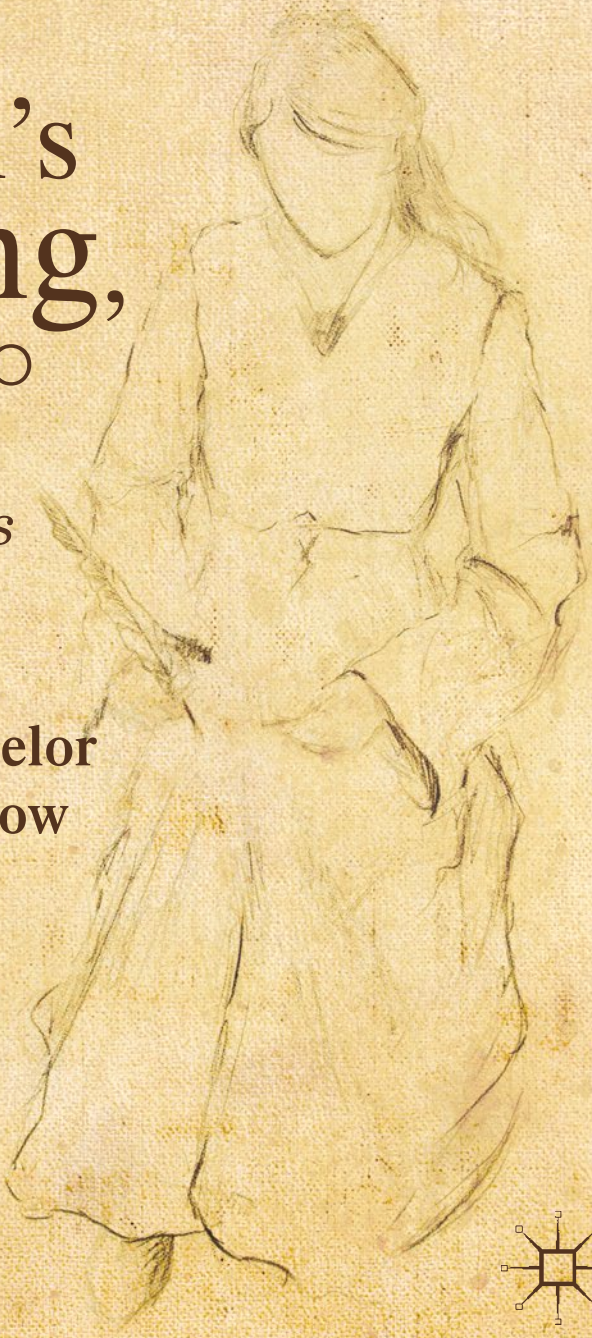
Women's Writing, 1660–1830

Feminisms and Futures

Edited by
Jennie Batchelor
and **Gillian Dow**



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To Ben and Edward, conference babies born in the planning, and for whom the history of women writing is important too.

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Notes on the Contributors

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Isobel Grundy FRSC, Professor Emeritus (University of Alberta, Canada), and a Patron of Chawton House Library, has published on topics in and around the eighteenth century, especially on Samuel Johnson, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and women's writing. With Susan Brown and Patricia Clements she created and still regularly updates the digital Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present, Cambridge 2006, http://orlando.cambridge.org/.

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Sarah Prescott is Professor of English and Principal of the College of Arts and Humanities at University College Dublin. Professor Prescott specializes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British and Irish women's writing, and pre-1800 Welsh writing in English. She is the author of *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690–1740* (2003), *Women and Poetry, 1660–1750* (2003), *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales* (2008) and *Writing Wales from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (2012) as well as numerous papers and chapters in her subject field. She is currently completing a British Academy funded book on *Women Writers and Wales, 1600–1800* and co-writing volume three of the *The Oxford Literary History of Wales*. Professor Prescott is the Principal Investigator for a Leverhulme Trust collaborative project (with Aberystwyth University, the University of Edinburgh and the National University of Ireland, Galway) on 'Women's Poetry 1400–1800 from Ireland, Scotland and Wales'.

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Preface: Writing and Reading the 'Rugged Realities of Life'

Isobel Grundy

This essay began as a talk celebrating Chawton House Library and a bouquet of related topics: its embodiment in a splendid house (historic even when Jane Austen knew it); the group of outstanding individuals to whom it owes its vigorous life as a study centre for pre-Victorian women's writing; and that writing itself, by Austen and her literary peers. To these the essay must now add celebration of scholarly work, beginning long before the birth of Chawton House Library and continuing into the present collection, to forward the reading and studying of 'early' texts by women.

Each of these many causes for feminist celebration also bears witness to the ongoing contest between feminism in its various guises and the forces arrayed against it. The house and estate are properties of patriarchy, even though the list of owners includes the formidable Elizabeth Knight. In Austen's lifetime, it seemed natural for the owner of the great house to provide a modest home for his dependent mother and sisters. Inheritance was masculine; benevolent support was for females. Austen's texts, and those of other women in and before her time, had to make their way

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in an intellectual and cultural world presumed to be masculine. Having been making their way in mainstream culture ever since, they now, against the odds, form a part of our own inheritance. As a group, however, they are neither automatically valued nor automatically feminist. Several of the essays here, particularly those by Katherine Binhammer, Ros Ballaster and Emma Clery, consider the varied challenges that this body of work poses for feminist scholars today.

From the seventeenth century to the twenty-first, feminisms have depended on the mostly written word. (So have other movements seeking autonomy or equity; so have groups whose relationship with the word is not originating it, like the actresses discussed by Elaine McGirr.) Audiences, readerships, have been at the core of such movements. The act of reading, like the act of writing, is profoundly self-realizing; they both confirm the sense of the individual life and connect the writer or reader with other readers. Women's quest for improvement in, or control over, their own lives has been bound up with the struggle not so much to find a voice as to find an audience, and that has been bound up with the struggle to get published. Recent attention to the role of manuscript circulation has reminded us that the core meaning of getting published is finding readers, connecting with a public, rather than doing so exclusively through type or pixels.

This volume is itself a testimony to present-day feminist interest in the writings of women in the past, and in the processes by which those writings became and in some cases remained accessible. From the means those writers used to connect with readers, from their readers' habits and motives and feelings about the texts they read, there is much to be learned of relevance today.

Then as now, some writers pressed the buttons of what had become by the seventeenth century the reading public: that solid minority among the population (gentry, professional and middling-commercial men and their families, skilled artisans, servants) who owned or borrowed books, or if not books then broadsides and street ballads. The expensive publications of Margaret Cavendish achieved (as noted by Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey) comparatively wide penetration; hymns written by Mary Masters were (as noted by Chloe Wigston Smith) painstakingly embroidered on samplers by young girls a century or so after their composition. The posthumous poems of Katherine Philips, 1667, were twice reprinted before their reissue in cheaper octavo format in 1710, besides much manuscript circulation. Individual instances abound of women's texts having a wide reach. Philips was known in Liverpool by 1678, when

the Quaker poet Mary Mollineux transcribed a quatrain by her as something 'one of our own Sex hath notably said or writ, several Years since'.[1] Jane Marcet's *Conversations on Chemistry*, edition of 1809, was known in what is now northern Canada in the remarkable collection of Hudson's Bay Company employee Peter Fidler.[2]

Other texts were not so lucky. Lucy Hutton's *Six Sermonicles; or, Discourses on the Punishment of Eve*, 1788, is known from three copies listed by *ESTC*, but her *Letters on the Antediluvian Females* is known only from its mention on the title-page of *Six Sermonicles.* This book, published at Kendal in the Lake District, was not well placed for exploiting the networks of the book trade, but shared some of the marginality of the Welsh, Scots and Irish writers discussed by Sarah Prescott.

The trade, however, in which bookselling, circulation of journals, advertising and reviewing were practices established and hugely extended over this period, offered opportunity to many of Austen's contemporaries. We now know that residence in remote Zetland or Shetland did not prevent Dorothea Primrose Campbell from building a sustaining network in the London periodical world.[3] Work by Betty Schellenberg and others has ensured that scholars no longer find professionalism or even careerism surprising in eighteenth-century women. Even in the often somewhat exploitative field of writing for children (as noted by Matthew Grenby), Priscilla Wakefield, a Quaker author dealing with a Quaker publisher, managed to be 'extraordinarily' well paid in recognition of her profitability, while Charlotte Smith exerted a remarkable degree of control over the publication process.

Nevertheless, word of mouth (or epistolary word of pen) remained vital to a book's success. Jane Austen, for instance, was not only well reviewed from her debut, but was the subject of eager exchange among discriminating private readers. Apart from William Gifford (reader for the *Quarterly*) they included Annabella Milbanke, Anne Grant, Catherine Hutton, Mary Anne Kelty, Sarah Harriet Burney (who wanted to hold on to *Pride and Prejudice* after she finished it, for the pleasure of reading it again) and Charles Chenevix Trench, soldier son of the life-writer Melesina Trench, who judged it would 'interest even those who have seen a little of the Rugged Realities of Life'.[4] Word of mouth kept bringing Austen new readers even in the years when she was deeply unfashionable, and they were readers who lived a rich life of the mind.

Women's texts were read predominantly for pleasure. At this date and earlier, they were less read as duty or self-improvement than were

men's. Poetry, drama, fiction or non-fictional prose (travels, memoirs, etc.) included a higher proportion of titles by women than did sermons, devotional and pedagogic works, or works of information. But pleasure in reading was found in many places, from formula fiction and undemanding poetry to texts devoured with a passion for knowledge and understanding. The very few female quasi-academic writers (Catharine Macaulay in history, Margaret Bryan and Jane Marcet in science) were seldom oppressively required. They were read as home schooling or self-teaching, not in institutions of higher education, not on imposed curricula but on reading lists compiled out of pre-existing fascination with their subjects. Chemistry or what we call physics would not be boring to Marcet's readers but exciting: the latest thing, for women readers a passport out of a narrow female sphere and into enlightenment.

Duty reading consisted not of science or history but of conduct or religion. Some books by women elicited responses like Lydia Bennet's to Fordyce's sermons. Hannah More's *Hints Towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess* was inflicted in daily two-hour doses on the young Princess Charlotte, heir to the throne. Charlotte, who at 16 was to self-identify with Jane Austen's Marianne Dashwood,[5] responded plaintively to More: '*I am not quite good* enough for that yet.'[6] Compulsory reading is no modern phenomenon, although it has changed with changing goals imposed by elders on the young. Today compulsory reading is more or less co-extensive with academic reading: children and teenagers are pressured to pass exams, not to have their characters formed (except insofar as scholarly practice is forced to justify itself by claiming to mould the future wage-earner).

Reading practices in Austen's day ranged from the casual to the intense. In January 1806 (at just 19), Mary Russell Mitford went through 55 volumes: more than a volume and a half a day, much of it inevitably by candlelight. She read books by Sarah Harriet Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton, Elizabeth Helme, Sophia and Harriet Lee, Elizabeth Meeke, Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan), Ann Radcliffe and Mary Robinson.[7] The highly unusual architect Sarah Losh and her sister were unofficially tutored by an uncle, reader of Godwin, Coleridge, Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Hamilton on women's education. These girls read Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, Charlotte Smith's *The Young Philosopher*, Harriet and Sophia Lee's *The Canterbury Tales* and more Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth, besides Hannah More ('good, but narrow minded').[8] This list is more

like a syllabus than the reading of Mitford or the Austen family, but still haphazard and curiosity-driven, with a generous proportion of women.

Readers of women had already, for many years, been aware of women's disadvantage in finding audience. As the eighteenth century progressed, Elizabeth Elstob's recuperative purpose of celebrating women's intellectual achievement was realized through George Ballard in biography, by George Colman and Bonnell Thornton in anthology and by Mary Scott and Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger in poetry.[9] Early in the new century, as cultured households like the Austens or Loshes found their pleasure and instruction in texts by both genders equally, feminists such as Mary Hays, Mary Matilda Betham and, as Gillian Dow argues here, Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, were working recuperatively through female biography. They were moving against the tide. As serious reading-matter was handed on, generation to generation, unrecognized principles of selection ensured its narrowing. By the time women had pried open the gates to university education, by the time modern literature had emerged as an acceptable subject of study with a canonical syllabus, discarded texts included virtually all those by women (and not only in Britain, as Dow informs us).

Academic recuperation of women's history in Britain was active at least by 1919, when Alice Clark published *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*. Recuperation of women's writing was probably delayed by the horrors of the twentieth century. Joyce Tompkins published *The Polite Marriage* (essays on Elizabeth and Richard Griffith, Mary Hays, Ann Yearsley and others) in 1938 and Mary Lascelles published *The Art of Jane Austen* (serious consideration of her use of her female predecessors) in 1939. These were not auspicious dates for scholarly works to become game-changing. Serious revisionary analysis of the canon began, as Emma Clery argues, in the 1970s and made headway in the 1980s; in 1980 I myself was guilty of supposing there were 'not many women' in eighteenth-century literature.

That was the year that Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and I began work with a host of contributors on *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*. We covered Anglophone traditions across the world, with a few entries on writers in other tongues who were influential for Anglophones. We gave well-known writers very short entries, to save space for more of the forgotten. My strongest memory of that work is not of how many women there turned out to be (although that was a revelation), but of how rewarding each one was: discovery after discovery of individual voices, read always with interest and often with admiration,

and the gradual building of a sense of women's writing as a tradition, a practice passed from one era to another.

My experience was part of the tectonic shift whereby women writers of the past began to reconnect with readers: not the kind they had addressed in their lifetimes, but academic readers. For graduates in English of my generation, these writers slotted in like missing jigsaw pieces alongside male texts we knew. Final exam papers in Britain and course anthologies in North America began to accommodate women's names. Now where there used to be Pope there was Finch and Pope, or Pope and Montagu; where there used to be one Fielding there were two; where there used to be Shelley and Byron there were Mary and Percy and Byron. We felt now able to see a picture formerly part-obliterated, or part spotlighted and part in darkness. This is the idea behind Ann Messenger's *His and Hers*, which pairs studies of male and female authors.

Several essays in the present book capture the experience of those who took BAs in English in the 1980s. Some accepted as a matter of course the older and newer presences on the syllabus. (I remember Ruth Perry enjoying the idea that a class on Locke and Astell approached those two names as intellectual equals.) But historically minded or feminist students—those more alert to cultural conditions—were vividly conscious of new space opening up before them, of benefiting from and participating in the work of rediscovery (a work still in progress, ably represented here by Jennie Batchelor).

Considering readers means considering encounters between a single mind and a single text. That is how most readers today experience texts (books, not films), since the social reading aloud so common in the eighteenth century is now confined to a handful of very particular settings. Even in a class or a book club, where everyone has read the same text, it is the solitary, inward experience of that text that readers bring for sharing. But the sharing completes the experience: we close a book and look for someone else to exchange impressions with.

The insertion of women's texts into students' experience, the finding of new readers for historical women's texts, contributed largely to expanding the number and variety of authors studied. The reading experience embodied in a BA in English became less homogenous across different institutions in the 1980s and 1990s. Academics had a wider choice of passions to communicate to their students. Sharing became chancier: you could no longer bank on every graduate in English having read *Paradise Lost* or Shakespeare's sonnets, but were more likely to encounter readers of marginal groups such as Quaker autobiographers or Romantic gothicists.

As women's texts entered the syllabus, so a critical mass of scholarly analysis built up around those texts, some of it from new publishing houses and new journals. The same moment of intellectual possibility, of intellectual expansion, produced Chawton House Library, the study centre for women's writing created by Sandy Lerner. Lerner's project for buying this house—the great house once owned by Austen's rich brother—and for its new cultural and intellectual role, was driven by just the same sense of delighted rediscovery that galvanized so much academic writing of the time. It also had astonishing symbolic resonance.

Chawton House Library would make a rewarding historical subject. A huge amount of work went into transferring ownership; rescuing and recuperating the house's physical body, which was almost past reclaiming; establishing relations with the local community in the village and the county; establishing relations with global communities of Austen fans, feminists, literary scholars, and historians of architecture, agriculture, horticulture, costume, cookery and other aspects of daily life in all its rugged reality; and establishing relations with other institutions and organizations (libraries, universities, societies). The birth, growth and continued existence of Chawton House Library, and the areas of knowledge to which it provides access, have been made real through determined and prolonged physical and intellectual labour.

At the heart of all this physical plant and mental activity, the books still draw readers. Texts by long-dead women stand in their controlled and protected environment: enclosed in a grand house in a magnificent estate in a beautiful village; the convergence point of routes by air, rail and road. Institutions and organizations provide for scholars to come and read the books, and to go off to communicate new understanding of them through their own writing and particularly through teaching students. There is something intensely moving about the way this unofficial organization, funded by donors, reliant on volunteers as well as professionals, has become a dynamic centre of scholarly expertise for a body of material that for generations was ignored by the great university and library knowledge-centres.

Of course no cultural change or development happens in isolation, but always within a nexus of broader change. Emma Clery points out that the decade when women's texts entered the canon was also the decade of neoliberalism, when making money was coming to be counted moral virtue, and individual rights and freedoms to trump 'society'. Courses on women's writing were embedded in the BA syllabus just as the syllabus as such,

the old historical model, was giving way to cafeteria choice and students as customers. Female authors revived at just about the time of the death of the author. Any name recognition today for women writers in particular exists against a background of sharply diminished name recognition for writers in general; the study of writing by women takes place against a background of sharply diminished market value and cultural capital for the study of writing in any shape or form.

To read and study women's writing from the past used to be seen as non-serious or as weird because it lacked the recognized cultural value of reading and studying canonical texts by men. The danger today is that reading and studying texts from any milieu other than that of the reader or student—from a different historical period or a different language or nation—might come to be seen as irrelevant and elitist. Worse, it might become literally elitist, as fewer institutions provide access to it, and more expensively.

The broad processes of history are hard to discern and impossible to control; but academics keep trying to exercise some minimal control through the courses we design and the works we publish. In 1992 (the year that Sandy Lerner decided to buy Chawton House, Janet Todd edited Aphra Behn, and Virginia Woolf's works came out of copyright for, as it turned out, four years only) Sue Wiseman and I published a volume of essays titled *Women, Writing, History, 1660–1740*. We agonized over the meaning and import of all three terms in our title, and as I remember it, we did not feel we could produce a clear or satisfactory definition, a definition of theoretical rigour, for any single one of those terms. Yet each one (feminism, literary and historical studies) represented, and represents, something of inestimable value; inattention to any one of them has serious deleterious effects for the culture as a whole.

Even in 1993, when women, writing and history might have appeared to be doing well, Sandy Lerner's purchase of Chawton House was widely seen as eccentric at best. Courses on scholarship in women's writing did not emerge without opposition, but this was countered with immense energy. Two Chawton House Library conferences—the inaugural in 2003 and the one in 2013 that celebrated ten years of Chawton House Library and two centuries of *Pride and Prejudice*—have been waymarks in the advance of knowledge about women's writing during the period.

At the present time, when reading practices, whether on printed page or screen, are shifting rapidly as they compete not only with television but with social media and digital games; when education is shifting rapidly to

comply with demands that it be instrumental, utilitarian, money-making; when women's voices are back in literature but literature itself is becoming steadily more marginal; what can be said about women, writing, history: about the habit of reading, of reading historical texts and especially texts by women?

To these three I would apply the words of novelist Emma Parker about novels: we should 'support their rights with all the powers of our pens, and fight their cause to the very last drop of our ink'.[10] Humanities courses that emphasize writing skills to the exclusion of reading skills (like a mirror image of the charity schools that once taught reading but not writing) are training a labour force rather than feeding minds. One could say the same of an education that excludes historical study or that excludes recognition of the different position and different experiences of women.

Celebration is still in order. Reading is still in fashion—both reading purely for pleasure and reading for mental outreach to new imaginative or intellectual territory—as it was then for readers in parlours, closets and sometimes stagecoaches, so now for readers with phones or Kindles, on planes or jogging tracks. With the study of women's writing well established but with literary study itself less than secure, women's texts are still a daring choice. They carry an element of challenge, of nurturing a separate and critical individuality, of difference from and potential resistance to the status quo. For writers and readers of this book, this little self-selected subgroup who deal in academic practices and find new readers for past women writers, it is vital not to let the element of pleasure get squeezed out. Students should find fun in their reading as well as intellectual substance. We are lucky to work in a field that so richly provides both.

Notes

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3. Constance Walker, 'Dorothea Primrose Campbell: a newly discovered pseudonym, poems and tales', *Women's Writing*, 21(4) (2014), pp. 592–608.

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10. Emma Parker, *Elfrida, Heiress of Belgrove*, 3 vols. (London: printed at the Minerva Press for A.K. Newman and Co., 1811), Vol. 1, p. 23.

Introduction: Feminisms and Futures: Women's Writing 1660–1830

Jennie Batchelor and Gillian Dow

Although this collection of essays is inspired by Chawton House Library's tenth anniversary conference, this book is not a conference proceedings. Indeed, and rather fittingly, the essays that follow emerged, like the field that is their subject, on the periphery of the main stage (which, in this case, was a marquee on the south lawn at Chawton House Library). They originated in chats in corridors and over coffee, which were followed up by conversations in other locations, at other conferences, by email and by telephone. The resulting contributions to this collection reflect on the simultaneously exciting yet disquieting feeling many of us shared in our recognition that the conversation we could and were having about eighteenth-century women's writing in 2013 was very different from that orchestrated by its precursor event to mark Chawton House Library's opening in 2003.

The intervening years had seen the publication of many groundbreaking works of feminist literary history devoted to our period. Narrative histories by Paula Backscheider (2005), Betty Schellenberg (2005) and

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Susan Staves (2006) and essay collections, such as volumes 4 and 5 (2010) of Palgrave's landmark ten-volume *History of British Women's Writing* (edited by Ros Ballaster and Jacqueline Labbe, respectively), are only the most prominent of the several major studies published in English in this decade that had set out to map British women's literary history and establish eighteenth-century women writers' contribution to its unfolding.[1] In continental Europe, colleagues working on Western European women writers of the same period were both attempting to provide biographical and bibliographical information, and trace connections between the writers of different nation-states.

As a result of these works, and many others cited by contributors in the essays that follow, we had come to know so much more about eighteenth-century women's writing in 2013 than we had known in 2003. Yet this vastly increased knowledge base had given rise to profoundly mixed emotions as it prompted us to reflect on what had not yet been, indeed might never be, reckoned with. Charlotte Brewer observes in a 2015 article focusing on Jane Austen and the *Oxford English Dictionary* that 'the first edition of the *OED*', published between 1884 and 1928, had turned to 'all the great English writers of all ages' for its quotation sources, and in general preferred those written by men to those written by women'.[2] This bias in our reference works—from the *OED* to the *ODNB*—continues, despite repeated and varied attempts to redress the balance. Questions of the 'inclusion' of the women of the past in how we narrate our present have rarely been out of the headlines since the opening 2003 conference at Chawton House Library. The foundation of Wikipedia in 2001, and the overwhelming initial bias towards entries on significant men, led to scholar Adrianne Wadewitz's feminist editing and creation of many hundreds of entries on women between 2004 and her untimely death in 2014: Wikipedia edit-a-thons in her honour at the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS), and organized by the Aphra Behn Society and other groups internationally, carry on Wadewitz's work. Caroline Criado-Perez led a successful campaign to 'Keep a Woman' on English banknotes: the woman, from 2017, will be Jane Austen. The Royal Bank of Scotland ten pound note from 2017 will contain an image of nineteenth-century scientist Mary Somerville, and President Trudeau of Canada announced on 8 March 2016—International Women's Day—that Canadian banknotes will feature distinguished Canadian Women. But despite valiant scholarly and campaigning work, systemic bias continues in the representation of women's lives, just as it does in the representation of women's writing.

Several of us registered a growing awareness of how much more there still was to find out about women's literary history, and experienced a growing fear that the very success of the recovery project might institute new forms of forgetting, as the works of certain women writers and certain kinds of women and women's writing were privileged above others. The conference provided ample occasion to welcome new digital resources, such as the cross-period *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles* database, which has created unparalleled access to and helps us make sense of all the data that we have amassed, and to discuss projects still very much in progress, such as the *Women Writers* database, which attempts a pan-European approach to the reception of women writers before 1900.[3] But this cause for celebration also occasioned lament over the prospect of us ever being able fully to synthesize and to provide comprehensive qualitative analysis of the quantities of big data with which we now had to deal.

More urgently, however, the conference posed a series of questions that no individual paper or panel did or could address satisfactorily. Did we now have the confidence to claim that the recovery project had achieved its goal? If so, could we finally realize much-repeated—and to many of us, antagonistic and dismissive—calls to move 'beyond recovery'?[4] And if we could, what should unite us as scholars devoted to the study of women's writing? What might the future of women's literary history look like in the research monograph, the classroom and the wider world?

These questions, sometimes deafening in their silence as we gladly commemorated the achievements of both well-known and still largely obscure women writers, have increasingly come to preoccupy historians and theorists of women's writing as we are forced to defend our field of enquiry in a world that as Devoney Looser and Schellenberg have eloquently documented, is not shy of declaring its obsolescence.[5] Objections to the project of writing women's or feminist literary history in the twenty-first century—although these are not necessarily the same thing, of course—are elucidated in richer detail in the chapters that follow and in particular in essays by Ros Ballaster, Katherine Binhammer, Gillian Dow and Isobel Grundy. In part symptomatic of a more widespread and insidious questioning of the value of the humanities in the modern higher education environment, these objections are also much more local in focus. Questions such as: Now that the case for studying women's writing has been successfully made and the recovery project has done its work, can we really justify its continued study as a distinct field? Wouldn't such an endeavour be separatist? Wouldn't it risk either ghettoizing women's writing, pushing it

back into just differently calibrated margins from those it once inhabited, or paradoxically, turning it into such a specialized field as to become elitist? Isn't there a danger, in other words, that the recovery project is becoming a victim of its own success?

This book refuses to apologize for the hard-won achievements of the field of eighteenth-century women's literary history and the feminist politics that has, and always should, underpin it. It does, however, reflect urgently on the state of the field and seeks to lay down new directions for it so that we still view it now, in Isobel Grundy's words in her Preface here, as the 'daring choice' it always was (p. 9). We remain committed to making visible what was always there but was often, and still is often, obscured: the contribution of eighteenth-century women's writing to all our histories. We lobby for the field's continued, indeed newly vital, relevance in a teaching environment in which affordable editions of many of the texts we want our students to read are unavailable, in which the case for the value of the humanities in general needs vigorous defence, and in which sexual difference still matters. And—crucially—we encourage our counterparts in countries where it is still claimed that there were very few early women writers, and that those who *did* write were not important, to continue to press for their inclusion on course syllabuses, to edit their texts, and to publish their research on their work and lives.

Our mounting of this case through the commissioning of the essays that comprise this collection is founded upon three underlying assumptions. The first is that calls to move beyond recovery are premature. The neatly catch-all phrase 'recovery project' masks the disparate nature of a field largely formed by the work of individuals. This is not to downplay the undeniable and path-breaking contribution of many large-scale projects such as the compilation of the *Feminist Companion to Literature in English* or the development of ongoing initiatives such as *Orlando* and the *Women Writers Project* (formerly based at Brown University but now based at Northeastern University).[6] But it is to acknowledge, as Ros Ballaster does in this collection, that such resources tend to be synthetic and documentary in nature rather than critically evaluative (p. 22). That evaluative work has, in the main, been the province of single-author journal articles, book chapters and monographs. Yet while the collective ground covered by these publications is vast and richly informative, it has tended, like the standard literary histories to which it seeks to restore its subjects, to privilege certain modes (print over manuscript, the written over the verbal), certain models of authorship (the professional over the amateur)

and certain genres (the novel and, to a somewhat lesser extent, poetry) above others in which women were both successful and skilled practitioners. This volume advocates a less narrowly defined model of the author and the literary. It considers, for instance, in Elaine McGirr's essay on the actress as author, the role of performance in not only authoring the texts of male and female playwrights, but also in teaching audiences how to read and interpret play-texts. It throws a spotlight, in Jennie Batchelor's essay, on the widely read but unpaid work of non-professional writers for the *Lady's Magazine* (1770–1832), many of whom were women, but many of whom resist the imperative of feminist literary history by obscuring their sex behind gender-ambiguous pseudonyms.

We were committed to producing a volume that read canonical genres alongside once critically and economically undervalued but influential forms such as biography, the periodical and also children's literature, in which genre, as M.O. Grenby points out, women played a leading role even if their creative efforts were not also commensurately compensated by publishers. Grenby's detailed book-historical approach to his subject underlines our conviction that the importance of women's work within the eighteenth-century literary marketplace was only partly defined by their success as writers, and that if we truly seek to illuminate historical women's contribution to literary history, then we need not only a more flexible definition of the literary but also recourse to methodologies (book historical and material) once understood to be only tangentially related to literary study. Essays by Chloe Wigston Smith on the implications of the material turn for the study of women's writing and Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey's essay on the ownership and collection of women's writing in the first decades of the long eighteenth century remind us that the composition, circulation and reception of women's writing was complexly implicated in the material circumstances in which it was produced. In their reminders that books are not simply words and ideas but works—the labours or, in Ros Ballaster's words, the 'performances of embodied experience' (p. 34)—as well as things, these essays urge us to think again about what it is, precisely, that we think we might or should be recovering when analysing women's writing of the past.

In forcing us to question the object of our enquiry—as every essay in this collection does in slightly different ways—these chapters also underscore our second assumption in conceiving of this volume: that the future of women's literary history must depend not only upon a sustained and critical interrogation of the imperatives that drove its historic obfuscation,

but also upon those that have structured the logic of its recent resurgence. The rationales for what and why we have chosen to remember when retelling women's literary history are both instructive and sometimes unsettling. As the essays by Gillian Dow and Sarah Prescott demonstrate starkly, the study of eighteenth-century women's writing has been dominantly Anglophone in nature and indeed often specifically Anglo-British in focus, a distortion that will be corrected by the Leverhulme Trust-funded *Women's Poetry in Ireland, Scotland and Wales* project, out of which Prescott's chapter emerges.[7] Beyond Britain, Pan-European funded projects, such as the COST project *Women Writers in History*,[8] have endeavoured to map women's literary history on a European scale. But the fact remains, as Dow reminds us, that even the most enthusiastic hailer of the end of the recovery project must acknowledge that this is an initiative that is at vastly different stages of development in different national contexts.

