

# REVIEW ESSAY

## The Serial as Episteme

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Clare Pettitt, *Serial Forms: The Unfinished Project of Modernity, 1815–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Clare Pettitt, *Serial Revolutions 1848: Writing, Politics, Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

**I**N the epilogue to *Serial Forms*, Clare Pettitt identifies key elements of the “form” she investigates in her massively detailed, deeply original study:

The serial is both form and process, and, to stay true to its form, it has to continue. Escaping form just as it is formed, the serial “begins again to begin.” . . . [S]eriality appears in different but related guises: it can be a form; a genre; a system; a technology; and it can also be a strategy; a philosophy; a mode. But wherever it appears, a distinct interrelation of its parts and a recognizable forward movement mark it as serial. Seriality was the single most important “form” to emerge out of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. (293)

Additional definitions appear earlier: “seriality becomes a kind of knowledge, a knowledge that is political, bodily and historical: a knowledge about being in time” (6); “seriality is both a category of historical knowledge and a materialization of novel possibilities of mediation” (15); it is immersively embedded in “an accelerating and serialized

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news culture” of “visual and spatial forms that were designed to distort scale and distance to create innovative perceptual and bodily effects,” all conducing to “the virtuality of contemporary life” (109). These definitions (serial themselves) are requisite to handle elements that are already known intimately yet that, in the totality of *Serial Forms*, enact a new understanding of the defining modernity that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Enabled by print and technological materiality, time, and human experience and cognition, the serial became a new episteme—a new system of understanding, experience, and knowledge.

This may seem the stuff of high theory, but Pettitt grounds this bold claim in popular culture, the domain of the many rather than the few, and is her own chief theorist, though she draws on Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, Paul Ricoeur, and print scholars Brian Maidment and Mark Turner amidst historians and literary scholars generously cited throughout. Even as older print forms such as the almanac (based on recurring, cyclic time), broadsides, and ballads persisted, the serial production of print with gaps between its ongoing increments helped generate a popular sense of living in time and history, of a today emerging from yesterday, a present always on the cusp of new events and specifically “news” of large or small historical events ranging from Vesuvian eruptions to Waterloo or new media forms like panoramas.

Unapologetically situating her 2020 volume in history and literature, Pettitt’s seven chapters and epilogue detail this new episteme’s emergent formation across media and events, beginning with “Yesterday’s News” (chapter 1), so-called because “taxes on knowledge” meant that daily newspapers were too expensive for most city dwellers, though they might access hand-me-down or shared print or witness street shows inspired by recent events. Starting in the 1820s and 1830s, popular audiences were served by cheap weekly papers separate from daily news, such as Charles Knight’s *Penny Magazine*. Crucially, Knight’s and related cheap titles were illustrated, extending the papers’ accessibility to the illiterate, while their features on recent events or distant customs created a sense of events occurring at a distance, always on the verge of becoming known, which enforced a new generalized perception of dailiness.

Pettitt repeatedly advances bold claims that unsettle long-held assumptions. In “Scott Unbound” (chapter 2), she displaces Walter Scott as inventor of the historical novel in favor of his being a participant in popular culture forms such as cabinets of curiosities; she notes that

Scott himself never called his fictional works “novels” and assigned himself the role of editor, a fitting role for the sheer miscellaneity of his work. “Live Byron” (chapter 3) demonstrates even more powerfully the emergent imbrication of serial print—here the serial poems *Childe Harold* (1812–18) and *Don Juan* (1819–24)—with news and spectacular visuality. If Childe Harold sails past the remains of ancient and recent historical pasts (in the Waterloo canto, for example) in his onward movement, *Don Juan* enters the channel of news, particularly in the shipwreck scene at the end of canto 2. Théodore Géricault’s painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819), based on the disastrous wreck under an incompetent Bourbon-appointed captain, had moved to London soon after its Paris exhibition, where popular audiences filed past the picture and could simultaneously read translated reprintings of testimonies by two of the raft’s survivors. These resulting serial multimedia enabled a sense of participation in a real-time news event, or in Pettitt’s words a “spectacularization of the ‘real’” (130)—an experience in keeping with the panoramas of Waterloo’s battlefield or scenes of contemporary London scrolling past popular viewers, a mediated “real” often accompanied by sound and other effects (such as smoke for battlefields). Spectators were virtually experiencing history on the move, like Childe Harold in his poem.

