10,000 Not Out: The History of the Spectator 1828–2020 by David Butterfield (review)

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David Butterfield’s *10,000 Not Out* is the latest in a long line of publications marking milestones in the 193-year history of the *Spectator*, including William Beach Thomas’s *Story of the Spectator, 1828–1928* (1928); special issues of the paper on the centennial (November 1928), the six thousandth issue (June 1943), the 125th anniversary (1953), and the 150th anniversary (September 1978); and Simon Cottauld’s *To Convey Intelligence, the Spectator 1928–1998* (1999). Like its predecessors, Butterfield’s book celebrates the newspaper-cum-magazine’s virtues: its recognition for excellence among its contemporaries, its important social and political stands, the quality of its contributors, and the cultural importance of its voice. It is not a scholarly book, nor does it try to be. Rather it is, as Michael White terms it in his review of the book, “a romp through its history” (“A Magazine or a Cocktail Party?,” *Literary Review*, June 2020, 7). Butterfield is informal, chatty, gossipy. He relates anecdotes like Charles Dickens’s referring to the founder and editor of the paper, Robert Rintoul, with the rhyming appellation “Squint-owl” (36), and he refers to H. H. Asquith as “Ol’ Squiffy” (63). Rintoul’s arrangement to allow his daughter to continue to live in the *Spectator* attic after Meredith Townsend took over the paper prompts Butterfield to ponder drily, “What Townsend’s reaction was to finding this rather highly-strung thirty-something pining in the rafters is unknown” (47). Thus, *10,000 Not Out* is an enjoyable, readable survey of the weekly over its long and storied history. It contains innumerable nuggets of information about contributors, editors, finances, circulation, contested political and social positions, and the actual process of printing. Until about 1900 the paper was still issued with pages uncut, for example (73). Who knew?

Butterfield surveys the remarkable influence of the paper during its first hundred years, examining the role of the four owner/editors: Rintoul, Richard Holt Hutton, Townsend, and John St. Loe Strachey. The editors and a handful of staff critics wrote most of the copy for every issue until the turn of the century, although they occasionally recruited leading statesmen, scholars, thinkers, writers, and artists who either submitted essays or debated issues in the correspondence column. Until 1922 leaders and most columns were anonymous; from the mid-1920s on, signed columns revealed that some of the most important figures of the century were contributing to the paper: Evelyn Waugh, John Betjeman, Jean Paul Sartre, T. S. Eliot, and others between the wars; Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and Kenneth Tynan in the 1950s and 1960s. From the 1970s on, celebrated artists and writers for the most part were displaced by regular columnists.
Butterfield lists them all; in fact, his lists of contributors are an important contribution of the book.

For a variety of reasons, the _Spectator_ morphed from weekly newspaper to weekly magazine in 1953. Butterfield describes in some detail the new opportunities that the revised structure provided. He also surveys the various owners in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the carousel of editors, and the slow evolution of the paper’s politics from somewhat liberal and independent to stoutly Tory, closing his account in 2020. The lean to the right has been most pronounced in the last several decades as the magazine and Tory leadership carried on a somewhat incestuous relationship, culminating with the ascension of former editor Boris Johnson to Ten Downing Street.

Because it avoids much of the apparatus of a scholarly study, Butterfield’s book is sometimes annoyingly incomplete. He cites most of his sources, and the endnotes are accurate as far as I could tell. But he fails to include a bibliography, and his index is woefully incomplete. Thus, when looking for information about a citation for, say, Robert Tener or Marysa Demoor, one is forced to read through the 1,200 endnotes for the original citation because the bibliography (which would be the first resource) does not exist, and the index does not stoop to include such subjects. Butterfield does have some fun with his index, however: the entry for _Maga_ specifies “see _Blackwood’s Magazine, not Trump, Donald_” (253). Even more annoying is his habit of occasionally not revealing sources of some of his information. I sympathize with his decision to avoid the appearance of too scholarly a work and thus not to overcite; after all, this is supposed to be more an appreciation than a peer-reviewed study. But his revelation in the second chapter that the mysterious Mr. Scott, who purchased the paper from Rintoul in 1858 and sold it in 1859, was in fact John Charles Addyse Scott, aged twenty-eight, Lord of the Manor of Ratlinghope, Shropshire, deserves some kind of citation. Where did he find Scott when _Spectator_ scholars have been looking for him since Beach Thomas mentioned him in passing in 1928, plugging in the name of any potential Scott and _Spectator_ to Google, poring over Scotts, seeking clues, and finding nothing?

While _Spectator_ articles were unsigned until the 1920s, both Hutton and Strachey kept article/author files, Hutton’s from 1874 to 1897 and Strachey’s from 1897 to 1922. We know about the Hutton files because, in his 1960 article on the _Spectator_ records, Robert Tener refers to seven notebooks listing authorship of _Spectator_ pieces for most of the period between 1874 and 1897 (“_Spectator_ Records, 1874–1897,” _Victorian Newsletter_, no. 17 [1960]: 33–38). We know about the Strachey files because Marysa Demoor consulted them at the 56 Doughty Street offices in the late 1990s for her book _Their Fair Share_ (2000). Butterfield references both sets of files and even includes an image of a page from Strachey’s that he bor-
rowed from Demoor. However, he did not actually lay hands on either file, and in endnote 1115 he states that the files all seem to have been misplaced, perhaps in the move from Doughty Street to the present premises at 22 Old Queen Street. (Patrick Leary has asked that if anyone knows the whereabouts of these valuable files they should contact him through the Victoria Research Web or the VICTORIA discussion list).

*Spectator* readers will appreciate Butterfield’s work and his breezy, friendly presentation of it; *Spectator* scholars will also appreciate the many nuggets of information spread throughout the text. However, Butterfield has seemingly bought into the current upper-middle-class, white, public school, Oxbridge, snarkily conservative, blokey *Spectator* ethos; he has carefully avoided any negative critical assessment of the contemporary product, which makes the last third of the book of little critical or historical value.

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Troy Bassett’s *Rise and Fall of the Victorian Three-Volume Novel* pioneers a new methodology to answer long-standing questions about the place of the triple decker in Victorian literature and culture. Following Sarah Allison’s *Reductive Reading* (2018), this is one of the first monographs in Victorian studies for which the author has collected his own extensive dataset, beginning in 2007, and used the resulting database, At the Circulating Library, as the basis for the study. At the Circulating Library is ground-breaking in its comprehensive nature, containing about 16,374 titles, 3,538 authors, 508 publishers, as well as additional information about novel serialization in periodicals and newspapers. It is a complete reference for all two-, three-, and four-volume novels published between 1837 and 1898. This database allows Victorianists, for the first time, to answer basic questions about the three-volume novel, including how many were produced (7,272), who published them (mainly Bentley and Hurst and Blackett), and who wrote them (mainly women by the end of the century). Bassett’s resulting study is a broad overview of multivolume fiction that will provide invaluable context to scholars moving forward.

Previous work on multivolume fiction has necessarily proceeded by anecdote and case study. Before the digitization of library catalogues, peri-