The logistical problems of accessing and, for many of us, reading texts in multiple languages are not to be underestimated, but not attempting to do so has produced a literary history of British women's writing that ignores the richness of a European tradition. As Dow points out in her chapter on early literary biographies, English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh women writers often insisted they were a part of a European tradition that overwrites the distinctive traditions of much of the British Isles. Ignoring an appetite for, and the influence of, translated female-authored fiction in Britain and Ireland—not to mention the cross-border appeal of women's writing elsewhere in Europe—distorts our view of the field. Although one important early account of sentimental prose fiction in England emphasized both women's role in the vogue, and the importance of translated fiction for English readers more generally, Josephine Grieder's 1975 study did not, for the most part, inform accounts of women's writing in its immediate aftermath in the latter half of the 1970s, or indeed through the 1980s and into the 1990s.[9] Key works of scholarship by scholars such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979), Joan DeJean (1991), Margaret Ezell (1993) and Joan Hinde Stewart (1993) emphasized the differences between women's writing in Britain and in continental Europe, and between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary traditions, rather than their similarities.[10] Where feminist histories of women's lives are concerned, the focus has tended to be on the Western European experience. Gerda Lerner's *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (1993), Olwen Hufton's *The Prospect Before Her* (1997) and the recent collection *Literature and the Development of Feminist Theory* edited by Robin Truth

Goodman (2015) all take a useful pan-European and attempt a 'global' approach to the object of their study, something that currently seems impossible for the writing of women's *literary* history: too many texts, too many contexts, too many lives.[11]

But if the future of women's literary history requires disciplinary flexibility to allow for its fullest and most accurate telling, then it also depends upon a broader questioning of the wider cultural and political inflections that have shaped what it is possible to see in or say about women's writing of the past. It has been suggested—in several of the many, many recent collections focusing on contemporary 'uses' of Jane Austen—that the popularity of Austen's fiction (and adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*) with Generation Y female readers can be attributed to post-feminist anxiety, nostalgia for a 'simpler' time for women, and even—more reductively—a desire for fine clothes and gentle ways. This analysis of contemporary reader-responses frequently, and understandably, distresses scholars of both Austen and eighteenth-century history more generally. No historian of literature or culture can escape their own time, but as Clery points out in her essay on the traumatic legacies of neo-liberal politics and economics on the post-1980s study of women's writing, it is important that we remain hypervigilant to its influence if we are to liberate the study and valuation of women's writing from the straightjacket of our own (even unwitting) internalization of the logic of dominant economic ideology.

And yet, a specific historical political moment can do good to both the sales and the popular reputation of an early woman writer. The left-wing adoption of Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) in a France hostile to former President Nicholas Sarkozy's right-wing agenda is a case in point. Here, Sarkozy's comments on the 'irrelevance' of the novel in 2006 and 2008 led to widespread outrage among French public intellectuals and scholars, including feminist writers such as Élisabeth Badinter, and an entire movement that used the novel as a symbol of protest (albeit a somewhat unlikely one, bearing in mind the subject matter: thwarted love in the court of Henri II). Staged 'read-ins' were carried out in front of symbolic locations such as the Pantheon in Paris—a building that serves as the resting place for 'Grands Hommes', and which until very recently only housed the remains of two 'Grandes Femmes'—Mme Sophie Berthelot, buried with her husband, and Marie Curie (two prominent female members of the French resistance, Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz and Germaine Tillion, were interred there in 2014). French badges reading 'Je lis *La Princesse des Clèves*' were worn proudly to mark

out opposition.[12] It is a gesture that is hard to 'translate' to contemporary Anglo-American politics: can one imagine opposition to Donald Trump taking the form of a reading of Frances Brooke; opposition to the Conservative government involving badges claiming 'I'm reading *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*'? Such 'afterlives', however, are certainly worth interrogation as part of the rich field of reception studies that can give women writers their proper place in their own time, and a renewed importance for our own.

In questioning the values that have shaped the construction of women's literary history in the past few decades, we nonetheless recognize the desirability as well as the need to develop robust principles and objectives going forward that might help to unite a field in danger of fragmentation and losing its political and cultural purchase in the classroom and, crucially—in this age of the evaluation of the 'impact' of scholarly work, despite the ambivalence (at best) that most of us feel about this evaluation of our labour—beyond. Key among these principles is the question of literary value that the new formalist turn in eighteenth-century studies has brought to the forefront of our scholarly conversations about women's writing. While we may be suspicious of the historical and often ideologically inflected constructions of aesthetic merit that were integral to what Clifford Siskin famously referred to as the 'Great Forgetting' of women writers, this is not to say that literary value cannot or shouldn't be part of our critical vocabulary.[13] Indeed, as Ros Ballaster's essay documents, it is a question we would be foolish to ignore even while we might contest how it may have been and continue to be defined. For Ballaster, the 'aesthetic turn' is vital in its ability to demonstrate how 'formal creativity' models a feminist aesthetics of enduring literary and political value (p. 26). If this is a compelling argument for emphasizing and sharpening our critical focus on the 'writing' in women's writing, then we leave behind 'women' at our peril also. Katherine Binhammer's essay makes a self-professedly polemical and unashamedly ambitious case for a renewed theoretical, feminist commitment to literary history that takes the long view; that recognizes the fact that the (relative) mainstreaming of the study of historical women's writing in school and university curricula has diminished the force of a critique; and that accepts its role, in part, as demonstrating how and why these writers' critique speaks as powerfully to our own moment as it did to their own.

It is a truth almost universally, if uncomfortably, acknowledged by our contributors that the scholarly resurgence of interest in women's writing

coincided with Roland Barthes' hailing of the death of the author. We see this current moment of crisis, impasse or—to use Binhammer's striking phrase in her essay in this collection—'scholarly morbidity' in the field of women's literary history as a moment of creative and political opportunity. The essays that follow do not always speak in unison—indeed, as editors, we encouraged critical engagement with work in progress throughout the writing of them. But all contributors are united in their commitment to a history of women's writing that is precisely attuned to the many ways in which these writers continue to signify to us as women, as readers and as feminists. They argue passionately and unequivocally that eighteenth-century women's literary history has a future, and that feminism was, and always should be, at its heart.

Notes

1. Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ros Ballaster, ed., *The History of British Women's Writing, 1690–1750*, Vol. 4 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jacqueline M. Labbe, ed., *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830*, Vol. 5 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Since 2013, their number has been joined by other notable studies, including: Catherine Ingrassia, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Devoney Looser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
2. Charlotte Brewer, '"That reliance on the ordinary": Jane Austen and the Oxford English Dictionary', *Review of English Studies*, 66 (2015), p. 744.
3. Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, eds., *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Online, 2006–), http://orlando.cambridge.org. The *New Approaches to European Women Writers* project database can be found at http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/womenwriters
4. These calls have been made ever more loudly since the publication of Jean I. Marsden's 'Beyond recovery: feminism and the future of eighteenth-century literary studies', *Feminist Studies*, 28(3) (2002), pp. 657–62.

5. Devoney Looser, 'Why I'm still writing women's literary history', *Minnesota Review*, 71–2 (2009), pp. 220–7; Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Writing eighteenth-century women's literary history, 1986 to 2006', *Literature Compass*, 4(6) (2007), pp. 1538–60.
6. Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); *The Women Writers Project*, www.wwp.northeastern.edu
7. *Women's Poetry in Ireland, Scotland and Wales*, http://womenspoetry.aber.ac.uk/en/aboutwwisp
8. *Women Writers in History: Toward a New Understanding of European Literary Culture*, www.womenwriters.nl/index.php/COST_Action
9. Josephine Grieder, *Translations of French Sentimental Prose Fiction in Late Eighteenth Century England* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1975).
10. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979); Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Joan Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
11. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500–1800* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Robin Truth Goodman, ed., *Literature and the Development of Feminist Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
12. Clarisse Fabre, Et Nicolas Sarkozy fit la fortune du roman de Mme de La Fayette', *Le Monde*, 29 March 2011, www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2011/03/29/et-nicolas-sarkozy-fit-la-fortune-du-roman-de-mme-de-la-fayette_1500132_3476.html, accessed 10 December 2015.
13. Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 193–209.

Passing Judgement: The Place of the Aesthetic in Feminist Literary History

Ros Ballaster

The repeated line in the concluding chapter of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, 'It was not a story to pass on' is, we know, purposely ambiguous.[1] Its meaning is all the more elusive because written language lacks the powers of emphasis and gesture we use in oral communication. The stories of slave oppression and emancipation that echo in this novel have been passed orally from mouth to ear within communities, some turned into written accounts and others never so, perhaps because they are too dreadful or too incendiary or, equally possibly, because they never arrive at a person or site with access to forms of writing and print. This terrible story of maternal passion, of troubled hauntings and the effect of bodily dispossessions on the human psyche is not a story to pass on to others? Or, not a story to pass by, to ignore?

Reading these passages out loud in a British classroom in my English received pronunciation, I hear a strange and surely unintended echo from a grammatical term: 'This is not a story to parse on.' To 'parse' is a form of grammatical analysis of a language, a form of syntactic analysis, in which the function of each component part is understood in relation to each other. To separate the 'parts' of *Beloved* as a novel, to analyse each character, each chapter, each part (as numerous school and college students

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have done since the novel's hugely successful debut in 1987) may be to miss or to exclude the story's real capacity to undermine our sense of relationship and hierarchy. Yet, this is the work of criticism. We habitually 'parse' literary texts to recognize the complex fibres that hold each element within a text in relation to another. This kind of new critical 'work' has historically been understood as a way of measuring the aesthetic value and achievement of the text under analysis: the more tightly woven the web of relations, the greater the work's aesthetic strength. For the microcosm of text so too for the macrocosm of genres, goes the argument. From the act of *parole* (the single work) to the system of *langue* that generates it, the quality of the artistic achievement lies in the unified complexity of its internal constituent parts.

Recent departures in criticism have dislodged the primacy of this kind of new critical reading, partly because the capacity to search vast swathes of digitally captured text has made possible kinds of knowledge not available to cultures in which books and texts were only encountered as print or manuscript objects. And partly because the politicization of the academy in the late twentieth century, in which feminist criticism was an important player, has challenged the criteria for 'value' that underpinned such reading. Big data, and digital humanities, shift our attention from internal coherence to the interaction of text with world and level the literary text with all other forms of language that share its capacity to be searched and investigated. I do not seek here to make a (futile) case for a 'return' to the kinds of aesthetic judgement of *belles-lettres* or neo-formalism. These activities were often ways of preserving elite class-based access to higher education. However, I do want to explore the case for 'passing judgement' in feminist literary history as it is currently practised. And, as in Morrison's concluding statement, the idea of 'passing judgement' should cut both ways. Is feminist criticism 'ready' to pass judgement on the works it addresses: to make distinctions between the merits of the many works by women identified, republished, made available in digital and print form since the 'recovery' project took hold in the early 1980s? Or to pass judgement on the merits of these works by women with comparison to the works we know to be by male authors of the period? Or should we continue to 'pass' on these acts of judgement? To see them as forms of elite control or compromises with authority and institutional instrumentalism? Or, more challengingly, to recognize that our definitions of 'value' can never be anything other than interested, partial and contingent?

Feminist arguments for embodiment and lived experience as the necessary ground of our politics should attend to the special significance of literary works by comparison with other forms of linguistic record that survive through history. Precisely because literary works seek to provide readers with an experience of the body and a consciousness of the body lived in time, they provide us with a unique form of evidence that moves beyond acts of representation or expression to the imagining of alternative pasts and futures of embodied being. This is not, let us note, a call to return to an essentialist claim for the 'truth' of kinds of knowledge that come from a body that is biologically sexed as female. Particular to feminist theory in its third wave has been the challenge to the relative stability of the sex–gender distinction that underpinned so much of the early recovery second-wave feminist project, which argued that women writers shared a biological sex but identified very differently on a spectrum of culturally constructed gender with those who took an explicitly feminist position (such as Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft) most inclined to challenge the naturalness of gender and its mapping onto sexed bodies. Literary writing has often been at the vanguard of feminist imagining: writing provides opportunities for impersonating and inhabiting the imagined bodies of others. Indeed, we often judge the greatest aesthetic achievement to be achieved when the correspondence between the body of the writer and the person who speaks in the work is most distant. So too, feminist theory under the influence of third-wave thinkers such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway has come to challenge the sequentiality (first there is sex, then there is gender) and the adaptability (sex is fixed, gender is fluid) of these terms. Technologies of gender reassignment, in an odd parallel with those of digital humanities, have opened up the field of possibility and made 'sex' appear (if not without labour, pain and expense) something that is open to change, while leaving open the question of whether 'gender' is now pluralized or re-implicated as a fixed binary to which we all conform. Here too the fluidity of the transmission of bodily experience that literary texts figure—between the mind of the narrator and the mind of the reader, between the bodies of past and present protagonists and between natural and supernatural beings in a work such as *Beloved*—can provide a means of reconfiguring these fraught encounters in the social and political public spheres of feminist argument.

I suggest that a turn toward embodiment and lived experience and its figuration in the literary work invites us also to re-evaluate the terms on which feminist literary history has to date been conducted. It requires

a political reinvestment in theorizing the politics of feminism, if not in the place of, then at least alongside the dominance of those questions of method and research practice that have come to be central in a neo-liberal higher education context, where education is defended as a vehicle for the transmission of (vocational and practical) skills rather than a means of challenging doxa and promoting scientific (in the fullest sense of the word) enquiry.[2]

Women's literary history has remained remarkably impervious to the theoretical and political debates that have taken hold in feminist theory and philosophy. I still receive regular requests to supervise research work on women's writing from highly educated and politically aware students who, while they may question categories of sex in their daily lives and experience through the politics of intersectionality and transgender, do not feel any pressure to defend the choice to concentrate on 'women', nor to explain what academic or intellectual benefit might derive from such (strategic or not) separatism. Too often the argument that these categories are meaningful and stable in history, and the literary history we study, and have only been destabilized in the twenty-first century seems to be assumed, despite the very history of a recovery project that has consistently challenged the assumption of the chastity, silence and obedience of women, and the constraints of patriarchy and heteronormativity, by uncovering female agents in history who conformed to none or only some of these assumptions. Again, this is not to say that the category of the 'woman writer' is to be abandoned and that a feminist literary history must abandon the notion of sexed persons, but rather to say that we need a better—or any—account of why attending to the creativity and aesthetic achievement of women in literature might (still) be significant within the feminist project and within literary history itself. Toril Moi observes:

> Today, cutting edge feminist theory … is no longer concerned with women and writing. We need to ask why feminist theory stopped being concerned with women and writing.[3]

So, to reiterate the two, here related, questions for a feminist literary history: can we and should we defend the category of the woman writer? And, if so, what place do we give aesthetic judgement and the privileging of literary forms of writing in the history of women's writing?

Feminist literary history in its second-wave manifestation was (rightly) cautious about acts of literary judgement. In the absence of competent

scholarly editions, we could not place women's writing in relation to that of their male or female predecessors or contemporaries, or take the measure of the depth or complexity of their generic choices, literary allusions and technical expertise. The fact that the case for women's significance in eighteenth-century literature was largely founded on the novel, a mode of published writing in which women seemed to be especially prolific and successful, only complicated the picture. What does it mean to make the case for the aesthetic achievement of women writers on the basis of a mode of writing that—book historians and critical theorists increasingly prove—gains its symbolic capital by virtue of its lack of generic or categorical stability?[4] Remarkable, if not entirely even, strides have been made since the early 1980s in the feminist editorial project with regard to women's writing against a context of declining investment in a commercial environment. Academic presses have mounted lists of newly edited works by women: Pickering and Chatto, Kentucky University Press and Chicago University Press have strong lists on the eighteenth century in particular. It seems now time to return to the question of literary value. However, feminist criticism faces a changed research landscape (to which it clearly contributed) in which literary writing no longer appears to carry any privilege in relation to other kinds of writing. One woman's account book is as valuable to the feminist critical project as another's verse epic of exquisitely poised satire.

This article aims to take two directions in order to make the case that a feminist politics cannot afford to sidestep the question of aesthetic merit (although it can undoubtedly challenge the values on which such judgements are made). First, it takes a route through recent sociological theory in feminism to argue for the special capacity of acts of *literary* creativity to model the generative and resistant agency of lived experience (including imaginative experience). Second, it argues that feminist criticism can, as it has in the past, make an important contribution to the debate about the often invisible political investments in and impacts of new developments in the study of literature. Specifically, in our present moment, the rise of cultural history, material history, history of the book and digital humanities must be interrogated not only on grounds of whether they engender new exclusions of women, but also because they bracket aesthetic judgements at the moment in the history of criticism when they are most important for a feminist politics.

In order to address these questions, I take two case studies of works by eighteenth-century women writers for whom embodiment—and

specifically the pain of embodied experience—is central to their artistic achievement: Jane Collier and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. I have consciously here turned away from the genre(s) of the novel, where we have become habituated to expecting the embodied experience of women to be represented. Feminist historians of the novel, myself included, have recognized that the voicing of female bodily experience is central to the formation of the new 'inwardness' of the novel.[5] More recently, feminist critics have laid claim to the importance of the theatre as a space that provides new opportunities of bodily agency for women as actors/performers.[6] The importance of female voice in the history of a poetry and literature of complaint has long been recognized.[7] I concentrate here on two (relatively short) works of prose (Collier) and poetic (Montagu) satire so as to make the case for formal creativity as an important element in any 'new feminist aesthetics'. The two works discussed here have an intimate relationship to the experiences we know both women underwent: Collier's unhappy life of dependence on the patronage and hospitality of others and Montagu's life-threatening and life-changing battle with smallpox. But these are also embodied experiences with a particularly profound material and symbolic valence for women in this period; precisely because they bring women to the brink of total exclusion from the (limited) social and sexual agency afforded their sex. I draw in particular on the insights of Jacqueline Rose in her provocative book, *Women in Dark Times* (2014), in which three women of modern times (socialist Rosa Luxemburg, German-Jewish painter Charlotte Salomon and Hollywood star Marilyn Monroe) demonstrate the 'ability' of women 'to force to the surface of the everyday parts of the inner life—its visceral reality, its stubborn unruliness—which in the normal course of our exchanges we like to think we have subdued'.[8] For Rose, these three artists—of the political speech, of painting and of cinematic performance—provide an opening into a discussion of the dark side of our modern world and the way in which it is inscribed on women and inscribed by them—migration, honour killings, dictatorship—as well as the capacity of art to speak from the place of suffering. My analysis in this article bears comparison with the subtle and persuasive reading Rita Felski offers of Virginia Woolf's skilful interweaving of aesthetics and politics in her rendering of Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* (1927):

> We see in Woolf's novel a tribute to the grace and dignity, but also the arduousness of a middle-class, middle-aged woman's life. Moving in and

> out of Mrs. Ramsay's mind, Woolf allows us to glimpse the hidden art and intelligence behind a way of life often described as trivial and feminine.[9]

Too often, feminist literary history has been embarrassed to speak about and from the place of such suffering. Art seems to be a luxury, feminist theory a kind of intellectual abstraction that turns away from harsh realities. However, in art practice and the very act of mourning, we may find secreted those potentialities for alternative visions. And traditional forms of feminist analysis—such as the Marxist-feminist critique of the appropriation of female labour or the literary history of early women's writing—may sometimes offer more insight or understanding than the 'crisis of gender' that has come to dominate feminist debate since the third wave. Viviane Namaste makes an eloquent case for the necessity of a feminist account of the appropriation of women's labour and the endemic violence against female sex-workers to explain the extraordinarily high incidence of HIV and subjection to violence among transgendered women in modern culture in her critique of what she sees as Judith Butler's instrumentalization of the transvestite or transgendered body to serve as the destabilizing sign of gender for a theoretical feminism.[10] With regard to modernist art practice (specifically the 'destroyed words and bodies of female writers in Larsen's and Woolf's novels'), Ewa Plonaska Ziarek makes the case that 'the emancipatory potential of artistic practice is related not only to domination but also to transformative political action'.[11] In addressing the art practices of women writers in history, we do not turn away from issues of form and of political inequality, nor do we practise forms of elite exclusion, but rather, I suggest, we generate new inclusions of literary forms as well as gendered identities.

My case here is for feminist critics to give their attention to explaining the aesthetic merits of individual works from within the recovery project. The argument is not for a quantitative aesthetics: a ranking list of good and bad works from the vast (if still not comprehensive) titles of works we can ascribe to women writers now available to us. But rather, that we concentrate on explicating the formal achievement of those works we find especially fine. In a world of seemingly infinite textual access, we find ourselves increasingly craving an informed opinion to direct our energies to work with special merit. Not because that work describes an exceptional experience, but because it manages to (re)mediate experience with exceptional skill.

The Recovery Project and Reserving Judgement

In a relatively recent revisionist work of 2006, Susan Staves concludes that 'it cannot be a sin against feminism to find that some women wrote well and others badly'.[12] Her own history of eighteenth-century women's writing makes a strong case for the artistic merit of Whig republican writings and the passions of militant rational feminism among the works by women she explores. These artistic merits have been overlooked because of their lack of fit with the sexual and identity politics of second-wave feminism, better represented by the woman-authored amatory and sentimental novel of the period. It is perhaps no surprise, given the apocalyptic visionary radicalism of the works she prefers, that Staves selects the word 'sin'. Neo-liberals and radical pluralists cast feminism as an 'orthodoxy', the list of works that it draws on as a 'canon' (a list of saints) and those who appear to challenge its doxas as heretics. The truth of course is that the history of feminist recovery of women's writing in the late twentieth century was altogether less intentional, more driven by (and hence more susceptible to) the market determinants of a growing academic economy in publishing and higher education than attempts to map its products and outcomes would suggest.

Nonetheless, Staves is right to recognize a certain reserve on the part of feminist literary historians in making value judgements about the artistic merits of the works we sought to identify, get published and make comprehensible through editorial and critical analysis. This reserve was shared by other heretics of the later twentieth century in criticism: those who sought to enlarge the field of objects of study from works of high literature to other forms: newspaper journalism, television, Hollywood cinema, critical theory.[13] That reserve stemmed partly from our sense that—without the institutional investment in research to uncover the contexts and determinants of these genres and writers—we had no coordinates for measuring their respective 'value'. One poem by Alexander Pope, thanks to the valuable work of his Twickenham editors who produced seven volumes under the general editorship of John Butt from 1929 to 1961, could be measured against all his other works as well as the different variant states of the work in question; an editor could point to the allusions to the works of his predecessors and to the genre conventions Pope manipulates with such consummate skill. One poem by a contemporary such as Mary Jones or Jane Barker without the benefit of a sound critical edition would have to stand for the author's achievement as a whole in an anthology with scant

space allowed for scholarly annotation.[14] Anthologies of women's writing, even those with a relatively limited chronological range—such as Roger Lonsdale's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* or Paula Backscheider's *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century*—can still only afford to include a handful of poems by any one woman writer to stand for her oeuvre as a whole.[15] However, as Rita Felski reminds us, to be reserved about making aesthetic judgements does not vindicate abandoning any kind of discrimination on the part of the feminist critic despite the need to recognize the elitism too often passed off as objectivity or transcendence. 'A questioning of transcendental grounds for artistic judgement should not be confused with rejection of all talk about beauty, value, or pleasure'.[16] Indiscriminate inclusivity may prove no less damaging to a feminist case for the value of women's writing than the exclusion of much of this work from the teaching and study of literature. That most literary works by women do not form part of the canon is not, she notes, 'in itself a good enough reason for putting them all back in'; 'Feminist critics are on much stronger ground when they offer positive justifications for their literary choices than when they lament the fact of exclusion'.[17]

Let us compare the place of aesthetic judgement in two important research resources for the historian of eighteenth-century women's writing that bookend the period of the feminist recovery project from the early 1980s to the present day. Janet Todd compiled and edited a *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660–1800* for a (then) small independent publishing company, Rowman and Littlefield, in 1985 and a new paperback edition was released from a larger academic publishing house, Methuen, in 1987. It would be wrong to say that aesthetic judgements are not made in this reference work and it is noticeable that in this early stage of the recovery project, the 'writing' under discussion is largely literary. Taking the first reference in a list of 'genres' that follows each writer's name, by far the largest group included in the more than 500 authors listed is poet (146 entries), closely followed by novelist (85), with playwrights (21) fewer than religious writers (29) and letter-writers (27). In her introduction, Todd comments on the unlikelihood of uncovering 'masterpieces' and the distance between modern taste and that of the period:

> Probably no undiscovered masterpieces are embedded in the material, and even the concept of the masterpiece seems inappropriate for women's literature of that era, which failed to conform to established critical hierarchies or

> to the classification of genres. Far more than male texts, female ones always have a subtext which marks them: the justification, even vindication, of their own existence and of their authors.
>
> The criteria for judgement are also problematic. On what grounds do we discriminate between Minerva novels or spiritual autobiographies of illiterate captives, self-doubting Quakers, and devotional Anglicans? In sentimentalism, women's major vehicle, which delivered for the first time female centrality, tragedy and comedy are confounded, and the demands of naturalism, the privileged fictional mode, are ignored. The distance between text and reader and between author and text, so prized by modern criticism, is actively frustrated, and the reader is taken into the work almost as a character. How can we judge sentimental writing? We are ill-attuned to it; we want wit and raciness, not effusive posturing, and collision with ideology, not collusion with it.[18]

Individual entries by different contributors rarely deliver aesthetic judgement, but nonetheless they are to be found. Entries often conclude with quotations from contemporary reviewers to indicate the critical reception and fortunes of the individual writer. A survey of the critical vocabulary used by the *Dictionary*'s contributors is instructive. Below is a full list of the lexis of judgement (in most cases a term or phrase is used only once with the exception of those marked '+' below where the term is used twice or more):

- **Positive**: better, sophisticated, original, pleasant, witty, freshness, authenticity, careful, elegant, skilful, superb technician, assured, lively, polished, above the average, superb, intelligent, eminently capable, considerable erudition, sprightly, precise, graceful, economical, compel[s] attention, competent, fair sense of rhythm.
- **Negative**: mediocre, inconsistent, pious, dull (+), tedious, lacking force and originality, inert and stylized, insipid, contrived, conventional, lengthy, dull, heavy-handed, rough, slight, little originality, unremarkable, exaggeratedly sentimental style, third-rate, stilted (+), crude, clumsy, weak in form and style, turgid, self-conscious, verbose, imitative, conventional.

As we can see, the vocabulary is itself reserved, inclined to represent women writers, even on a positive spectrum, as competent rather than creative and original talents. Of course, it is arguable that any reference work attempting to include all male writers or all writers within a period would expect to find more dross than gold.

A far more sophisticated tool for identifying and searching women's writing at the forefront of digital technology was first launched in 2006 in the shape of the dynamic subscription textbase *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present*. By 2013, the editors noted that the database contained entries on 1300 women writers from or associated with the British Isles. In their scholarly introduction, the three editors (Susan Brown, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy) adopt a tone of confidence both in the field and in the potentialities of new digital technologies:

> The time is ripe for a broad and contemporary history of women's writing. *Orlando* offers a feminist literary history centred in women's production. It builds on the wealth of new knowledge that recent scholarship has produced. We believe that as an electronic history it can overcome some of the limitations of traditional literary history.
>
> Humanities computing makes possible new and flexible structures for doing literary history. The *Orlando* history brings together in electronic form an extensive, multiple micro-history (the immense textbase of highly historically contextualized accounts of individuals' lives and careers). For the reader this offers the ability to move back and forth among the granular or detailed accounts, to expand on a particular topic or context, or to pursue fruitful and serendipitous links through the pathways of the textbase.
>
> The *Orlando* Project team has grasped the opportunity to build a new, fluid, complex, and interruptible literary history: interpretive arguments grounded in particularities. These arguments serve as invitations to explore that rich detail and as encouragement to venture out on alternative pathways through the textbase.[19]

While the *Orlando* team engaged in extensive original research, they also, of course, built on the earlier scholarship of many others in the recovery project, including Janet Todd and the contributors to the *Dictionary*.

The editors developed the electronic resource as a response to their sense of the limitations of the print medium for searchable information, two of them having co-edited in 1990 *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*.[20] As they note in their introduction, the information now included in the textbase is the equivalent in length of 100 volumes of readable text. However, as Jacqueline Wernimont has pointed out, the feminist recovery project

cannot simply measure its success in terms of size or amount of material 'recovered' (the larger the archive, the more feminist gain); access must go hand in hand with means to help users 'sort through an abundance of data and push against monumentalism in some way'. She concludes:

> What is at stake here is access not only to the texts, but also to the intellectual paradigms that situate women's writing as transformational with respect to canon and as central models of textual genres. Access, as a way of sorting through data, is also a way of valuing texts.[21]

Orlando offers a rich system of mark-up to enable researchers to compile their own narratives and interpretive routes through the information it provides. The core of the information lies in narratives about each writer and, for the majority, a distinction is made between documents about the life and documents about the writing. Text can be searched through 'life tags' and 'writing tags'. For our purposes, the latter are of most interest. Writing tags fall into three main fields: production, textual features and reception. A specific tag 'responses (literary)' has attributes that can also inform you whether the response is recent, a re-evaluation or initial, its formality (whether it was published or not) and also whether it is predicated on the author's gender.

However, *Orlando* does not, in the main, offer its own evaluations or responses to literary works nor measure them against each other. It provides descriptive information about the literary responses as well as the forms of public recognition afforded authors' works under its tags for 'reception'. A search from among the entries for 426 British women writers *Orlando* identifies as writing between 1660 and 1800 with the tag 'landmark text' produces 146 hits.[22] The majority of these hits identify works that are landmarks in terms of genre innovation (e.g., the first play written by a woman to be performed on a public stage) or in terms of a contribution to feminist argument.

Compare the entries for the two writers for whom this article seeks to make a case for particular aesthetic achievement in Todd's *Dictionary* and in *Orlando*. In Todd's *Dictionary*, the entry for Jane Collier by Robin Jarvis describes Collier's *Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*, which Jarvis states (wrongly) was co-authored with Samuel Richardson, as 'an often amusing catalogue of minor cruelties' and 'an early exercise in black comedy',[23] offering one evaluative comment in a one and half column entry; Jarvis connects the *Essay* with the work Jane Collier co-authored with Sarah Fielding, *The Cry* (1754) and says that the latter is 'Like the *Essay*, … an

unusual if far from distinguished work'.[24] The entry for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, authored by 'Sallie M. Strange', offers no evaluative comment. Half the entry is concerned with the life and the other half gives a flavour of her writings and draws attention to her 'variety of tone' from her earliest works. Her openness to other cultures is favourably commented on with regard to her (now) most famous work, the *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763). The entry concludes with the comment that 'MWM was known during her lifetime as a woman of wit and after the publication of her *Embassy Letters*, the year after her death, as a woman of charm and perspicacity'.[25] The entry gives most space to detailing Montagu's cynical view of marriage and her advocacy in her letters of female education as a vehicle to alleviate the unhappiness of solitude and foster women's power to reason. The entry for Montagu is twice the length of that of Collier.

