
introduction

A Great Multiplication of Meters

J A S O N D A V I D H A L L

The long nineteenth century (the period to which the present book is devoted) was simply awash with meter, and it mattered in more ways, and to more people, than most of us, from our twenty-first-century vantage point, readily appreciate. So abundant, in fact, was the metrical output of the period that the eminent turn-of-the-century prosodist George Saintsbury devoted a whole book to it: the third and final volume of his epic *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day* (1906–10) concentrates exclusively on meters “From Blake to Mr. Swinburne.” His compendious study catalogues an array of feet and forms—from the usual to the more exceptional suspects. Alongside the proliferation of ballad meters, perfect as well as “minced or colloped decasyllabic lines,” and much-debated hexameters (which receive a chapter of their own), one finds several less frequently remembered (and even less discussed) measures: Swinburne’s “Dolores’ metre,” the “fourteener metre” of William Morris’s *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), the “Whitmanically” arranged meters of William Ernest Henley’s *A Song of Speed* (1903), and “other out-of-the-way measures”¹—alcaic meters, choriambic meters, galliambic meters, sapphic meters, and various imported French measures and stanzas. Even a “deeply traditional poet” such as William Wordsworth, as Brennan O’Donnell reminds us, not only attempted to renovate blank verse but also used “nearly ninety different

stanza forms.”² Indeed, so staggering was the “multitude of metres”³ in circulation that nineteenth-century poets and readers sometimes struggled to make sense of—not to mention agree on—matters of versification. According to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, the young Alfred Tennyson had no “understanding” of meter, so ostensibly dissimilar were the two poets’ positions on the subject.⁴ Poets were not alone in their confusion. Many a reader of George Meredith’s later poetry, in fact, wondered whether it was written in verse at all. *Punch* satirists accused Meredith of “destroying literary form” altogether with his staggered stressing, irregular syllabification, and contorted syntax (fig. 1).⁵ Unquestionably, along with the century’s profusion of prosody came much disagreement about what meter was and how it functioned.

Meter Matters displays a sampling of this metrical miscellany. To help situate the range of metrical activity discussed in the chapters below, and to gesture toward the superabundance of meter *not* represented here (the collection’s “supernumerary syllables,” we might say), this introduction provides an (admittedly truncated) account of some of prosody’s perambulations, its myriad movements and modulations, across the literary and cultural terrain of the 1800s. While Saintsbury’s *History* provides a fairly comprehensive—if by no means unbiased—account of Romantic and Victorian meters, it nonetheless gives little indication of how widely and variously versification voyaged in the nineteenth century. That meter mattered to the period’s poets goes almost without saying (though today it is worth repeating); just the same, the nineteenth-century “metrical imaginary” that Yopie Prins and other scholars (in this compilation and elsewhere) have begun to bring to light encompassed considerably more than just writing *in verse*.⁶ There are countless instances not only of meter’s refusal to respect generic boundaries—the idea of genre was itself in flux during the nineteenth century⁷—but also of its diffusion across regimes of knowledge not often associated with anacrusis and ictus, iambus and amphibrach. Given the ubiquity of meter and its corollaries, a truly *historical* prosody (which is one among many things that *Meter Matters* endeavors to showcase) must, of necessity, cast its nets very wide, explicating (literally “laying open”) nineteenth-century prosody’s often unpredictable (and seldom seen) circulation among and dialogue with the urgencies—as well as the trivialities—of its moment, which include, to begin with, contemporary social and political agendas, sciences and technologies, and educational and philosophical methods and models.⁸



FIGURE 1. “Meredith Destroying Literary Form,” an illustration by E. T. Reed, from *Punch*, 28 July 1894, 37. Reproduced by permission of Special Collections, University of Exeter.

Exactly who was encountering meter throughout the nineteenth century? How and where were they coming into contact with it? To what extent did prosody intersect with other discursive economies, both elite and popular? These are just a few of the questions that underpin *Meter Matters* and that its contributors aim to address. In the next few pages, I give some responses of

my own, beginning close to home with some examples drawn from the century's imaginative literature before moving from there into what is possibly less familiar metrical territory.



METER's circulation in the nineteenth century was greatly assisted by what Richard Menke has called "an emergent 'culture of information,'" which was characterized by a "cross-pollination between imaginative writing and media innovation." The period's readers, who were being exposed to "new forms of information exchange" almost daily,⁹ grew accustomed to encountering not only poems but also prosody mixed in with other forms of literature, including prose fiction. In *Hard Times* (1854), for example, Charles Dickens counts "prosody" among the subjects that the educator Mr. McChoakumchild has "at the ends of his ten chilled fingers."¹⁰ Later, in the 1860s, Dickens would publish in his weekly journal *All the Year Round* a story by Percy Hetherington Fitzgerald that features a tutor, Mr. Blackstone, similarly equipped for "grinding" the fundamentals of prosody into small boys.¹¹ Several of the century's best-known writers of fiction were, of course, poets as well. Charles Kingsley, for one, was not only a popular novelist but also, according to one contemporary source, the author of "the finest English hexameters ever written."¹² His most celebrated contribution to this contested genre is undoubtedly "Andromeda," the narrative title poem of his 1858 collection. Just three years earlier, as a "hexameter mania" (Saintsbury's term) was spreading throughout Britain and America (where Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, author of the 1847 poem *Evangeline*, was regarded as the measure's master), Kingsley unapologetically smuggled a full six pages of metrical diversion into his historical novel *Westward Ho!* (1855). At the center of its swashbuckling sixteenth-century action, amid the battle of Smerwick Bay, two figures (revealed to be Walter Raleigh and Edmund Spenser) square up for a contretemps of their own: the one, we are told, "was in complete armor; the other wrapped in the plain short cloak of a man of pens and peace: but the talk of both was neither of sieges nor of sallies, catapult, bombard, nor culverin, but simply of English hexameters."¹³ Though it may be hard for us to believe now, few subjects exercised educated Victorians (and their early-modern avatars) more than the six-foot Homeric line and its "modern" interpretations.

