

NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVEL COLLECTION

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This project represents the first stage in the production of an enhanced catalogue of the Robinson Library's Nineteenth-Century Novels Collection, an important collection of the most popular writers of genre fiction of the Victorian era. The ephemeral nature of genre fiction means that many of the authors and titles in the collection are not widely known or studied. This material provides valuable insight into what most Victorians read and is of scholarly value for recent and emerging trends in literary scholarship and print culture studies.

Enhanced cataloguing has enabled this otherwise hidden collection to become more accessible by providing subject, setting, and genre keywords to characterise the works in the collection. Library of Congress and American Library Association guidelines have served as the basis for assigning descriptors. To date, 426 of the 1441 (29.56%) of titles have been annotated, with a focus on the most represented authors: those with 6 or more titles in the collection (and representing 20.6% of the 223 authors in the collection). Authors with six or more titles account for 37% of the collection and their work is representative of the overall nature of the collection.

If one were to sum up the collection in a single title, it would be *Darnley: or, The Field of the Cloth of Gold* (1830). *Darnley* is a historical fiction set in 16th Century England, and concerns the reign of Henry VIII – a culmination of the collection's most prominent features. The title is written by G. P. R. James, who is described by Sutherland as "The doyen of hack historical novelists, and author of more romances than anyone has ever managed to count." * This is certainly reflected in the collection, as James is by far the most represented author with 36 titles present.

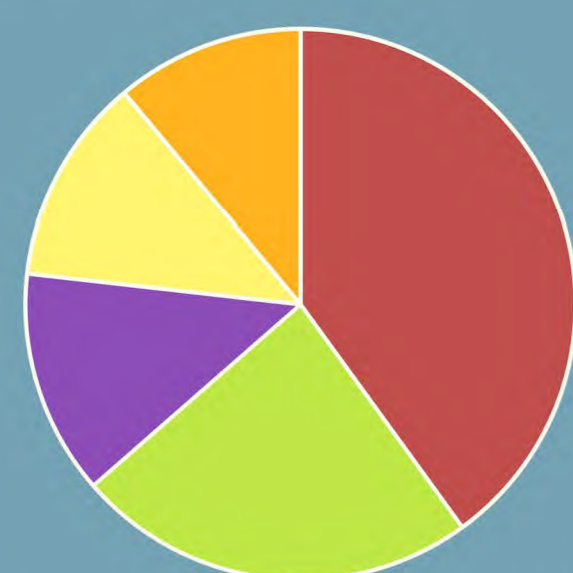


One of the most interesting finds of the collection is the discovery of two dystopian titles. To find titles that look to the future is especially noteworthy in a collection which mostly looks to the past. Both are written by Walter Besant, and are primarily concerned with his anxieties about gender roles. The first is *The Holy Rose* (1890), and concerns the fate of England in the 22nd Century after the discovery of an elixir of life, and the adoption of socialism. This results in the faces of men and women physically growing alike, as well as them being clad in identical clothing. This can be seen below in the actual frontispiece of the edition in the collection.



The second title also focuses on gender, and provides a cautionary tale of feminism. It is titled *The Revolt of Man* (1882), and describes a future in which the House of Commons is occupied exclusively by women. Men are excluded from politics, and are treated purely as ornaments. Both titles provide an interesting reaction to feminism in their study of gender.

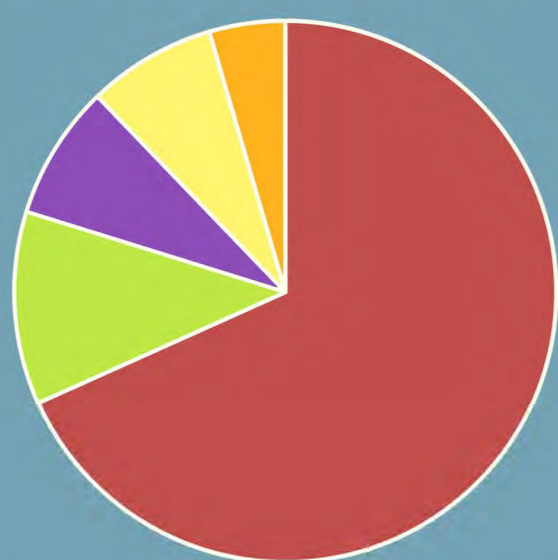
The pie charts below are comprised of the top five keywords under each of those headings, and give a general idea of how the collection looks as a whole.