Serial media that looked back to the past but reinforced a newer sense of the present as unfolding history and spectacle come to the fore in “Vesuvius on the Strand” (chapter 4) and “History in Miniature” (chapter 6). The former traces the widespread print columns on ancient Vesuvian eruptions, especially Pompeii, inspired by renewed eruptions in the nineteenth century; Vesuvius as a historical present was also mediated as visual shows with special effects onstage, at Astley’s, and in opera houses. The Vesuvian iterations within an “accelerating and serialized news culture” had all the greater effect because they disrupted the very sense of dailiness that the subjective experience of an emergent news culture created and sustained: disaster seemed all the more disastrous (as it does in our own time) because of preponderant dailiness (109). Given this surround of news, image, sound, and more in London shows and print, Bulwer Lytton’s *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) could acquire a more powerful, looming sense of disaster because, the end already known, his linear narrative of dailiness was fraught with underlying doom.

The chapter on miniaturizing history addresses miniature reproductions, pictures, or toys (e.g., of the Roman Coliseum), which enabled

audiences, including nonreaders, to deepen a sense of living in history and thereby of participating in it (which might suggest interventions leading to an alternative future). Miniaturization also imparted a sense of control over the ongoing surge of events in time. Here, then, was the potentially liberal and liberating effect of serialization.

But Pettitt explores the flip side in chapters 5, “Scalar: Pugin, Carlyle, Dickens,” and 7, “Biopolitics of Seriality.” Nineteenth-century seriality (in its comprehensive sense) was accompanied by the scalar, the huge scaling up of massive printing initiatives, advertisements, things, people, details, and events that marked the first half of the century, and that could lead to the regressive mediations of categorization and classification (e.g., the deserving or undeserving poor) and statistical surveillance and mapping meant to control the urban populace. Augustus Pugin and Thomas Carlyle, both repulsed by the massive noisiness, exaggerations, and chaos of commercial advertising culture, turned to the past, Pugin in *Contrasts* (1841), Carlyle in *Past and Present* (1843). Yet to make themselves heard, as it were, they too engaged in these qualities, Carlyle self-consciously so through his distinctive rhetorical style. Dickens, in contrast, far less troubled by the scale of London, serialized it in his *Sketches by Boz* (1833–36), set amidst a crumbling past within which Londoners still maintained touch with older cultural forms such as the broadsides depicting sensational crimes; Dickens thereby let Londoners see themselves mirrored in print, enabling their own participation in seriality.

Pettitt, paradoxically, registers regressive, potentially oppressive social mapping and classifying in the 1840s in the reformist *Howitt's Journal* (1847–48), edited by the progressive William and Mary Howitt, themselves dedicated to working-class uplift through shared knowledge, weekly news bulletins, advocacy of reforms, and critiques of government failure to respond adequately to the Irish famine. It was they, too, who according to Pettitt played the principal role in the crowd-sourced funding campaign to purchase a steam press for the *North Star* newspaper of Frederick Douglass (founded 1847), which itself was modeled on *Howitt's Journal*, after Douglass and they became friends during his tour of the British isles in 1845–47. Set against these ostensibly progressive moves, however, the emphasis of *Howitt's Journal* on successive generations (their reproduction and nurture in future), the editors' own great faith in the liberating possibilities of new technologies, and their classificatory impulse manifest in the distinctions of race (e.g., Irish versus English) and the very divisions of their own periodical, from “month” illustrations

by Wilhelm von Kaulbach to a separate “Children’s Corner” (though poems, tales, and selected illustrations often appeared in separate sections in weekly papers). The Howitts, Pettitt suggests, were naïvely blind to the negations of biopolitics as a regulatory force that tracked and directed the growing population of England as well as to technology that worked hand in glove with capitalism (itself dependent on births to provide labor and consumers) to generate rich versus poor. Notably, biopolitics always involves seriality, as individuals are a part of an ongoing whole and successively enter and depart from a population. Elizabeth Gaskell, who contributed pseudonymous stories to *Howitt’s*, comes in for more sympathetic treatment, for in a story such as “Life in Manchester: Libby Marsh’s Three Eras,” she represents an alternative to heterosexual reproduction in the productive and affective economic unit of Libby and washerwoman Margaret Hall who support and care for each other. Pettitt ends by noting that at least the Howitts attempted to bring into existence a more liberal, free society and helped bring attention to the marginalized.