While metrical digressions as protracted as this one may have been rare, they were often just as bizarrely positioned and humorously executed, as

Wilkie Collins demonstrated. Though no poet himself, Collins nonetheless delighted in comedy of a metrical and more generally elocutionary nature, and in his 1870 novel *Man and Wife*, he entered jocosely into contemporary debates about the desirability of the so-called final pause (fig. 2). Exaggerating advice from metrists and elocutionists about the correctness of a slight “suspension of the voice” at the end of blank-verse lines, Collins has one of his metrically untutored characters deliver the opening verses of *Paradise Lost* so that “every line [ends] inexorably with a full stop” (each of which Collins deliberately prints):

Of Man’s first disobedience and the fruit.
 Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste.
 Brought death into the world and all our woe.
 With loss of Eden till one greater Man.
 Restore us and regain the blissful seat.
 Sing heavenly Muse—¹⁴

Such a stilted reading (no heavenly singing, this) pokes fun at those who would insist, as many authorities did, that “every line [be] sensible to the



FIGURE 2. “Ending Every Line with a Full Stop,” from Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife* (1870).

ear.”¹⁵ There is here the intimation of an exchange between a fiction and a metrics of sensation. As Jason R. Rudy’s chapter shows, meter was, for many Victorians, something sensible not merely to the ear but to the body more generally: rhythmic experiences could not simply be confined to the mind (though Coventry Patmore, for one, might wish they were); rather, they were often compellingly (and at times worryingly) physiological.

Meter certainly had the power to excite those who took it seriously. Alongside nineteenth-century fictional works, there existed a metrical literature of fact—not unknown to the century’s Gradgrinds, McChoakumchilds, and their ilk—where questions of metrical theory, which incorporated prescriptions on pause, were anything but a laughing matter. The late-Victorian poet-cum-prosodist Alice Meynell, for example, once described herself as “fierce” on the subject of trochaic endings, remarking that she was prepared for a “passage of arms” on the question of “whether one might pause on them before carrying on the weak syllable to the next line.”¹⁶ The conviction of Meynell’s metrics (not to mention her bellicose rhetoric) is, as it happens, not inconsistent with the tenor of much Victorian metrical discourse, particularly at the fin de siècle and in the decades leading up the First World War—as Meredith Martin’s “Prosody Wars” chapter makes clear. A rapidly specializing and professionalizing field of study—at once affiliated with but increasingly discrete from its parent disciplines of philology and grammar—prosody was very much contested territory, whose borders and homelands were patrolled (and whose “laws” were enforced) by a veritable army of professional and auxiliary prosodists, some of them also poets. These no-nonsense arbiters of verse form pronounced and wrangled with each other on subjects such as feet, accents, quantities, and, of course, systems for defining and measuring the same—frequently with an earnestness that made them easy targets for satirists such as Collins. In fact, the figure of “the prosodist” was, throughout the century, a well-known emblem of pedantry—a latter-day Augustan dryasdust “Whose head with cloistered lore . . . / Was fill’d, and modern learning too.”¹⁷ The prosodist’s arcane, often antiquated subject of study did little in the popular imagination to confound this stereotype. Many metricians, of course, devoted their energies to the internecine mysteries of quantitative classical prosody, and their learned treatises cluttered the pages of specialist organs such as *Transactions of the Philological Society* and the *Classical Museum*.

There was a burgeoning “science” of vernacular meters as well. Yet while scholarship focusing on modern English versification grew apace during the

nineteenth century, it sometimes struggled to distinguish itself in relation to its Latin and Greek forebears. For many metrists, the principles of English verse could be derived indisputably from ancient quantitative measures, while for others the meters of antiquity were based on different principles altogether from those that characterized the modern English line. Edgar Allan Poe, an avid prosodist, indeed remarked in his 1848 essay “The Rationale of Verse” that “while much has been written on the Greek and Latin rhythms, . . . little effort has been made at examining that of any of the modern tongues. As regards the English, comparatively nothing has been done.”¹⁸ What Poe and many of his contemporaries wanted was a “system” of English versification that accounted for the “varieties of English feet and English lines.” Was English poetry, like Greco-Roman verse, fundamentally quantitative (that is, based on the duration of pronounced syllables), or was it essentially accentual (based on patterns of accent or stress), as Anglo-Saxon verse had been? In 1838, the English philologist Edwin Guest had staked a claim for stress in his *A History of English Rhythms*, which endeavored to establish accent as the rhythmical “index” of English poetry.¹⁹ In the 1850s, however, prosodists such as E. S. Dallas and Coventry Patmore (the latter now more famous for his 1854 poem *The Angel in the House*, the former all but forgotten entirely) suggested an alternative theory. English meter, they argued, was not fundamentally *accentual* but *temporal*. In his book *Poetics* (1852), Dallas claimed that “metre in its simplest form” is “time heard,”²⁰ an idea that Patmore would develop a few years later in his influential *Essay on English Metrical Law* (1857). According to Patmore, English meter was properly a measurement of “the time occupied in the delivery of a series of words,” and he set out a “law” based on the division of lines into “isochronous intervals,” or units of equal time. Drawing an analogy with musical isochronism, Patmore designated “the isochronous *bar*” as the “integer” of English metrical verse.²¹ Later in the century, the American poet-prosodist and Civil War veteran Sidney Lanier, in his authoritatively titled *The Science of English Verse* (1880), acknowledged Patmore’s work in his elaboration of a complex musical prosody. Around the turn of the century, the positivistic impulse suggested by Lanier’s title found its fullest expression in scientists’ laboratories, where experimental psychologists such as Edward Wheeler Scripture brought to metrical studies a technologically informed and empirically grounded methodology very much in keeping with the modern, industrial spirit of the times. Their analyses tended toward “fact” in a way unforeseen

by earlier generations of metrists. Trusting in data produced by their kymographs and phonautographs, these “verse scientists” forsook the more or less abstract, idealized language of “feet” or “intervals” for what I. A. Richards, in *Practical Criticism* (1929), would call “the actual sounds in verse.”²²

Of the voluminous literature devoted to the “laws” or “facts” of meter, a sizeable proportion was intended for and consumed, sometimes enthusiastically but more often grudgingly, by schoolboys, most of them pupils in England’s public and grammar schools. Meter mattered to them in an immediate, matter-of-fact way: it formed part of the daily scholastic routine. In Thomas Hughes’s *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857), other school novels of the period, and countless educated men’s memoirs and autobiographies, one can find accounts of doing “weekly ‘verse task[s]” or composing the daily “vul-gus.”²³ These exercises, devised by educators such as William Johnson Cory (of Eton College) and C. Granville Gepp (of King Edward VI School), introduced pupils to the fundamentals of classical pronunciation and meter, endeavoring (with more or less success) “to make the process of versification less distasteful and less wearisome to boys than it sometimes used to be.”²⁴ In theory if not always in practice, an education grounded in the particulars of classical prosody was intended to matter well beyond boys’ school days. For many middle-class pupils in Britain (and for an expanding population of their American counterparts),²⁵ success in their “afterlife”—whether they followed a clerical vocation, forged ahead as captains of industry, or took up the burden of empire—depended (nominally, at least) on their fluent mastery of Latin and Greek metrics. The practice of “exercising boys in the composition of Latin poetry,” as Vicesimus Knox, one-time headmaster of Tonbridge School, stated in his *Essays, Moral and Literary* (first published in 1778), would instill in them “manly behaviour” and “virtue.”²⁶ With that aim in mind, Latin masters (the “grinders” who, as we have seen, populate much of the century’s literature) ensured that boys’ days were spent grinding away at (that is, construing, scanning, and composing) “verses” using texts such as the *Eton Latin Grammar* (in use for much of the century) and, notoriously, the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, a formidable compendium of classical quantities. Pupils disregarded the rules of quantity at their peril. A “false quantity” found in a boy’s exercises could and very often did lead to corporal punishment. In several of his letters, the Eton-educated poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (whose meters Yisrael Levin discusses in a later chapter) claims to have fantasized about metrically induced floggings, though he