So too the entry on the writing of Mary Wortley Montagu in *Orlando* is much fuller than that of Jane Collier, unsurprising given how much more evidence remains in the former's case, and the fact that the lead editor in this literary period for the textbase, Isobel Grundy, is Lady Mary's most recent and distinguished biographer and editor.[26] Collier's entry hinges on the new information available from her commonplace book transcribed by her sister Margaret after her death, brought to public attention by its owner, Michael Londry, in a 2004 article in the *Times Literary Supplement*.[27] This book, we are told, 'vividly reflects the liveliness and originality of JC's mind, her interest in books (from the classics and the Bible to very recent publications), education, women's issues, family life, and in moral interpretation of human behaviour'.[28] It is noted that Collier's mock-instructional work, *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), received a 'moderately laudatory' assessment in the *Monthly Review*, is quoted three times in Johnson's *Dictionary* and probably influenced his Rambler essay number 148. The work was 'much valued by women readers, probably as a voicing of unpalatable and normally hidden home truths. It was hardly ever out of print before the early nineteenth century. The words "art of tormenting" became almost a catchphrase in fiction and autobiographical writings by such authors as Frances Burney'[29] (Burney's novel of 1814, *The Wanderer*, describes the heroine's miserable experiences at the hands of a female patron who enjoys the art of tormenting).

The entry on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu illustrates throughout Montagu's skill across and within genres, concluding that her 'poetry as a whole is conspicuous for its versatility'.[30] Her 'Verses Address'd to the Imitator of Horace' (1733) are described as 'the most brilliant of all the

many satirical attacks on Pope, and one of the most offensive'. The poem she composed after her recovery from and disfigurement by the smallpox in January 1716, 'Satturday, the Small Pox' is one of six town eclogues (one for each day of the week except Sunday), in the form of monologues and dialogues of society figures. The *Orlando* entry comments:

> 'Satturday'—which closes the series with a lament by Flavia, who has lost her beauty to smallpox—is as much a satire and a social criticism as all the other protagonists… Flavia shares Lady Mary's own disfigurement and her thirst for admiration, but lacks her toughness and her intellect. These attitudes voiced in these highly sophisticated dramatized poems cannot be adequately read at face value. In every case the speaker is influenced by some personal predicament and by response to a competitive, commodified social world.[31]

There is no doubt that *Orlando* offers a powerful resource for feminist researchers. Digital mark-up provides links to evidence and a deep scholarship that the limited resources of a print publication such as Todd's *Dictionary* could not have imagined. Wernimont argues that the interpretive mark-up of *Orlando* generates 'a feminist and materialist hermeneutic space through which a reading of primary texts is enabled'.[32] It is, I would argue, the work of feminists who continue to work on the history of women's writing to take advantage of these resources and the print as well as electronic accessibility of many of the primary works they describe: but in order to do so to promote ways of reading and arguing that cannot be fielded from within a textbase or database, with or without interpretive mark-up. I attempt to sketch out below a feminist aesthetics that understands art as a performance of women's embodied experience—but not (merely) as a representation or expression of a 'life'. *Orlando*'s 'separation' of 'life' from 'writing' in its presentation of information recognizes the need to maintain this distance between life and writing. In *Orlando*, these sets of data can sit side by side on the screen but are accessed separately. Women's art is not represented as a product of individual experience but the fact of female experience is not artificially excluded from the interpretation of the products of their art.

The Arts of Suffering: 'Satturday' and *Ingeniously Tormenting*

I want to propose here that the literary treatment of suffering has an intrinsic value beyond other non-literary textual evidence. It provides for us a way of living 'in' embodied experience rather than witnessing or

observing its presence. It has a capacity to make embodied experience, the life of the body, live in its reader. Further, these literary works are themselves present 'acts', rather than merely representations of ways of being in a past world, acts that performatively transform the genres they knowingly inhabit in order to repurpose them for a politicized (feminist) aesthetics. These are large claims, but they are claims that must be made, it seems to me, if a feminist literary history is to stake a claim for its continuing value and the value of the humanities as a critical agent in the 'sciences' of human knowledge. Value must lie beyond or outside the instrumental and the descriptive. Information-rich societies need to identify repositories of rich *value* within the fields they chart. Of course, we avoid judgement or value-claims because they so often seem to lack 'hard' evidence and can be dismissed as no more than attempts to vindicate personal or group 'taste'. This should, however, surely make the endeavour more urgent, rather than less; to begin to shape a capacious-enough aesthetic for feminist politics is to begin to find qualitative rather than quantitative grounds for attentive engagement with literary works and the workings of literature.

Why might aesthetics be important in feminist theories of embodiment? Twenty-first-century feminists have argued for a turn that grounds our politics in material embodiment (the experiences of the body in history) in place of abstractions of a 'gender' system.[33] Lois McNay in her important book *Gender and Agency* (2000) observes the tendency in social theory to adopt 'determinist' rather than 'generative' theories of subjectivity. Subjectivity is seen to be the product of determining social processes (in the case of feminism, patriarchal relations of dominance and oppression, and the phallocentric construction of power) to which it must submit or which it can resist. McNay insists rather that 'imaginative or creative dimensions' are 'immanent to agency' on the grounds that there is an 'inherence' between psyche and society: 'agency is configured as a capacity to institute new or unanticipated modes of behaviour, the ontological grounds of which lie in the originary capacity for figuration but which are not reducible to it because of the dynamic nature of the social order'.[34] As a result, agency should be conceived partly 'as the capacity to manage actively the often discontinuous, overlapping or conflicting relations of power'.[35] It is that capacity for figuration, the dynamic relationship between the creative agency of the work and the 'repetitive, lived aspects' of the 'sexual identity' it performs,[36] which I want to suggest should form the politicized aesthetic ground of our claims for women's literary achievement.

Subject matter is not incidental but integral to a feminist aesthetics. Described in these works are forms of experience that are specific to female bodies as they live in the world. Mary Wortley Montagu's Flavia recognizes that the loss of her looks through smallpox undercuts the symbolic capital she has wielded in the small world of court politics and cannot reconceive her agency in new terms. Middle-class women, Collier's essayist argues, are especially prone to indulge in acts of domestic tyranny toward their (female) dependents, their children and the men who love them, because they have few other opportunities for power over others. However, the value of the work lies not (only) in the representation of such experience, nor in the analysis of the ways in which these psychic deformations have come about through systems of inequality and oppression, but in the aesthetic agency of the (female) writers who repurpose familiar genres (the town eclogue and the mock work of instruction) for performances that resist the objectification of female bodily experience or its instrumentalist reduction to a mere 'sign' of decadence in satirical discourse.

Three of Montagu's six town eclogues, notably not including 'Satturday', were published illicitly by Edmund Curll along with three others in March 1716. All six survive in manuscript in her poetry album and were published together anonymously as *Six Town Eclogues* in 1747. John Gay had already published a version of 'Friday' as his own in his 1720 *Poems* (of Montagu's 78-line poem, 43 'coincide word for word' with Gay's 106-line poem).[37] 'Satturday' brings together Montagu's experience, her learning and her artistic talent to shape a verbal performance that both communicates a powerful sense of embodied experience and demonstrates a value system (of artistic creativity and political consciousness) that is not tied to standards of gendered physical beauty.[38] The speaker is now alienated from her beautiful past self ('how am I grown/A frightful Spectre to my selfe unknown!', ll. 5–6) and a past time when social invitations and admiration were showered on her in equal measure ('even Youth it selfe tome is useless now', l. 16). While Flavia adopts the conventional position of the lost and abandoned maiden—here separated from her own beauty and power, rather than a faithless lover—the poem itself is ambiguously placed between separation and identification between speaker and poet. The final lines play out this uncomfortable distance when Flavia's lament is interrupted by the injunction 'Cease hapless Maid, no more thy Tale persue,/ Forsake Mankind, and bid the World Adieu' (ll. 84–5). Flavia apparently conforms to the injunction when she pronounces 'Adieu ye Parks, in some obscure recess […]/There let me live' (ll. 89, 93).

Eclogues traditionally conclude by pointing toward a death, but Montagu provides us with a resilient vitality after her (speaker's) own close encounter with death through smallpox. While Flavia views her own predicament as a kind of living death, an incarceration outside the charmed life of the court, the poem itself—in its satirical yet compassionate distance from a speaker acknowledged to be an alienated part of the poet's own self—reveals a new and secreted resilience as well as a critique of an idea of embodied selfhood that measures value only in physical beauty. The presentness of the action and the speaking voice of the poem powerfully resist the language of mourning and loss in which it ostensibly deals: 'As round the Room I turn my weeping Eyes,/New unaffected Scenes of Sorrow rise' (ll. 41–2). Her gaze alighting on the portrait painted of her before her illness, Flavia calls for it to be removed or disfigured ('The Face disfigure, or the Canvas tear!', l. 44). Not only will the 'lost resemblance' (l. 46) be erased but the picture in its disfigurement will better resemble its object. This kind of play of symmetry and dissymmetry is typical of a poem that carefully brings its reader into relation with and distance from the speaker.

A similar play is at work in Jane Collier's prose work composed and published in 1753.The work was printed by Samuel Richardson in whose home Jane's sister Margaret had been living in 1750.[39] The *Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* is a mock instructional work, along the lines of Jonathan Swift's *Directions to Servants* (1731) and Alexander Pope's *The Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727), in which a satirical target is characterized through apparent praise of vices. Like Montagu's poem, this work also presents female embodied experience beyond the familiar confines of heterosexual love and courtship. Power relations of kin, of household, of parents to children and between women of different classes are symbolically rendered in terms of acts of physical and emotional violence. However, the true resemblance of Collier's work to Montagu's lies, I want to suggest, in the dynamic relation between what is represented and the artist's framing consciousness.

Collier's essay is divided into two main parts, one providing instructions for those with exterior power over others (parents, creditors, employers) and one for those with interior power through affection (wives and friends). Collier's own situation was that of a genteelly educated unmarried woman with no means of financial support obliged to live in dependency in the households of others. The *Essay* achieves its aesthetic effect, however, not by speaking from personal experience, but rather by apparently occupying the place of the antagonist and oppressor. Collier points to the

advantages of techniques of distancing and abstracting the self in order to communicate embodied experience at several points in her work. There is of course bathos in the application of the term 'arts' to acts of domestic torture, but Collier is also insistently pointing to her own artistic achievement and identifying herself with classical precedents both high and low. The work is framed by references to the Roman satirist Horace and the Greek fabulist Aesop. The frontispiece to the 1753 edition quotes from Horace's *Ars Poetica* in its motto 'Celebrare Domestica Facta' ('Celebrate Domestic Affairs'). Horace's lines refer to native Roman poets who abandon Greek airs and celebrate home affairs with plays given in Roman dress. The frontispiece also included an image of a cat playing with a mouse which is referred to at the close of the *Essay*:

> I can recollect but one kind of brute, that seems to have any notion of this pleasant practice of Tormenting; and that is the cat, when she has got a mouse—She delays the gratification of her hunger, which prompted her to seek for food, and triumphs in her power over her wretched captive—She not only sticks her claws into it, making it feel the sharpness of her teeth (without touching the vitals enough, to render it insensible to her tricks), but she tosses it over her head in sport, seems in the highest joy imaginable, and is also, to all appearance, at that very time, the sweetest best-humoured animal in the world.[40]

Appended to the *Essay* is 'A Fable', which makes reference to an old poem surviving from a world in which animals could read and write, signed 'L' on the title page. Scholars dispute the authorship of the lion, the leopard the lynx and the lamb. The poem strongly describes

> the misery that is endured, from the entrance of teeth and claws into living flesh. In the strongest colours was painted the pain which the poor sufferer sustains, his agonizing faintness from loss of blood, with the exquisite torment he undergoes, until his heart-felt anguish is relieved by death.[41]

The horse settles the dispute after most scholars have advocated the authorship of the most savage animals (the three cats) by arguing that it must be the lamb because he is the only beast who can have had a 'true idea' of the sufferings described. In true Aesopian style, the meaning of the fable rests on the inherent characteristics of the beasts it concerns. Collier here identifies herself with classical male sources and aligns them with her own 'domestic' arts. She lays claim to her own artistry while also playing with the anonymity of her act of authorship. However, we might

also note that the work as a whole is a riposte to the precision of the torture exercised by those it targets. Collier's is a careful performance of an apparently light-hearted work of instruction that uncovers the suffering inflicted by the powerful on the weak as well as the disfiguring effects of torment that converts the bullied into bullies themselves. Intrinsic and inherent to the power of the embodiment of female experience in this work is the artistic poise with which it is carried out.

Conclusion

Feminist historians of women's writing and lives have been creative agents in the discovery of new evidence from the second wave onwards. There are, of course, many other sources that provide us with evidence about women's experience of the smallpox and of domestic dependence. For instance, historian Amanda Vickery's impressive monograph *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* vividly describes the letters of a contemporary of Jane Collier, the shy and unhappy spinster Gertrude Savile (1697–1758) obliged to live in a condition of miserable dependence with her brother and his wife on their Nottinghamshire estate.[42] I do not assume that works not published, manuscript letters and diaries, are *not* literary works or do not display literary qualities. Nor that they are transparent and uncompromised renderings of the writer's experience. I do, however, want to suggest that works designed and written for aesthetic ends should be assessed and valued as aesthetic objects. And that such works offer us—through their formal choices and the skill with which they fulfil or challenge the aesthetic expectations of literary form—an experience of women's creative agency often precisely through the representation of suffering and oppression.

In the early 1980s the feminist recovery project in women's literary history played a significant role in redirecting and reviving the energies of the study of literature in the new environment of thriving mass entertainments (journalism, television, film) and liberal political demands for less exclusionary versions of culture. In the early decades of the twentieth century, feminist politics is all too often characterized as a reactionary essentialism. A new aesthetic turn, driven by our sense of a need to restore a politics to the representation of embodied experience in place of identity categories, may be necessary to save what is valuable in the humanities: the capacity of the 'discipline' of critical thinking to promote the powers of discrimination and judgement, to identify work of lasting value and with a capacity to speak to and for our sense of being-in-the-world.

Notes

1. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York and Scarborough, ON: Plume, 1987), pp. 274–5.
2. Mary Evans, 'The problem of gender for women's studies', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13(5) (1990), pp. 457–62. Evans points out that in British universities, the twin forces of increased liberalism about sex and sexualities have gone alongside the neo-liberal departure from state involvement in and funding of higher education. Education is now perceived as a private rather than public good, funding is internal to universities and there is increased pressure for higher education to provide a preparation for work. As a result, she concludes, women's studies courses, alongside other humanities courses, are called upon to justify their existence in terms inimical to those on which they were first founded.
3. Toril Moi, '"I am not a woman writer": about women, literature and feminist theory today', *Feminist Theory*, 9(3) (2008), pp. 259–71.
4. See, in particular, J.A. Downie, 'Mary Davys's "probable feign'd stories' and critical shibboleths about "the rise of the novel"', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 12(2–3) (2000), pp. 309–26.
5. See in particular Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Michael Mckeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).
6. See Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) and Helen Brooks, *Actresses, Gender, and the Eighteenth-Century Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
7. John Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and 'Female Complaint': A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Peggy Kamuf, *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).
8. Jacqueline Rose, *Women in Dark Times* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 5.
9. Rita Felski, 'Values', in her *Literature after Feminism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 145.
10. Viviane Namaste, 'Undoing theory: the "transgender question" and the epistemic violence of Anglo-American feminist theory', *Hypatia*, 24(3) (2009), pp. 11–32.
11. Ewa Plonaska Ziarek, 'Feminist aesthetics: transformative practice, neoliberalism, and the violence of formalism', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 25(2) (2014), pp. 111, 103.

12. Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 439.
13. See, for example, Antony Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1991).
14. See Alexander Pettit, 'Terrible texts, "marginal" works, and the mandate of the moment: the case of Eliza Haywood', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 22(2) (2003), pp. 293–314. Pettit notes that modern editors of marginal writers are often working with print and manuscript texts of poor quality under pressure from trade publishers and university presses that do not have the economic incentive to invest in editorial systemacity.
15. Roger Lonsdale, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Paula Backscheider, ed., *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Anthology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
16. Felski, p. 19.
17. Felski, p. 167.
18. Janet Todd, 'Introduction', in *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660–1800*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 25–6.
19. Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, eds., *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Online, 2006–), http://orlando.cambridge.org, accessed 15 September 2015.
20. Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, eds., *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).
21. Jacqueline Wernimont, 'Whence feminism? Assessing feminist interventions in digital literary archives', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 7(1) (2013),p.6,www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000156/000156.html, accessed 17 September 2015. Wernimont focuses her discussion on the Brown University *Women Writers Project Online* and *Orlando*. The latter is based in the Research Institute at the University of Alberta with a site at the University of Guelph while the publications are owned by Cambridge University Press and hence the site is not open access and is accessible only through subscription. WWO was founded at Brown University, moving to Northeastern University in 2013, and has been funded largely by external grant agencies and is now available through subscription. WWO provides access to digital primary texts (350 transcribed texts dating between 1526 and 1850), while *Orlando* is an archive of digital-born secondary texts about writers and works.
22. Results of Tag Search query on 'no content' within tag 'landmark text' within British women writers within all entries for writers alive from '1660-05-08' to '1821-01', long-form results within Brown et al., *Orlando*.
23. Robin Jarvis, 'Jane Collier', in *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers*, p. 89.

24. Jarvis, 'Jane Collier', p. 89.
25. Sallie M. Strange, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu', in *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers*, p. 223.
26. Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Comet of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Mary Wortley Montagu, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Mary Wortley Montagu, *Romance Writings*, ed. Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
27. Michael Londry, 'Our dear Miss Jenny Collier', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 March 2004, pp. 13–14.
28. 'Jane Collier', in Brown et al., *Orlando*, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3241, accessed 17 September 2015.
29. 'Jane Collier', in Brown et al., *Orlando*.
30. 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu', in Brown et al., *Orlando*, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3241, accessed 17 September 2015.
31. 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu', in Brown et al., *Orlando*.
32. Wernimont, 'Whence feminism?', p. 13.
33. See in particular Toril Moi, *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: 'Throwing Like a Girl' and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
34. Lois McNay, *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 21.
35. McNay, *Gender and Agency*, p. 16.
36. McNay, *Gender and Agency*, p. 18.
37. See Grundy, *Comet of Enlightenment*, pp. 107–8. While Gay's Lydia mourns the loss of her lover to a younger woman, Montagu's Lydia fears he may return to his wife; Grundy observes that Montagu offers 'a far more sharply particularized dilemma posed by contemporary marriage criticisms' (p. 108).
38. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 'Satturday the Small Pox', in *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Essays and Poems*, pp. 201–4.
39. Isobel Grundy, 'Jane Collier', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
40. Jane Collier, *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*, ed. Audrey Bilger, Broadview Literary Texts (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003), p. 129.
41. Collier, *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*, p. 130.
42. See Amanda Vickery, 'The trials of domestic dependence', in *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

Free Market Feminism? The Political Economy of Women's Writing

E.J. Clery

In this essay, I will argue that the development of research into early women's writing has been traumatically shaped by the rise of neo-liberal ideology from the 1980s onwards. Reaganomics in the United States and Thatcherism in Britain were inimical to the project of recovering the lost voices of female authors. The social conservatism of the movement reinforced the marginalization of historically subordinate groups. The tightening of the fiscal reins on universities was designed to narrow the curriculum and make it the servant of economic growth. The stress on financial incentives in work seemed to relegate the history of women even more conclusively to outer darkness.

As a student in the 1980s, I watched aghast the shenanigans associated with the 'Greed is Good' philosophy. I caught a series on Channel 4 called *The New Enlightenment* that claimed without blinking that civil rights and sexual equality were the direct consequence of free market capitalism rather than protest and rebellion against the status quo. I kept pictures of stock market traders flailing their arms around that appeared in the newspapers every time share prices dipped.

In the meantime, scholarship on women's writing was changing. Previously the outlines of female literary production had been hazy,

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particularly prior to 1800. Any work by a woman that had made it into print could be hailed as a triumph of the will. Feminist literary scholarship, like the feminist movement at large, for a while at least, appeared to thrive on opposition to the new political status quo. Come the 1980s, the labour of archival recovery accelerated. Virago and Pandora Presses were established and paperback editions of forgotten works by early women writers proliferated. Yet the new wave of literary criticism that accompanied, disseminated and codified this expansion of archival knowledge was characterized by a strange gloom. *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar was in the vanguard of this tendency, with its diagnostics of the damaging psychodrama that must afflict any woman writer who attempted to find a voice within patriarchy. A series of influential overviews of the price of female authorship followed, notably from Mary Poovey, Jane Spencer and Janet Todd, that exchanged the flamboyant metaphors of *Madwoman* for more rigorous critique of ideology. The central focus was on conformity; its benefits and its price.

It is a paradox that this was the decade in which the study of early women's writing came of age as a legitimate field of study with a permanent presence in higher education institutions. Jane Gallop has remarked that around 1981 in America 'feminist literary criticism entered the heart of a contradiction'. Academic feminism prospered 'while feminism as a social movement was encountering major setbacks in a climate of new conservatism'.[1] Be that as it may, on both sides of the Atlantic much feminist scholarship succumbed to a sort of melancholia, albeit of an unusually energetic and critically reflective kind. Critics spoke of the all-pervasiveness and inescapability of patriarchal ideology; for example, in the final summing-up of *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984):

> If there is one thing we learn by studying these writers from our own vantage point, it is that economic, political, legal, and social conditions exercise an extraordinarily tenacious—and extraordinarily complex—hold over the feelings, aspirations, accomplishments, and imaginative styles of individuals.[2]

Poovey, herself shrinking from this bleak picture, then offers a faint hope that 'decorum' (another word for conformity), 'cannot completely stifle the energy of the imagination or wholly blunt the edge of criticism', but it is apparent that the confident attack, the optimism and sense of discovery displayed by the first wave of feminist criticism has gone.

In Britain in particular, the fact that the political and social shift towards a raw and often brutal monetarist ethos was presided over by a woman, I would suggest, was a source of real trauma. It is important not to misuse or trivialize this concept, most often introduced in the context of the Holocaust or war atrocities. The Thatcher government carried out a radical restructuring of the postwar settlement in Britain. A recent 'criminological' analysis of neo-liberalism provides a conceptual framework for assessing the social damage involved.[3] It was a war in slow motion, during which communities were swept away and lives were crushed mercilessly and irrecoverably, and it was accompanied by the rhetoric of combat. The prime minister declared her intention to 'kill socialism'.[4] Stuart Hall and Stuart Jacques, among the earliest and most influential analysts of Thatcherism, treated the phenomenon not as a watershed but a rupture.[5] In this sense, for the casualties and opponents of Thatcherism, the notion of trauma as a psychic wound is apt.[6]

More pervasively, in the years following her fall from power in 1990, it is possible to see the formal structure of trauma as part of the legacy of the Thatcher years. Cathy Caruth has described the pathology as the state of being 'possessed by an image or event'.[7] It is a compulsive return, unrelated to unconscious desire or conscious decision-making; a phenomenon whereby the subject herself becomes 'a symptom of history'.[8] The temporality of trauma is belatedness, premised on amnesia.[9] In this way it is the inverse of the much-discussed phenomenon of cultural memory. Yet trauma too has its collective dimension. Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho, commenting on post-1990 British culture, speak of the way 'Thatcherism has been naturalized into national discourse and, as a consequence, forgotten', completing the tasks of co-option and the suppression of dissent.[10] Regardless of personal views and experience, all are affected by the seismic consequences of insurgent neo-liberalism in the 1980s, even those born after the event.

After the death of Thatcher in 2013, the question 'Was she a feminist icon?' led to some soul searching. But to ask the question in this form is too glib; it assumes there is a choice, and that the issue lies outside us. It has been said that 'we're all Thatcherites now', and I want to explore that suggestion through a brief consideration of the development of feminist literary history, through the 1990s and into the twenty-first century.[11]

My argument is that a splitting has occurred in the work of excavating and interpreting the history of women's writing; a form of adaptation that leads critics to articulate their findings in terms that conform to

neo-liberal orthodoxy, while continuing to be driven by an oppositional feminist agenda. I don't exempt myself from this crux. The phrase in my title, 'free market feminism', is taken from a review of one of my books, where the reviewer had mistaken 'neutral' historical analysis for ideological advocacy. I imagined critique could be glimpsed between the lines; he saw an acolyte of the Chicago School of Economics. One lesson: speech can sometimes only be understood through the listening-act of another.[12] Another lesson: unless you attempt to address an economic model openly and explicitly, you may find that it has come to model you.

In the course of the 1990s and beyond, a number of influential critical works aimed to alter previous perceptions by emphasizing the empowerment of early female authors within the commercialization of print in the eighteenth century. The rise of studies in print culture and this new wave of feminist criticism have gone hand in hand.

Catherine Gallagher's *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (1994) was at the forefront of this shift, and the deliberately misleading title was symptomatic of a parting of the ways. Gallagher begins by reflecting that when she proposed the title, there were objections that it 'would suggest exactly the sort of study this is not: one lamenting the unjust absence of women from the eighteenth-century canon'. But she was determined to change the story by redefining 'nobodies'. Her concern was not with 'ignored, silenced, erased, or anonymous women' but with 'literal' nobodies:

> authorial personae, printed books, scandalous allegories, intellectual property rights, literary reputations, incomes, debts, and fictional characters … the exchangeable tokens of modern authorship that allowed increasing number of women writers to thrive as the eighteenth century wore on.[13]

Hers, in other words, is a success story about enterprise, ingenuity and adaptation. Far from shrinking from authorship, women come to define what it is to be a modern commercial author, partly by virtue of their negatively defined sex. They 'emphasized their femininity to gain financial advantage' and 'relentlessly embraced and feminized' the business of writing for money. The subject of the book is the 'reciprocal shaping of the terms "woman," "author," and "marketplace,"' traced through the careers and writings of Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth.[14]

To view women writers as economic agents par excellence seemed the way to liberate them retrospectively from narratives of pain and defeat. The 1990s saw the development of the language of 'professionalization', which has continued to flourish in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Virtually every female author from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen could be rediscovered as a careerist, exploiting her social network to the full. The rubric of the 'professional woman writer' has been instrumental in bringing to light a wealth of new data as well as new and more affirmative lines of enquiry about women's role within print culture. Betty A. Schellenberg's superb *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2005), for instance, demonstrates the capacity of this approach to break new ground. Jennie Batchelor has persuasively established 'labour' as a crucial category in the lives of women writers of the period.[15] Broader evidence of reception—notably copyright fees, sales figures, the quantity of reviews, wide dissemination—have provided an alternative measure of value and significance to the tradition of aesthetic judgement governing the masculinist literary canon. In this way the watchword 'professionalism' serves as a meta-language, an institutional rhetoric, a factor in the consolidation of early women's writing within the discipline of literary studies.

The neighbouring realm of intellectual history, with its close attention to texts and rhetoric, has provided a complementary source for the reconceptualizing of eighteenth-century women's writing and the place of women within the Augustan and Georgian social formation. J.G.A. Pocock is a historian of mainstream political thought who has incidentally foregrounded the gendered construction of socio-economic change in the eighteenth century. Pocock's commentary on female personifications of luxury, fortune, credit and of commerce itself has influenced literary historical studies by Gallagher, Erin Mackie (1997), Shawn Lisa Maurer (1998), Catherine Ingrassia (1998), Harriet Guest (2000) and my own *Feminization Debate* (2004), among others. When the attributes of modernity are gendered feminine, women can be located as symbolically central to the culture of capitalism.

In the 1990s, as free market capitalism emerged triumphant and apparently unchallengeable following the Cold War and the collapse of communism, scholars turned to the long eighteenth century for an account of its embattled origins. The capitalist system had now apparently transcended questions of legitimation. The archive documented the earliest legitimating arguments for capitalism and the first critiques of the irrationality and

capacity for damage inherent in the modern economic order. These now held a new fascination. One particular area of interest has been financial crises. The South Sea Bubble of 1720 was the most notorious of these, and the details and implications continued to be raked over in the aftermath of the bubbles and crashes of the turn of the twentieth century. Many of the new accounts have been aimed at a mainstream audience, and openly make the connection with the present-day politics of finance.

The study of 'luxury' as a concept and a historical phenomenon has also burgeoned, although as yet there is only a tenuous link between this scholarly work and the new field of contemporary luxury studies born of the burgeoning global market in luxury commodities.[16] The University of Warwick established an interdisciplinary 'Luxury Project' (1997–2001) led by the economic historian Maxine Berg and literary scholar Elizabeth Eger. It involved a series of conferences, workshops and seminars and gave rise to a landmark edited volume, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (2002), with a section entitled 'A Female Vice?' in which essays explored the gender politics of economic controversy.

The luxury debate that raged through the eighteenth century was the first major test of capitalist ideology as it made the transition towards hegemony in the West. Arguments for and against were inflected by gender. Critics of capitalism denounced luxury—a catchall term that laid special emphasis on hedonism and acquisitive consumerism—as an effeminization of the nation, rendering it weak, corrupt and contemptible, while advocates claimed trade promoted a positive feminization, an advance in refinement and civility.[17]

By this means, women in the eighteenth century were interpellated by luxury as a concept, and their active involvement in the growth of luxury has been a growth area for research in women's history and women's writing. In place of the sequestered 'angel in the house', there has been an altered emphasis on women as consumers. Fashion can be framed affirmatively as a realm of expressive individualism, rather than as an industry that objectifies or exploits the labour of women. Shopping can be reconceived as itself a form of work as well as an indulgent pleasure, requiring skill and judgement and driving economic prosperity. This affirmative perspective abolishes the boundaries that had been assumed to separate home and workplace, domesticity and the empire of trade. It enables us to resituate women with money to spend as key players in the revised socio-economic order.