Pettitt conveys this far-reaching argument with graceful prose throughout. More notably, her writing participates aesthetically in the argument she sets forth. It took a massive materiality of print and London shows to shift what could be merely one incident following another or scraps of print taken up a bit at a time into an episteme, and the materiality of her own book, its prose, its chock-a-block footnotes below the text, and its manifold pictures replicating nineteenth-century visuality performatively convey the book’s argument. I have noted already her serial layering of definition upon definition of seriality, and her density of historical detail likewise helps re-create in the phenomenology of the reading experience the scalar materiality of print and the culture’s serial rhythms.

Pettitt’s fascinating epilogue focuses on Alexandre Dumas’s feuilleton *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844–46) and Robert Browning’s “How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix” (1845), both marked by relentless speed and a sense of individual agency, and both dependent on their insistent forward movements to literal technology (in Dumas’s case) or to the new rhythms of industrial technology conveyed in the poem. It was the merging of seriality and technology, she then adds, that created the possibility of the serial revolutions of 1848, the focus of her second volume. (The last volume in the trilogy, with the working title *Serial Transmission*, is forthcoming.)

In *Serial Revolutions 1848*, seriality remains an episteme, a materiality manifest in communications networks and embodied human action, and an ongoing, unclosed temporality marked by pauses—this last crucial because it leaves open the possibility of alternative futures (the very aim of revolution) or shutting down momentary uprisings and reestablishing a worse status quo. Pettitt concludes her four-hundred-page volume arguing that the serial revolutions of 1848 were “the powerful response to a remarkable cross-class diagnosis of the political failure of governments across Europe to care for their people. And, crucially, . . . [I] argue that this revolutionary response was the result of new forms of representation and mediation: until the ragged and the angry could see themselves represented, and represented as a serial phenomenon, such a political consciousness was impossible” (391).

Her book thus offers a bold counterstatement to Karl Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), which dismisses the 1848 serial revolutions as a failure because prior governments were reinstated afterward—a judgment shared among many historians. Pettitt contends instead that these outbreaks modified the nineteenth-century serial episteme in generating a persisting transnational awareness of multiple polities and a fresh concept of universal human rights, especially the right to work, move, think, and speak freely associated with full citizenship—a concept that would help fuel the civil rights movement of the 1960s decades later. She also directly links the serial 1848 revolutions to serial print that could convey new ideas and human actions with speed, instigating human actants to respond unpredictably and spontaneously, then disperse. This model is consistent with Jean-Paul Sartre’s social theory in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). Sartre, according to Pettitt, “substitutes seriality for collectivity,” for he perceives in the modern city a seriality that is a “mode of being for individuals both in relation to one another and in relation to their common being,” which can produce “a ‘group-in-fusion’ with the capacity for political resistance.” Rather than the class formation and solidarity so crucial for Marx, Sartre’s social model makes comprehensible “a distributed series of parallel responses to similar, but not identical, provocations and forms of oppression”—namely, the 1848 serial revolutions (26–27).

To focalize her broad canvas, Pettitt traces the disparate places, events, evolving concepts of human rights, and new literary forms that revolutionary ideas required through a transnational set of figures: Arthur Hugh Clough, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charles Dickens, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Fanny

Lewald (though we see Lewald least often). Cumulatively, their writings and movements help Pettitt unfold the more global, less nationalistic moment of 1848–49 against a backdrop of utopian hopes driven by new consciousness of social inequities created by incompetent governments—before more nationalist, capitalistic, imperialist regimes indeed followed.

Pettitt's first three chapters, as in *Serial Forms*, foreground popular shows and forms of print as English, American, and European visitors flocked to Paris when revolution broke out in February 1848 to witness history and an apparent continuation of 1789. Emerson, Lewald, and belatedly Clough were among those “Revolutionary Tourists” (the title of chapter 1). Ironically, being up close provided no stable perspective, for in this urban setting crowds could pop up and disrupt the city, then disperse before the foreign visitors (many hampered by inadequate command of French) heard about or understood it. The visitors also lacked ready access to the revolutionary clubs or socialist *ateliers* of Louis Blanc that were helping drive revolt. Ironically, though bursts of action on urban streets provided street theater of sorts, formal theatrical performance imparted the tourists' clearest sensation of witnessing revolution, especially when, after every performance of her tragedy repertoire, the actress Rachel seized a large tricolor and sang the Marseillaise.