avers that he never experienced a “swishing” for such a lapse.²⁷ Toward the end of the century, when English began displacing the classics as the subject of literary instruction, boys and young men learned from vulgar prosody manuals such as John Ruskin’s *Elements in English Prosody; for Use in St. George’s Schools* (1880) and the American Francis Gummere’s *Handbook of Poetics, for Students of English Verse* (1885). The specter of classical meters, however, would continue to haunt classrooms (and the boys who received their prosodic inculcation there) well into the twentieth century.

Admittedly, for many boys subjected to such an educational regime, meter mattered considerably less once school was behind them and a career had been achieved or other means of receiving an income were secured. Richard Carstone, the hopeful young ward in Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1853), thinks little about his “eight years at a public school” and the “Latin verses of several sorts” that he learned to make there once he begins to look forward to the possibility of a “settlement.” Regardless, for him and other men throughout the century, the prosodical equipage that accompanied a classical education—which Esther Summerson suspects has not “directed [Richard’s] character” as it ought²⁸—remained an important “status marker”²⁹ for men well into adulthood. Indeed, just being in a metrical environment seems to have had its benefits, whether a boy took his studies seriously or not. Consider, for example, the character of Flashman from Hughes’s novel about Rugby School. While this fifth-form bully expresses little interest in doing his “verses” while at school, his disregard for anapests and dactyls appears to hinder him little as a grown man—or so George MacDonald Fraser’s series of twentieth-century novels would have us believe. An educator such as Knox might have argued that Flashman benefitted unconsciously from exposure to the character-building rigors of the public-school pedagogical method.³⁰ Presumably, then, even Flashey’s avoidance of Latin meters enabled him to develop other equally valuable skills. Though the narrator of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* never says as much, we are given to understand that the boy-menace is an adherent of the “vicarious method” of vulgus-composition—which “obtained amongst big boys of lazy or bullying habits, and consisted simply in making clever boys whom they could thrash do their whole vulgus for them, and construe it to them afterwards.”³¹ No doubt the lessons in delegation learned from foisting his meters on his juniors would serve as good preparation for a career as an army officer in the Crimea, India, and Afghanistan—just some of the places, according

to Fraser, that Flashman's misadventures take him following his expulsion from Rugby.

For many others, less dilatory in their metrical dispositions, versification continued to exert an altogether conscious and positive attraction well into adulthood, sustaining (or at least counterpointing) their professional pursuits. For instance, the eminent British scientist William Whewell, author of the influential *History of the Inductive Sciences* (1837), managed to keep up his classical-verse composition and continued to exchange letters with his old Latin master at Rugby about the “naturalness” of English hexameters. His contemporary, the scientist and polymath J. F. W. Herschel, was also an energetic versifier and an interlocutor with Matthew Arnold, Longfellow, and others in midcentury debates about classical meters. In 1867 Herschel had his *Schillers Spaziergang, Translated into Latin Verse* printed as a pamphlet for private circulation (fig. 3). Likewise, the leonine William Ewart Gladstone, four-time Liberal prime minister of Great Britain, remained an avid classicist throughout his political career and frequently participated in contemporary debates about classical verse. In the 1860s and '70s, he waded into controversies regarding accent in Greek verse, rejecting theories that insisted on equating it with “emphasis.”³² Like their British contemporaries, several American men active in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remained devoted to the meters they had learned as boys. Even as his nation was beginning to assert its newly won independence in the years following the American Revolutionary War, in which he played no small part, the American statesman Thomas Jefferson had meter on his mind. His “Thoughts on English Prosody” (1786) exhibits a little-seen side of the man who would go on to be the nation's third president: not only does the document attest to his classical learning; it also shows him swearing allegiance to accent at the expense of quantity.³³ When, almost a century later, another American, the Phillips Academy-educated physician-poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, decided to tackle prosody in his 1875 essay “The Physiology of Versification,” his intimate knowledge of the human circulatory and respiratory systems influenced his thinking. Convinced that the body “legislates largely for our habits”—“The secret of our diversities as social beings lies far more in our peptic capacities . . . than our friends . . . are always ready to believe”—he grounds our metrical practices in somatic rhythms.³⁴

While for Holmes our embodied experience of rhythm is fundamentally shared—we all have lungs and hearts, and so our capacities for metrical



FIGURE 3. Front cover of J. F. W. Herschel's *Schillers Spaziergang, Translated into Latin Verse* (1867). Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

expression are grounded in more or less the same innate sense of periodicity (gastro-idiocyncrasies notwithstanding)—there are certain physiological rhythms that are *not* universally experienced. In her 1892 essay “The Rhythm of Life,” Alice Meynell reminds us that alongside the metrical “experiences of man” are the “rhythmic pangs of maternity.”³⁵ Irrespective of one’s position regarding prosody’s relationship with the body—and as Kirstie Blair observes, “the mid-Victorian period was the point at which” the link “between rhythm and the body” began to be “fully theorized in relation to metre”³⁶—there can be no denying that nineteenth-century women’s experiences of meter—in particular their access to the formal study of it—differed greatly from men’s. For the most part, girls were not exposed to the same pedagogical regime that boys enjoyed (or endured) at school and, later, at university. “British education,” as Frank M. Turner has noted, “virtually ensured the exclusion of women from both serious classical training and the benefits accruing thereto.”³⁷ Of the girls who were educated at all, most received their instruction at home from governesses or in private day (and in some cases boarding) schools, and prosody exercises of the kind described above did not often feature (or did not feature as consistently) in a young woman’s studies. In fact, many male educators, publishers, and critics argued that the finer points of grammar and prosody were beyond the mental reach of women. Greg Kucich has shown that reviewers in the Romantic period relied on and perpetuated assumptions about women poets’ and dramatists’ lack of prosodic education and general incapacity for understanding the rules of meter, which eluded, they claimed, the “female mind.”³⁸ Such gendered attitudes toward meter—and the ideological motivations underpinning them—persisted, in one form or another, throughout the nineteenth century. As Stephen C. Behrendt has observed, during the Regency period, debates about women’s access to “classical literature and subject-matter as well as poetic devices and prosody” formed part of a deep-seated and “widespread anxiety among the male literary and critical establishment over the possibility that such education might open up avenues of incursion into traditional bastions of male prerogative—including ‘serious’ poetry.”³⁹ A similar prejudice is given voice in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s verse-novel *Aurora Leigh* (1856) when Romney, the protagonist’s cousin, dismisses her apparently amateur grasp of classical versification, referring to her “lady’s Greek / Without the accents.”⁴⁰ If such persistent assumptions, on the part of men, about women’s prosodic ineptitude left some women metrically stifled, it inspired others to