There are striking continuities between the tenets of eighteenth-century modernizers and contemporary mainstream sociological and economic theory, although the vocabulary differs. Both valorize emulation as a 'rational' motive for an individual's desire for luxury. In terms of Enlightenment thinking, emulation is a 'cool' passion, readily instrumentalized. In modern terms, emulation is a basic human instinct to be comprehended and manipulated by advertisers and policymakers. Then there is the idea of the utility of luxury. Luxury is seen in the eighteenth century as the ultimate destination of the acquisitive drive. By this means it can be understood as the final cause of economic development and national strength. The desire to spend promotes trade and manufacturing, which in itself is a public good. A rational and even moral justification is provided for some of the more problematic corollaries of luxury: escalating expenditure, debt, waste and the spectacle of gross inequality. Consumerism is underwritten by an ethic of industry.

How are women writers placed within the battle of ideas surrounding luxury? Women in general get caught in the crossfire and certain prominent women, famous or notorious, including female writers, get used as ammunition by one side or the other. Some women are able to utilize the ideological prominence the debate gives them to their own advantage; others retreat, wounded or appalled. A few critique the terms of the debate itself.

For luxury could also be a basis for the articulation of dissent from market ideology. The value of the eighteenth-century concept of 'luxury' is that it enables a focus on the irrational, incalculable and uncalculating aspects of the economy—on risk, loss and expenditure. Women's continuing identification with luxury—via both the civic humanist association with effeminacy and their positioning as agents of luxury through conspicuous consumption—leads, it would seem, to a heightened sensitivity among female authors to the implications of recuperating the passions in early capitalist apologies. Essentially, it is the writer's attitude to the passions that reveals their position in the luxury debate: suppression? management? fatalism?

By increasing our own sensitivity to economic language in the eighteenth century, it becomes possible to trace the involvement of women in debate on the rights and wrongs of capitalism. For instance, it becomes possible to see that Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694/1697) is designed as a remedy not only for the ills of patriarchy, but as a warning about the traps endemic to consumerism. Astell playfully

mimics the women of the leisure class: 'For shame let's abandon that *Old*, and therefore one wou'd think, unfashionable employment of pursuing Butterflies and Trifles.' Fashion is old-fashioned: 'Let us learn to pride ourselves in something more excellent than the invention of a Fashion.'[18] In Part II of *Serious Proposal*, she urges women to attend to mind and spirit in a manner that transcends fashion, to 'withdraw' their

> Minds from the World, from adhering to the Senses, from the Love of Material Beings, of Pomps and Gaities; for 'tis these that usually Steal away the Heart, that seduce the Mind to such unaccountable Wanderings, and so fill up its Capacity that they leave no room for Truth.[19]

Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, in spite of its ostensibly anti-luxury stance, *A Serious Proposal* conducts its arguments in terms of a commercial logic of profit and loss.[20] It begins with the promise of a 'Profitable Adventure', and describes a female academy, a safe harbour where women can add value to the property they hold in themselves. Furthermore, the pleasures of education are described in terms that rival the allure of fashionable commodities. Astell's next major work *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (1700), in sharp contrast, begins with an 'unhappy Shipwrack'.[21] Connections have been made between her feminist outlook and the critique of political ideology; but the critique of contemporary economic ideology is also apparent.[22] In this later treatise, Astell sees the dangers posed to women by the reasoning of the marketplace as absolute.

The *Reflections* were occasioned by the death of Hortense Mancini, the duchess of Mazarin, one of the great heiresses of her time, a victim of dynastic ambition consigned to marriage at the age of 15, a runaway wife and notorious subject of a divorce case, a sometime mistress of Charles II and promiscuous bisexual, a profligate hedonist with intellectual tastes. Aristocratic birth might seem to detach her from the common lot, but Astell takes her fate as a sensational reminder of women's continuing status as commodities. 'What do men propose to themselves in Marriage?… What will she bring is the first enquiry? How many Acres? Or how much ready Coin?'[23]

The duchess's later mixed career as courtesan, gambler and enlightened patron of learning caused Astell to rethink the pleasure principle as a route to the empowerment of women. Mancini's sad fate—she died a few streets away from Astell's home in Chelsea, possibly by her own hand—challenged the essentially optimistic vision of the *Proposal*. In *Reflections*, Astell

addresses the predicament of women facing life in an unhappy marriage. Her answer is bleak, and represents a retreat from her previous acceptance of the play of the passions. After Eden, when the passions or appetites became separated from right Reason, arbitrary government is necessary for the sake of order, in the private as in the public domain, however unjust: 'in the laps'd State of Mankind, and now that Men will not be guided by their Reason but by their Appetites … the Will and Pleasure of the Governor is to be the Reason of those who will not be guided by their own'.[24] It remains to wives to learn how to preserve self-respect under tyranny. As an alternative to the Lethean delights of luxury, Astell advocates the Stoic ideal of *ataraxia*, peace of mind and renunciation of the passions, an intellectual and spiritual freedom that transcends material constraint, as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Mary Chudleigh and Elizabeth Carter would later do.[25]

The appeal of Stoicism to women writers has been noted. But it is important to recognize that it is no mere supplement to socially acceptable female piety. This philosophy had a critical edge, with contemporary political and economic relevance. Elizabeth Carter, in the preface to her translation of *The Works of Epictetus* (1758), remarked that the exemplary lives of Stoics and their 'strict Notions of Virtue … must contribute a good deal to preserve luxurious States from an absolutely universal Dissoluteness; and the Subjects of arbitrary Government, from a wretched and contemptible Pusillanimity'.[26] On the first count, women could become the guardians of probity in a modern world of luxury; on the second, they could heroically rise above their condition as subordinate beings, as Astell had advised, and resist succumbing to compensatory passions.

Mary Astell goes further than any other commentator I have encountered in rejecting the emerging economic model of the desiring subject. Eliza Haywood, by contrast, conducts a radical investigation of the dynamics of desire, suspending moral judgement while exposing its destructive, wasteful, incalculable magnificence, beyond the control of reason or prudential interest, towards catastrophe. In this way her amatory fiction anticipates some of the most challenging theoretical writing on the economic in the postmodern era, by Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Joseph Goux, all influenced by the work of Georges Bataille with its emphasis on excess and unproductive expenditure, and libidinal and gift economies. Julia Kristeva briefly intervened to identify non-productive excess in Marx's exposition and associate it with dream-work, play and the body, but where otherwise, one wonders,

are the contemporary women philosophers, those without 'Jean' as a *prénom*, engaging in critical and speculative work on the economic?[27] Nancy Fraser offers powerful criticism of the present-day complicity of feminism with neo-liberalism, but neglects the wilder shores of the capitalist experience.[28]

When I came to Eliza Haywood's novel *Love in Excess* (1719–1720), which suggests an economic ratio by its very title, I was expecting to find a straightforward link between the two components in the eighteenth-century understanding of luxury: *luxus* and *luxuria*, the love of luxury goods and licentious desire; both by definition excessive, surplus to requirements. The reality was more complex, and it became apparent that her fiction addresses a new amoral strand in the justification of luxury; one that validates consumer culture by affirmation of sensual delight.[29] Exactly contemporary with the speculative fever surrounding South Sea stocks, the novel provides an oblique commentary, with its narrative of limitless desire and disastrous consequences.

The connection between consumption and indulgence of the senses is a relatively unexplored avenue of scholarship on the concept of luxury. Most historians of economic ideas have preferred to foreground emulation, as a more easily measurable motive, and one more in keeping with the utilitarian understanding of luxury, as a spur to production. The pioneering exception was Werner Sombart, who in *Luxury and Capitalism* (1913) posited the idea that the rise of luxury stems from sensuality. His approach foregrounds the agency of women emphatically, conflating the conspicuous consumption of court and salon with sexual drive:

> In the last analysis, it is our sexual life that lies at the root of the desire to refine and multiply the means of stimulating our senses, for sensuous pleasure and erotic pleasure are essentially the same. Indubitably the primary cause of the development of any kind of luxury is most often to be sought in consciously or unconsciously operative sex impulses.[30]

This statement may strike the early twenty-first-century reader as an unseemly lapse into ahistorical Freudianism, and indeed, Maxine Berg has cited the passage only to tame it by resort to Norbert Elias' notion of 'court rationality'.[31] However, Colin Campbell in his important study *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (1987) managed to historicize Sombart's insight while retaining its subversive core: the privileging of hedonism over utility as an explanatory factor.[32]

Both Sombart and Campbell allocate to women a crucial role not only as experts in the provision and purchase of luxurious comforts, but also as prime facilitators of the intermingling of pleasurable goods with non-material and non-rational sensations of love and desire. They refer respectively to mistresses and courtesans and to readers of romance narratives, but I will argue that the scope could be extended to a writer of amatory fiction such as Eliza Haywood.

Haywood's transgressive ideas came packaged in the form of a novel, itself a luxury commodity, and a speculative venture in the growing book market. In her world, nothing any true lover does can be wrong, because they are lovers. Those possessed by love display a magnificent egotism, almost totally indifferent to collateral damage: attempted rapes, unwanted pregnancies, betrayal of friends, destruction of reputation, manslaughter, suicide of rejected admirers, the death of parents from grief—nothing must get in the way of consummation. Parents come off particularly badly, as one would expect within an outlook so opposed to patriarchal hierarchies and committed to the overthrow of authority. If parents attempt any 'tyranny', they are simply eluded. In the third part of *Love in Excess*, Violetta's father dies from grief after she runs away to pursue her love object; likewise Cleomira's mother in *The British Recluse* (1724) pines and dies after she is legally 'divorced' by her daughter, who chooses as her new guardians a couple in reality acting as pimps to the faithless Lysander.

The ruthlessness in Haywood's protagonists at times verges on the Sadeian, while the count's refusal to allow 'life-wasting anguish to suppress desire' seems to anticipate William Blake's famous proverb 'Sooner strangle an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires'.[33] Haywood is one among a genealogy of writers who brings the pressure of sensual pleasure to bear upon moral orthodoxies. There is a comic side to the mayhem; Haywood is not unaware of the potential for humour.[34] But the narrative voice in *Love in Excess* nevertheless affirms love as a sovereign force again and again.

There is a case for suggesting that Haywood pursues a sustained, quasi-anthropological study of the nascent economic order. In the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble, she continued her highly topical exploration of the psychology of desire. In 1720, a forthcoming collection of five fictions by her was formally announced under the general title, 'The Danger of Giving Way to Passion'.[35] Although they would eventually appear separately, they are united by their attention to sensuality, unsound credit, and unmitigated loss. *Fantomina* (1725) is perhaps the most clearly allegorical

of the post-bubble narratives; *Beauplaisir*—his name translates as 'beautiful pleasure'—is an irresistible object to the heroine as she learns to accommodate the constant swing between euphoria and satiety that typifies consumer culture.

The new order was consolidated by the outcome of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which confirmed Britain as the dominant global empire and commerce as its new religion. The way in which this development was framed as a 'feminization' of British society had a seductive appeal for women writers. Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), for instance, transplants cultivated Englishwomen to Canada, a colony acquired by the defeat of France, and presents a powerful fable of the transformative effect of female influence in the realm of imperialist politics. Economic ascendancy was projected in fashion, and onto the bodies of women. Frances Burney is the great chronicler of the stresses and strains experienced by women as they were refitted as emblems of socio-economic progress and politeness. The most emblematic passage of all is the one in which Evelina, the eponymous heroine of Burney's first novel (1778), is remodelled for her role as icon, in advance of her first fashionable London ball, by having her hair dressed.

> You can't think how oddly my head feels; full of powder and black pins, and a great *cushion* on top of it. I believe you would hardly know me, for my face looks quite different to what it did before my hair was dressed.[36]

Where the portraits generated en masse by the studios of Gainsborough and Reynolds naturalize the labour of transformation, Burney defamiliarizes it, taking note of the experience of dissociation involved for the woman herself ('my face looks quite different to what it did'). The fashionable excess involved in constructing a mountain of 'frizzled' hair and padding, held in place by pins and coated with powder, is the most obvious connection with luxury. But the style itself is symbolic. It announced the triumph of the feminine as a signifier of economic progress. The fashion for towering hairstyles in the 1770s is the outward expression of the Enlightenment theory of feminization. This was the decade that saw the public image of the Bluestockings as its height. Elizabeth Montagu (a shrewd capitalist, with income from northern coal mines eventually totalling £10,000 a year) reigned as 'Queen of the Blues' and Hannah More issued her celebrations of the cultural sway of female intellectuals, the poems *Sensibility* (1782) and *The Bas Bleus* (1782).

Women writers of the eighteenth century gained from their association with socio-economic 'progress': it brought them attention from the reading public, a degree of deference, a hearing as the voice of the new age of civility. It was, nevertheless, a constraint, conditional upon rigid norms of conduct and a willingness to subordinate individual conviction to a modernizing agenda. In the distant mirror of the eighteenth century, we may recognize something of our predicament in theirs. Once we've done that, it seems important to examine how, in a variety of ways, some women writers chose to distance themselves from the identification with the hegemonic discourse on progress, and to engage instead in critical examination of modernity, whether it was by addressing consumer culture, commercialism and the slave trade, questioning imperialism, the system of public credit and the dominance of finance capitalism, or re-examining gender hierarchy as an anomalous feature of the new social formation. Faith in progress had involved a (very limited) overcoming of inequality. But in questioning that faith, women writers attained intellectual freedom. Their writings should be recognized as an important legacy for the continuing discussion on capitalism and progress.

How could women writers break free of the association with socio-economic progress? The career of the celebrated historian Catharine Macaulay exemplifies the way in which a writer could be co-opted, regardless of her personal views. Macaulay's magisterial *History of England* (1763–1783) unfolded a classical republican narrative of national decline into corruption and effeminacy, and therefore implicitly critical of the present-day status quo, yet the criticism was not heard and she was quickly reified as an icon of progress and Enlightenment, a living muse for the nation. Then in 1778, scandal struck in the form of a second marriage to a medical apprentice 26 years her junior, and Macaulay was knocked from her pedestal. After this fall from grace, she seems to have been increasingly willing to speak out on contemporary politics, and to voice a radical agenda.

In the 1780s and 1790s, Macaulay was one of a number of women writers whose irregular private lives attracted virulent negative publicity, often in the form of anonymous reviews. Trolls are nothing new. Others who suffered in this way were Mary Robinson, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith and Mary Wollstonecraft. Literary scholars have tended to agree that these personal attacks damaged their reputations as writers and limited the effect of their works. But it may be worth considering a different view: that this group of writers bravely allowed the

destruction of their own moral standing in order to shed the burden of iconic status and gain intellectual independence. Wollstonecraft wrote in *A Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* in 1794, 'What is often termed virtue, is only want of courage to throw off prejudice'.[37] She and a number of sister writers seem to have woken up to the realization that when they exercised their understanding freely they had nothing to lose but their respectability and that, in important ways, the loss might be a gain.

Obviously it belongs to the remit of historians of women's writing to research all kinds of text, including the apparently hackneyed or generic, the conservative and the downright reactionary. Yet I would argue that iconoclasm is a lesson that we can learn from many of the writers we study, and apply to our own practice. Even writers apparently restrained by 'respectability' took remarkable risks if viewed rightly. Anna Laetitia Barbauld was an iconic writer and a second generation Bluestocking; in her youth she had been reified as 'One of the Living Muses of Great Britain'. But she deliberately braved bad press with her campaigning poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), an intervention in an economic crisis that helped to bring about a change in government war policy. Jane Austen, having achieved fashionable success with *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), proceeded to write a fable of quite a different kind, *Mansfield Park* (1814), in which she broached the dangerous topic of the slave trade. Met by deafening silence from the reviewing fraternity, she defiantly produced another novel with a heroine 'whom no-one but myself will much like'.[38] In the history of women's writing, if anywhere, we can be sure to find evidence of the fact that the profit motive has not always been uppermost, and that authors do not always behave 'professionally'.

In current research, too, there are countervailing tendencies. The resurgence of interest in scribal culture, writing that circulates outside the marketplace, has its own political agenda, even if unspoken.[39] But much existing work that engages with the economic ideas and institutions of the eighteenth century does little to challenge Thatcher's most enduring slogan, 'There is no alternative' (affectionately nick-named 'Tina').

Let us be attentive to the alternatives, the crossroads of the past, the routes less easily recognizable. Remembering is, after all, what we do; remembering what others have chosen to forget. Feminist historical scholarship has been led by faith in the disruptive capacity of memory, which can change the face of history and partially redeem its injustices. For Andreas Huyssen in *Twilight Memories* (1995) 'modernist formulations

of memory' are the utopian alternative to 'the discourses of objectifying and legitimizing history'. He connects memory with Nietzsche's critique of archival history, 'an academic apparatus producing historical knowledge for its own sake' and without 'vital links with the surrounding culture'.[40] And if the 'vital links' have been severed by a collective trauma, 'a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together'?[41] That has been the claim of this essay, with regard to the project of feminist criticism. It may be that adherence to archival history be a vital survival mechanism in the aftermath of shock. Although the links cannot be restored by simple voluntarism, acknowledgement may be a start.

While writing this essay, I have had beside me an image created by the photographer Lisa Barnard. In 2009, Barnard received a commission to record the abandoned state of the old Tory party headquarters at 32 Smith Square before refurbishment. Unoccupied for nearly ten years (there's clearly no housing crisis for the political class), she approached it as 'an archaeological ruin from the time of Thatcher's reign'.[42] In a cupboard on the top floor she found a pack of photos of Margaret Thatcher taken at a conference, which had been damaged by a spillage. Bernard scanned the pictures and digitally removed the other figures to produce a series of iconic portraits of the Prime Minister in her pomp, with her fixed smile, helmet of hair, pearls and suit, apparently in the course of being engulfed by a corrosive tide of orange and red. For Barnard, the overriding message was *Sic transit gloria mundi*. The project was titled 'Chateau Despair', although she felt this particular image could represent 'a phoenix rising from the ashes'.

It could also be understood as a call to arms. Thatcher's face still haunts us down through the years; her ideological legacy is alive and well in the Britain of today, and many of her policy initiatives thrive as if she never left. The damaged photo image can be related specifically to Margaret Thatcher's rhetoric on feminism. From the outset she violently excoriated 'women's lib' as she did socialism. A former advisor recalled the following words: 'The feminists hate me, don't they? And I don't blame them. For I hate feminism. It is poison.'[43] In Barnard's image of Thatcher, it appears that the icon is in the process of being obliterated by toxic chemicals. It seems to say to us, 'be poison', embrace marginality and voice dissent. Beware of claims that women have always-already been central, that feminism and neo-liberalism are compatible and that all that's required is to 'lean in'.

There should be no retreat from research that addresses the economic in women's writing: that is a vitally important battleground of ideas in our time, as it was in the eighteenth century. But the next stage for critical practice informed by feminism should include an increased reflexivity, consideration of the pitfalls of a politically neutral language of persuasion, more intensive investigation of complexity and contradiction in economic debate and enhanced sensitivity to the history of dissent from dominant economic ideology—a history almost as buried now as women's writing was at the start of the 1980s.

Notes

1. Jane Gallop, *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 10.
2. Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 246.
3. Vincenzo Ruggiero, *The Crimes of the Economy: A Criminological Analysis of Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 2013).
4. Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 21.
5. Stuart Hall and Stuart Jacques, 'Introduction', in *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), p. 13. Cf. Ralph Milliband, 'The new revisionism in Britain', *New Left Review*, 1(150) (1985), p. 7, in which the term 'traumatic' is used in relation to 'Thatcherism' and its ability to win elections.
6. Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho, '"The lady's not for turning": new cultural perspectives on Thatcher and Thatcherism', in *Thatcher and After: Margaret Thatcher and Her Afterlife in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1–3.
7. Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 5.
8. Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 5.
9. Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 8.
10. Hadley and Ho, '"The lady's not for turning"', p. 3.
11. The remark was made first by Peter Mandelson in an article in *The Times* on the work of his Policy Network think tank in 2002, and repeated by David Cameron during an interview on the Radio 4 *Today* programme following Thatcher's death in April 2013.
12. Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 10.

13. Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), p. xiii.
14. Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, p. xiii.
15. Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750–1830* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010).
16. See John Armitage and Joanne Roberts, eds. *Critical Luxury Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016) and the activities of the Winchester Luxury Research Group, www.southampton.ac.uk/wsa/about/staff/ja1e12.page, accessed 5 November 2015.
17. E.J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 1–12.
18. Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2002), p. 55.
19. Astell, *Serious Proposal*, pp. 106–7.
20. E.J. Clery, 'Luxury', in *The History of Women's Writing, 1690–1750*, Vol. 4, ed. Ros Ballaster (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 40–60, esp. pp. 45–9.
21. 'Mary Astell, Some reflections upon marriage (1700)', in *Political Writings*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 33.
22. Patricia Springborg, 'Astell, Masham, and Locke: religion and politics', in *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. Hilda L. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 105–25.
23. Astell, *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, p. 38.
24. Astell, *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, p. 15.
25. See Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 36–37, and Clery, *The Feminization Debate*, pp. 89–93.
26. Elizabeth Carter, 'Introduction', in *The Works of Epictetus* (1758), ed. Judith Hawley, reprinted in *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738–1785*, Vol. 2 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), p. 27.
27. See Michelle Boulous Walker, *Philosophy and the Maternal Body* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 85–99.
28. Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013).
29. Clery, 'Luxury', pp. 50–5.
30. Werner Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism* (1913; New York: Ann Arbor, 1967), p. 44.
31. Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 37–8.

32. Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumption* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).
33. Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess*, ed. David Oakleaf (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2000), p. 111.
34. See, for instance, the knowing reflection attributed to Melliora, repeatedly accosted by predatory lovers, 'who began to think she should lie in quiet no where', Haywood, *Love in Excess*, p. 144.
35. Patrick Spedding, *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), pp. 53–6.
36. Frances Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 27, emphasis in original.
37. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, in *Mary Wollstonecraft: Political Writings*, ed. Janet Todd (London: William Pickering, 1993), Bk 1, ch. 1, p. 301. Wollstonecraft's point here about artificial and oppressive notions of 'duty' is not gender-specific, but its applicability to the condition of women would be explored in her unfinished novel *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798).
38. James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, ed. R.W. Chapman (1926; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 157
39. See Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), and, in the multivolume Palgrave Macmillan, *The History of British Women's Writing* edited by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, Kathryn R. King, 'Scribal and Print Publication', Vol. 4 (1690–1750), pp. 127–44, and Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Bluestocking Women and the Negotiation of Oral, Manuscript, and Print Cultures', Vol. 5 (1750–1830), pp. 63–83. Michelle Levy has eloquently challenged the notion of a literary career defined by print and publicity in 'Austen's Manuscripts and the Publicity of Print', *ELH*, 77(4) (Winter, 2010), pp. 1015–40 and 'Do Women Have a Book History?', *SiR*, 53 (Fall, 2014), pp. 297–317.
40. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 6.
41. Kai Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in *Trauma*, p. 187.
42. Hanna Partos, 'Lisa Barnard's best photograph: Margaret Thatcher found in a cupboard', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2015, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/23/lisa-barnard-best-photograph-margaret-thatcher-portrait-phoenix-flames, accessed 25 September 2015.
43. Paul Johnson, 'Failure of the feminists', *The Spectator*, 12 March 2011, www.spectator.co.uk/features/6766663/failure-of-the-feminists, accessed 22 September 2015.

Feminist Literary History: How Do We Know We've Won?

Katherine Binhammer

Women's Writing is Dead; Long Live Women's Writing

This essay pronounces the death of women's writing as a field of study and then argues for its resurrection. Women's writing needs a new body; the hard-fought gains in institutional infrastructure for its study—the editing projects, databases, scholarly organizations, journals and curricula—must continue. But its current content, its specific modes of study, has placed the field on a trajectory to scholarly morbidity. We need a new queen of the Amazons. She might resemble her mother in scholarly rigour and attentiveness to intersectional differences, but she will look more like her second-wave grandmother in her theoretical boldness and political commitment.

The death of women's writing announced itself to me over the course of the past few years when I realized I no longer understood how the 'women' in 'women's writing' signified. The adjective's emptiness first became apparent when I found myself standing in front of an eighteenth-century women's writing classroom rehearsing arguments such as Jane Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* or Nina Baym's 'Melodramas of beset

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manhood' and repeatedly realizing, from the blank faces staring back at me, that the arguments conveyed nothing to students for whom the category of 'novelist' had not always already included both 'woman' and 'romance' and for whom American literature's genealogy had not always been traced to women's captivity narratives. Whenever I introduced an interpretation based on a negative thesis—that 'women's writing has been excluded from' or 'women's writing has not been considered as'—students were simply uninterested because the critical touchstones were anathema to them.[1]

Second, I felt the death of women's writing at a number of conferences when I have anticipated in the opening sentence of a paper what will come next. Even if I do not know the particular details of a particular woman writer, the argument is as predictable as a marriage plot ending: this woman writer found her voice by claiming maternal authority or this woman writer claimed authority by refusing the maternal voice or this woman writer was constrained by a misogynist reception of her work or this woman writer was a savvy and active agent in print culture. I have made all of these arguments at various times myself and they were all sophisticated and original in their moment. But we know them now. Are we pushing the boundaries of knowledge when we find more particular examples of familiar arguments? There are compelling scholarly reasons for pursuing the particulars of each women who ever wrote and in my ideal universe we do that *and* we pause to reframe what particulars we are seeking, to ask new questions of the specific details of women's writing lives. This essay polemically suggests that we are at an intellectual moment when a concentration on women's writing as a category of study has become a scholarly dead-end and we need to shift our focus to the synthetical and theoretical questions posed by feminist literary history and gender studies. In contrast to the critical trend that separates the study of women's writing from the study of gender, I argue for a renewed theoretical commitment to a literary history that is unabashedly feminist and literary.

In her 1987 essay 'Feminist criticism: how do we know we've won?' Lillian Robinson answers the titular question by querying the methodological heart of feminist literary criticism:

> [W]hen asked whether it is essential that scholarship on women writers operate within feminist assumptions and with a feminist orientation, one hesitates over the appropriate response … *Is* there a place for research—criticism and scholarship—on women's literature that, while not being explicitly anti-feminist, nonetheless is not explicitly feminist either?[2]

Her answer in 1987 was 'yes': since prejudice against women's writing was widespread and since women remained excluded from the canon, simply working on a woman writer was a feminist act. Whatever we might say about the pockets of sexist resistance that remain, we cannot make Robinson's same claim today.[3] Students are as likely to encounter Aphra Behn as they are Daniel Defoe, and scholars have made successful careers working on women's writing.[4] The seamless tie of marginalization that bound scholarship on women's writing to feminist criticism has frayed. And frayed in ways that make the outfit no longer either recognizable or comfortable. While feminists in the 1970s and 1980s saw themselves as part of a larger social movement for the liberation of women, the feminist gains made within the study of literature have not translated to or been mirrored by similar gains outside humanities programmes; sexism is alive and well and living in popular culture. As well, at the same time as women's writing has achieved a stronghold within literary studies, the study of literature or literary criticism has been devalued and any claims about the canon have been displaced by the fact that a canon no longer exists. As scholars are increasingly doing well-respected authoritative work on particular women writers, neo-liberal ways of determining value in both literary studies and the university have made that victory hollow. This essay charts how winning in Robinson's terms might be losing in the terms of the present, and proposes a reclamation of the value of literature and feminist theory with a difference. It's time for women's writing to return to the style of bold questioning that criticism deployed in the 1980s. Our historical moment is different and the digital tools we have to answer them are new. Our questions will probably not include whether there is 'a female literary imagination' but they will ponder how a feminist critique of culture can offer insight into the complications of gender and sexual difference in the twenty-first century.

What was Women's Writing? Sexual Difference as Opposition

In echoing Kenneth Warren's *What Was African American Literature?* as 'What was women's writing?', I highlight the historical nature of the field to query whether women's writing, like African American literature for Warren, is a thing of the past. Warren argues that African American literature as a coherent body of texts is tied, through opposition, to the Jim Crow era and that post-Jim Crow, 'African American' makes no sense

as a descriptive term for a body of literature.[5] Women's writing, I suggest, confronts a similar problem in that its coherence as a field of study is tied to a political history of oppression, one that works in terms of a binary understanding of sexual difference. Women's writing simultaneously signifies as 'not men's writing' but this signification is lost when we study women writers outside the frame of feminism or gender. The field coheres not because women wrote literature but because they did so (and, I would argue, still do so) within a political context of gender oppression that produced a collective voice and created an object of study: women's writing.

In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist literary history began from the premise that women's writing was different from men's writing and that once we included women writers in literary history, the shape of that history—for example, the rise of the novel, the Enlightenment, the Age of Satire—would look fundamentally different. The adjective 'women' in work such as Janet Todd's *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction* or *Rise of the Woman Novelist* registered both as a category of difference—not men's—but also as a political category of oppression. Studying women's writing necessarily entailed thinking about how gender shaped literary production because that production took place in a context of institutional sexism, including the literary critic's own. The questions we asked of eighteenth-century women's writing developed out of the institutional context of that time. The ground has shifted around the political significance of sexual difference in reading literary history, difference has multiplied to differences and the current trend in the field is to disassociate women's writing from an analytic of sexual difference and an overt feminist politics. Some scholars lament the turn to gender studies as having caused the decline of women's writing but I wonder if the opposite is the case; that is, if the shift away from reading women's writing in terms of gender and sexual difference may have produced a decline in feminist literary history even as the study of women writers has thrived in eighteenth-century studies.[6]

The trend to study women writers outside the frame of gender oppression is both a product of the success of feminist literary history and its failure. On the one hand, the field has reached its goal of mainstreaming women writers such that writers, especially major figures such as Aphra Behn or Frances Burney, are being studied not for what they tell us about being a woman or about gender but for what they contribute to various literary histories *sans* sexed qualification, in other words, the moment when Lillian Robinson might have said we've won. On the other hand, feminist

literary history, in its concentration on the politics of sexual difference, often failed to provide a complete interpretation of the past, skewing the picture by emphasizing women's victimization at the hands of a patriarchal print culture, rather than drawing out their agency or complicity. Thus, some critics argued for a women's writing without gender to de-emphasize female disenfranchisement. Betty Schellenberg's repositioning of 1750s women writers heralded this critical trend; she called on feminist literary history to 'let go of gender' in order to develop a deeper picture of writers such as Charlotte Lennox.[7] Other critics such as Margaret Ezell argued that feminist literary history disproportionately celebrated a heroic past of feminist writing, avoiding literature that reflected conservative and less subversive views and thus studying women without gender would bring religious writers, for instance, into the frame.[8]

Reading women writers without gender, whether it is a product of feminist literary history's success or failure, is unquestionably a good thing. It has led to deeper and more nuanced readings of women's literary production and Schellenberg's *The Professionalization of the Woman Writer* attests to this fact. But where does this leave the 'women' in women's writing? If it does not signify a methodology that focuses on sex or gender, does it signify coherently? How do we teach women's writing if we no longer organize the course around a female literary tradition or as providing a counter-narrative to the dominant one or as furthering our understanding of how gender operates in literature? To students who are likely unfamiliar with William Wordsworth, does it matter that Smith predates Wordsworth as the mother of the Romantic sonnet? Students where I teach are voting with their feet; the course I taught a few years ago in early women's writing was in danger of cancellation for low enrolment at the same time as a course in gender and sexuality was oversubscribed. We could read this as evidence that gender studies killed women's writing, or we can think about how the intellectual interest that gender studies generates might benefit early women's writing.