Theatricality also figures in chapter 3, “The Ragged of Europe,” since one of the Parisian celebrity performers was Frédéric Lemaître in the roles of ragged trickster Robert Macaire or Jean, the title character of *Le Chiffonnier de Paris* (*The Ragpicker of Paris*, 1847–48), by socialist playwright Félix Pyat, a work censured for inciting insurrection. Positing that the many actual ragpickers of Paris formed a Sartrean group rather than class, Pettitt asserts that seeing themselves depicted onstage and in illustrations gave the poor and ragged of Paris purchase on a sense of history and participation in ongoing political uprisings themselves—in short, to see themselves as fully human beings entitled to human rights. The way for this was also prepared by Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–43) and its transnational sequel, G. W. M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* (1844–46), both of which also addressed workers and the urban poor, their rapid succession facilitated by the Paris–London print-and-travel channel that Pettitt brilliantly excavates in her second chapter, “Moving Pictures.”

Challenging the frequent historical assumption that the rapid spread of 1848 revolutions relied on the telegraph and railroad, Pettitt reminds us that these European networks weren't yet fully developed—but



they were between Paris and London. Thus, she asserts, the key to what seemed like electric revolutionary transmission was the illustrated newspaper that pictured revolutionary events and that, as a visual form, could be rapidly transmitted across borders and languages and levels of literacy, helping to create “an imaginary of ‘1848’” (27). The images often were produced in London, where the *Illustrated London News* debuted in 1842, and where woodcut illustrations that could be printed alongside verbal text had been developed. Some images of the Paris revolution were crafted by French exiles in London or were modified stock images of Paris; these woodcuts could then be sold back to France and other countries, and Pettitt literally tracks the circulation of an iterated image from London to Paris to Germany (101–2, 109–10). As she wryly notes, “it was non-revolutionary London that was supplying representations of the Paris revolution back to Paris and beyond” (96).

Thereafter, *Serial Revolutions 1848* takes a more literary turn, for, as Pettitt straightforwardly explains at the outset, “it was through novel material forms of serial writing, speaking, and performing that serial communication became the engine of revolution in 1848” (31). In chapter 4 (“The Inter-National Novel”), Pettitt takes up Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), still best known as an “Industrial” or “Condition of England” novel or provincial tale of Manchester. Pettitt is having none of it. She boldly claims *Mary Barton* to be as important a contribution of 1848 to world literature as Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, upholding the intellectual strength and power of Gaskell’s analysis. For Gaskell saw, as would Clough and others, that the underlying revolutionary demand was for work and fair pay. *Mary Barton*, she contends, is profoundly aware of work in all its materiality and its applicability not just to men but to women, whom she represents as supporting the family when the men are thrown out of work, rather than suggesting that female support unmans men and unwomans women, as Engels claimed (179). Both genders are part of an impoverished community that works daily, hourly, often long into the night to sustain life and extend the affective bonds that require caring for the aged, ill, and children. Rather than a resolution in romance, as many have argued, the novel’s concluding remove to Canada, according to Pettitt, occurs because it’s the one place Jem can get work.

“Under Siege” (chapter 5) intriguingly pairs Margaret Fuller and Clough as transnational writers creating new styles for an era of transnational rather than insulated national literature and politics, Fuller in her serial dispatches to the *New York Tribune* (often broken off with “Time Fails” as she rushed to get her dispatch into the mail) and he in his serial,



open-ended, old-new poem “Amours de Voyage,” the very open-endedness being the essential, foundational trait of seriality and of revolutionary activity. Both writers’ forms conveyed a sense of being in the midst of revolution and developed “a peculiarly urgent epistolary style of address,” drawing them into alignment to convey the abrupt shifts in action and revolutionary status moment to moment (193–94). Of course, Claude’s rushed dispatches go astray, so that the revolutionary and romantic plots of Clough’s serially published poem obstruct each other, and just as Claude ends traveling without direction, so the poem itself represents the “nightmarish open-endedness of history” (216).