embrace meter enthusiastically. The predilection for received prosodic patterns—possibly even to the point of metrical “conformity”—among some turn-of-the-century women poets has been explained by Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle as part of a conscious “attempt to identify themselves with the male tradition which they sought to enter.”⁴¹

There were, of course, exceptions to the narrative of metrical exclusion and conformity. Not all men assumed women to be incapable of understanding the nuances of versification, whether classical or English. The Victorian theologian and education reformer Frederick Denison Maurice, for instance, did not merely speculate that girls might have an “aptitude” for meter; he also proposed that boys might have a “peculiar inaptitude.”⁴² Some women poets—of whom Barrett Browning is among the best known—set contemporary attitudes at defiance, not only making contact with meter and composing adroitly in it but also contributing their voices to the otherwise male-dominated specialist discourses concerning its theoretical principles. While she may have had an ad hoc classical education—“learn[ing] ancient Greek from her brother’s tutor”—the young Elizabeth Barrett nevertheless knew her classical meters sufficiently well to exchange pointed comments on accent and quantity with Uvedale Price, whose *Essay on the Modern Pronunciation of the Greek and Latin Languages* appeared in 1827. And she was not alone. “With the formation of women’s colleges in the course of the nineteenth century,” notes Yopie Prins, “women gained increasing access to formal education in ancient Greek” meters and their Latin counterparts.⁴³ Some young women in America were afforded similar opportunities. When Emily Dickinson entered Amherst Academy in Massachusetts in 1839, at the age of nine, she was introduced to “a broad curriculum that included Latin, Greek, geography, ancient history, botany, physiology, and English grammar.”⁴⁴ Indeed, as Christine Ross has argued, Dickinson was hardly the “self-taught” prosodist” whose metrical training was grounded principally in hymns, as many critics have speculated; on the contrary, she doubtless “used her textbooks”—such as E. A. Andrews and S. Stoddard’s widely adopted *Grammar of the Latin Language* (possibly the 1836 second edition)—“to create a uniquely expressive metric.”⁴⁵ In Canada, as well as in the United States, normal schools and, eventually, colleges and universities were places where middle-class women could receive instruction in classical and vulgar literatures and prosodies. Even Shakespeare societies provided opportunities for metrical edification: exposure “to any one [Shakespeare] play,” as Heather Murray records in her history of Ontario’s

nineteenth-century literary societies, “opens questions of etymology, syntax, and prosody.”⁴⁶ On both sides of the Atlantic, women found more and more spaces for engaging with the “great multiplication of metres” that Saintsbury’s turn-of-the-century study showcases.⁴⁷

Women were not the only beneficiaries of the growing number of outlets for prosodic instruction. Throughout the century, various organizations and individuals, many of them driven by the spirit of self-improvement that characterized the age, were helping to democratize versification, extending the metrical franchise to those for whom the subject had long been literally a closed book. While Wordsworth was, in the preface to his 1815 *Poems*, considering the possibilities of widening prosodic participation—addressing the “spirit of versification” in relation to the reader’s “voluntary power to modulate”⁴⁸—he was nevertheless unwilling to forsake the “law” of meter in favor of the (possibly untutored) individual’s voicing of it. By contrast, the radical poet and elocutionist John Thelwall, who corresponded with Wordsworth on matters metrical, was prepared to reject the governing abstractions of meter in favor of a more personal and practical engagement with the rhythms of speech and the “rhythmus” of poetry.⁴⁹ In books intended to illustrate that both “[p]oetic taste and elocutionary clarity are not mysterious accidents but objects of scientific study that are subject to improvement”⁵⁰—for people with little formal education or with speech impediments, for example—Thelwall attacked the metrical establishment for obfuscating its subject of study, railing at “those ‘prosodical’ Tyroes, (Critics, Pedagogues, and Grammarians) who have deemed themselves qualified to dogmatize on the rhythmus and structure of the English Language.”⁵¹ Ordinary readers—Thelwall’s pupils and others interested in self-education—who were willing to follow his “exercises in recitation,” as set out in works such as *The Vestibule of Eloquence* (1810), could learn many of meter’s movements without the aid of such pedantic authorities: in only a “few weeks,” he avers, “Junior Pupils” and “Ladies” can both effect changes in their pronunciation and train their mouths to modulate meters more freely. Moreover, “the prosodies of the Greek and Latin languages” are not necessarily to be perceived as obstacles by those wishing to improve their verse-speaking; rather, they are, in Thelwall’s program of study, “made to co-operate with demonstrated principles of English Rhythmus.”⁵²

Such an attempt to transform prosody and individuals’ encounters with it forms part of a larger debate about education reform that cut across class

lines, from the elite public schools to the newly established workingmen's or mechanics' institutions and other bodies—such as the London Institution, founded in 1806 and intended for the “Promotion of Literature and Useful Knowledge.” Throughout the nineteenth century, the educational value of meter and prosodic exercises (of the kind outlined in the preceding pages) was vociferously critiqued.⁵³ Should meter matter to boys at public schools? Even though many a Latin master (or a headmaster such as Knox) argued in its favor, other professional educators were antagonistic to “verses”; both they and general opponents of liberal education were convinced that prosody could be advantageously dropped from the curriculum, claiming that it was not only “useless” (that is, without utility or application beyond the classroom) but also “deleterious” to a modern man's prospects.⁵⁴ Further, was prosody—whether classical or otherwise—really a suitable subject of study for *everybody*—that is, for the “million” who could only dream of gaining admittance to Eton, Harrow, Winchester, and, ultimately, the hallowed halls of Oxbridge? For many aspiring nineteenth-century men, meters—the classical variety in particular—represented a passport to worldly advancement, scholarly achievement, or simply “gentlemanliness.” As Stephen Harrison tells us, “Several characters in Victorian literature seeking intellectual self-improvement and consequent increase in social standing”—think of Jude Fawley in Thomas Hardy's 1895 novel *Jude the Obscure*—use the meters of Horace “as a potential way to success.”⁵⁵ Success, however, was not always forthcoming. Toward the end of *Jude*, we hear the title character's realization that Christminster “sneers at . . . [the] false quantities and mispronunciations” of “the so-called self-taught.”⁵⁶