In comparing the fields of women's writing and gender studies, the particularism of the first comes into view. In some ways 'women writers' would be a better descriptor of the area of study than 'women's writing' since the emphasis on individual women over synthetical or theoretical analysis of large groups of texts dominates current research. A content survey of recent issues in journals of women's writing and of the programme for the Chawton House tenth anniversary conference on 'Women's Writing of the Long Eighteenth Century' reveals a division between the

way we study particular women and how we talk about multiple writers. Of 76 essays in the past three volumes of *Women's Writing*, only 32–42 per cent—foreground a feminist or gender studies topic in their title. Further, the vast majority of the essays without an explicit reference to feminist literary history or gender studies were essays on particular women writers. That is, when the essay singles out a woman writer, it tends not to read the writer as a woman but as a science writer or a working-class writer or a travel writer. If an essay takes up a topic or problem or school, on the other hand, it will likely address a gendered interpretation. Thus, in a special topic issue on Australian girl culture, almost all the essays synthesize ideas about girls and women, whereas a special issue on Felicia Hemans provides detailed investigations into her writing but only one takes up her sex.[9] A concurrent trend was noticeable at the Chawton House Library conference with a programme dominated by papers on particular women that did not address questions of gender or of a writer's representation of sexual difference. As an attendee of the conference—one who notably gave a paper on a particular woman writer that did not address gender—I heard excellent papers on individuals but I rarely heard the word 'feminist' over the course of the three-day event. A search on the programme reveals only two instances where 'feminist' is named in a title, three hits for 'gender', but 105 for 'women'.[10] Intersectional topics are more rare: 'queer' and 'race' appear only once and 'class' and 'lesbian' not at all. What does this reveal about how 'women' works as a descriptor of 'writing'? If it does not signify in terms of gender or feminist politics or an intersectional marker, what intellectual core synthesizes the disparate work? Scholars seem to assume a loose understanding that the material conditions of production in the eighteenth century mean something to the interpretation of a woman writer but we increasingly leave this 'something' out of our criticism.

If feminism has disappeared from the study of women's writing, we can find it alive and thriving in academic discourse in its dominant form of social science research. Journals such as *Signs* and *Feminist Studies* are publishing more and more essays from the social sciences and fewer from the arts and humanities. Toril Moi notes this phenomenon in her essay '"I am not a woman writer": about women, literature and feminist theory today' when she pointedly asks 'Why is the question of women and writing such a marginal topic in feminist theory today?'[11] My question here is the inverse of Moi's: why has feminism disappeared from discussions of women's writing? I hope the answer will bring the two back together.

A women's writing with a renewed focus on the 'feminist' and 'literary' in feminist literary history will help recalibrate the intellectual justification of the field.

Value, the Particular and the Problem of Scale

The disappearance of feminism and the turn to the particular woman writer can be traced, no doubt, to multiple causes, including to the general lull in literary theory and to the widespread scepticism toward grand narratives in humanist disciplines. Within women's writing specifically, scholars emerged from the twentieth-century identity and essentialism debates into an intersectional twenty-first century feeling skittish, with good reason, of claims based upon what it means to be a woman. Micro-histories of micro-moments, contextualized and historicized, appear as both safer and methodologically defensible. In fact, one could trace the current emphasis on the historicized particular within literary studies in general to the success of feminist literary history. As M.O. Grenby notes in his survey of eighteenth-century studies, the turn to historicism was broadly initiated by critics emerging from feminist and post-colonial contexts and that the shift 'is largely responsible for breaking down the old canons and media hierarchies'.[12] Feminist literary history successfully proved its claims that the historicized details of individual women writers mattered, that grand narratives were suspicious, and that all writing—not just high art literary genres—were valid objects of study. In breaking down patriarchal hierarchies, does this mean we've won? My concern is that the historicist shift has occurred within a context of the rise of the neo-liberal university and the devaluing of literary studies. Just as the field of women's writing has obliterated any idea of a canon, and just as women's writing has rejected high aesthetic forms, the value of English and of literary genres within the institution has fallen. To what extent does the turn to the historicized particular and away from aesthetic categories feed the neo-liberal university's appetite for quantification and empirical research? In her conclusion to the *History of British Women Writers, 1690–1750*, Ros Ballaster notes the concurrence of the expansion of post-secondary education and the rise of the study of women's writing, pointing out that 'the growing industry of literary criticism proved keen to uncover new material'.[13] The industry of scholarship on women's writing is not divorced from the conditions of its own production and I wonder whether the current demand for the 'new' and the 'empirical' has influenced the emphasis on finding new writers

with new archives that require data-gathering and that legitimate research trips. Insofar as the study of women's writing has become more individualized and particularized, does it fit too nicely with a metric-oriented university?

I am haunted by the question feminists asked in the 1990s about the death of the author: why, at the exact moment when feminists recovered women as the subjects of literary history, was the subject and the author declared dead?[14] The updated version has me asking: why, at the same time as there is a plethora of scholarship on women writers, has literature lost its cultural capital? Why have we abandoned grand narratives at the same time as we have a critical mass of women's writing that would allow us to rewrite, for instance, the grand narrative of the Enlightenment? The abandonment of the traditional categories of literature—poetry, fiction, drama—served feminist literary history well as women often wrote in non-literary genres. But in giving up the primacy of the literary categories have we surrendered too much?[15] We have awoken to discover that our intellectual institutions are perfectly happy to agree to a devaluing of the literary, women's writing included. It is not without note that the study of literature has become feminized at the same time as it has become devalued.[16] Feminist literary history has taught us to be wary of what happens to women around institutions and value: cultural capital shifts away from those genres and disciplines that are associated with women (romance, children's literature, home economics) and authority accrues to fields dominated by men (realism, engineering, computer science). Women's writing may be immured in a shell game where the death of the canon, the disappearance of literature and the rise of historicism has us searching for the pearl under the wrong shell.

To remain vital in the twenty-first-century intellectual context, the field needs to keep a feminist critique of value front and centre and to understand the particular circumstances that have allowed women's writing in the academy to flourish while the material conditions of women's lives remain constituted by an intransigent patriarchal social and political structure. Feminist literary history may have won the battle within literature departments but the war for gender freedom is far from won. Can we find a way to bring the substantial body of particular historical studies that the field has produced together with a commitment to a shared feminist project? At present, few scholars are literally on the same page. We rarely share textual references with more than a few fellow critics. Instead, we are embargoed in ever-smaller and smaller chunks of specialized chronologies:

not 'eighteenth-century women's writing' but '1790s feminist novels' or 'Restoration comedy by women'. In her polemical essay 'Why I'm still writing women's literary history', Devoney Looser shares my worry over the fragmentation of the field: 'There seem to be fewer works of theory or literary criticism that large numbers of us are reading in common … we seem to be less often reading scholarship that falls outside our own chronological, generic, or other more modest niche.'[17] A place to start might be to risk grand narratives or, at least, to risk more synthetical work. In asking 'How do we know we've won?' Robinson proposed that once women writers enter the picture '[a]ll our generalizations about, say, "the" seventeenth-century or "the" American national character have to be re-examined'.[18]

We now have a strong picture of a literary landscape that includes women but instead of re-examining the old views, we have abandoned any idea of 'the' eighteenth-century or 'the' novel. There is good reason for such abandonment and I do not want to return to an era where historical narratives were authoritatively claimed as singular. But that does not mean we need to abandon all general or theoretical claims. I have to admit to disappointment when I opened Palgrave's *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830* and discovered most of the essays dealt with specific women writers. In her introduction, Jacqueline M. Labbe argues that the field has reached a point where it has broken free from gender and that 'women [have] gradually gained the ability to be as different from one another as their writing showed them to be'.[19] The problem is that if every woman writer is different from the next, what is the basis for bringing them together? We are living in a moment when handbooks and companions and digital reference sources proliferate but bold new grand narratives of women's writing, ones that compare to Gilbert and Gubar's madwoman or Showalter's gynocritics in scope and persuasiveness, are rarely offered. While the archival and 'recovery' work never ends and we still need biographies for many major women writers (as Devoney Looser has recently noted[20]), we have amassed a large body of research and have a solid understanding of women's participation in print culture.[21] The *Orlando* project, for instance, contains 496 entries on women writers in the long eighteenth century, all of which capture the most current scholarship on those individuals.[22] The challenge in teaching eighteenth-century women's writing used to be in finding texts, especially when the *Norton Anthology of Women's Writing* included only a handful of writers before the nineteenth century. Now it is one of a selection: Broadview's literary series

alone offers five different texts by Eliza Haywood, including *Love in Excess*, *The Adventures of Eovaai* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, not to mention that 'Fantomina' is one of the most anthologized texts. Women's writing today confronts not a dearth of information, but a plenitude, an excess of knowledge or what I call the problem of scale. In a post-canonical era of increased accessibility to all writing, it is easy to find a copy of an obscure novel by a woman (one can quickly do that online) but harder to find anyone else who is reading it. The sheer number of texts now in the literary field has not only reduced the chances to slim that we share a body of literature, but it also makes large general claims based upon a comprehensive understanding of a field harder to make. Gilbert and Gubar did not have to account for the range, diversity and sheer number of women's texts that any critic today must. It makes sense that in the face of the mathematical sublime, we take comfort in the particular and the micro.

By not risking the big thinking synthetical work, however, women's writing might not be 'leaning in'. We need to be claiming a bigger piece of the scholarly pie because there is always a risk of another great forgetting and because the feminist revolution is unfinished. A place to start might be in working with contemporary gender theory to pose big questions, like critics did in the 1980s, that are crucial to a current feminist politics and to explore answers in literary history with the help of new digital resources. Distance reading strategies could help us solve the problem of scale. We might also find that re-posing some of those 1980s questions, ones that seemed dated in the post-essentialist period, might allow us to ask them in new and creative ways. For instance, could big data reveal a women's poetics inaccessible in 1984 when Josephine Donovan proposed that such a poetics could 'be constructed from comprehensive studies of women's stylistics and thematics'?[23] Is now the moment when we have amassed enough research to start to answer some of those original questions with new qualitative, not just quantitative, insight? Such research will definitely not reveal *a* women's poetics but it might open up an immanent critique of women's language stylizations that brings new gendered narratives to the surface.

Feminist Literary History in a Digital Age

Though my first academic job was as a postdoctoral fellow on the *Orlando* project, I am not a digital humanist. I use digital tools every day in my research but I am very much like the sceptical colleague who Ted

Underwood describes as 'friendly to digital methods but wary of claims about novelty that seem overstated'.[24] I am also one of those people suspicious of the ways institutions ascribe cultural capital to digital humanities. But as a member of *Orlando* in those early years, I shared the political optimism that digital tools would revolutionize literary history; that hyperlinks and content tagging would answer both the critiques of a totalizing, masculine, grand narrative by allowing for multiplicity and diversity *and* they would simultaneously reveal hitherto unknown connections between women writers. Many feminists experienced this optimism; a large number of the initial projects within digital humanities grew out of the promise of electronic texts to serve the goals of the recovery movement, thus answering the problem of a restrictive canon by providing infinite access to every hitherto marginalized text. In addition to the *Orlando* project, many of the first big digital projects centred on women's writing: the *Women Writers Project* (WWP), the *Perdita Project*, the *Victorian Women Writers Project*. Has feminist literary history garnered the payoff for all those countless hours of coding, inputting and processing that feminist researchers have been doing?

In an excellent essay in *Digital Humanities Quarterly* assessing feminist literary history's central contribution to digital humanities, Jacqueline Wernimont describes the original optimism of those years: 'If only we could accurately capture all the work of marginalized groups, then we could have a complete view of our literary past, or so such arguments seem to suggest.'[25] But this desire for what she calls 'the mythical Alexandrian archive', with its 'emphasis on familiar patriarchal tropes of size, mastery, and comprehensive collection' was misplaced.[26] We had hoped that with enough inputting of structured information and primary texts, we would see patterns that were not visible to the lone researcher in the library, but we are still waiting for what Julia Flanders recently described as those 'game-changing insights that would bubble up from the data'.[27] So far, the results of computational processing have not told us much we did not already know. An exact accounting of how many novels by women feature female protagonists will probably not change our understanding of the central place of the novel in feminist literary history. But, as Flanders and Wernimont note, feminist literary history is less about data and more about a radical critique of monumental ways of knowing.[28] The 'additive approach' to literary history depends upon, what Flanders calls, 'an epistemology of thereness', the idea that history exists as a concrete thing that will deliver truths if we accrue enough facts.[29] Feminist literary

historians have known that the history of women's writing is more often about ghostliness, aberration and the unknowable. Isobel Grundy recently followed the labyrinth traces revealed by an *Orlando* tag search on 'non-survival of text' to demonstrate the impact of the unknowable on the history of women's writing.[30] As long as we stick to 'an epistemology of thereness' and imagine literary history as a computation of facts that programmes can run, the digital archive will probably only reveal what we already know. Given its critique of quantification, feminist literary history is in a unique position to push the digital humanities from data crunching into the hermeneutic project of what Alan Liu has called the 'second wave' of digital humanities.[31] 'We can see now that the greatest challenge of developing digital humanities methods,' Liu writes, 'may not be how to cull data from humanistic objects, but how to analyze that data in meaningfully interpretable ways'.[32] Flanders understands this as the challenge for large textbases like the WWP and she suggests that the digital search interface will be the crux in developing strategies that are not prescriptive or based on the known.[33]

When databases like *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* and *Early English Books Online* made simple word searches on large bodies of texts widely available, we noticed a change in literary scholarship. Full-text searches meant many scholars, not just literary historians, started working on a larger body of material. Ted Underwood in a recent *Representations* forum on 'Search' notes how many, including himself, found themselves working on 'a wider range of primary sources', which often led to many claims for the discovery of new 'discourses': 'If you could associate a theme with a set of verbal tics, you could suddenly turn up dozens of citations not mentioned in existing scholarship and discover something that was easy to call "a discourse".'[34] But there are serious problems with such full-text searches, not the least of which, Underwood points out, is that they often return results based upon a 'relevance' ranking that is hidden (think Google). They create a false sense of comprehensiveness because they begin from the assumption that more hits means historical verifiability and leads to claims about the 'thereness' of a historical period. The burden of contemporary scholarship is that all researchers now must account for more texts since those texts are at our fingertips and since we have thoroughly critiqued non-inclusive literary histories (the problem of scale), but we must do so based on rigorous conceptual models that lead to new interpretations. Underwood admits that the results of full-text word searches have been less than earth-shattering. But he sees promise in

the new technique of 'topic modelling', which provides a more open and curious form of searching. 'Topic modelling' lets the primary texts produce their own algorithms by parsing what words occur most frequently with other words. He gives an example of how a topic modelling search on 'blush' reveals that blushing is more frequently associated with 'artlessness' than 'shame' in the eighteenth century.[35] Topic modelling factors in the unknown by not entering keywords in advance. Still, as Underwood cautions, 'the interpretive process is … shaped and initiated by human assumptions'; the search is only the starting point of research.[36] The misguided assumption that the big data search will deliver the answer rather than ask the question in more complicated ways reminds us that searches in the digital world do not take place outside the material and institutional conditions of reception. Hypothetically, we now have access to enormous numbers of primary and secondary texts, but who is reading them, how and in what context?[37]

Orlando: *Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* provides a very different type of digital resource than primary electronic texts. From the very beginning, *Orlando* chose not to create a database that would quantify but to tag critical material on women's writing in ways that generate groupings of narrative prose, not rigid taxonomies but ones that make readers 'active partners in its literary historical endeavours'.[38] The elaborate tagging structure of *Orlando* is hard for new users to crack and the material it provides will never replace interpretation by scholars. But by tagging bio-critical entries on 1300 women writers, *Orlando* allows the non-digital humanist to discover avenues of literary history that they would not otherwise have accessed, avenues that allow the scholar not to relinquish historical specificity for breadth. Again, the search is only the beginning and the payoff will come when we develop new general narratives that resonate as strongly with feminists as something like Mary Poovey's *Proper Lady* thesis did 30 years ago.[39]

For bold new ideas to occur, we need to get out of our current historically specialized silos. Rather than using the new digital tools to go deeper into everything published in 1714, we need to use them to ask broader questions. What would happen if feminist literary history focused less on a specific historical moment or context and more on literary forms and conditions of productions across historical periods and geographic borders? The new digital resources allow us to do this in ways that remain historically grounded and immanent. We do not have to be a specialist in every period to have access to, for instance, the various ways women's

writing has been anthologized. A tag search in *Orlando* will point you to a trajectory from Thomas Bentley's reprinting of prayers by both Frances Neville and Elizabeth Oxenbridge in *The Monument of Matrones* (1582) to the anthologizing of Meiling Jin's poetry in recent collections of black and Caribbean women's poetry. Can we discern a pattern across the *longue durée* of anthologization that would tell us something about the institutionalization of women's writing? Literary history has always been about patterns and clusters; digital resources excel at revealing these; and feminist critics can offer powerful explanatory frameworks.

One of the patterns that early work on feminist literary history revealed was that when aesthetic forms become institutionalized, women are often written out. When the novel goes from being 'silly' to 'serious', pseudonyms change sex and 'written by a lady' morphs into 'George Eliot'. How might more research on a longer trajectory help us understand the interplay between the feminization of form and value (an intersection we see repeating itself in the declining value of literary studies and its feminization)? How might a renewed attention to literary form over our current obsession with the particular historical context provide new ways into digital resources? What would topic modelling of women's lyric poetry across centuries allow us to say about women's creative articulations of subjectivity? In addition to charting courses across historical periods, might digital resources push us outside our geographic boundaries toward more global and trans-European approaches to women's writing as Gillian Dow suggests in her essay in this volume?[40] We need the promises of the digital archive to pay off in new large-scale narrative literary histories that do not back down from synthetic arguments about how 'women' transforms 'writing'.

The most successful classes in the early women's writing course I taught, the ones that made me see a pedagogical future for women's writing, were ones that paired a literary with a feminist theoretical text and thus gave students a gendered frame of cultural interpretation: Haywood's *Fantomina* paired with Gayle Rubin's 'The traffic in sex' or Anne Finch's poetry paired with Margaret Homans' 'Women writers and poetic identity'. The dialogue between feminist theoretical concept and the literary imagination was the magic alchemy that brought the classroom and women's writing back to life for both me and the students. I think the field in general would benefit from a similar alchemy on a greater scale. While scholarship on women's writing in eighteenth-century studies has achieved a level of authority and maturity that allows us to forget gender

and register the historically specific details, I think it might also serve us to remember the transformative spirit under which feminist literary history emerged. We'll know we've won when women's fiction is reviewed as often and ranked as highly as men's, when women's creativity does not face the economic obstacles of single parenthood or low-paying 'pink ghettos', or when literary scholarship, feminist or otherwise, is as valued in the institution as engineering or as central to the women's and gender studies curriculum as sociology. Until then, we need to keep our eye on the collective struggle and thus maintain a dialectic between theory and history, between the general and the particular, and between then and now. Until sexual difference does not matter in cultural production outside the academy, the 'women' in 'women's writing' still signifies in and as opposition.

Notes

1. I teach in an English department where courses on women's writing have been on the books for 30 years and colleagues teach women writers across the curriculum. There may still be pedagogical contexts in which this is not the case and thus the work of such a course still needs to perform the negative critique.
2. Lillian S. Robinson, 'Feminist criticism: how do we know we've won?', in *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*, ed. Shari Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 140, emphasis in original.
3. While women's writing constitutes a large part of the academic publishing market in eighteenth-century studies, there remain instances in which the authoritative standard is presumed to be masculine. For instance, the 2010 anthology *This Is Enlightenment* manages to present an Enlightenment without women but with Diderot and Kant: Clifford Siskin and William Warner, eds., *This Is Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). James Noggle's *The Temporality of Taste in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) has individual chapters on Pope, Hume, Smith, Beckford and 'three women' who are not named in the chapter title.
4. A Google Ngram search on *Oronooko* in comparison to *Robinson Crusoe* shows the two meeting in frequency around 1995 (http://books.google.com/ngrams). The success of women entering eighteenth-century studies is evident in the many past presidents of the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies whose scholarship has focused on women writers, for instance, Paula Backscheider, Joan B. Landes, Felicity Nussbaum, Ruth Perry and Julie C. Hayes.

5. Kenneth W. Warren, *What Was African American Literature?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
6. For a discussion of the trend to see gender studies as having supplanted women's writing, see Toril Moi, '"I am not a woman writer": about women, literature and feminist theory today', *Feminist Theory*, 9(3) (2008), pp. 259–71; and Anna Richards, 'Introduction: studying eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German and women writers: feminist criticism past, present, and future', in *German Women's Writing of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Helen Fronius and Anna Richards (London: Legenda, 2011), pp. 1–15.
7. Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Beyond feminist literary history? Re-historicizing the mid-eighteenth-century woman writer', in *Women and Literary History: 'For There She Was'*, ed. Katherine Binhammer and Jeanne Wood (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), p. 88.
8. Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
9. See *Women's Writing*, special issue: 'Girls' culture in colonial Australia and New Zealand', 21(2) (2014) and *Women's Writing*, special issue: 'Beyond domesticity: Felicia Hemans in the wider world, 21(1) (2014).
10. The programme for the conference is available at www.chawtonhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/FINAL-Pride-And-Prejudices-Conference-Programme.pdf
11. Moi, '"I am not a woman writer"', p. 259.
12. M.O. Grenby, 'Introduction', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34(4) (2011), p. 431.
13. Ros Ballaster, 'Critical review', in *History of British Women's Writing, 1690–1750*, Vol. 4, ed. Ros Ballaster (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p. 243.
14. Nancy Hartsock asked the question of the death of the subject in post-structuralist theory most pointedly: 'Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic?' Nancy Hartsock, 'Foucault on power: a theory for women', in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 162.
15. Ros Ballaster's essay in this volume asks a similar question as she queries whether the success of 'writing' over 'literature' has come at too high a cost, proposing that it might be time to return to questions of aesthetics. She notes how women's writing argued vociferously to break open literary studies to include not just the high art forms but all types of writing and thus the account book has become as valued an object for analysis as the verse epic.

16. The *NCES 2013 Digest of Education* provides statistics of enrolment by discipline for the United States and shows 61 per cent of English students were women in 1971; in 2011, that had risen to 68 per cent: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2013menu_tables.asp, accessed 30 May 2015.
17. Devoney Looser, 'Why I'm still writing women's literary history', *Minnesota Review*, 71–2 (2009), p. 225. I should note that while Looser shares my concern with fragmentation, she would disagree with my assessment that women's writing is currently not producing much new knowledge.
18. Robinson, 'Feminist criticism', p. 145.
19. Jacqueline M. Labbe, 'Defining "women's writing"; or, writing "the history"', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830*, ed. Jacqueline M. Labbe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1–26 (p. 10).
20. Devoney Looser, 'British women writers, big data and big biography, 1780–1830', *Women's Writing*, special issue: 'Reassessing British women writers of the Romantic period', 22(2) (2015), pp. 165–71.
21. For a good overview of women's participation in eighteenth-century print culture, see Michelle Levy, 'Women and print culture, 1750–1830', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830*, Vol. 5, ed. Jacqueline M. Labbe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 29–46.
22. Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, eds., *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Online, 2006–), http://orlando.cambridge.org
23. Josephine Donovan, 'Toward a women's poetics', in *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*, ed. Shari Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 98.
24. Ted Underwood, 'We don't already understand the broad outlines of literary history', blog post, *The Stone and the Shell*, 8 February 2013, http://tedunderwood.com/2013/02/08/we-dont-already-know-the-broad-outlines-of-literary-history
25. Jacqueline Wernimont, 'Whence feminism? Assessing feminist interventions in digital literary archives', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 7(1) (2013), www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000156/000156.html, para. 4.
26. Wernimont, 'Whence feminism?', para 4.
27. Julia Flanders, 'Alternate literary histories in women's writing', unpublished paper delivered at 'Digital Diversity: Writing, Feminism, Culture', Edmonton, Canada, 7–9 May 2015.
28. See Julia Flanders, 'Learning, reading, and the problem of scale: using women writers online', *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, 2(1) (2002), pp. 49–59;

Julia Flanders and Jacqueline Wernimont, 'Feminism in the age of digital archives: the Women Writers Project', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 29(2) (2010), pp. 425–35; Wernimont, 'Whence feminism?'

29. Flanders, 'Alternative literary histories'.
30. Isobel Grundy, 'The *Orlando* project', unpublished paper delivered at 'Digital Diversity: Writing, Feminism, Culture', Edmonton, Canada, 7–9 May 2015.
31. Alan Liu, 'The meaning of the digital humanities', *PMLA*, 128(2) (2013), p. 409.
32. Liu, 'The meaning of the digital humanities', p. 411.
33. Flanders, 'Learning, reading, and the problem of scale', pp. 52–3.
34. Ted Underwood, 'Theorizing research practices we forgot to theorize twenty years ago', *Representations*, 127(1) (2014), p. 67.
35. Underwood, 'Theorizing research practices', p. 67.
36. Underwood, 'Theorizing research practices', p. 70.
37. For an analysis of the politics of digital humanities and how a focus on the computational has masked central questions of who is doing the computing and why, see the special issue of *Differences*, 'In the shadows of the digital humanities', ed. Ellen Rooney and Elizabeth Weed, 25(1) (2014), especially articles by Adeline Koh and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Lisa Marie Rhody.
38. Brown et al., *Orlando*.
39. Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
40. Digital projects such as *New Approaches to European Women's Writing* or *RECIRC: The Reception and Circulation of Early Modern Women's*

Anon, Pseud and 'By a Lady': The Spectre of Anonymity in Women's Literary History

Jennie Batchelor

> Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman […] This may be true or it may be false—who can say?—but what is true in it, so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at.[1]

So wrote Virginia Woolf, who in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) encapsulated the feminist recovery project's determination to recuperate the lost voices, words and lives of past women writers. Yet even as *A Room of One's Own* dares its readers to imagine a matriarchal textual genealogy to rival its canonical, male-dominated counterpart, it resists the temptation it puts before them. In part, the difficulty of such a project lies in Anon's intractability. It may be 'true' that she was 'often a woman', but equally, it 'may be false'. Where she has been firmly identified, Woolf unearths merely an unholy 'relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women'. In the examples of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and George Sand, all of whom famously adopted male pseudonyms, she finds women who capitulated to the notion 'that publicity in women is detestable'.[2] Nonetheless, Woolf recognized

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Anon's value both for women writers and for women's literary history. Thus, the bifurcated objective of *A Room of One's Own* is not simply to give Anon a name, but to do so while attempting to preserve the liberating potential of her outsider status. As Jane Goldman reminds us, Anon's 'legacy' for Woolf, as articulated in this work at least, lies in its refusal of the 'model of authorial subjectivity'—that is, the author as 'individual, singular, […] absolute' and male—'constructed in patriarchy'.[3]

In the nine decades since the publication of Woolf's work, women's literary history has been remapped beyond recognition and the wreaths of flowers that have fallen onto Aphra Behn's tomb have been followed with less perishable tributes in the form of generations of scholarship that have moved women writers from the periphery to the centre of eighteenth-century studies and university curricula. Yet while we may have largely achieved the first part of Woolf's objective in *A Room of One's Own*, by acknowledging the importance of many formerly forgotten and often anonymously published women writers, her second impetus 'to develop', in Goldman's words, 'the democratic and anti-patriarchal potential available in the legacy of Anon', has, I would contend, been overlooked to the impoverishment of the recovery project.[4] If feminist scholarship is to heed the calls to move 'beyond recovery' made in recent scholarly journals, books and by some authors in this collection, then we leave Anon behind at our peril. This is the case, I would argue, even if she may sometimes turn out to be a he.[5]

To confront Anon, as Woolf realized, is to confront the disarming. For modern readers, author and text exist in a 'tautological' relationship, in which, as Susan S. Lanser explains, the text is viewed as a metonym of the author who is, in turn, (re)constituted by our experience of reading their work(s).[6] For eighteenth-century readers, however, anonymous and pseudonymous publication were simply accepted authorial practices. Michel Foucault's influential assertion that the 'author-function' was born 'in the seventeenth or eighteenth century' is at least partly misleading.[7] As Robert J. Griffin has demonstrated, 'anonymity is not simply a residual characteristic of oral or manuscript culture, but continues for several centuries to be a dominant form, perhaps the norm, of print culture'. Given its pervasiveness, 'historical understanding' of the practice 'must be integral to our understanding of authorship and writing generally'.[8] Griffin's compelling claim becomes irrefutable when we review the conclusions of James Raven's profiling of the anonymous novel in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland, which demonstrates that between 1750 and 1800, a

clear majority of new novels were published anonymously: the figures fall from a staggering over 80 per cent between 1750 and 1790 to a still striking 62 per cent in the 1790s.[9] Even allowing for cases where an author's identity was an open secret or divined by association, as in the case of Frances Burney's *Camilla* (published in 1796 with a title-page bearing its ascription to 'the Author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*'), these figures should give pause for thought. The work of Griffin and Raven, as well as that of Margaret Ezell, Peter Garside and John Mullan, is ensuring that anonymity is a better-understood and more highly theorized practice in our period than it once was.[10] However, much work remains to be done, especially in the field of women's writing.