Emerson and Douglass are the focus of chapters 6 (“Serially Speaking”) and 7 (“Slavery and Citizenship”), as is their shared invention of a new serial form to embody new ideas of citizenship and democracy for a transitioning era: the lecture scripted in advance, delivered in person to share the individual presence that was part of the meaning for the audience, then picked up immediately in newspapers that circulated the lectures to a far wider assemblage. The lecture series, then, was another serial form of mixed temporalities that could travel, as could open-ended evolving thought, and these *were* intimately tied to the railroad in Britain and the United States (228, 235). The trigger to Emerson’s evolving thought from individualism to the necessity of abolition, and Douglass’s shift from speaking as a formerly tormented slave to an orator propounding universal human rights, was both men’s travel to the British isles and, in Emerson’s case, Paris. Emerson could never overcome his racist tendencies but learned to reassess his thought as a result of first dismissing, then being in the midst of Parisian revolutionary fervor that called into question his former elevation of the peaceable English nation. For Douglass, the pivot was witnessing famine in Ireland, when he saw that the seriality of suffering and impoverishment affected white- as well as black-skinned peoples, which pointed to larger encompassing systemic serial inequities that demanded redress in universal citizenship and rights. Both Emerson and Douglass thereafter turned to the U.S. Constitution as one means of reform and redress, “imagining a new constitutionalism that was serial and therefore flexible and responsive, forward moving, and open to reinterpretation” (289).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows* (1847–51), written first as she observed revolution from her window, then responded to in the aftermath of Austrian troops’ return as both poet and mother, is the focus of chapters 8 (“O bella libertà”) and 9 (“Forms of the Future”). *Casa Guidi Windows* comports well with Pettitt’s argument

that the 1848 revolutions were not mere ephemeral eruptions but part of a serial process that opened onto a future that was different from what preceded; in this context the poems' windows in part I are portals opening onto a possible albeit not yet realized future (similar to a theme she pursues with Dickens in chapter 10). Part I identifies democracy with the people, yet Barrett Browning recognizes the challenge posed when the majority of them are illiterate and need far more than words to coalesce around revolution; hence the poem ends by breaking with serial time and reverts to prophetic time when Barrett Browning alludes to "The Vail, lean[ing] inward to the Mercy-seat." This Old Testament passage, if read typologically, forecasts the coming of Christ and assured future salvation (320). *Casa Guidi Windows*, accordingly, is an "interstitial poem . . . that exists in the in-between of the interrupted revolutionary process." Paradoxically, its pause from serial time opens a portal, "the real 'windows' of the poem: windows of opportunity for the reprisal of the struggle" (319). That the abstract child who opens part I by singing "*O bella libertà*" has become the real child born to the poet during the pause gestures toward biopolitics, the birth of future generations that will realize the revolution's goals.

Barrett Browning shared both recent motherhood and passionate advocacy of the Risorgimento with Margaret Fuller, who stopped in Florence for a few months on her way back to the United States (forever suspended when she, her husband, and child drowned just off the U.S. coast amidst shipwreck). Though, unusually, this claim seems more speculative than demonstrated (phrases like "it was possibly" enter the argument), Pettitt contends that Fuller helped radicalize Barrett Browning's thought and catalyze her conviction that a global systemic oppression directly connected Italians' oppression under Austria and the oppressions of U.S. slavery. Pettitt likewise speculates that Fuller's journalistic example may have inclined Barrett Browning to publish her overtly political poems in the weekly *New York Independent* before collecting them in *Poems Before Congress* (1860) and to adopt a new, more direct style of political protest. What remains indisputable is that Fuller and Barrett Browning's brief intimacy also involved their roles as mothers, with their babies playing with each other and their exchange of gifts. Pettitt further widens her transnational analysis by connecting *Casa Guidi Windows* to the Macchiaoli painters, committed republicans with whom the Brownings sometimes socialized. Both Barrett Browning and the painters sought new aesthetic forms for gesturing toward an as-yet-unrealized future, and both positioned women next to windows

within domestic interiors even as the women looked beyond onto revolution without. Two paintings that Pettitt reproduces, for example, depict women sewing Italian tricolor flags or singing revolutionary songs at the piano.