Not everyone thought it wise to encourage workingmen in their prosodic pursuits. In the 1860s, when debates about prosody's place in endowed schools were raging in Britain and meter had been a sporadic feature in popular magazines such as *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* and the *British Controversialist* for over a decade, the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe, already world-famous as the author of the abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), took sides in the issue of metrical instruction's universal suitability. Her book *Little Foxes; or, The Insignificant Little Habits which Mar Domestic Happiness* (1866) contains an instructive anecdote about forcing a prosodic education on a child who is believed to be “a born mechanic”: “[H]e is doomed to go into the Latin School, and spend three or four years in trying to learn what he never can learn well,—disheartened by always being at the tail of his class,

and seeing many a boy inferior to himself in general culture, who is rising to brilliant distinction simply because he can remember those hopeless, bewildering Greek quantities and accents which he is constantly forgetting.”⁵⁷ Stowe was not alone in considering that some persons were “born,” rather than “made,” for metrical exercise—many sources of “evidence,” some of them very curious indeed, were forwarded in support of this position.⁵⁸ The position that Stowe voices was by no means uniquely American; nor was it confined to views on the meters of antiquity. Even where modern English versification was concerned, there were doubts about the innate *fitness* of “mechanics” and other members of the perhaps indifferently educated—but nonetheless metrically aspirational—classes. As a reviewer for the *Educational Reporter*, a well-known British organ, cautions the “many young versifiers” who might come into contact with Robert Frederick Brewer’s popular 1869 *A Manual of English Prosody*, “Ponder well the motto, ‘Poeta nascitur non fit.’”⁵⁹

Many nineteenth-century educators and learners challenged this dubious motto and the attitudes about prosodic predisposition that obtained to it, what one reviewer of Stowe’s *Little Foxes* dismissed as “a growing popular sentiment founded on an exercise of good sense, independently of precise experience or the instinct of scholarly thought.”⁶⁰ There was discernible “popular” support for “mass” metrical instruction and related self-help initiatives. Several of the institutes and societies that, in the early decades of the century, had served as a venue for the propagation of Thelwall’s work on elocution and the English “rhythmus” would continue, throughout Victoria’s reign, not only to propose educational reform but also to consider meter’s place within a reimagined regime of knowledge. In 1834, just three years before the young princess succeeded to the throne, a commentator in the *London Quarterly Review* took a firm stand in favor of “Eton verse-making” and looked forward with “hope” to its incorporation within “a system of universal national education”—the latter of which was still almost forty years from being realized in England. Even so, the reviewer is inspired by the possibility of “a tract on Greek prosody . . . appear[ing] among the publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,” an earnest body that, from 1826, published “improving” literature for a largely working-class readership.⁶¹ The SDUK, though more or less utilitarian in its outlook and quietist in its aims, was not uniformly against meter; in fact, a not-insignificant document on prosody had already featured in the pages of a society publication. In 1832,

the *Quarterly Journal of Education*, which was printed “under the superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,” included a twenty-three-page article titled “Latin Prosody Made Easy,” a review of the third edition of John Carey’s book of the same name. Beginning with an “apology . . . to the reader for venturing upon such ground”—“[s]o much time has been wasted by the learned, . . . so much trash, we had almost said, has been written upon the subject of prosody”—the anonymous reviewer cautiously perseveres, building a case to support his belief that not only the review but more importantly the book that is its focus may make meter more “intelligible” to a wider audience. The potentially dull topic of accent and quantity in classical verse may, if given the right treatment, “excite in [readers’] minds that spirit of inquiry which is the best guide to the truth.”⁶² Meter, after all, could be an agent of “sweetness and light.” *Excelsior!*

In addition to these pressing and politically charged encounters with prosody, there were innumerable entertaining and ephemeral rendezvous with meter to be had in the nineteenth century—ranging from the fairly disposable and downright bizarre to the thrilling and, given one’s luck, potentially lucrative. Readers of cheap and widely available illustrated periodicals, such as *Funny Folks*, could enjoy mild metrical diversion alongside fiction and advertisements (fig. 4). Both in print and in person, meter, in one form or another, was ready to greet the nineteenth-century public—a public that was experiencing new forms of mobility, had more time for leisure pursuits, and found itself with more disposable income than ever before. For the price of one shilling, early-Victorian visitors to the Egyptian Hall, one of London’s premier venues of spectacle, could watch in amazement as John Clark’s Eureka machine, a mechanical apparatus about the size of a wardrobe, cycled randomly through Latin hexameters—supposedly perfect as to meaning and meter. These “nonsense” verses—automatically generated counterparts of the playful prosody penned by Victorians such as Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, among others—exhibited a distinctive (and, for some, worrying) attention to versification for its own sake. Wim Tigges reminds us that one pejorative definition of “nonsense” in circulation in the nineteenth century is “verses consisting of words and phrases arranged solely with reference to the metre and without regard to the sense.”⁶³ Appearing at a time when education reformers were thinking (and saying) much the same thing about the verses composed in the classrooms of England’s endowed schools, the Eureka functioned as both a curiosity, its “correct” measures entertaining