There are several reasons why feminist scholarship is particularly troubled by Anon. Principal among these is the embarrassment her presence can occasion. We know that eighteenth-century women blessed with the 'great gift' of literary creativity were just as likely, and were often encouraged, to pick up their pens rather than to go crazy or shoot themselves in the manner of the outcast sixteenth-century figures Woolf imagines. When they did so unsigned, or as 'a Lady', however, they have traditionally been seen to confirm assumptions that women's writing was determined an immodest or dangerous activity that contravened the gendered imperative that women conform to an 'ideal of silence and modesty'.[11] Recent work on female authors, authorship and literary networks has significantly nuanced such views. Yet curiously, the default position that women's adoption of anonymity was a conciliatory or deferential strategy doggedly persists. It is certainly true, as Jacqueline M. Labbe has argued, that 'the last twenty-five years of scholarship and textual recovery have overturned the convention that women wrote unambitiously, mostly anonymously, and concentrated on "feminine" concerns like the family and home'.[12] We need only consider the current consensus about two of the most famous writers of our period, former daddy's girl, Frances Burney, and secretive creaky-door dependent Jane Austen, now long since established, as if we were ever in doubt, as determined literary professionals, to see how outdated such perceptions are.[13] Yet, Labbe's claim that feminist literary scholars have largely overcome the problem of anonymity and its association with a lack of ambition and a benignly 'feminine' focus on the domestic is problematic, not least because in claiming as much, we ironically consolidate the very associations between anonymity and the non-professional and deferential we seek to question. Such claims fail also adequately to account for several incontrovertible facts: that significant

numbers of texts, including those by Burney and most of Austen's, were published without their author's names; that many female-authored texts are still only tentatively or controversially attributed; and that many works likely written by women may never be definitely assigned to a known author. We simply cannot overcome anonymity straightforwardly, nor, I will argue, should we attempt to do so. Yet to confront the practice on its own terms presents significant challenges.

Because of its privileging of gender as an analytical category, and despite its cautions against essentialism, the field of women's literary history needs heroines in the form of named authors whose sex can be verified or at least credibly assumed. Publishers also need named authors. When Megan Hiatt and I sought a publisher for an edition of the novel *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen-House* (1759), our first attempt was largely scuppered by our refusal to hazard an attribution on the basis of the limited extant evidence. We were delighted when our proposal was later accepted for Pickering and Chatto's Chawton House Library novels series: a women's writing list of currently more than 20 novels in which it remains the only unattributed text. The compromise was that this was a research rather than teaching edition, but it was a compromise preferable to the alternative: a paperback edition, a tenuous attribution of which might have had a distorting ripple effect on the perception of the career of its presumed author, usually claimed to be Sarah Fielding, but perhaps Sarah Scott or another unidentified Bath resident.[14] Leah Orr's recent work on the impact of 'questionable' attributions on our perception of the career and legacies of Eliza Haywood suggests some of the perils such a move would have entailed.[15]

Anon further troubles us by uncomfortably reminding us that the goal of recovery will always be, in part, illusory. At the 2010 American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies meeting in Albuquerque, a roundtable of five speakers working in and across different disciplines elucidated how we might learn from historical efforts to write women's literary history in order to map new directions for the recovery project.[16] The panel's conviction in the field's intensified importance, and the methodologies proffered to promote its post-recovery advancement, were energizing. Their collective optimism was deflated, however, by a question, from the audience: 'What about Anon?' The collective groan with which it was met was motivated not by irritation but in recognition of the question's salutary check on our enthusiasm in reminding us how much work still lies ahead. Texts can be recovered, but if we cannot definitively assign an author to them

then our work seems only partly complete. Yet, it is precisely in preventing us from moving forward too quickly and unreflectively, in forcing us to interrogate some of literary scholarship's most fundamental assumptions about the relationship between sex and gender, author and text that Anon, in all her impossibility, is so deeply valuable, indeed vital, to the future of women's literary history.

While much of the work on anonymity and women's writing to date has focused on the novel, it is the periodical that perhaps most sharply brings the practice into focus. In historical periodicals, anonymity and pseudonymity are the norm and accepted mediators of the reading experience.[17] Signed pieces taken from the works of known authors or submitted by writers keen to see their name in print sit alongside swathes of anonymized contributions in the form of fictions, poems and essays by Amators and Chloes. Nowhere, arguably, are the various implications of this authorial culture for our understanding of eighteenth-century women's writing more evident than in the longest running female-oriented monthly periodical of the era: the monthly *Lady's Magazine: or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* (1770–1832).

The *Lady's Magazine* branded itself as unique within the periodical marketplace on the grounds that its content was, according to its editors, 'supplied entirely by *Female Pens*, and ha[d] no other end in view, than to cherish *Female* ingenuity and to conduce to *Female* improvement'.[18] In fact, the *Lady's Magazine* was one of a succession of prior and usually short-lived eighteenth-century women's periodicals and magazines, many of which bore near-identical titles.[19] What distinguished this publication from its predecessors, beyond its longevity, was its composition: also comprising extracts and serializations of already published works, much of the magazine was filled by diverse submissions representing every conceivable textual genre and authored by volunteer and seemingly unpaid amateur reader-contributors whose identities are, for the most part, obscure to us to this day. Edward Copeland has convincingly contended that the diverse contents of the publication 'defined public issues for women' in the Romantic era.[20] This is not simply true because of the range of the magazine's content but because of its form and the writing culture it promoted. A literal and metaphorical space in which women could express their views and talents in print behind the mask of anonymity or pseudonymity, the magazine proved itself superior to other public forums where women, in the words of a 1780 contributor who went simply by 'A Friend', were forced to 'stud[y] their action'. By contrast, the *Lady's Magazine*'s habit

of concealed authorship allowed women to reveal themselves plainly: to 'speak from our own feelings and not that of others'.[21]

Yet while many contributors shared A Friend's enthusiasm for the periodical and its encouragement of female authors, the reality of the magazine's production and circulation was much more complex than its editors' feminocentric pronouncements indicate and calls into question the periodical's place in the histories of women's writing and reading. Even the most cursory glance at the magazine's content reveals that many male authors read and responded to it, anecdotal evidence that has been subjected to more rigorous scrutiny by Jan Fergus, whose analysis of the archives of a number of Midlands booksellers provides valuable evidence of male subscription and affiliation to the *Lady's Magazine*.[22] Such detail merely gestures towards a bigger and more complex picture, however. For the periodical's culture of anonymous and pseudonymous publication means that we may never know how much of this important women's magazine—credited by later writers such as Brontë as promoting women's 'aspirations after literary fame'—was actually written or read by women at all.[23]

Various degrees of anonymity were embraced by the magazine's authors. Some writers eschewed it entirely and opted for what Gérard Genette calls 'onymity': that is, the 'deceptively ordinar[y]', but far from naïve, practice by which an author assigned their legal name to their work.[24] The identity of the now largely obscure Ann Murry, author of the previously published *Mentoria: or, the Young Ladies Instructor* (1778), was disclosed proudly underneath the title of her monthly and lavishly engraved natural history serial, *The Moral Zoologist* (1800–1805), for instance, as were those of Catherine Bremen (or Breeman) Yeames and her younger sister Elizabeth (later Clabon) who published their various works of fiction, poetry and advice in the magazine in the 1800s and 1810s. Others published under what we know or might assume to be partially concealed versions of their legal names. Among this number we can count the likes of translator and French novelist Henrietta R-, whose career in the magazine extended from 1773 to 1784; short-fiction writer and enigmatist Marianne C-r (sometimes Marianne C.), who published in the magazine from 1779 to 1782; and 1770s–1780s contributor J. L./J.L-g, since identified as John Legg, essayist, ornithologist and author of the unfinished novel *The Treacherous Husband* (1779–1782).[25] Others again adopted initials that might (or might not) be their own, such as I., J.M.L., E.F. or G.H. A significant number of contributions, however, bore no signature at all,

such as the serialized Gothic novel *Derwent Priory* (1796–1797). Many, still obscurely authored contributions, were followed by a teasing long dash or series of asterisks. Others were written by contributors who went by 'Anonymous' or the Burneyesque 'Nobody'. Sometimes the content of unsigned contributions nonetheless provided hints of their author's identity at least to other readers of the magazine, as in the 'Verses to Miss E- S-, at B- in Surrey' that appeared in the November 1771 issue and were authored by a 'Nobody' who was presumably a somebody to the titular Miss E- S- if to no one else.[26] At other times, contributors conceded their geographical location, such as the poet Anonymous of N. Petherton who published in the magazine between 1810 and 1812 and whose decision to disclose their place of residence enabled their contributions to be linked to one another, like the works of the 'author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*', and distinguished from the many other anonymous contributions that filled the magazine's twin columns.[27]

More commonly, however, writers adopted various kinds of pseudonym that adhered to conventions ubiquitous in and beyond periodical print culture. These include: patterned initials that are unlikely to relate to legal names (A.Z. or A.B.C, for instance); pastoral types (such as Myrtilla, Strephon and Delia) or pastoral parodies (including Reuben Rustic or Philly Nettletop); citational pseudonyms that allude to literary heroines or heroes (Eloisa, Emily Montague or Tom Jones); self-deprecating or satirical allusions to an author's age, gender, marital, occupational status or educational background (An Old Man, A Spinster, the grocer Artichoke Pulse or Oxoniensis); or that most ubiquitous of pseudonyms, 'By a Lady', which was the first signature ever to appear in the magazine under the title of its long-running serial narrative, *A Sentimental Journey* (1770–1777), allegedly authored by a 'lady of some eminence in the literary world'.[28]

While these various pseudonyms may appear generic, it is clear that writers often selected them with great care and a strong sense of affiliation. Authors whose submissions were inadvertently published without their pseudonym could be quick to correct the editors, as a contributor did in May 1799 when s/he requested that the pseudonym 'W.M.' be 'affixed to the Epistle of Maria to Henry inserted last month'.[29] Some adopted different signatures for work in different genres. The evidently well-educated Constantia Maria, who wrote moral essays on love and friendship as well as translations and historical anecdotes, seems to have used the alternative signature Historicus (on one occasion switching between the two signatures in a single series) for her more sustained historical narratives

or more politically or sexually sensitive contributions on such subjects as Assyrian marriage practices.[30] Yet even those who went by relatively common signatures could object vociferously when other contributors appeared to poach their own. Such 'delinquent' behaviour was castigated by '[a] *Leonora*' who wrote to the magazine in January 1775 to complain that 'some lady has borrowed her signature, page 661, Vol. V, and has added the name of a street, by way of distinction'. Such 'female *litterary larcenies* [sic]', the magazine's editors acknowledged only partly mockingly, would in future be 'punish[ed]' in such a manner as 'the gay and beautiful world would shudder at'.[31]

A significant percentage of the magazine's pseudonyms are explicitly feminine. Even where the identity of these individuals is still unknown, however, there is little reason to doubt but that contributors such as Constantia Maria or Henrietta R- were female. Equally, there is little evidence to suggest that such pseudonyms were adopted as a sign of modesty. Pseudonymity was, in part, an elaborate fiction and the identity of some writers was an open secret to other of their readers, such as C.D.H. (C.D. Haynes, later Golland), whose February 1817 rebus about an unnamed absent lover was solved in the May issue by Henry: '[John] *Golland*'s the swain beloved by thee.'[32] Nor is there any reason to believe, as conventional accounts have suggested, that the adoption of pseudonymity was a sign of a lack of professional literary ambition. To give but three of many such examples: the aforementioned C.D.H. went on to publish a number of novels for the Minerva Press under the names C.D. Haynes and then Mrs Golland; the anonymous author of *Derwent Priory* went on to publish several more novels as Mrs A. Kendall; and the poet and essayist who in the 1770s went variously by C., G.C. of Woodbridge or G. Ebbare/Ebbarc forged a better-known career outside the magazine's pages as George Crabbe.

Other writers appear to have had no end in view other than publication in the magazine itself. The fact that the magazine's circulation is widely cited as being in the region of 10,000–15,000 monthly copies may well explain why.[33] In 1778 it is possible that more people were reading and talking about the aforementioned Henrietta R- than the initially unknown author of *Evelina* (1778). *Lady's Magazine* writers certainly achieved local celebrity, receiving fan letters passed on via the editors or even published in the magazine itself, as in the 'Lines addressed to Miss Eliz[abeth] Caroline Litchfield', a regular 1790s contributor, who was lauded in the December 1792 issue.[34] Some such contributors achieved more lasting

and even global acknowledgement. Bound copies of the magazine, as an 1840 letter from Charlotte Brontë to Hartley Coleridge intimates, were often kept and passed down through families and their contents reread. Even long after 'the black day' her father 'burnt' the copies of the magazine bequeathed to her by her mother or aunt, Brontë could recall fictions including Kendall's *Derwent Priory*, just as Catherine Bremen Yeames could, in May 1803, run to the aid of a fellow reader requesting a cure for hair loss after remembering one by the medical columnist Dr Turnbull in the magazine for 1784 (the year before her christening).[35] It is unlikely that her sister Elizabeth knew that her serial *Julia and Palmira* (September 1815 to January 1816) would find its way over the Atlantic to appear, under her name, in the Savannah, Georgia, *Ladies' Magazine* in 1819.[36] Evidence of this kind suggests that the claim of G R-ff-y, of Goodman's Fields, that the magazine was a place where the people behind 'signatures unknown' could '[g]ain from their pieces honour and renown' were not as inflated as we might assume.[37]

These women and their sometimes decades-long careers as fiction writers, poets, essayists, translators and historians for the magazine have surely earned their place in women's literary history not despite but, as I have argued elsewhere, because they challenge so many of our assumptions about authorship and later eighteenth-century print culture.[38] Yet the claim to the magazine's literary merit is one that still needs to be made in the face of the historical women's magazine's association with conduct book prescription, on the one hand, and popular ephemera on the other.[39] Just as pressing is the need to resolve its contentious (non-)place within most histories of women's writing in the long eighteenth century, a tenuous position that is in large part a product of the culture of pseudonymity it fostered. As this essay has already intimated, the *Lady's Magazine* was far from 'supplied entirely by *Female Pens*'. Men seemed to have edited the magazine and, as Jan Fergus has demonstrated, routinely subscribed to and read it. What is more, male writers embraced the possibilities opened up by publishing 'under a borrowed name', as one contributor put it, with enthusiasm.[40] Whether they did so as regularly as women is a question that is virtually impossible to answer because of the authorial masquerading and gender-bending pseudonymity permitted and encouraged. Knowing how to address fellow readers and contributors was no simple matter. In the words of the ubiquitous R-, whose column on women's education, 'The friend to the fair sex' first appeared in June 1773:

> MESDAMES, *or* MESSIEURS—I Confess I do not know under what predicament I am to address you; for the pieces you publish under the signatures of *ladies*, are so *masculine*, and those under the signature of *gentlemen*, are so feminine, that my *embarras* is a least veniable.[41]

The problem was not as universal as R- denotes, but also more complex than s/he (most likely he) imagined. Women sometimes, like Constantia Maria, adopted male signatures. Figures such as Leonora, who apparently submitted a carefully chosen selection of material from James Fordyce's 1765 *Sermons to Young Women* in 1776, routinely excerpted from already published male-authored works and framed these extracts with words that allowed them to claim the original male author's sentiments as their own.[42] A significant number of women, including the talented Eleanor H- of Twickenham, penned original translations from the works of their male contemporaries and predecessors (in Eleanor H-'s case, of August von Kotzebue, J.B. Monsollier, Jacques-Marie Boutet de Monvel and L.B. Picard).[43] Women's signatures could also mask male identities. It seems reasonable to assume that misogynist essays on female conduct bearing female signatures, such as Modesta of Hanover-Square's 'Essay on female unchastity'—a warning for 'female macaronies'—might have been the product of male pens, although it would be a mistake to presume that men had or have a monopoly on misogyny.[44] Even those apparently female contributors who offered more temperate advice, such as the magazine's agony aunt from 1774 to 1791, the Matron also known as Martha Grey, were sometimes suspected by readers of being men.[45]

In the majority of cases, neither the signature beneath nor the content of a contribution gives sufficient evidence to identify an author's sex securely. Frequently even the magazine's editors themselves were in the dark about their authors' gender and were forced to address correspondents as '*him*, or *her*', as they did in January 1776 when explaining that Elfrida, the translator of part of Alain-René Lesage's *Le Diable Boiteux* (1707) had failed to produce a much-anticipated conclusion to the narrative, forcing them to commission their own.[46] Quite why the editors assumed that Elfrida might have been a man is unclear except that the magazine is full of contributions by Lucindas who might have been Lucases or of Strephons who might have been Daphnes. Columnists routinely and self-consciously withheld their sex, as did columnist 'The Reasoner' (1773–1775), who acknowledged the Addisonian convention that a periodical persona 'give an account to their readers of their birth, parentage, and education', before

refusing to disclose not only this information, but also his sex: 'Hitherto my sex has been a secret: I have been addressed in various terms, and it is my particular humour to conceal it from the world. Each may fancy it which they please.'[47] Then there are other cases again where contributors exploit the possibilities of anonymity and pseudonymity to identify themselves explicitly, not as potentially either male or female, but of a third gender: 'the doubtful'.

The first time this phrase is used in the magazine is in relation to its editors, who are addressed in December 1774 'in the *doubtful* gender [Mr. or Mrs. Editor]' by a correspondent who goes by I--, and of whose own gendered identity, the contributor claims, readers 'will not long be ignorant of' after reading the celebratory 'Character of the late Princess of Orange' the letter prefaces.[48] More often, however, 'the doubtful gender' is used to describe contributors, such as in the July 1779 instalment of 'The Matron', which grudgingly reprints a letter from the playfully monikered Kitty Touchwood, expressing a desire to set up an association of young ladies worried about foreign invasion and trained to don breeches at the critical moment to defend their country. Unable to determine whether the tone of Touchwood, a self-styled 'fine lovely girl['s]', prose is that of a female patriot or male satirist of amazonianism, the Matron responds that since 'the above epistle seems to have been written by a person of the *doubtful gender*, an immediate answer cannot be given to it'.[49] None was ever produced, leaving the status of the letter and the questions it raises about the nature of women's engagement with national politics—a recurrent preoccupation of the magazine—hanging.

Various contributors embraced the possibilities of writing as the 'doubtful gender' for themselves. In May 1781 the phrase appears again in the ten-page 'A comparative view of the virtues and abilities of men and women. Or a modest defence of the female sex' signed 'A Friend to Merit'. The Friend begins by withholding their gender from readers before indicating that the subject of the following essay—the nature of sexual difference—makes it necessary that s/he should do so: 'Though the masculine is more worthy than the feminine, and the feminine only worthier than the neuter; I who may be considered by your readers of a doubtful gender, cannot patiently remain neuter, whilst the feminine is degraded below its real dignity and deserts.' What follows, contrary to the apparent sentiment of this opening statement, is an eloquent defence of the deleterious effects of culture in tempering women's 'natural abilities' and 'quickness' of comprehension in order to teach them to be 'inferior in

understanding to the male' so that they are fit for a wasted life of 'domestic affairs, confined to their own houses'.[50]

Each of these contributions on gender and national politics lends further credence to Copeland's assertion that the *Lady's Magazine* defined contemporary public issues for women. Yet each of their doubtfully gendered, pseudonymous authors are most likely male. (For all of his proto-Wollstonecraftian rhetoric, the Friend's subsequent, chivalric allusions to women's 'sweetness' and 'softness' seem to give him away.)[51] To muddy the waters still further, it is possible, although far from certain, that the Matron herself (so troubled by Kitty Touchwood's ambiguous gender) was in fact a man masquerading as a woman, as some of the magazine's original readers and the book historian E.W. Pitcher suspect.[52] Yet, whether the Matron, Kitty Touchwood, I-- or Friend to Merit were men or not is, in many ways, merely a distraction. Despite the presence of men within its pages, *The Lady's Magazine* is, I would contend, unequivocally women's writing. Furthermore, over the course of its 62-year run, it offers one of the most intricate and prolonged meditations upon what constitutes women's writing—what women should read and who had the right to write about to and for women readers—in women's literary history.[53] The culture of pseudonymity the magazine fostered encouraged women to participate in this conversation and allowed them 'to speak from our own feelings'. We cannot, nor should we, ignore the fact that it allowed men to do the same. Many wrote within the magazine from the explicit position of their femininity or masculinity under gender-specific pseudonyms, although as in the wider literary marketplace, there are simply no guarantees that 'a Lady' or an Elfrida really was a woman or a Historicus (as he seems not to have been) really a man. Writers, as this essay has indicated, could textually switch their gender by adopting carefully selected pseudonyms in a bid to shape their readers' reception of their work or, in the case of the almost certainly male Kitty Touchwood, to conceal their misogyny. Others again, including the Friend to Merit, the Reasoner and the innumerable A.Z.s, Anons and Nobodies that litter the magazine's columns seem to gesture towards a proto-queer authorial identity in which the contributor's 'sex' was kept as an intensely guarded 'secret' in order that their views, especially those about the nature of sexual difference and women's role in national politics, could (ideally at least) be viewed without the taint of presumed gender prejudice.

The *Lady's Magazine* plays with, but ultimately refuses to resolve, the question of whether or not it is possible to fulfil the utopian promise of Anon: to write without gender or, at least, without person.[54]

Nonetheless, the anonymous and pseudonymous contributions of its legion of 'ingenious correspondents' demonstrate clearly the perils involved in assuming the sex of texts or authors on the basis of their writing's content, style or ideological position. Moreover, the remoteness of many of its contributors to readers then and now—and we simply will never find out who the majority of the magazine's contributors were—demonstrates clearly how anonymous and pseudonymous publication can successfully preserve an author's identity and sex. The reasons why authors adopted such strategies were multiple and likely even more various than this essay has been able to account for. What is striking, however, is how infrequently they are explicitly a sign of the near proverbial modesty or deference with which the practice, when adopted by women in particular, has been traditionally associated. Instead, these practices are more commonly indicative of a widely accepted and vibrant literary culture that actively promoted women's writing even as their licensing of men to participate in the same forum productively forces to question the very nature of the object of our enquiry.

In the *Lady's Magazine*, 'Anon' was 'often a woman'. Yet very often, as Woolf conceded in her later, unfinished, 'Anon' (composed 1940), we have to acknowledge that 'sometimes' she was 'a man'.[55] And sometimes she was a woman pretending to be a man or, more often in fact in the *Lady's Magazine*, a man pretending to be a woman or a contributor of such 'doubtful gender' that their sex will never be known for sure. One of the reasons why the *Lady's Magazine* and many other anonymous works possibly authored and certainly read by eighteenth-century women have not received sustained scholarly attention is surely their anonymity, which resists one of our principal categories of textual analysis (the 'author'), frustrates so many of the ambitions of women's literary history and gives the lie to the ideal that recovery is ever a fully realizable objective. Yet, to attempt to tell women's literary history and to move beyond recovery without taking with us the vast swathes of work by anonymous and pseudonymous writers in periodicals and other genres with us is to risk losing the insights attendant upon what Woolf termed the 'privilege' of 'outsiders' to 'mock the solemn, to comment upon the established'.[56] As the example of the *Lady's Magazine* demonstrates, the 'established' includes not only norms about gender and authorship, embodied in *A Room of One's Own* in the impossible figure of Judith Shakespeare, but the established literary historical narratives that we have constructed around the practices and aspirations of women writers and the nature of women's writing in the later eighteenth century.

Notes

1. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), reprinted in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Anna Snaith (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2015), p. 38.
2. Woolf, *Room of One's Own*, p. 38.
3. Jane Goldman, 'Virginia Woolf and the aesthetics of modernism', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1920–1945*, Vol. 8 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 60.
4. Goldman, 'Virginia Woolf', p. 60.
5. Some of the key works on what may lie (for better or worse) beyond recovery include: Jean I. Marsden, 'Beyond recovery: feminism and the future of eighteenth-century studies', *Feminist Studies*, 28(3) (2002), pp. 657–62; Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Beyond feminist literary history? Re-historicizing the mid-eighteenth-century woman writer', in *Women and Literary History: 'For There She Was'*, ed. Katherine Binhammer and Jeanne Wood (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), pp. 74–91; and Devoney Looser, 'Why I'm still writing women's literary history', *Minnesota Review*, 71–2 (2009), pp. 220–7.
6. Susan S. Lanser, 'The author's queer clothes: anonymity, sex(uality), and *The Travels and Adventures of Mademoiselle de Richlieu*', in *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Robert J. Griffin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 82.
7. Michel Foucault, 'What is an author', reprinted in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood (London: Longman, 2008), p. 286.
8. Robert J. Griffin, 'Introduction', in *The Faces of Anonymity*, p. 15.
9. James Raven, 'The anonymous novel in Britain and Ireland, 1750–1830', in *The Faces of Anonymity*, p. 143. Presenting these statistics over a slightly different chronology, Peter Garside has noted that '[o]ut of 3374 novels first published from 1770–1819, some 2045 (representing just over 60 per cent) were published without the name of an author on the title page'. Peter Garside, 'Authorship' in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English. Volume Two: English and British Fiction, 1750–1820*, ed. Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 29.
10. As well as Griffin's *Faces of Anonymity*, see also 'Anonymity and authorship', *New Literary History*, 30(4) (1999), pp. 877–95. Margaret J. M. Ezell's work on anonymity and pseudonymity includes: 'Reading pseudonyms in seventeenth-century coterie literature', *Essays in Literature*, 21 (1994), pp. 14–25 and '"By a lady": the mask of the feminine in Restoration, early eighteenth-century print culture', in *The Faces of*

Anonymity, pp. 63–79. John Mullan's *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007) takes a long view of five centuries of the practice.

11. Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 25. Garside has shown that 'By a Lady' and 'close variant forms' is the 'most common' of the 'gender/social descriptors' used by authors who do not sign their names to their works, with an explosion in the use of such descriptors occurring in the 1780s. In 1785 over 25 per cent of novels follow this form. Garside, 'Authorship', p. 37.
12. Jacqueline M. Labbe, ed., *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830*, Vol. 5 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1.
13. On Burney, see, for instance, Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 141–61; on Austen see, for example, Jan Fergus, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991) and Claire Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World* (London: Canongate, 2010).
14. Jennie Batchelor and Megan Hiatt, 'Introduction', in *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen-House*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Megan Hiatt (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), pp. xx–xxiii.
15. Orr's article casts doubt on the attribution of a number of works attributed to Haywood. Several 1750s 'Haywood' texts that have spurious or unequivocal provenance have puzzled scholars who register a shift in tone from Haywood's early to later work that requires explanation. The explanation, Orr contends, might simply be that Haywood did not write all of these works. Leah Orr, 'The basis for attribution in the canon of Eliza Haywood', *The Library*, 12(4) (2011), pp. 335–75.
16. The speakers were Susan Carlile, Gillian Dow, Laura Engel, Julie Candler Hayes and Devoney Looser.
17. Garside asserts that while anonymous publication was dominant in fiction for much of the second half of the long eighteenth century, '[p]seudonymous authorship is virtually unheard of up to 1800, through a shift in this direction is evident in the new century'. What is true of the novel is emphatically not true of periodicals, however, where pseudonymity was rife. Garside, 'Authorship', p. 29.
18. Anon., 'Address to the public', *Lady's Magazine*, 13 (January 1782), p. iv, emphasis in original.
19. These include: the weekly *Lady's Magazine, or Compleat Library* (1738–1739); Jasper Goodwill's *The Ladies Magazine, or the Universal Entertainer* (1749–1753); and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Lady's Magazine, or Polite Companion for the Fair Sex* (1759–1763).

20. Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 119.
21. *Lady's Magazine*, 11 (March 1780), p. 125. For a fuller account of the textual exchange in which this letter appears, see my '"Connections which are of service … in a more advanced age": *The Lady's Magazine*, community, and women's literary histories', 30(2) (2011), pp. 256–9. For this contributor, pseudonymity seems to function as Margaret Ezell describes it: 'as costume rather than as a disguise'. Ezell, '"By a lady"', p. 64.
22. Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 200–9.
23. Charlotte Brontë to Hartley Coleridge, Haworth, 10 December 1840, in *The Selected Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 26.
24. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 39–40. In Genette's words: 'Onymity is sometimes motivated by something stronger or less neutral than, say, the absence of a desire to give oneself a pseudonym [… .I]t is … the way to put an identity, or rather a "personality", as the media call it, at the service of the book' (p. 40).
25. Legg's sister Elizabeth also published as E. L-g in the magazine. On the Leggs, see Jenny DiPlacidi, 'The mysterious J. L-g from Market Lavington', in *The Lady's Magazine (1770–1818): Understanding the Emergence of a Genre*, http://blogs.kent.ac.uk/ladys-magazine/2015/04/14/the-mysterious-j-l-g-from-market-lavington, accessed 30 July 2015.
26. Anon., *Lady's Magazine*, 2 (November 1771), p. 233.
27. A death notice in the July 1812 issue reveals that Anonymous was John Ayers, who died 'in his 23d year'. *Lady's Magazine*, 33 (July 1812), p. 340.
28. 'Address to the fair sex', *Lady's Magazine*, 1 (August 1770), p. 2.
29. W.M., 'Henry to Maria', *Lady's Magazine*, 30 (May 1799), p. 230.
30. Constantia Maria is unidentified. Assuming that all of the contributions bearing her signature are by her, and they certainly coalesce around common themes and subjects and exhibit stylistic similarities, she wrote for the magazine from September 1774 to June 1778. In her four-part 'Life of Edgar, king of the West Saxons' (July–December 1775), the signature Constantia Maria appears under the first three instalments and Historicus under the last. Contributions by Historicus appear until 1781.
31. Anon., 'To our correspondents', *Lady's Magazine*, 6 (January 1775), p. 2, emphasis in original.
32. C.D.H., 'Rebus', *Lady's Magazine*, 38 (February 1817), p. 88; Henry, 'Answer to the Rebus by C.D.H. in the magazine for February', *Lady's Magazine* (May 1817), p. 233, emphasis in original. On Haynes/Golland

see DiPlacidi, The Lady's Magazine, http://blogs.kent.ac.uk/ladys-magazine/2015/08/19/c-d-h-or-catharine-day-haynes-a-gothic-author-for-the-ladys-magazine-and-the-minerva-press, accessed 30 August 2015.

