



The Historical Novel and the Nation State, 1814-1867: A Transnational Study of Print History and Social Transformation (Ashgate Series in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Studies)

David Buchanan

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The Historical Novel and the Nation State, 1814-1867: A Transnational Study of Print History and Social Transformation (Ashgate Series in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Studies) David Buchanan National literatures of the nineteenth century are typically studied in terms of the nationality of the author, but what people actually read in countries such as Scotland, France, America, and Canada often originated beyond national borders. Examining popular historical novels by Walter Scott, Honoré de Balzac, James Fenimore Cooper, and Philippe-Ignace-Francois Aubert de Gaspé in terms of their production for both upmarket and downmarket audiences, David Buchanan foregrounds the tension between reading matter that is valued for its supposed artistry, enduring value, and cultural impact, and those works that are dismissed as entertainment, due to format, content, price, and readership. As Buchanan underscores, a wide gulf remains between the designations "literature" and "popular literature" within the academy and elsewhere. He argues that this gulf is exacerbated by the reluctance to consider national literatures from a material and historical perspective that includes downmarket print, popular adaptations, and transnational dissemination. Tracing the varied print histories of four novels considered to be major literary works within and beyond their national contexts, Buchanan situates his own analysis of each work within a larger discussion of century-long changes in the novelistic use of historicity to describe and direct the shape and progress of the nation state.

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