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there after all, but already with us, nestled in our hearts and minds … in the Orientalist unconscious of the West” (165). It remains for future scholars to assess the German, French, and other European versions of this story, given Long’s claims for the impact of the British version on “Western society.” He points to the West’s pleasure in its prejudice and wisely acknowledges that intervention against the fantasy of the Orient is impossible, calling instead for a critique of the place of class within a critique of that fantasy. Readers hoping for illumination on this point may search for it in the book’s creatively composed concluding sentence: “Of course, the way in which the fantasy of the Orient is not merely so much false consciousness—or just fantasy—serves a complex function that must be deftly untied with formalist and materialist critique is a crucial recognition” (215).

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“The Prose Homer of the Great Ocean”: William Clark Russell


WILLIAM CLARK RUSSELL may not be well known outside Victorian scholarship on popular fiction, but as Andrew Nash explains, he was virtually a household name in his time. Sir Edwin Arnold described him as “the prose Homer of the great ocean,” and his works came to be among the favorite reading of King George V. In Britain, Robert Louis Stevenson and George Meredith admired his writing, while in America he enjoyed even greater popularity and was considered the worthy successor of Cooper and Melville. Yet today, a search in the MLA International Bibliography turns up but a single article on him (aside from those by Nash), compared with nearly a thousand entries for Stevenson, 1,300 for Cooper, over six thousand for Melville, and even 650 for Meredith. Nash’s William Clark Russell and the Victorian Nautical Novel, part of the Literary Texts and the Popular Marketplace series by Pickering & Chatto, takes a notable early step towards rectifying this relative dearth of scholarship. At the same time, this book demonstrates the potential rewards of studying noncanonical authors on terms kinder to authors such as Clark Russell, who was seen even then as a writer who churned out genre fiction according to a winning formula. As Nash shows, Clark Russell can be productively
reevaluated for what his writing demonstrates about changes in the literary marketplace, and the history of the novel, in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England and America.

Nash’s account begins with some telling misunderstandings that took place on Clark Russell’s death. Obituaries misdated his death and failed to note the fourteen non-nautical novels that he had written before becoming a writer of sea fiction, and even his family was not fully aware of his early narrative work. The British Library catalogue misattributed several of his works to other authors. Other lists of his publications, then and since, included inaccurate dates and underestimated by half the amount of his nautical writing. Setting the record straight, while tracing the web of connections and influences tying Clark Russell into the world of Victorian publishing history and popular readership, Nash proceeds by a set of chapters that revisit much of the same material each time, but from different perspectives. Early chapters describe Clark Russell’s biography (his eight years at sea, followed by nearly sixty novels over some thirty years) and how he searched for topics and moved from sensational novels to sea stories. Subsequent chapters address his nautical fiction along the lines of genre, theme, and gender. Nash presents Clark Russell as an author who both participated in fictional treatments of topical issues and stood apart from his contemporaries in the way that his narrative strategies pushed his work toward or beyond the boundaries of genre fiction and gender distinctions. Marketing comes more specifically under study in the latter part of this book, as Nash reexamines the events in Clark Russell’s writing life but in terms of publication history, income, and his relations with publishers.

Some of the especially interesting conclusions that Nash reaches have to do with the intersections of gender and market forces. As Nash explains, Clark Russell believed that the readership supporting circulating libraries was mostly female; consequently, he sought to break out of the library-only readership of his early non-nautical novels by tapping into a masculine audience—while he would later remain sensitive to the importance of female characters in his sea fiction and how women readers might receive his work. Accordingly, the second chapter foregrounds how Clark Russell focused on women’s experiences in his early sensation fiction. Those early novels featured young, orphaned women entering and then fleeing difficult marriages, including legally complicated instances of bigamy. It was on such efforts to render female psychology that Clark Russell initially staked his success, while
he apparently hedged his bets with reviewers and readers by publishing under the androgynous pseudonym of “Sydney Mostyn.”

The early novels were commercial failures, though, and it was not until Clark Russell retooled his writing to focus on the sea that he achieved financial success. Nash’s next chapters situate that success in terms of genre, giving pride of place to *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (1877) for its combination of romance and documentary realism as well as for the quality of its writing. Nash then describes how this novel differed from earlier nautical fiction in challenging assumptions about genre, and how Clark Russell’s subsequent nautical novels further brought a new style to sea fiction. For this analysis, Nash discusses Clark Russell’s particular notion of “romance,” which for that author was grounded in sympathetic attention to the quotidian realities of life at sea. Thus, Clark Russell’s blurring of accepted distinctions between romance and the realist novel paved the way for critical discussions, on the part of Robert Louis Stevenson and others later in the century, comparing the two genres. Similarly, Nash argues, Clark Russell dissolved conventions of gendered behaviors at sea, as his nautical fiction began to feature seafaring heroines and cross-dressing women sailors (in portrayals further inflected by class differences and the colonial project).

Nash places the appearance of Clark Russell’s sea stories at a crucial juncture in the transformation of genre fiction. In this analysis, the demand for long serials placed in shilling monthlies gave way to a call for shorter writing in less expensive periodicals and in Christmas annuals. Consequently, as Nash details, Clark Russell trimmed the length of his sea voyage narratives; furthermore, he found that the episodic style of his stories suited them well to newspaper serialization. In addition to detailed accounts of late nineteenth-century serial publication practices in this section, Nash examines transatlantic market expansions, copyright, and literary property, making Clark Russell a useful focal point for scholars interested in these issues. Nash devotes two chapters to marketing, one to serials and one to books, the latter including reproductions of book jackets and going into illuminatingly thorough detail on marketing strategies, binding choices, and book costs and sales. Such information usefully reveals monetary arrangements of the period, while it buttresses Nash’s account of Clark Russell’s search for financial security as he experimented with topics, envisioned his audiences, negotiated with publishers, and carefully tracked reviews. Nash also discusses Clark Russell’s American readership, as well as
the copyright controversy that took place in 1882 following the unauthorized reprinting of his works in cheap editions in the United States. The final chapter culminates Nash’s extended argument that Clark Russell overcame market obstacles and generic constraints through the quality of his writing and through his attention to shifting publication demands, bringing nautical fiction out of the popular fiction category to which it had been relegated after the 1840s and placing it alongside the work of leading novelists.

In this wide-ranging and comprehensive look at Clark Russell’s place in literary history, Nash asserts that Clark Russell’s innovations as a writer of sea fiction lie in two new methods: setting nautical novels entirely at sea and portraying the ordinary sailor’s working conditions. For this part of the argument, it might have been helpful to see Clark Russell in a more developed comparison with Cooper, Marryat, Poe (The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, 1838), Melville (White Jacket, 1850), and perhaps Verne. Nevertheless, thorough descriptions of numerous Clark Russell volumes and how they show his evolution as a writer are among the strengths of this book, which make it particularly useful for readers new to Clark Russell and interested in the subjects and styles of his many novels. Furthermore, readers interested in nineteenth-century publication history and the transformations of genre will likewise find much to consider, as noted above. As an examination of the literary marketplace into which Clark Russell entered, and which he helped shape despite his comparative obscurity today, William Clark Russell and the Victorian Nautical Novel serves its purposes well as it develops a highly detailed portrait of an author meriting further study.

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The Political Conrad

RICHARD RUPPEL’S A Political Genealogy of Joseph Conrad is direct, clearly written, and stylistically effective. This book considers Conrad’s works from a political perspective. Such a view is welcome since the only monographs devoted exclusively to Conrad’s politics (Eloise Knapp Hay’s The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad and Avrom Fleishman’s Conrad’s Politics) were published some fifty years ago.