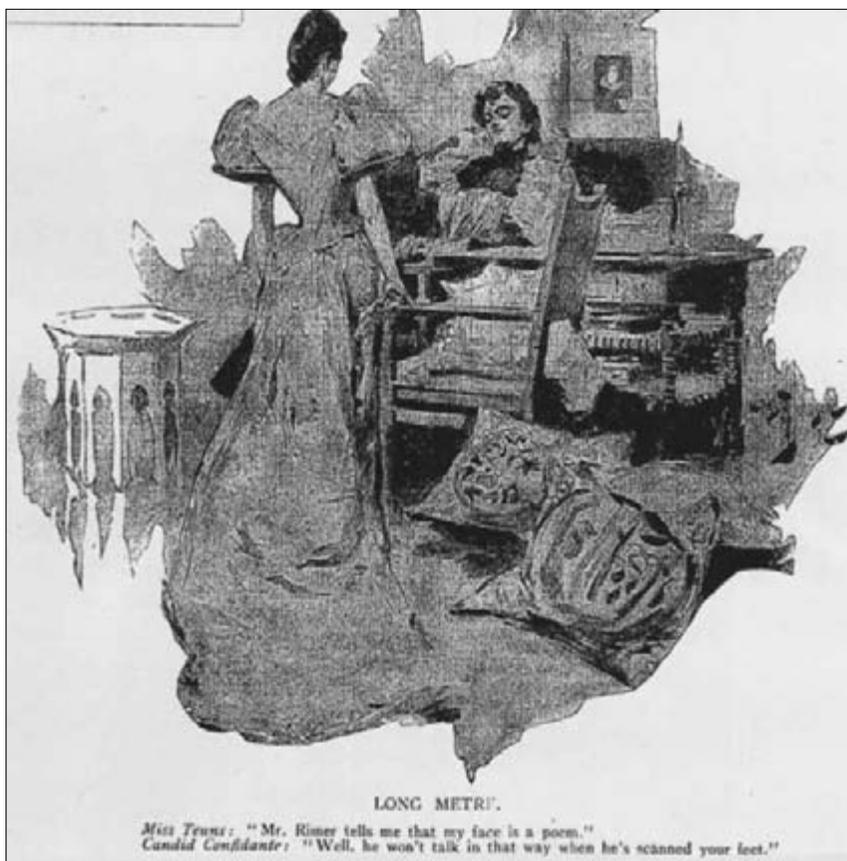


FIGURE 4. "Long Metre," illustration from *Funny Folks*, 18 February 1893, 149.

and harmless, and a material embodiment of prosody's profound uselessness.⁶⁴ Why did boys need to learn from the *Gradus* when a machine could do the work for them? Or, more pointedly, why would we want to turn our sons into "automaton Latin versifier[s]"?⁶⁵ Even in its recreational form, meter could become the focus of national attention and controversy. At the same time, though, there were certain national pastimes where no "grinder" at all (mechanical or otherwise) was needed for one to reap the rewards of meter. Acting on a good tip, a betting man prepared to have a flutter at Newmarket or one of Britain's other racecourses could stand to make a few bob on Prosody—not the subject of study but an aptly named racehorse that ran in the 1840s. For those who followed "the turf," meter matters were well worth looking into.⁶⁶



MUCH the same can be said about the nineteenth-century “metrical imaginary” more generally: it is well worth looking into. Readers of the ten chapters in this volume will find much that bears closer scrutiny, from analyses of poems well known to assessments of prosodic histories perhaps less familiar. If anything, these studies show that meter mattered to those who took it up—wrote in it, ridiculed it, pronounced on it, edited and published it, illustrated it, learned it by heart (or failed to), and craved more contact with it. In the 1930s, the “scientific” prosodist Wilbur Lang Schramm would liken the rising and falling modulations of meter to the contours of “a mountain chain,” where accentual uplands and unstressed basins “are strung together like bumps on a central ridge so that one is never sure where in the intermediate valley one [metrical unit] ends and the other begins. . . . If [a traveler] climbs one peak he knows he is not on the mountain to the east, although he might not know exactly how far eastward he would have to walk before his mountain ended and the next one began.”⁶⁷ As we have seen, while not always known “exactly” by those who moved through it, the metrical terrain of the nineteenth century was nevertheless well traversed. Looking back at this topography from a distance in time, however, we should not be surprised to find that fluctuations in landscape once recognizable to so many may appear to us smoothed nearly into invisibility. If meter is in danger of becoming invisible to us, as some scholars have recently opined, then it is time for us to look again, quite possibly with differently tuned instruments, at a moment when meter was very nearly everywhere one looked. This is where *Meter Matters* begins.

Notes

1. George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1923), 3:52, viii, 330, 383, 378.
2. Brennan O’Donnell, *The Passion of Meter: A Study of Wordsworth’s Metrical Art* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995), 4.
3. Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, 3:317.
4. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1836), 222.
5. See *Punch* 107 (28 July 1894): 37.
6. For the “metrical imaginary” in relation to Matthew Arnold and the midcentury hexameter controversies, see Yopie Prins, “Metrical Translation: Nineteenth-Century

Homers and the Hexameter Mania,” in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 229–56.

7. For analyses of genre as a contested and unstable concept during the period, see Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); and Susan Stewart, *Crimes of Writing: Problems of Containment and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

8. Yopie Prins has been instrumental in charting this territory, and the appellation “historical prosody” and the suggestion of its “unpredictable” movement are hers. See Yopie Prins, “Voice Inverse,” *Victorian Poetry* 42, no. 1 (2004): 43–59.

9. Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 5, 6. Meter reached nineteenth-century readers through various media, though there is not enough space here to discuss all of these encounters. Apart from (or alongside) the various prosodical correspondences between men and women of the period (e.g., Wordsworth, Thelwall, Hopkins, Patmore, Bridges), there were notes, compositions, and translations printed privately and distributed to select groups. Meter also enjoyed more of a “broadcast” transmission among the period’s literate consumers, who could be sure to encounter prosody—in one form or another—in the century’s periodical literature. Herschel and Tennyson both published their meters in the respectable *Cornhill Magazine* and other well-known periodicals. Thomas Hardy, whose novels had been serialized in illustrated weekly newspapers, also placed his verse in many of the same popular miscellanies. The brooding tri- and tetrameters of his “By the Century’s Deathbed” (better known to us as “The Darkling Thrush”) first appeared in *The Graphic* on 29 December 1900, alongside a round-up of nineteenth-century British politics and military engagements. A quarter of a century earlier, the poet Austin Dobson had used the same periodical to popularize experimental French forms (such as the triolet and rondeau) for an English readership. For more on meter in periodicals, see Linda K. Hughes, “Tennyson,” *Victorian Poetry* 43, no. 3 (2005): 390; A. A. Markley, *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); and Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007).

10. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Penguin, 1995), 15.

11. See [Percy Hetherington Fitzgerald], “Autobiography of a Small Boy,” *All the Year Round* (15 August 1868): 222–23.

12. [Anon.], review of *Andromeda and Other Poems*, by Charles Kingsley, *Ladies’ Companion* 13 (1858): 329.

13. Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1855), 176.

14. Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife* (1870; repr., Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 188.