Chapter 10, “The Grammar of Revolution,” traces Dickens’s turn to the grammatical form of the historical present in *Dombey and Son* (1846–48), in contrast to the historical past tense he adopted in the earlier historical novel *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). Here, too (as in the prior two chapters), aesthetic form pauses momentarily from linear time to gather energies, invent new strategies, then resume forward-moving serial temporality but one enlarged through a more transnational perspective. The switch point for Dickens, Pettitt suggests, occurred in *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *The Chimes* (1844), when the protagonists are visited by figures of the past, present, and possible future and awakened with transformed perspectives. In both, time is spatialized even as Dickens was “spatializing” his experience by living abroad in Italy in 1844. His brief editing of the *Daily News* in 1846 following his travels to the United States and Italy was also germane. His prior expectation of a new democratic order in the republican United States versus tired old Europe was upended when he encountered so much that was primitive and oppressive in the States (newspapers, unsettled swamps, slavery) and Italian urban centers that resembled England’s. Dickens’s answer to the aesthetic problem of how to manage temporalities within his new more transnational outlook, Pettitt suggests, was the newspaper’s juxtaposition of columns of international news and reports of older events (i.e., a spatialization of temporalities and geographies). At the end of *Dombey and Son*, the historical present surfaces as the honeymoon ship of Walter Gay and Florence Dombey sails off, as Mr. Dombey is ruined, and as he reappears as the white-haired grandfatherly figure walking with his grandson, all in close proximity; a look at the past rendered in present tense becomes a means to a possible future. Dickens passionately supported the Risorgimento, and Pettitt sees the culmination of his revolutionary sympathies in *A Tale of Two Cities*, serialized in 1859 on the cusp of Italian reunification yet reanimating, as it were, the French Revolution. This novel involves transnational spatialization even more emphatically, seen in its sustained juxtaposition of London and Paris that shifts the center of gravity away from nationhood to the channel running between them that belongs to neither; and Dickens’s historical present recurs at the beginning and end to relay a past event. This intensified transnational vision, Pettitt maintains, is one of the most

important residual legacies of the 1848 revolutions, and Dickens emerges here as a progressive figure embracing global awareness and the cause of freedom from oppression. I could not forget in reading about his 1859 novel, however, the Dickens responding to the Indian Uprising of 1857 and the racist transnational Christmas tale it inspired, “The Perils of Certain English Prisoners.” I wish Pettitt had devoted some time to commenting on the relation of these two Dickens moments, one so regressive and lasting, just as she addresses in chapter 6 Emerson’s inability to move beyond racist impulses despite his conversion to abolitionism.

*Serial Revolutions 1848* closes with a transnational tour de force in her epilogue titled “Flaubert’s Afterword,” in which she reads his *L’Éducation Sentimentale* (1869), a retrospective on 1848, less as a send-up of failed revolution than one that presents open possibilities effected through his lapidary prose that counters the onward flow of time. Simultaneously, she filters all her own earlier chapters through the lens that Flaubert’s novel provides.

*Serial Revolutions 1848* is never naïvely optimistic; Pettitt makes clear that one aftermath of 1848 was the establishment of a transnational bureaucracy that tracked and thereby helped control populations, and the rise of an invidious nationalism that led directly to the transnational imperialism of the late century, when the globe had become electronically connected through undersea cables, telegraphs, and sped-up means of transport. She dismisses the nationalist narrative of exceptionalism whereby Britain explained its avoidance of revolution in 1848, attributing the avoidance not to its constitutional monarchy but to Britain’s status as a surveillance state that imposed on its citizens press censorship, taxes on knowledge, and a police force begun with the Bow Street Runners of 1829. But neither will she concede that the 1848 serial revolutions were a flash in the pan that burned brightly and immediately faded. For her, they are a serial occurrence reliant on the speed of print and illustrations and the affordances of serial time that can make a pause outside of time and forward movement to reenvision and realize an alternative future. I admire Pettitt’s ability to manage massive detail while sustaining a through line and attention to individual human lives, daily human experience, and above all the imperative human rights of work and dignity. The cohesion of her first volume is stronger, but that is in part because its canvas is smaller with fewer variables to manage, in contrast to the deliberately transnational conspectus of 1848.

