in Kingston Jamaica in 1831, she married in 1852 George Robert Barker of the Royal Artillery, who was knighted for his role in the siege of Lucknow in 1858, dying a few months later. In 1865 she married the journalist Frederick Napier Broome, with whom she emigrated to New Zealand, before the couple moved on to colonial appointments in Mauritius, Australia, Barbados and Natal. It was as "Lady Barker", however, that she continued to publish.

10. For further biographical details, see G.H.Pike, *John Cassell* (London: Cassell, 1894).

11. Simon Nowell-Smith, *The House of Cassell, 1848-1958* (London: Cassell, 1958), 22.

12. See Henry Shaen Solley, *The Life of Henry Morley* (London: Arnold, 1898)

13. T.C.Barker, *The Glassmakers: Pilkington, The Rise of An International Company 1826-1976* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977) traces the family tree up to and including Alfred's mother, Alice Pilkington. Though the firm were later to amass a considerable fortune from the manufacture of sheet glass, in which they enjoyed an effective monopoly, little of the resulting affluence flowed through this particular branch of the distaff line. Information from Cyril Pilkington Gittins (1908-94), augmented by personal knowledge.

14. Bythway and Son, 1727-1940. See National Library of Wales GB 0210 GLAMON; also Gwent Record Office, Bythway papers, GB 0218 D32.

15. Robert S. Johns, ed., *The Masonic Calendar for the Province of Montmouthshire, 1939-40* (Newport: R. H. Johns at the Directory Press, 1939), 8-9