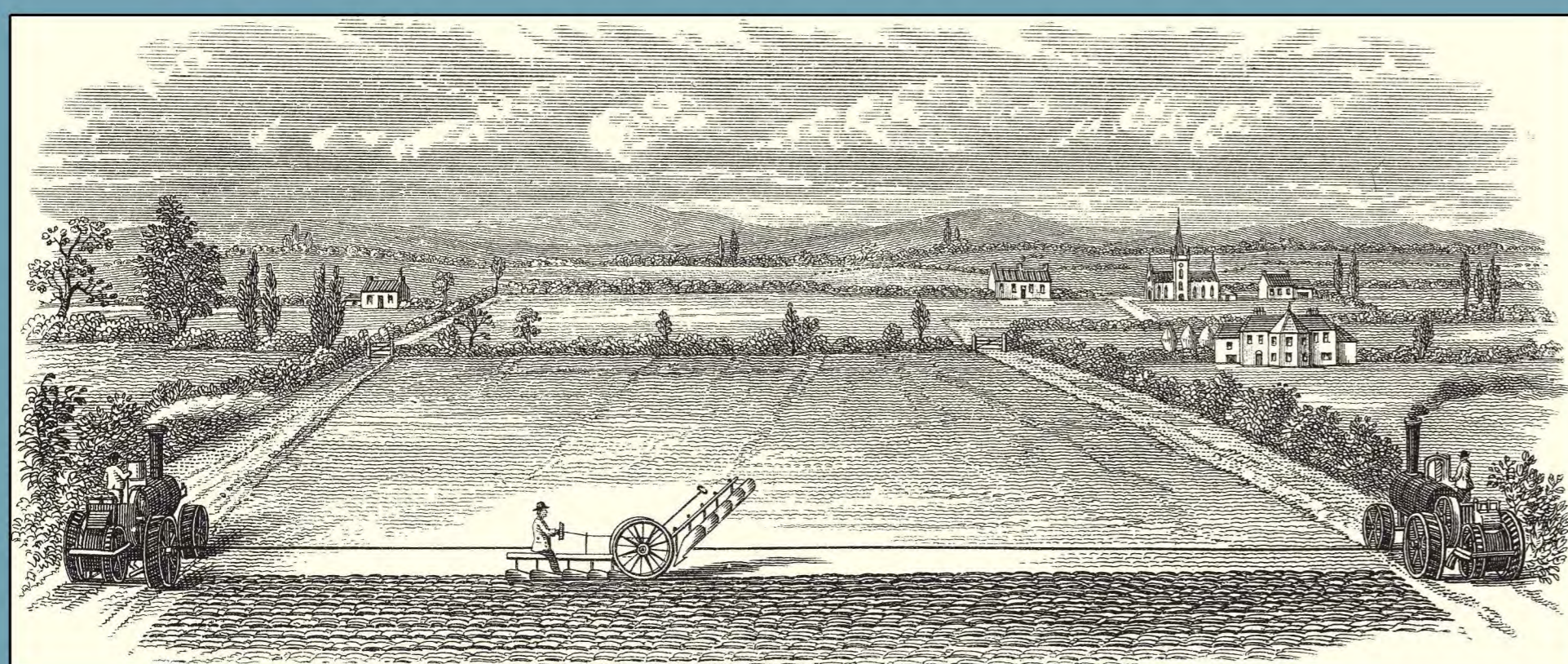
As seen to the left, the most represented genre in the collection is **Historical Fiction** with 112 entries, followed by **Love Stories** (66), **Regional Fiction** (37), **Military Fiction** (31), and **Sea Stories** (27).



To the right, **War** (141) is the most popular subject within the annotated collection, followed by **Aristocracy** (92), **Marriage** (90), **Rural Life** (78), and **Urban Life** (68).



The vast majority are set in **England** (196), seen to the left. The second most represented is **Scotland** (33), followed by **America** (23), **France** (22) and **Australia** (13).



For more information, or to request a copy of the enhanced catalogue please contact:

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* John Sutherland, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (California: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 325.