In demonstrating the pervasiveness and effects of seriality as episteme, Pettitt's two volumes are a far cry from studies that take up a specific publication or address a common literary form of the nineteenth century and, in the electronic media of radio and television, the twentieth and twenty-first. Still, recent studies of seriality from 2018–2022 look ahead to aspects of her work, if not matching the scale of her examination or her encompassing vision of seriality as episteme (a term Pettitt herself does not use, I should note). An especially important recent contribution is Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa SurrIDGE's *The Plot Thickens: Illustrated Victorian Serial Fiction from Dickens to Du Maurier* (2019), which anticipates Pettitt's own argument about serial illustration's ability to move in parallel with or detached from verbal texts and to layer temporalities through prolepsis and analepsis (two of Leighton and SurrIDGE's categories of serial illustration). As well, their volume's many illustrations remind us of the enormous abundance of illustration in nineteenth-century print at large. Their analysis is tied specifically to serial literary fiction in Britain, however, as opposed to Pettitt's interest in transnational visuality in newspapers, street shows, theater, and more. To cite another example, a cluster of short essays on "seriality" by Susan David Bernstein, Lauren Goodlad, and Robyn Warhol in this journal's "Keywords" special issue (2018) point to the affective dynamics and relation of fictive worlds to readers' external surrounds, in psychoanalytic terms (Bernstein), in the shift in serial scholarship to ever greater transnationality and transtemporalities (Goodlad), and in the scalar effects of multiple simultaneous serials and print forms (Warhol).

Seriality's potential for multiple simultaneous temporalities, rhythms, formats, and subject matter is touched on in an alternative cluster of essays. James Mussell's "Seeking Nothing and Finding It': Moving On and Staying Put in *Mugby Junction*" (2018), one of the tales in *All the Year Round*'s 1866 Christmas number, attends not only to Dickens's fiction (in which Boxcar Brown moves on [to a new phase of life] by staying put [in *Mugby Junction*]) but also to the larger seriality of periodicals that rely both on pauses between parts yet also a continuity that promises repetition (of features and forms), each time with a difference. He thus shares Pettitt's attention to the always-contingent open-endedness of seriality (since all serials can abruptly end and be replaced by a something else). Mark Turner's "Seriality, Miscellaneity, and Compression in Nineteenth-Century Print" (2020) considers the miscellaneity of journal content that allows for massive expansiveness which can be managed and contained through the stabilizing periodicity of the serial form itself. The

nineteenth century's pervasive seriality was thus characterized by expansion and contraction with interstitial pauses, and also by compression in the later century in features like W. T. Stead's *Review of Reviews* and ever shorter "bits" designed for rapid consumption. Turner also emphasizes seriality across multiple genres with variant rhythms, and the compression that often occurred as a serial became a volume. My "Vernon Lee: Slow Serialist and Journalist at the Fin de Siècle" (2022) examines not only the understudied early journalism of Lee across various periodicals but also notes an alternative serial genre and serial rhythms in tracing the irregular serial publication of Lee's aesthetic criticism, sometimes with long gaps between installments, before she gathered her dispersed serial essays into a volume, a kind of secreting out from a mass of unrelated, undifferentiated print contexts into a new unity that I liken to the nebular hypothesis, wherein planets gradually form from masses of gas and dust and develop a new gravitational pull around a center. Finally, Pettitt's attention to transnationality, race, and returns to the past to prop open alternative paths into the future is anticipated by Amber Foster in "The Serial Novel, Nation, and Utopia: An Intratextual Re-Reading of Pauline Hopkins' *Of One Blood; Or, the Hidden Self*" (2019). As Foster argues, when Pauline Hopkins was editing the *Colored American Magazine* (1900–1904), African American periodicals were imagining "what a more egalitarian future society might look like," and Hopkins's serial novel *Of One Blood* (1903–4) "reimagines Africa as a past and future utopian landscape, an ideological nexus for African-American renewal" (42)—terms that parallel Pettitt's own analysis of the importance of seriality to the 1848 revolutions and British authors' turn toward a past to imaging an alternative new future.

These works of 2018–2022 provide sidelights on seriality, but Pettitt's large-scale representation of seriality grounded in history, literature, and popular culture stands alone. Pettitt's vision of seriality amounts, I have argued, to an episteme, and her large vision is alive to the enabling and progressive as well as to the oppressive potentialities of a pervasive seriality. In toto, scalar seriality, her two volumes persuasively argue, helped nineteenth-century human beings to discern, grasp, and develop new awareness of being in history and in the world on a global scale.

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