33. Jean E. Hunter, '*The Lady's Magazine* and the Study of Englishwomen in the Eighteenth Century', in *Newsletters to Newspapers: Eighteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. Donovan H. Bond and W. Reynolds McLeod (Morgantown: School of Journalism, West Virginia University, 1977), p. 105.
34. Litchfield's name might appear to be a citational pseudonym, after Isabelle Montolieu's *Caroline de Lichtfield* (1786), translated into English in the same year by Thomas Holcroft for the magazine's publisher, George Robinson. However, her involvement in an enigma solution about a particular London school suggests that she may have been the Elizabeth Caroline Litchfield baptized in St-Mary-Le-Strand in 1776.
35. Charlotte Brontë to Hartley Coleridge, *The Selected Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, p. 26. C.B. Yeames, 'Answer to a Former Query', *Lady's Magazine*, 34 (May 1803), p. 252.
36. Bertram Holland Flanders, *Early Georgia Magazines: Literary Periodicals to 1865* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1944; reprinted 2010), p. 18.
37. G. R-ff-y, 'Lines inscribed to the editor of the *Lady's Magazine*, on completing the ninth and beginning the tenth volume', *Lady's Magazine*, 10 (January 1779), p. 4.
38. Batchelor, '"Connections which are of service"', pp. 260–3.
39. Particularly influential is Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 186–90.
40. This phrase is used by a correspondent who goes by 'Eliza' in a letter soliciting advice from the magazine's agony aunt, the Matron. Eliza, 'Letter to the Matron', *Lady's Magazine*, 19 (July 1788), p. 365.
41. R-, 'The friend to the fair sex', *Lady's Magazine*, 4 (June 1773), p. 313, emphasis in original.
42. Of course, Leonora's signature could simply mask that of a staff writer.
43. Just to complicate the gendered (and national) lines still further, Monvel's *Matilda* (c. 1803), the subject of Eleanor H-'s serial 1803 translation, was itself a French dramatic adaptation of Elizabeth Inchbald's novel *A Simple Story* (1791).
44. Modesta, ' Essay on female unchastity', *Lady's Magazine*, 3 (November 1772), p. 517. As Lanser argues, although we might associate 'particular ideological configurations of texts with a particular sex of authorship … anonymous authorship reminds us that there is finally no way to guarantee the sex of a real author on the basis of the text alone'. Lanser, 'The author's queer clothes', p. 96.

45. See, for instance, the letter signed by an apparent shoemaker, J.B., who writes that his fun-loving and dipsomaniac wife and mother of their four children is an avid reader of the magazine who is often 'heard to ask her acquaintance if the[y] really thought Mrs. Grey was a woman'. *Lady's Magazine*, 18 (September 1787), p. 479.
46. Editorial note, *Lady's Magazine*, 7 (January 1776), p. 29, emphasis in original.
47. Anon., 'The Reasoner. Number V', *Lady's Magazine*, 4 (August 1773), p. 388.
48. I--, 'Character of the late Princess of Orange', *Lady's Magazine*, 5 (December 1774), p. 626, emphasis in original.
49. Kitty Touchwood, 'Letter to the Matron', *Lady's Magazine*, 10 (July 1779), p. 363, emphasis in original.
50. A Friend to Merit, 'A comparative view of the virtues and abilities of men and women. Or a modest defence of the female sex', *Lady's Magazine*, 12 (May 1781), p. 254–6.
51. A Friend to Merit, 'A comparative view', pp. 255, 256.
52. E.W. Pitcher, 'William Mugleston and "The Matron": authorship of a *Lady's Magazine* essay serial, 1774–91', *ANQ*, 12(1) (1999), pp. 28–9. Mugleston (actually named Mugliston, a dyer who passed away years before the column abruptly ceased) is an unlikely candidate for the Matron and has been elsewhere identified as another, serial contributor to the magazine, Castalio of Alfreton. Bateman, *Descriptive and Historical Account of Alfreton (1812)*, Derbyshire Record Office, D654/A/PZ/10, p. 29.
53. See Jacqueline M. Pearson, '"Books, my greatest joy": constructing the female reader in *The Lady's Magazine*', *Women's Writing*, 3 (1996), pp. 3–15 and *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750–1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Richard de Ritter, *Imagining Women Readers, 1789–1820: Well Regulated Minds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 21–9.
54. Joan DeJean labels this latter form of anonymity 'strong anonymity': that is, it is 'authorship without person' but not 'beyond gender'. 'Lafayette's ellipses: the privileges of anonymity', *PMLA*, 99(5) (1984), pp. 884, 887.
55. Brenda R. Silver, '"Anon" and "The Reader": Virginia Woolf's last essays: edited with an introduction and commentary', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25(3–4) (1979), p. 382.
56. Silver, '"Anon", p. 383.

Authorial Performances: Actress, Author, Critic

Elaine McGirr

Women's literary history has long celebrated the female playwright—it has followed Virginia Woolf's famous dictum that 'All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds'. However, this essay will contend that we should reserve our plaudits for the actresses who gave voice, body and meaning to lines written by Behn and a host of others. Actresses were empowered not only to speak their own minds, but to give public voice to the thoughts of women everywhere. The actress, not the playwright, demanded that women's voices be heard and valued; indeed, the actress's was one of the most prominent voices in the eighteenth-century cultural marketplace. However, despite her cultural authority, the significance of the early actress has been downplayed in the centuries since her debut, and she has been largely neglected by women's literary history. The very category of 'women's writing' seems to exclude the actress who authors her texts through performance, rather than publication. Penny Gay argues for the significance of 'female eloquence' in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama, but keeps her attention firmly on playwrights, crediting those who published and neglecting those who performed. She lauds playwrights for 'writing roles that allowed adult

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women to represent characters who debate … rather than (or perhaps as well as) presenting primarily an erotic spectacle for the enjoyment of a male dominated audience'.[1] I contend that playwrights are not puppet-masters, and actresses do not passively mouth the lines given them. The roles for 'adult women' lauded by Gay developed in tandem with the rise of the professional actress: these new roles for adult women were made possible by the adult women who performed them. The corporality of performance, and the dearth of performance records in the period means that when the early actress is considered by modern scholars, her body, her celebrity and/or her sexuality are the primary objects of interest; her art is rarely considered. Feminist theatre history from Elizabeth Howe's *The First English Actresses* (1992) through Gilli Bush-Bailey's *Treading the Bawds* (2006) and Felicity Nussbaum's *Rival Queens* (2012) replicate, even as they complicate and challenge, the actress–whore binary popular since the Restoration. This unrelenting focus on the actress's body and its offstage behaviour silences a body of women who spoke as and to women of reputation, women of wit and women of importance. Actresses were eloquent women.

This essay will challenge notions of authorship and of women's writing through analysis of performance history, focusing on two celebrity actresses better known for their personal lives than their performative utterances: Nell Gwyn and Susannah Arne Cibber. I want to reclaim these actresses as artists, as authors. Both of these actresses made significant—and often overlooked—contributions to literary history. Not only did they author roles through their uniquely successful performances, but they also created new heroic identities for women. Both Gwyn and Cibber established performance traditions. They inspired imitations and rivalries and their performances of new characters encouraged audiences to reread and/or recontextualize traditional performance lines. Both actresses created stock characters, fictional yet embodied identities that lived in the cultural imagination and populated plays, novels, poems and periodicals. These actresses created—authored—roles that lived beyond the original plays in which they appeared. Finally, both actresses influenced writing for the stage, as well as our readings of the roles they authored. This act of performative authorship was also a powerful act of literary criticism. The actress's creation of a role provided a reading of the play, an interpretation of character and significance. These iconic performances often went unchallenged for centuries. Their power was such that they could even rewrite rival texts and characters. Nell Gwyn's witty lovers and Susannah

Cibber's injured wives were more than their lines. These professionals created touchstone performances that taught audiences how to read, how to interpret, and how to feel about women. They gave voice to women's plots and made women's lives, loves, and suffering more visible and more sympathetic.

Nell Gwyn: 'Infinitely Fair, Witty and Deserving'[2]

Nell Gwyn's most famous performances may have taken place offstage, but her after-career as the nation's (if not always the king's) favourite mistress and folk hero was made possible by her stage business. Furthermore, while the specifics of her early stage performances have been largely forgotten, their significance still resonates. For not only did Gwyn embody and make possible a new female identity, but the characters Gwyn created on stage also served as models for later, more canonical, female roles. We see this most clearly in the development of Hellena, the heroine of Behn's *Rover* (1677), which is indebted to two early Gwyn roles: Flora in Richard Rhodes' *Flora's Vagaries* (1664/70) and Paulina in Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso* (1653/63), Behn's source text for *The Rover*. By examining these early roles, we can begin to understand the debt owed to the actress who first embodied Woolf's ideal heroine, a debt owed not just by Behn but by 'all women together'.

Although many actresses had longer and more prolific careers, few were as influential or popular as Nell Gwyn. Performance records for the first decade of the Restoration are notoriously incomplete, but it is clear that Gwyn was an early favourite with audiences and was quickly typecast as a 'mad girlie' and 'merry slut' in the bawdy comedies that define the period.[3] John Downes includes 'Mrs Ellin Gwin' in his list of the actresses to begin at the Bridges Street theatre, which opened 7 March 1663.[4] She was already 'witty, pretty Nell at the Kings house' when Pepys caught her checking out her competition at the premiere of Orrery's *Mustapha* on 2 April 1665,[5] although he does not comment on her acting by name until 1666, when he sees her act Lady Wealthy in *The English Monsieur*, 'which is a mighty pretty play, very witty and very pleasant—and the women do very well; but above all, little Nelly'.[6] Gwyn's reputation was clearly well established by 1666: when Pepys recorded his impressions of James Howard's play, it was Gwyn's performance that dominated his memory. Hers is the only name to be recorded, the only cast information to be retained at all,[7] and the language he uses to describe Howard's comedy—'pretty', 'witty'

and 'pleasant'—is the same language he uses to describe Gwyn herself. As far as Pepys was concerned, *The English Monsieur* was 'little Nelly', the affectionate diminutive itself a clear sign of her established celebrity.

A more significant early role was the title character in Richard Rhodes' comedy *Flora's Vagaries*, which premiered on 3 November 1663 and was frequently revived. The play was not published until 1670, shortly after Rhodes' death. The 1670 edition offers the first complete *dramatis personae*, identifying Flora as Nell Gwyn and giving the other female role, Otrante, to the actress, singer and Pepys's occasional mistress Elizabeth Knepp. It has been widely assumed that 'Nell Gwyn and Mrs Knepp … could hardly have played in it in 1663'[8] but, as Downes confidently identifies both actresses as among the first women to join the King's Company, it is certainly possible that Gwyn *was* the original Flora, but no one knew her name enough (yet) to record it for posterity. Because no other performer has ever been associated with the role, I suspect that she was in the cast as early as 8 August 1664, when Pepys sees the play for the first time and is struck 'by the most ingenious performance of the young jade Flora', concluding: '[I]t seemed as pretty a pleasant play as ever I saw in my life.'[9] We have no cast information at all until 5 October 1667, when Pepys saw Gwyn in the flesh and then watched her perform the title role:

> and to the Duke of York's playhouse; but the House so full, it being a new play *The Coffee-House*, that we could not get in, and so to the King's House; and there going in, we met with Knipp [sic] and she took us into the Tireing-rooms and to the women's Shift, where Nell was dressing herself and was all unready; and is very pretty, prettier than I thought; and … here I read the Qu's [cues] to Knepp while she answered me, through all her part of *Flora's Figarys*, which was acted today … But to see how Nell cursed for having so few people in the pit was pretty, the other House carrying away all the people at the new play, and is said nowadays to have generally most company, as being better players. By and by into the pit and there saw the play; which is pretty good.[10]

It is clear from Pepys' inability to get in at the Duke of York's and Gwyn's cursing the scarce audience that *Flora's Vagaries* and its cast were no longer novelties by October 1667. Earlier in the year, the scene may have been quite different: *Flora's Vagaries* was the play chosen for a special Court performance on 14 February—Valentine's Day.[11] The tantalizing possibility exists that this—and not the premiere of *Secret Love*

sometime later that month—was when Charles II first saw and admired Nell Gwyn.

It was, however, as Florimell, a character introduced to the audience as 'a new Beauty, as wilde as you [Celadon, the rake-hero], and a vast Fortune',[12] that Gwyn cemented her reputation as a leading actress and as 'a bold, merry slut'.[13] Flora may have given Gwyn her first title role, but Florimell made her a star. Pepys voices the general approbation when he gushes:

> After dinner with my wife to the King's house, to see *The Mayden Queene*, a new play of Dryden's mightily commended for the regularity of it and the strain and wit; and the truth is, there is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimell, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again by man or woman. The King and Duke of York was at the play; but so great performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell doth this, both as a mad girlie and then, most and best of all, when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the motions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her.[14]

The king and duke of York are nothing compared to Gwyn's 'mad girlie'. But perhaps more significant than Pepys' eroticized memory of the play is his unconscious act of literary criticism. John Dryden's comedy comes 'mightily commended for the regularity of it and the strain and wit' but for Pepys at least, 'the truth is' that it is Gwyn's performance, not Dryden's poetry, which makes the play work. Her comical part—her stage presence and physicality—trumps the 'regularity' and 'wit' of Dryden's writing. What Pepys admired about *Secret Love* was not anything in the published text, but the inimitable style of the play's female lead. By invoking the play's reputation for good writing and rejecting it in favour of Gwyn's excellent acting, Pepys credits Gwyn as the author of the play's success. Significantly, Gwyn's ability to perfectly capture the physicality of both the girl and the gallant does not just titillate, but also commands respect for it as art, as craft. Pepys' admiration is not just sexual: he cannot imagine a better comic performance by man or woman. He would rather watch Gwyn's performance than admire the king and his company. And Pepys was not alone in thinking Gwyn the best thing about the play: the duke of Buckingham identifies her dancing—not Dryden's writing—as the play's real author. Buckingham uses the epilogue to *The Chances*, which was also performed in early 1667, to tease Dryden for his vanity in assuming theatrical applause was meant for the playwright. Buckingham knows better:

having often seen
Some of his fellows, who have writ before,
When Nell has danc'd her jig, steal to the door,
Hear the Pit clap, and with conceit of that
Swell, and believe themselves the lord knows what.
(ll. 18–22)

Buckingham warns Dryden against assuming the applause at the play's end was meant for the playwright. Audiences, Buckingham reminds us, have come to see acting, not poetry. And Gwyn, not Dryden, has earned the applause. By 1667, Gwyn was already a celebrity, an established draw and a talented comic actress. The careers of playwrights like Dryden were made possible by the comic turns and tragic deaths of the early actresses who gave flesh and voice to their characters.

The significance of both female roles and the actresses who created them is seen in the care taken to prepare plays for production. Very little of *Thomaso*'s stage life is known (indeed, it is not certain that *Thomaso* ever made it onto the Bridges Street stage); however, an edition was printed in 1663, suggesting a performance,[15] and Killigrew also created a cast list for the play in or around 1664, which rather tantalizingly only identifies the main female roles. Killigrew planned: 'Serulina—Wevar [Elizabeth Weaver]; … Angelica Bianca—M. Marsh [Ann Marshall, who, performing under her married name of Quin/Gwin reprised the role for Behn]; … Paulina—Nell [Gwyn]'.[16] William van Lennep argues convincingly that the cast list indicates a 1664 performance of *Thomaso* with Gwyn taking on Paulina as one of her first roles, and even if the production did not come to fruition, it indicates her availability to perform. However, given Killigrew's management of the theatre, and the need for new plays to attract audiences, the ten-act, two-day *Thomaso* seems too attractive and profitable to have been abandoned. I think it likely that a 1663/4 production did occur, with a relatively unknown Nell Gwyn as Paulina, the good-hearted whore.

The likely 1664 productions of *Flora's Vagaries* and *Thomaso* do more than pad out Gwyn's performance history, important through that is. Gwyn's performances as and identification with Flora and Paulina allow later playwrights such as Dryden and Behn to imagine the better-known Florimell and Hellena. Tanya Caldwell emphasizes the importance of casting in establishing audience expectations and interpretation. In her analysis of the shifting significance of repertory staples, she proves that 'actors

contribute as much, if not more, to the meaning of any performance as the playwright does'.[17] Marvin Carlson, in his *Haunted Stage*, argues that audiences find pleasure in recognizing theatrical elements they have seen before. In the case of performers, 'audiences could use their memories of past performances of actors to orient themselves to the interplay of characters in each new production'.[18] Gwyn's celebrity ensured that audiences oriented themselves to her new characters through reference to her known character—thus Florimell was not a new creation but a pastiche of the earlier roles of Flora and Paulina, with a dash of 'witty, pretty' Nell's celebrity persona thrown in for good measure. Gwyn was such the perfect comic heroine, such the ideal romp, that she seared herself into the collective imagination. Later versions of Gwyn's stock character, the 'merry slut' or feigned courtesan, were drawn from Gwyn's performance history and modelled after her comic turn.

Nell Gwyn retired from the stage in 1671 and did not act in any of Behn's plays.[19] But Behn had a long association with Thomas Killigrew and his company, from the Surinamese feathered headdress she presented to the King's Company in 1664, about the time of *Flora's Vagaries* and *Thomaso*, to her services to the Crown during the Dutch Wars—services managed by Killigrew. During the first decade of the Restoration, Gwyn embodied the kind of public celebrity and agency that Behn herself never achieved, although many of her female characters did. When Behn created her heroines, women who laugh, rather than cry, for love, she drew them after Gwyn's example and based them on Gwyn's own fictional and celebrity characters.

This, I argue, is why Behn dedicated *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679) to Nell Gwyn. This was Behn's first dedication, and her choice of patron is significant. Rather than appealing to an influential public figure whose future patronage could support or advance the playwright, this dedication, from one established figure to another, speaks of past debts and deep gratitude. While written in the florid and obsequious dedicatory style, the specific points of praise still resonate as sincere. Throughout the dedication, Behn praises Gwyn's performances, both bodily and spoken. She avers that: 'you never appear but you glad the hearts of all that have the happy fortune to see you, as if you were made on purpose to put the whole world into good Humour'.[20] For Behn, as for Pepys a decade earlier, Gwyn's physicality is always a command performance: her comic turns eclipse even majesty. Behn goes on to praise Gwyn's public acting:

> whenever you look abroad, and when you speak, men crowd to listen with that awfull reverence as to Holy Oracles or Divine Prophesies, and bear away the precious words to tell at home to all the attentive family, the Gracefull things you utterd and cry, *but oh she spoke with such an Ayr, so gay, that half the beauty's lost in the repetition*. 'Tis this that ought to make your Sex vain enough to despise the malicious world that will allow a woman no wit, and bless our selves for living in an Age that can produce so wondrous an argument as your undeniable self, to shame those boasting talkers who are Judges of nothing but faults.[21]

As with Pepys, who despaired 'seeing the like done again by man or woman', it is the inimitable quality of Gwyn's performance that Behn notes and praises. It is not Gwyn's physical beauty but rather the artfulness of her speech that moves crowds and inspires both good humour and reverence. Where Alison Conway reads this dedication as a paean to Gwyn the courtesan instead of Gwyn the actress, I would argue that Behn links Gwyn's public performance as the king's mistress to the celebrity roles she played in the theatre and to *The Feign'd Curtizan*'s Marcella and Cornelia, women who adopt the role of the courtesan in order to speak freely, in order to be heard and admired.[22] Behn's 'long overdue' dedication does not dwell on Gwyn's status as a courtesan: she focuses on Gwyn's agency and authority, not her sexual allure. Behn argues that crowds—audiences—flock to see and hear Gwyn in her new role, just as they did when she was on stage; 'when you speak, men crowd to listen'. It is Gwyn's ability to speak and be heard that moves Behn to admiration, and that her own characters strive to achieve. All of the 'feigned courtesans' in Behn's work follow in Gwyn's footsteps and mirror Gwyn's characters.

Nell Gwyn authored the roles that Aphra Behn went on to write. Behn may have been thinking about Gwyn as a role model for Marcella and Cornelia when writing *The Feign'd Curtizans*, but she was certainly channelling Gwyn when she adapted *Thomaso* into *The Rover*. When Behn adapts Killigrew's sprawling play into a more stageable five-act drama, she creates composite characters while also separating out different plot lines. Killigrew's 'good whore' Paulina and good woman Serulina are made more equal in the sisters Hellena and Florinda, a coupling that also echoes *Flora's Vagaries*' whimsical Flora and constant Otrante. Florinda is given Serulina's constant heart, and is rewarded with a constant lover in the new character Belvile. Hellena's 'vagaries' win her the love of Willmore, Behn's

version of Killigrew's eponymous wanderer. But Hellena's marriage plot alerts us to the fact that Behn has not simply separated the whimsical from the constant in order to preserve the 'fourth unity' of character, but rather attests to the fact that Hellena is more complex, more 'real', than any of the women in Behn's source text. Hellena combines 'the virgin Serulina and the prostitute Paulina', 'characters who, like young Hellena, are to be sent to a nunnery but refuse the calling'.[23] As Heidi Hutner has argued: 'Behn's revision of Hellena ironically collapses the distinction—in terms of virtue and therefore moral power—between virgin and whore.'[24] Behn's Hellena is another feigned courtesan, a woman who has both virtue and sexual agency, a woman who is able to speak and be heard, and therefore to stage-manage her own plot. Hellena is not only indebted to Killigrew's Paulina, but also to the actress who created her. The descriptions of Paulina are equally applicable to Hellena and to Gwyn herself. Angelica Bianca's description of Paulina reads like an entry in Pepys's diary:

> I like *Paulina*'s humour, 'tis gay and ingenuous, you may read a real heart in her eyes; there is woman in her aspect, her very looks are soft and kind, yet a Girle of a sprightly Meen, and graceful in every motion; 'tis pleasure to converse with such a humour; I could love her before a hundred of her Sister.[25]

Likewise, Killigrew's rover sounds like Behn's when he avers that 'I swear there are charms in her tongue' and marvels that Paulina's spirit is so 'catching, infectious' that it forces him to match her mood despite himself.[26] Thus, even though Gwyn herself was no longer available to give flesh to Behn's creations, it is right to say that Gwyn gave them her voice, body and 'inimitable grace'. Gwyn's roles—onstage and off—ghost Behn's characters. Just as Gwyn was the 'real' author of *Secret Love*, *The Feign'd Curtizans*' dedication, with its belated thanks for Gwyn's unspecified support, invites us to read all of Behn's witty, pretty heroines as models of her patron.

Star Performances, Repertory Rivalry and Reinterpretation

On 14 October 1765, the actress Kitty Clive wrote to David Garrick to protest her salary being stopped for a failure to attend rehearsals: 'I hope this stopping of money is not a French fashion; I believe you will not find

any part of the English laws that will support this sort of treatment of an actress, who has a right, from her character and service on the stage, to expect some kind of respect.'[27] She goes on to quantify the lack of respect she thinks Garrick guilty of: 'I have had but a very small share of the public money: you gave Mrs Cibber 600*l.* for playing sixty nights, and 300*l.* to me for playing a hundred and eighty.'[28] Garrick's response was to concur with Clive's calculations and continue to pay Susannah Cibber double the salary of any other actress in his company, despite the fact that, as Kitty Clive complained, Cibber's appearances were relatively few. Susannah's contract (negotiated in 1745–1746) also gave her the right of first refusal over all new plays, complete control over her repertoire, a costume allowance and separate salary for her dresser; unheard of perks not extended to another actress until the end of the century. But Garrick did not believe that he was paying over the odds for Susannah Cibber's services: her appearances, however infrequent, were worth it to him. Garrick knew that nothing guaranteed a full house like her name in the bills, and he risked a riot every time she cancelled a performance. At the end of her celebrated career, Susannah Cibber was buried in Westminster Abbey, only the second actress to receive that honour, and the first proven adulteress. Susannah Cibber earned her salary and the adoration of the nation because she could do something the comedic Kitty Clive could not: she could move audiences to tears.[29] Nell Gwyn's performance of the good whore defined one ideal, one fantasy of womanhood: Susannah Cibber's line in tragic wives, from Desdemona to Lady Brute, created another. But while Gwyn played off her male co-stars, Cibber's wives were at their most eloquent, most powerful, in dialogue with other female roles onstage and in repertory rivalries. Cibber's performance of the wronged woman offered heroic resistance and stoical suffering as an alternative to the sexual agency of Gwyn's romps. But it also drew out its opposite: the *femme fort* who would never die with honours but would attract generations of audiences and actresses to her noble fury. Cibber's performances gave voice not just to her own roles, but to a range of female performances, female identities.

Susannah Cibber embodied the mid-century cult of sensibility and pathos; she was she-tragedy made flesh. Part of her success lay in her ability to articulate the plight of many wives who, like *The Careless Husband*'s Lady Easy, wonder 'Was ever Woman's Spirit, by an injurious Husband, broke like mine? A vile, licentious Man!'[30] Cibber's career coincided with the 'emphatic persistence of successful comedies that enable women to speak out about the trials of unhappy marriage'.[31] Gay argues that these

plays give 'adult women within an unhappy marital relationship'—both the characters personated on stage and the women in the audience who identified with them—a fictive yet physical space in which to 'eloquently express their distress'.[32] The skill, the artistry with which Cibber did this not only separated her from rivals such as the comic Clive, but also gave voice and sympathetic body to a role as pervasive as it was previously unspoken. Significantly, the eloquently unhappy wife was Susannah Cibber's key role even before her off-stage life caught up with her performances of distress. Most analysis of her career focuses on her fame from the 1750s onward, and cannot separate her 'unhappy marital relationship' from her performances. But this is to ignore her earliest successes, the roles that defined her as a performer and that preceded the spectacular breakdown of her marriage. Her first role, in 1732, was Amelia, the eponymous heroine of a formulaic seraglio opera, whose only attraction was the sight and sound of Miss Arne's eloquent expression. Four years after her debut as a singer, Susannah, by then Mrs Cibber, made her debut as an actress, performing the lead role in Aaron Hill's *Zara*, a translation of Voltaire's *Zaire*. These productions, of little literary interest, nevertheless revolutionized the performance of female identities on stage and in the public imagination.

Amelia, a sentimental opera set in a Turkish harem, dramatizes the fate of a faithful, chaste Christian wife who pretends to sacrifice her virtue to the besotted Muslim sultan in order to save her husband, who has been captured in war and enslaved, but then scorns to clear her reputation when her rescued lord doubts her sexual fidelity. *Zara* tells a similar story: Zara is a European princess enslaved in a seraglio, faithful and chaste in her love, but whose virtue is misunderstood. Unlike Amelia, whose virtue is discovered just in time, Zara falls a sacrifice to the jealousy of her beloved. While *Amelia* is sentimental and *Zara* tragic, the main difference is that in *Zara* the Christian princess sincerely loves the sultan she agrees to marry: her newly discovered family and her newly pronounced Christian faith get in the way of romantic resolution.

Like *Amelia* before it, and the hundreds of other harem/abduction plots to follow, *Zara* had all the necessary ingredients to be a hit and it did not disappoint. However, the play's spectacular initial run should never have happened. Hill's insistence on casting his nephew, an amateur ominously described as being 'too fond' of the theatre, was predictably disastrous. The young man was so awkward and unprepossessing that he was booed off stage in the first act and never heard from (theatrically) again. However, 'the audience … unanimously declar'd for the continuation of

the play, and 'twas desired the Part might be read till one of the Players could be studied in it'.[33] The part was read through, script-in-hand, for six more performances until William Mills was prepared to perform the role. *Zara* seemed to be an unstoppable juggernaut, and Susannah Cibber's performance was the driving force.

Zara's success is entirely down to Susannah's appeal and craft as an actress. Hill effusively describes her as a natural actress, claiming that: 'Her Person, Her Voice, the unaffected Sensibility of her Heart, (and, her Face, so finely dispos'd, for assuming, and expressing, the *Passions*) have, so naturally, qualify'd her' to move audiences to pity and love.[34] An anonymous reviewer, writing of her Juliet in 1750, describes her thus:

> Nature had bestowed on her an agreeable figure, a bewitching voice, and above all, an exquisite feeling, all which she has improved to a prodigious degree, by her application and good-sense … her feeling of the import of the speeches and situations, upon the whole is such, as throws a general justness on her delivery, and more than balances every trifling defect.[35]

Mrs Cibber's craft, her application to her work and her good sense in interpreting the plays and parts she took on trump her 'agreeable figure' and other sensual attractions. The pairing of 'application and good-sense' emphasize the importance of hard work: it is not enough that Mrs Cibber is gifted by Nature with beauty and sensibility: she must improve these qualities through committed application to her profession.

Susannah's performance as Zara, even more than her operatic debut as Amelia, who lives to sing another day, defined her line in tragic wives, and would colour interpretations of Cibber's characters from Shakespeare's Lady Constance to Vanbrugh's Lady Brute. Thomas Davies's Shakespeare criticism, written a generation after Cibber had died, used her performances as his touchstones, as his ideal interpretations of Shakespeare's female characters.[36] Cibber is repeatedly praised for the perfection, the propriety, of her performances. But Susannah's success as a pathetic heroine also sparked another performance, and encouraged another form of literary criticism. Covent Garden mounted a rival *Zara* to challenge the character so expertly, so inimitably performed by Mrs Cibber.

Covent Garden could not afford to sit back while Drury Lane profited from *Zara*'s, and Mrs Cibber's, success: at what would prove the end of *Zara*'s initial 14-day run, new playbills went up for Covent Garden, announcing Mrs Porter as their *Zara*. Rival productions were a staple of

the Georgian theatre. For most of the century, rival companies faced off and competed for the same audience. For this reason, Fred Bergmann, one of the few theatre historians to treat *Zara* in any depth, rather ungallantly assumes that 'such was [Mrs Cibber's] success that Rich at Covent Garden was forced to run *Zara* concurrently at his house, with old Mrs Porter in the title role'.[37] But despite the look of the playbill, Covent Garden was not mounting a rival production of *Zara*; rather, they were reviving Congreve's 1697 tragedy *The Mourning Bride*, billed (for the first time) as *Zara*. Instead of trying to get up the same play and facing direct comparison, they simply rebranded a popular old play. *The Mourning Bride*'s initial run had been a brilliant 13 nights, and the play, as *The Mourning Bride*, had been revived frequently since its debut in 1697. Mrs Porter first appeared as Congreve's Zara in 1719, and had resumed the role in at least ten revivals before Hill's *Zara* debuted. But the 1736 '*Zara*' staged at Covent Garden was in many important aspects entirely novel. The rebranding of the play and rival performance and performers changed the significance of Congreve's play and altered the theatrical histories of both the old and the new Zaras.

