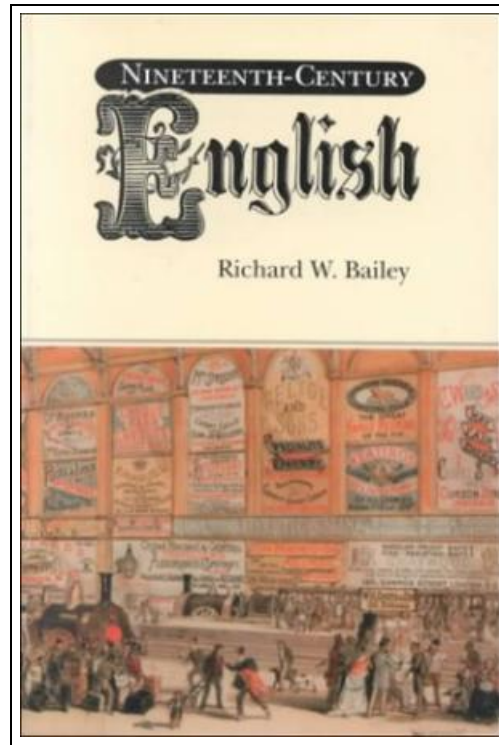# Nineteenth-Century English (Paperback)

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Reviews

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(Toney Bernhard)

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH (PAPERBACK)

The University of Michigan Press, United States, 1998. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. Jane Austen s English is far different from Virginia Woolf s, but historians of the English language have given scant attention to the ways in which English changed over the course of the nineteenth century. In Nineteenth-Century English, Richard W. Bailey treads new ground by showing the extent to which the language changed as cultural and economic transformations brought us into the modern world. Six aspects of nineteenth-century English are treated in separate chapters: writing, sounds, words, slang, grammar, and voices. In each domain, innovation and obsolescence are discussed as they were observed by contemporary writers. Thus Bailey shows how linguistic details gained powerful social meaning in the emergent stratification by class, region, race, and gender of the anglophone community. At the beginning of the century, the Italian sound of a in dance was thought to be an intolerable vulgarity; by the end, it was a sign of the highest refinement. At the beginning, OK had yet to be invented; by the end, it was being used in nearly all varieties of English and had appeared as a loanword in many languages touched by English. At the beginning, mixed forms of English-- pidgins and creoles--were little known and thoroughly despised; by the end some of them had become vehicles for Bible translation. As English became a global language, it took on the local color of its surroundings, and proper usage became ever more important as an index of social worth, as a measure of intelligence, and as a gauge to a person s suitability for employment, often resulting in painful consequences. What the language was like changed dramatically. What people thought about the language changed even more. The tale that Bailey has to tell...

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