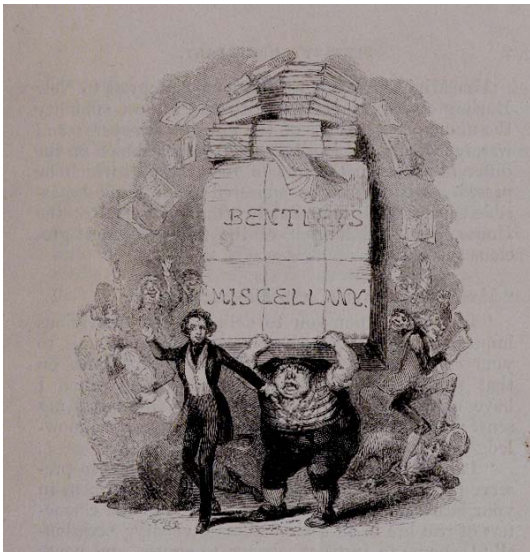


THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM PRESENTS
VICTORIAN BESTSELLERS

****Press Preview: Thursday, January 25, 2007, 9 a.m. until noon****

New York, NY, December 14, 2006—Although today’s public may think of the “bestseller” as a relatively recent development generated by modern mass marketing, many of the “bestseller” literary formulas and publishing techniques actually date to the nineteenth-century Victorian era.



Hablot Knight Browne, Caricature of Charles Dickens in *Bentley's Miscellany* (detail), March 1837.

In a fascinating exhibition entitled *Victorian Bestsellers*, The Morgan Library & Museum explores the rise of this cultural phenomenon through original manuscripts, first editions, cheap trade publications, rare advertising posters, and other materials drawn largely from the Morgan’s renowned literary collections. The show will be on view from January 26 to May 6 in the museum’s Engelhard Gallery.

The period covered by the exhibition (1837–1901) saw rapid social change and enormous economic upheaval, when new technologies, improved transportation systems, better living standards, and rising literacy rates created a wider market for fiction and other types of popular reading matter.

For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), here presented in its first edition, stirred up so much excitement that it could not be printed fast enough: it went back to press repeatedly in America and England, where ten different editions appeared in two weeks. Resourceful publishers could sell more than a hundred thousand copies of a thriller in just a few months.

The works of Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, and other well-known authors were sold in unprecedented numbers. On view in the exhibition will be first editions and manuscripts of such celebrated novels as *Oliver Twist*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

“The Victorian era is a truly fascinating period in the history of the publishing industry,” said Charles E. Pierce, Jr., Director of The Morgan Library & Museum. “Immensely talented authors producing outstanding works of fiction and resourceful publishers drawing on vastly improved technology created a new and greatly enlarged market for great works of literature.”

But publishers also sold quite successfully the work of writers who are now forgotten. Literary masterpieces will be shown along with “penny dreadfuls” and “shilling shockers”—cheap books produced for mass consumption during the Victorian period.

Also on view will be rare advertising posters, colorful bindings, and enticing illustrations by celebrated nineteenth-century artists, such as Gustave Doré and George Cruikshank. Their work appeared in media suitable for mass production—wood engravings, steel engravings, and lithographs, which will be displayed along with original drawings and preparatory sketches.

Victorian Bestsellers is curated by John Bidwell, Astor Curator and Head of the Department of Printed Books and Bindings at The Morgan Library & Museum.

Sponsored by Fay and Geoffrey Elliott.

The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical and performing arts venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. Nearly a century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirms its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

212.685.0008

www.themorgan.org

Hours

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day.

Admission

\$12 for adults; \$8 for students, seniors (65 and over) and children (under 16); free to Members and children 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission to the McKim rooms is without charge during the following times: Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m.; Friday, 7 to 9 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 6 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

Press contacts

Patrick Milliman	212.590.0310	pmilliman@themorgan.org
Sandra Ho	212.590.0311	sho@themorgan.org