15. Lindley Murray, *The English Reader*, 10th ed. (New York: Collins and Co., 1812), xxii. Theories about the final pause abounded in the nineteenth century. Noah Webster, the renowned American lexicographer and spelling reformer, asserted that the

“final pause marks the close of a line or verse, whether there is a pause in the sense or not. . . . [T]he final pause, when the close of one line is intimately connected with the beginning of the next, should be merely a suspension of the voice without elevation or depression.” In his 1857 *Essay on English Metrical Law*, Coventry Patmore made pause central to his understanding of isochrony. As Yopie Prins has written, “Patmore’s principle of isochronous intervals” insists that “every pentameter line should have an extra silent foot to complete the dipode.” Speakers of verse who are unmindful of the final pause will confound what Patmore calls a “right reading” of verse; by moving along too quickly from one line to the next—by enjambling meter along with grammar—they run the risk of losing all the effect of the poem’s metrical movement, of compromising the metrical “law.” See Noah Webster, *An Improved Grammar of the English Language* (New York: Webster and Clark, 1843), 164; Coventry Patmore, *Coventry Patmore’s “Essay on English Metrical Law”: A Critical Edition with a Commentary*, ed. Mary Augustine Roth (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1961), 11; and Yopie Prins, “Patmore’s Law, Meynell’s Rhythm,” in *The Fin-de-Siècle Poem: English Literary Culture and the 1890s*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 274.

16. See Alice Meynell, introduction to *The Art of Scansion*, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (London: Clement Shorter, 1916), ix; also see Browning’s essay.

17. [Anon.], *The Tour of Doctor Prosody, in Search of the Antique and Picturesque, through Scotland, the Hebrides, the Orkney and Shetland Isles; Illustrated by Twenty Humorous Plates* (London: Matthew Iley, 1821), 1.

18. Edgar Allan Poe, “The Rationale of Verse,” in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. James A. Harrison, 17 vols. (New York: Society of English and French Literature, 1902), 14:210–11.

19. Edwin Guest, *A History of English Rhythms* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), 2. Guest was not the first to argue for the accentual nature of English poetry; such assertions had been in circulation for some time. Nearly four decades before Guest’s book, Joseph Robertson had pointedly “rejected all those scholastic terms, which have been used in Greek and Latin prosody, and considered the English versification as founded, not on Greek and Roman feet; but on a certain order and succession of accented and unaccented syllables.” See [Joseph Robertson], *An Essay on the Nature of English Verse, with Directions for Reading Poetry* (London: J. Walter, 1799), iii–iv.

20. E. S. Dallas, *Poetics: An Essay on Poetry* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1852), 164.

21. Patmore, *English Metrical Law*, 15, 33.

22. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (1929; repr., New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2004), 219. Richards imagines using a kymograph “to record (by curves drawn on squared paper)” the rhythms of poetry—“all the physical characters of the sequences of sounds emitted, their strength, pitch, duration, and any other features we choose to examine” (216).

23. For an explanation of these exercises in verse composition, see Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *What I Remember* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1888), 82.

24. C. Granville Gepp, *Progressive Exercises in Latin Elegiac Verse*, 5th ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1880), x. The “progressive” method signalled by Gepp’s title is noteworthy.

Although he believed in the benefits of a prosodic education, he was convinced that bad instruction and unnecessarily early exposure to classical metrics could actually have a deleterious effect on boys. Here his thinking overlaps with that of Matthew Arnold, who, though an advocate of the classics, well understood the drawbacks of too rigid a system of instruction. Arnold remarks in “The Study of Poetry,” “The elaborate philological groundwork which we require them [schoolboys] to lay is in theory an admirable preparation for appreciating the Greek and Latin authors worthily. The more thoroughly we lay the groundwork, the better we shall be able, it may be said, to enjoy the authors. True, if time were not so short, and schoolboys’ wits not so soon tired and their power of attention exhausted.” By pushing a pupil too hard too early, an educator runs the risk of “distract[ing him] from the enjoyment of the best” the classical authors have to offer. See Matthew Arnold, “The Study of Poetry,” in *Selections from the Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. William Savage Johnson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913), 61. For Cory, by contrast, verse composition was intrinsically good. “To give substance to this theory, he prepared thorough exercises in verse composition which the school [i.e., Eton] continued to use well into the twentieth century.” See Tirthankar Bose, “William Johnson Cory,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 35, *Victorian Poets after 1850*, ed. William E. Fredeman and Ira B. Nadel (Detroit: Gale, 1985), 36.

25. For comments on the history of classical education in America (seasoned with quite a lot of polemic), see Lee T. Percy, *The Grammar of Our Civility: Classical Education in America* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

26. Vicesimus Knox, *Essays, Moral and Literary*, 3 vols. (London: J. Richardson and Co., 1821), 1:15, 16.

27. Swishing, flogging, or scourging (as it was called at Winchester School) was a punishment administered by masters and undermasters for numerous infractions. Swinburne recalls his own time at Eton thus: “I firmly believe that my ear for verses made me rather a favourite. I can boast that of all the swishing I ever had up to seventeen and over, I never had one for a false quantity in my life. (Can you say the same? I should imagine you *metrical* as a boy.) One comfort is, I made up in arithmetic, so my tutor never wanted reasons for making rhymes between his birch and my body.” See Algernon Charles Swinburne, letter to Richard Monckton, ca. February 10, 1863, in *The Swinburne Letters*, vol. 1, 1854–1869, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 78.

28. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853), ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: Norton, 1977), 151.

29. Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 27.

30. For more on this method, see M. L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain, 1500–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959); Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Jason David Hall, “Popular Prosody: Spectacle and the Politics of Victorian Versification,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62, no. 2 (2007): 222–49; and Stray, *Classics Transformed*. Educators continue to make the case for the beneficial study of the subject. See, for example, Percy, *Grammar of Our Civility*.

31. Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays, by an Old Boy* (1857; repr., London: Macmillan, 1869), 262.

32. See, for example, Thomas Gordon Hake, "Accent, Emphasis, and Pitch," *Athenaeum*, no. 2592 (30 June 1877): 831; also see Gladstone's *Address on the Place of Ancient Greece in the Providential Order of the World; Delivered before the University of Edinburgh, on the Third of November, 1865* (London: Murray, 1865).

33. See Thomas Jefferson, "Thoughts on English Prosody," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 593–622. Jefferson had been taught Greek and Latin under the tuition of the Reverend William Douglas and the Reverend James Maury. See Jennings L. Wagoner, *Jefferson and Education* (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, 2004), 17–23. For Jefferson, instruction in the classical and modern languages, including their grammar and prosody, was an essential ingredient in the republic's new curriculum. He advocated state-supported grammar schools that taught "English grammar, Greek, Latin, higher mathematics, and other studies." See Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, DC: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907), 7:xiv, xv.

34. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Physiology of Versification," in *The Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, vol. 8 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1895), 315. Holmes had been educated at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, where a strong classical tradition had been in place since the eighteenth century. For context, see Robert Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition: The Classical Curriculum in Eighteenth-Century New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1961): 54–67. See Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 64.

35. Alice Meynell, *The Rhythm of Life and Other Essays* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1896), 6.

36. Blair, *Victorian Poetry*, 64.

37. Frank M. Turner, "Victorian Classics: Sustaining the Study of the Ancient World," in *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, ed. Martin Daunton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163. For remarks on the American context, see, for a start, Catherine Hobbs, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

38. Greg Kucich, "Reviewing Women in British Romantic Theatre," in *Women in British Romantic Theatre: Drama, Performance, and Society, 1790–1840*, ed. Catherine Burroughs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 63.

39. Stephen C. Behrendt, "'Certainly Not a Female Pen': Felicia Hemans's Early Public Reception," in *Felicia Hemans: Reimagining Poetry in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Nanora Sweet and Julie Melnyk (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2001), 98.

40. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, ed. Margaret Reynolds (New York: Norton, 1996), 41. Yopie Prins notes, "Romney recognizes the writing in her book because of the Greek she has marked, or rather left unmarked, in the margins. His gentle mockery of 'Lady's Greek, without the accents' suggests either that she writes Greek improperly, without correct diacritical marks, or that she does not know how to scan the quantities of Greek verse for proper pronunciation. Any English schoolboy would

have better training in Greek prose composition or classical prosody than Aurora, who lacks formal education: while she is no philologist, she has learned to love the ‘trick of Greek’ from her father, in the books from his private library, at home.” See Yopie Prins, “‘Lady’s Greek’ (With the Accents): A Metrical Translation of Euripides by A. Mary F. Robinson,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34, no. 2 (2006): 594.

41. Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle, *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women’s Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 31.

42. F. D. Maurice, “What Better Provision Ought to Be Made for the Education of Girls of the Upper and Middle Classes,” in *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, ed. George W. Hastings (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1866), 270.

43. Yopie Prins, “The Sexual Politics of Translating *Prometheus Bound*,” *Cultural Critique* 74 (2010): 166, 169–70.

44. Roger Lundin, *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 30.

45. Christine Ross, “Uncommon Measures: Emily Dickinson’s Subversive Prosody,” *Emily Dickinson Journal* 10, no. 1 (2001): 73.

46. Heather Murray, *Come, Bright Improvement! The Literary Societies of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 118. Sidney Lanier worked up his *Science of English Verse* (1880) by giving lectures to ladies’ societies in Baltimore.

47. Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, 3:508. The copy of Saintsbury’s *History* that I consulted while composing this introduction belonged to the English poet and critic Edith Sitwell (1887–1964), whose interest in prosody is not only inscribed in the margins of the book but also on display in various essays of her own. I am grateful to the staff of the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas at Austin for bringing this artifact to my attention.

48. William Wordsworth, “Preface to the Edition of 1815,” in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Edward Dowden, vol. 5 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893), 287 (emphasis added).

49. Simon Jarvis notes the exchange of letters between Wordsworth and Thelwall on this topic and discusses their difference of opinion regarding the abstract “law” of meter. See Simon Jarvis, *Wordsworth’s Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11.

50. Michael Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories: John Thelwall and Jacobin Writing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 194.

51. John Thelwall, *Selections for the Illustration of a Course of Instructions on the Rhythmus and Utterance of the English Language* (London: n.p., 1812), iii.

52. John Thelwall, *The Vestibule of Eloquence* (London: privately printed, 1810), 3, 7.

53. See Christopher Stray, ed., *Grinders and Grammars: A Victorian Controversy* (Bristol, UK: Colloquium on Textbooks, Schools, and Society, 1995).

54. [Anon.], “View of a Classical School,” *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* 9 (1840): 207. See also F. W. Farrar, ed., *Essays on a Liberal Education* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1867).

55. “At one end of the Victorian period,” we find “Mr. O’Bleary, the ambitious young Irishman in ‘The Boarding House’ in Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz* (1836–7), [who] reads Horace in the evenings, expressive of his desire to rise in the world of London to which he has moved from Dublin. At the other, Jude Fawley in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895) studies his Horace on the road with his baker’s cart in his quest to become a gentleman and scholar . . . , and H. G. Wells’s autobiographical George Lewisham in *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900) reads Horace’s *Odes* as a set text for his external London matriculation.” See Stephen Harrison, “Horace and the Construction of the English Victorian Gentleman,” *Helios* 34, no. 2 (2007): 208.

56. Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Patricia Ingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 308.

57. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Little Foxes; or, The Insignificant Little Habits which Mar Domestic Happiness* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866), 90.

58. Among those interested in whether a sense for meter was innate or learned were phrenologists, who identified discrete “faculties”—such as Ideality, Time, and Order—as loci of prosodic capacity. Some, however, remained unconvinced, speculating that schooling, not cerebral constitution, was responsible for metrical recognition and fluency of composition. See [Anon.], “Phrenological Society of Paris—Annual Meeting, Aug. 1834,” in *Annals of Phrenology* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, and Lyon, 1834), 1:402–8; and Richard Cull, “On the Perception of Metre and Rhythmus, Both in Language and in Music,” *Phrenological Journal* 19, no. 33 (1846): 1–10.

59. [Anon.], review of *A Manual of English Prosody*, by Robert Frederick Brewer, *The Educational Reporter* 1, no. 3 (15 June 1869): 10.

60. [Anon.], “Boston,” *Round Table* 3, no. 20 (20 January 1866): 44.

61. The SDUK took up the call for “improvement” outlined in Lord Brougham’s 1825 speech “Practical Observations upon the Education of the People.” See *Speeches of Henry Lord Brougham, upon Questions Relating to Public Rights, Duties, and Interests; with Historical Introductions* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1841), 2:130–59.

62. [Anon.], “Latin Prosody Made Easy,” *Quarterly Journal of Education* 4 (July–October 1832), 336, 337, 359.

63. Wim Tigges, *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 7. Tigges’s definition is drawn from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

64. See Hall, “Popular Prosody.”

65. [Anon.], “Oddities in Music,” *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts* 12 (1859): 313.

66. See, for example, [Anon.], “The Racing Calendar, 1842,” *New Sporting Magazine* 4, no. 24 (1842): 1–100.

67. Wilbur Lang Schramm, *Approaches to a Science of English Verse* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1935), 22.