Despite the much-advertised similarity of character names, *The Mourning Bride* is a very different play from *Zara*, and its Zara is as different to Hill's as Mrs Porter was to Mrs Cibber. One passionate, one submissive; one scorned, the other beloved; one established, one inexperienced (in the case of the performers and of their characters); one matronly, the other slight; one a virago, the other a victim. Congreve wrote his play for the talents and characters of the Betterton-Barry-Bracegirdle trio. The plot is absurdly complicated. The play opens with Almeria, the titular mourning bride, explaining the complicated back story. Suffice to say, she has secretly wed—and lost—her father's enemy, Alphonso. Her father's army is returning in triumph with their captives, who include the African Queen Zara and a 'Moorish' prince, Osmyn. The king of Granada falls madly in love with Zara, who is madly in love with Osmyn, who is actually Alphonso in disguise and already married to Almeria. Tragedy ensues. Osmyn was created by (and for) Thomas Betterton, Almeria for Anne Bracegirdle and Elizabeth Barry was the first Zara. This casting played up the Barry-Bracegirdle opposition: sweet, chaste, suffering Almeria/Bracegirdle against violent, sexual, cunning Zara/Barry. Betterton's character shows himself tempted by the one, but ultimately true to the other. Anne Bracegirdle was the great unrequited love of Congreve's life: his career is a series of love letters to the actress. Almeria, not Zara, is

Congreve's title character and the female lead. She and Osmyn/Alphonso survive the play's carnage, and Almeria gets the final word in the saucy epilogue. *The Mourning Bride* outlived its original cast, and Mary Porter stepped into the role vacated by Elizabeth Barry in 1719. Mary Porter was a protégé of Elizabeth Barry's and had been learning her craft since at least 1698, when her name first appears on extant playbills.[38] Her line was in supporting roles, often as a cast mistress like Lady Graveairs, who she created for Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* (1704). While a long-serving actress who moved up the theatrical pecking order, Mary Porter was never a star attraction. Conversely, the actress who inherited Almeria from Anne Bracegirdle was Sarah Thurmond, a leading lady known for roles as diverse as Polly in Gay's *Beggar's Opera* and Calista in Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*.[39] Star power and character lines ensured that from 1697 to 1736, Congreve's play was Almeria, but the coming of Mrs Cibber's Zara would change it forever.

Against all odds, Covent Garden's bold stroke succeeded. While *Zara* established Mrs Cibber as the rising tragic star and highlighted Mrs Porter's waning powers, and *Zara* offered audiences a heady mix of seraglio passions, it was not enough. *The Mourning Bride*'s Zara, old and fat as she was, saw off the newcomer: Hill's *Zara* would not be performed again on the English stage until Susannah Cibber chose to reprise the role for her benefit in 1751, while *The Mourning Bride* remained in heavy rotation, albeit now billed as '*Zara*, by W. Congreve'. Hill's *Zara* did become a repertory staple in the 1750s, due to Mrs Cibber's celebrity power, and would be performed regularly throughout the latter half of the century and well into the nineteenth, but *The Mourning Bride* continued to enjoy its popularity uninterrupted. *Zara*'s success was entirely owing to Susannah Cibber's performance of Zara; however, *The Mourning Bride*'s popularity after 1736 is also attributable to Zara. Cibber's eponymous performance brought Porter's Zara into starker relief: the rival performance made Zara the heroine of Congreve's play. So while Collier could fume about Zara's 'fits of fustian' and her immodest character in 1697, John Genest, writing in 1832, concludes that 'on the whole it cannot be called a good play—the genius of Congreve comes in, and goes out, with Zara'.[40] After 1736, *The Mourning Bride* is Zara.

Given the attractions of Hill's play, the popularity of the harem/abduction genre it contributed to and the undoubted brilliance of its female lead, why did *Zara* get shelved for the next 15 years? Why couldn't it recover from a head-to-head comparison with *The Mourning Bride*? And

what does the clear audience (and performer) preference for Congreve's Zara over Hill's, and for Congreve's Zara over his Almeria, mean for our understanding of gender and genre, and the narrative of increasingly chaste and passive femininity over the course of the century? Susannah Cibber's Zara was unhappily eloquent. Cibber herself built an enormously successful career out of such roles: she excelled in being the passive, but not silent, victim of male passions. Her big eyes and slight frame, which she retained into her sixties, allowed her to convincingly play the virgin sacrifice for more than 30 years. Her line in pathetic victims corroborates the narrative of the eighteenth-century stage so convincingly detailed in works such as Jean Marsden's *Fatal Desire*. But, as the duelling Zaras remind us, hers is not the only story.

By staging *The Mourning Bride* against *Zara*, attention is drawn to the chiasmic plotlines: Osman's love for Zara in Hill versus Zara's love for Osmyn in Congreve. Despite her superior stage time and titular prominence, this juxtaposition ensures that chaste Almeria's plot becomes secondary to the sexually predatory Zara's. (In a similar vein, the relative importance of male roles in *Zara* gets recalibrated in theatre histories of the play: because David Garrick chose to play Lusigan, the old king of Jerusalem, that character is repeatedly described as the male lead, despite appearing in only one scene.) *The Mourning Bride* also offers an inversion of the popular harem/abduction plot: the lost Christian at risk of sexual and religious apostasy is male; the sexually voracious figure of the exotic East is female. *The Mourning Bride*, and its Zara, dramatize the attractions of the East as well as the appeal of the *femme fort*. Bridget Orr persuasively argues that 'Congreve's depiction of Zara is far from monstrous … although a foil for Almeria's passively resistant virtue, she is a figure of heroic and pathetic proportions … her passion … is figured as heroic and womanly rather than simply monstrous'.[41] It is Congreve's Zara who gives us the immortal (and oft-misquoted lines): 'Heav'n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn'd,/Nor Hell a Fury, like a Woman scorn'd.'[42] Like one of Nell Gwyn's heroines, Zara dares do all for love: she is as active in pursuit of her passion as Almeria and Hill's Zara are passive. As Osmyn admits, 'This Woman has a Soul/Of God-like Mould, intrepid and commanding'.[43] She may be punished for her beauty and sexuality, but she is also admired and admirable. This Zara commands the stage while both Almeria and the other Zara pale into insignificance beside her. When presented with these rival characters, audiences admired the tragic wife but enjoyed the exuberant, excessive, active *femme fort*.

The long repertory lives of the rival Zaras, however, add a further twist to the story. Hill's Zara, and Susannah Cibber's line of tragic wives, did more than make audiences cry. They were not *femmes fort* but they demonstrated another kind of strength: heroic endurance. Susannah Cibber's popularity endured. It survived bad plays, a terrible marriage, personal tragedy and a debilitating illness. Audiences came to see the strength, not of her suffering, but of her fortitude. Mrs Cibber's virtuous yet suffering wives embody the heroism celebrated in texts as diverse as Sir Richard Steele's *Christian Hero* and John Milton's *Paradise Regained*, a heroism yoked to virtue and defined as the power to resist temptation and withstand suffering.[44] The tragic wife's heroic resistance against temptation, her heroic endurance of unjust cruelty, raised her from weak victim to Christic hero. Rather than reading her as a 'passive heroine' in 'a posture of humiliation', Cibber's tragic wives displayed fortitude in their martyrdom.[45] The *femme fort* was an attractive figure of both male and female fantasy—but she was also an exotic character completely at odds with contemporary social mores. The heroic suffering of Susannah Cibber's characters, on the other hand, offered women an achievable, if not always pleasurable, model of heroism.

Playwrights write dialogue, create plot lines and may go as far as to make performance suggestions through stage direction. For this, they have received the credit for creating plays. But drama is a collaborative art, and without performers to stage a play it is nothing. Actresses are authors too. They author roles, they give flesh and voice to characters that were unimaginable before being seen and loved on stage. The actress's craft makes the imagined real, makes heroism a viable option for all women. From Nell Gwyn's 'merry sluts' to Susannah Cibber's tragic wives and the *femmes fort* who raged against them, actresses created a range of female identities that audiences and other authors could imagine themselves into. But each performance is also and always an act of literary criticism. The actress is not a mimic, limited to the 'Mimickry of Parrots and Monkies, that can only prate, and play a great many pretty Tricks, without Reflection'.[46] Acting is an intellectual art, not a menial one. Steele's hymn to the actor in the first number of *The Theatre* concludes: '[L]et their severest enemies name the profession which requires qualifications for the practice of it more elegant, more manly, more generous, or ornamental, than that of a just and pleasing Actor.'[47] And throughout the long eighteenth century, the most pleasing, most just, most elegant and eloquent performers were actresses.

Notes

1. Penny Gay, '"So persuasive an Eloquence"? Roles for Women on the Eighteenth-Century Stage', in *The Public's Open to Us All*, ed. Laura Engel (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), pp. 12–13.
2. Aphra Behn, *Feign'd Curtizans*, reprinted in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 6, ed. Janet Todd (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1996), p. 86.
3. So much so that by 1669, Gwyn could (mock) complain to audiences that:
   To tell you true, I walk because I dye/Out of my Calling in a Tragedy./O Poet, damn'd dull Poet, who could prove/So sensless! to make Nelly dye for Love,/Nay, what's yet worse, to kill me in the prime/Of Easter-Term, in Tart and Cheese-cake time!
   (John Dryden, epilogue, *Tyrannick Love*, ll. 15–20).
4. John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), ed. Judith Milhous and Robert Hume (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987), p. 8, fn 6.
5. Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 6, ed. Robert Latham and William G. Matthews (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 73 (2 April 1665).
6. Pepys, *Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 401 (8 December 1666).
7. See William van Lennep, ed., *The London Stage, 1600–1800*, 11 vols. (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1965), Part 1, p. 98.
8. Van Lennep, *London Stage*, Part 1, p. 72.
9. Pepys, *Diary*, Vol. 5, p. 236 (8 August 1664).
10. Pepys, *Diary*, Vol. 8, pp. 464–5 (5 October 1667).
11. Van Lennep, *London Stage*, Part 1, p. 102.
12. John Dryden, *Secret Love*, ll. 47–8.
13. Pepys, *Diary*, Vol. 9, p. 140 (7 January 1669). Charles II's biographer, Ronald Hutton, elaborates on this description, detailing 'a heart-shaped face, a full-lipped mouth, dimples, bright chestnut hair, hazel eyes, and a small, slender, and shapely body. Her personality was that of a perfect gamine, a compound of wit and urchin looks.' Ronald Hutton, *Charles II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 262.
14. Pepys, *Diary*, Vol. 8, p. 912 (March 1667).
15. Van Lennep, *London Stage*, Vol. 1, p. 55.
16. William van Lennep, 'Thomas Killigrew prepares his plays for production', in *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. James G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson and Edwin E. Willoughby (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Institute, 1948), p. 805; van Lennep, *London Stage*, Part 1, p. 84. See also Colin Visser, 'The Killigrew Folio: private playhouses and the Restoration stage', *Theatre Survey*, 19 (1978), pp. 119–38.
17. Tanya Caldwell, 'Meanings of *All for Love*, 1677–1813', *Comparative Drama*, 38(2) (2004), p. 186.

18. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 111.
19. There is a persistent misattribution of Anne Quin (frequently spelled 'Gwin') for Nell Gwyn. Quin, not Gwyn, played Angelica Bianca in *The Rover* (1677) and Lady Knowell in *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678).
20. Behn, *Feign'd Curtizans*, p. 86.
21. Behn, *Feign'd Curtizans*, p. 86, emphasis in original.
22. 'Immediately Behn attaches this adoration to the particular conditions of Gwyn's status as a royal mistress', and later: 'Behn could have drawn on Gwyn's career as an actress and her own work as a playwright to forge a bond with the courtesan, but chose, instead, to create a more abstract social and literary discourse to represent the woman author and courtesan as peers': Alison Conway, *The Protestant Whore: Courtesan Narrative and Religious Controversy in England, 1680–1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 55, 57.
23. Heidi Hutner, *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 105.
24. Hutner, *Rereading Aphra Behn*, p. 106.
25. Thomas Killigrew, *Thomaso; or, The Wanderer*, in *Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Henry Herringman, 1664), p. 396.
26. Killigrew, *Thomaso*, p. 458.
27. Kitty Clive to David Garrick in James Boaden, ed. *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the Most Celebrated Persons of his Time*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Vol. 1, p. 203.
28. Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, p. 204.
29. See Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations of the Plays of Shakespeare*, 3 vols. (London: printed for the author, 1783–1784), Vol. 1, p. 131: 'Of Mrs Clive's Ophelia I shall only say, that I regret that the first comic actress in the world should so far mistake her talents as to attempt it.'
30. Colley Cibber, *The Careless Husband* (1705), Act 1, scene 1, line 1.
31. Gay, p. 13.
32. Gay, p. 14.
33. *The Daily Advertiser*, 14 January, 1736, reprinted in van Lennep, *London Stage*, Part 3, Vol. 1, p. 543.
34. Aaron Hill, preface, *Zara* (London, 1736), n.p.
35. Anon., *The Theatrical Review, for the Year 1757, and Beginning of 1758. Containing Critical Remarks on the Principal Performers of both the Theatres* (London: J. Coote, 1758), p. 15.
36. 'To utter, with the utmost harmony and propriety, all the succeeding changes of grief, anger, resentment, rage, despondency, reviving courage,

and animated defiance, incidental to Lady Constance, and to accompany them with correspondent propriety and vehemence of action, was a happiness only known to Mrs Cibber.' Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies* 3 vols. (London, 1785), vol. 1, p. 35.

37. Fred Bergmann, 'Garrick's *Zara*', *PMLA*, 74(3) (1959), p. 226.
38. Jane Milling, 'Mary Porter', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also van Lennep, *London Stage*, index.
39. See van Lennep, *London Stage*, index and Jane Girdham, 'Sarah Porter', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
40. John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, 10 vols. (Bath: H.E. Carrington, 1832), Vol. 3, p. 120.
41. Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1660–1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 175.
42. William Congreve, *The Mourning Bride, a Tragedy* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1697), Act 3, ll. 490–1.
43. Congreve, *The Mourning Bride*, Act 3, ll. 71–2.
44. Elaine McGirr, *Heroic Mode and Political Crisis, 1660–1745* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), p. 135.
45. Jean Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660–1720* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 73.
46. Colley Cibber, *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, ed. B.R.S. Fone (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. 319.
47. Sir Richard Steele, *The Theatre* #1, in *The Theatre; to Which Are Added, the Anti-Theatre etc*, ed. John Nichols (London: John Nichols, 1791), p. 7.

Pay, Professionalization and Probable Dominance? Women Writers and the Children's Book Trade

M.O. Grenby

Book history has revealed much about women's writing in the long eighteenth century. Quantitative research has shown, to take one emphatic example, that during the 1780–1820 boom years, more novels were written by women than men.[1] More qualitative research has demonstrated that women writers were often not merely amateurs, dabbling in literature for the satisfaction only of themselves and their friends, but were frequently highly professionalized, with a substantial degree of agency in the production and dissemination of their work, even if their livelihoods were precarious.[2] We now also know that, as well as being readers and writers, many women were instrumental in the operation of print culture in other ways: as, say, editors, anthologizers, printers, retailers and collectors. We have come to recognize that the standard book history models are not always adequate. The enduring importance of oral and manuscript transmission has meant that women's work often stood outside what we have hitherto usually understood as constituting literary culture.[3] But much is still to be done. We have, as Jacqueline Labbe puts it, 'not yet fully recovered the economics of female authorship'.[4] This is particularly true for genres besides the novel. Michelle Levy has specifically called for more work on women's involvement in the production of poetry, 'as well as their (probable) dominance in emergent genres like children's literature'.[5]

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In fact, book history has always been at the heart of the study of children's literature. Texts produced for children, with only a few exceptions, have customarily been regarded as unsuitable for serious literary criticism, either because they are too dry, didactic and pious, or because of a belief that serious textual analysis is inappropriate for such charming, frivolous and insubstantial items. As a result the most weighty studies of early children's books are bibliographical, notably some rigorous and, in some cases, colossal bibliographies of children's book publishers. Yet Levy is right that there is still much we do not know, including indeed whether women really were so central to the children's book trade. Drawing on those magisterial bibliographies, this question of female preponderance is something I hope this essay will help to settle. Other questions—about the professionalization and economics of women's involvement in the trade—I will also investigate here by drawing on the scattered archival record, notably from the children's publishing firm founded by William Darton in 1787. These materials have not been subjected to sustained analysis. What follows will allow us to substantiate, or reconsider, some of our assumptions about women writers of children's books. It will also offer some wider indications of the possibilities of a women's book history more generally. Book history may already have reshaped our understanding of women's writing in the long eighteenth century, but its potential is by no means exhausted.

The '(Probable) Dominance' of Female Authors

Thanks to the assiduity of children's book collectors and enthusiasts, we have thorough bibliographies of four of the major children's publishing houses of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century: John Newbery and his successors from the 1740s (by Sydney Roscoe); John Harris, successor to the Newberys, from 1801 (by Marjorie Moon); Harris's less successful rival Benjamin Tabart, 1801–1820 (also by Moon); and of the firms operated by members of the Darton family and their partners from 1787 (by Lawrence Darton).[6] There were other firms publishing children's books, either exclusively or as a part of their larger lists. But their output was smaller (indeed, children's writers sometimes complained that their publishing options were limited[7]) and these four houses accounted for a very significant percentage of published children's books. Analysis of their combined outputs can tell us a great deal about patterns of authorship.

It has been assumed that women wrote the majority of children's books in our period.[8] After all, as Nigel Cross, dismissively put it, 'to write a children's book required only a modest literacy and experience of childhood', so it 'was inevitable that middle-class women … should provide the bulk of this well-intentioned literature'.[9] It is not altogether straightforward, and complete precision is impossible, but systematic analysis of the bibliographies enables some convincing quantification of this 'probable' dominance.[10] At first sight Fig. 1 appears to show that more of the children's books published by the Newberys, Harris, Darton and partners, and Tabart were by men than by women (712 compared with 643). The main caveat is that titles for which author gender cannot be determined remains the largest category (779) and it is certainly not inconceivable that female authors were more likely to publish anonymously than male. It is also noticeable that these aggregate figures for the four publishers are skewed by the very low number of identifiably female authors publishing for the Newberys. The balance between male and female authors for Darton is more equal, and for Tabart is exactly level, while identifiably female writers actually outnumber the identifiably male for Harris's publications. This probably represents a shift taking place over time more than any particular

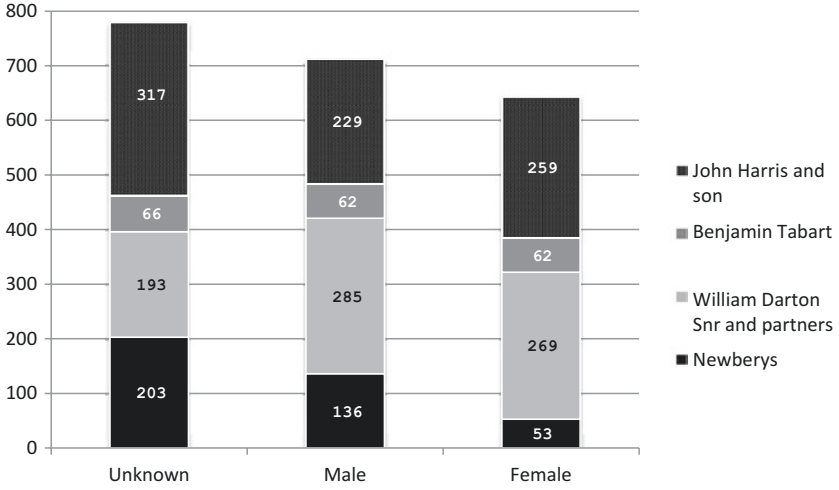

Fig. 1 Authors of children's books from four publishing houses by gender, 1744–1843

biases of the publishers. The Newberys published children's books during the period 1742 to 1802 (with a single outlier in 1814); Darton and his partners brought out a continuous stream of titles from the 1790s to the 1820s (and indeed into the 1840s), but ramped up production from the 1810s; Tabart flourished in the 1800s and early 1810s; while Harris's firm kept up a steady flow of a dozen or more new titles per year (and often more) from 1803 to 1830. By the nineteenth century, and particularly the 1810s, either more women were becoming published writers, or were increasingly willing to avow themselves authors. The same trend is even more markedly observable if we subject just Darton's publications to closer scrutiny. In the first 22 years of the operation, 1787–1809, his firm published 278 separate titles, 120 of which were by men (43.2 per cent) and 70 by women (25.2 per cent), with 88 (31.7 per cent) unidentifiable. In the second two decades, 1810–1830, female dominance of his list had been asserted. Of the 469 titles he published in that second period, 199 were by women (42.4 per cent) and only 165 were by men (35.2 per cent), with 105 (22.4 per cent) unidentifiable. There was, in short, a two-thirds rise in the proportion of Darton titles identifiable as having been written by women. This was offset by a proportional decline in male authorship but more substantially by a decline in the number of titles published anonymously.

We can also ascertain that women dominated particular genres. Fig. 2 shows a clear division. Men preponderated as authors of books of instruction, whether religious or secular, whereas women dominated the production of works of fiction and poetry.[11] The categories I have used here are somewhat elastic: 'alphabets, grammars and primers', 58 of which were written by men as opposed to 41 by women, comprises works designed to teach literacy skills not only in English but also classical and European languages, while 'religious works', also dominated by men (55, compared with 32 women authors and 31 unknown), includes substantial works of theology as well as Bible stories and simple catechisms. Another caution is that some categories can be dominated by particularly prolific or enduring authors. For instance, Charles Perrault and Aesop help to establish the preponderance of men in the 'fables and fairy tales' category (48 to 20, with 70 unknown). In the fiction category, however, writers who, being particularly prolific, might have skewed results, are in fact fairly evenly split between the sexes: Mary Pilkington, Frances Bowyer (Vaux) Miller, Priscilla Wakefield, Eliza Fenwick, Maria Budden and Barbara Hofland each had seven or more works of imaginative prose published, but so too

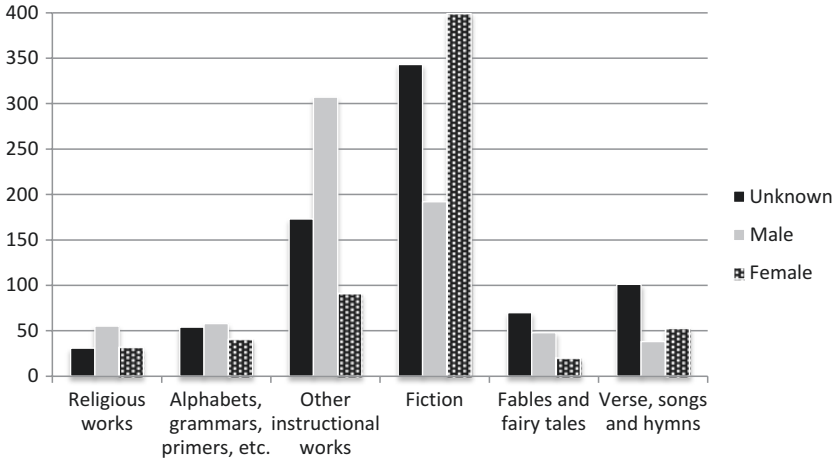

Fig. 2 Authors of children's books from four publishing houses by genre and gender, 1744–1843

did Edward Kendall, for example, as well as Richard Johnson, the survival of whose day-books demonstrate that he compiled at least 20 imaginative prose titles for John Newbery's heirs, as well as instructional works.[12] The continuance in print of work by Daniel Defoe, François Fénelon, Miguel de Cervantes, Samuel Richardson, Thomas Day and others also buoys up male authorship of children's fiction.

The data is not perfect then, but it does allow us to nuance our assumptions. It would be incorrect to say that women dominated the production of children's books in the long eighteenth century. Actually, the balance was fairly even, although there was a pronounced shift towards female authorship, or acknowledgment of it, from around 1800. Women did dominate children's fiction (and verse), but men dominated non-fiction. But overall, perhaps the most striking findings are just how significantly the children's book business was expanding. John Newbery published 89 children's titles in 25 years, an average of 3.5 new titles per year. (And it should be noted that only 'about one in five' of his full list 'was of the juvenile class'.[13]) Elizabeth Newbery, his nephew's widow, who took over the firm in 1780, published 205 children's titles in 22 years, an average of 9.3 per year. For Tabart, the average was 10 per year. William Darton Senior averaged 17.4 from 1787 to 1830. For John Harris, it was 19.2 new children's titles per year across the period 1801–1843. More than 1000 of

these titles were probably written by women (if we divide the anonymous titles equally between the two sexes). And this was the product of four publishing houses only. In other words, the rise of children's literature led to a tremendous surge of female literary production. And of course these figures, as Cheryl Turner has noted, must inevitably be an underestimate, for they count only those writers who were successful in getting into print.[14] Many others no doubt wrote, but remained unpublished, either by design or disappointment.

'The Emolument is Precarious and Seldom Equal to a Maintenance'

The survival of archival material that discloses how much eighteenth-century authors were paid for their labour is very rare. Exceptional in both their survival and their usefulness are three documents compiled by William Darton Senior. The first document is an indexed album of receipts and correspondence covering the period 1791–1846, which details the payments Darton's authors received for their copyrights as well as the firm's purchases at trade sales of shares in existing titles. These figures can sometimes be compared with an incomplete 'Copyright Book' covering 1791–1818. The third document is Darton's list of the number of copies printed in successive editions of his titles from 1808 to 1818. Together, alongside their usefulness in identifying otherwise anonymous authors, they give a unique insight into the economics of the children's book business.[15]

These documents provide information on how much Darton and his partners paid for 245 different titles between 1791 and 1841, 148 of them being identifiably by women. Of this 245, 88 were payments made at book sales, usually to other publishers for shares in the right to publish a new work or, more commonly, to publish a new edition of an existing work. For instance, at the Queen's Arms tavern in January 1805, Darton paid £78 to the assignees to the estate of the publishers George and John Robinson for a one-32nd share in William Guthrie's immensely successful *Geography and Atlas* (first published as the *Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar* in 1770). Darton thus joined a large 'conger' of publishers who shared the cost, and hoped-for profits, of subsequent editions. It may have been that not all shares were actually sold, or that different publishers purchased their shares at different rates. But Darton's £78 for a one-32nd share allows us to fix a notional value for the whole

copyright: an astonishing £2496 (fo.37; G407). This was comfortably the most valuable of all the literary properties in the Darton copyright book. The cheapest was also bought at a trade sale, Darton paying the publisher James Wallis just 10s 6d in 1801 for the whole right to publish Mary Weightman's *The Polite Reasoner, in Letters, Addressed to a Young Lady*, which had first appeared in 1787 (fo.25; G1037). However, 157 of the recorded payments were to individual authors or their representatives, usually in exchange for the whole copyright. Taken altogether, the average sum Darton paid for a title was just over £111, although this is distorted by the very large sums spent on shares in textbooks (like Guthrie's), grammars, dictionaries and bestselling anthologies such as Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts in Poetry* and William Enfield's *The Speaker*. Eliminating all those titles bought at auction gives a more realistic mean of just under £14 10s per title. Since the seven highest sums paid by Darton to a single author were to one extraordinarily well-remunerated writer, a more representative figure is actually the median price: just £9 per copyright.

The exceptional individual who commanded the seven highest sums Darton paid to an author was the Quaker, philanthropist and early feminist Priscilla Wakefield (1751–1832). Beginning in 1794, when she was in her early forties, Wakefield wrote at least 16 children's books for the Darton firm, including moral tales, fictionalized travels and works of history and science. Her husband's business being precarious, she wrote for money. For the two volumes of *Leisure Hours* (1794) she was paid £15, but this rose to £60 for *Juvenile Anecdotes* (1795) and to a highpoint (for her and for Darton) of £200 for *The Juvenile Travellers* (1801). She was savvy in her dealings too (or perhaps her husband managed her business affairs, for he routinely signed her receipts), the usual practice apparently being to sell a third or a half of the copyright to Darton in the first instance, presumably drawing royalties on the remainder, but allowing Darton to purchase the balance of the copyright a few years later. For example, for *Instinct Displayed*, a collection of anecdotes of animal sagacity, 'one half share' was sold for £50 in 1811, 'it being understood that if it should come to a second edition I am to receive a further sum of £25 on this share'; then in 1812 the remaining half was sold for a further £50 with the same condition (a total of £150) (fos.57, 61; G995).[16] Nevertheless, Darton would surely have profited substantially from her work. *Leisure Hours* sold for 3s; Darton's typical print run was 2000. It would have grossed £300 if the whole edition sold at full price. In addition to Wakefield's initial fee of £15, he would of course have had to pay for paper, printing, advertise-

ment and distribution, although since it was unillustrated, not, in this case, for the design and engraving of pictures, and to allow for the retailers' profits. Perhaps, then, a *single* edition might have brought in a profit of around £100. But *Leisure Hours* was in its seventh edition by 1821. *Juvenile Travellers* would have been more lucrative still. With a cover price of 5s 6d each edition of 2000 would have grossed £550. At almost 400 pages, and with a copperplate engraved frontispiece, it would have been expensive to produce, but the £200 Wakefield received would have been outweighed by the profit on just the first edition, let alone the 17 further editions published by 1842.

Wakefield's remuneration, however, was most unusual. Many authors of non-textbooks sold their copyrights for under £10. Much more typical was Charlotte Anne Broome (1761–1838), sister of the novelist Frances Burney, whom, the Darton ledgers reveal, was paid £6 6s for her *Mamma's Stories* in 1811 (G138). Selling at a shilling, with eight copperplate engravings, it was apparently a major success. An initial print run of 3000 was followed by a second edition of the same size in 1812 (and two further editions in 1814 and 1816). Each would have grossed £150 if sold out at full price. Yet in 1813, she was again paid just six guineas (£6 6s) for her *Mamma's Pictures* (fo.65; G137), and although that also went through four large editions, Darton then bought her *Fanny and Mary* for the even lower price of four guineas (£4 4s) in 1821 (fo.133; G136).

These were paltry sums. Wakefield, in her *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*, had called writing 'respectable and pleasing employment' for women of talent and 'mental cultivation', and advised that 'although the emolument is precarious, and seldom equal to a maintenance, yet if the attempt be tolerably successful, it may yield a comfortable assistance in narrow circumstances'.[17] In Wakefield's case perhaps. But the Darton ledgers reveal that writing for children was definitely 'seldom equal to a maintenance', at least writing fiction, for which the mean sum Darton paid was a mere £19 14s 11d. The average price paid for other genres—indeed, *all* other genres—was higher. Darton bought travel books for an average of £29.5s; religious works for £60 15s 2d; books of verse for £114 3s 2d; primers and spelling books for £131 12s 10d; and books of instruction (history, biography, geography, mathematics, natural sciences and so on) for £168 14s 2d. Easily the most remunerative genres were grammars and dictionaries, for which Darton paid a mean sum of £429 1s.[18]

Jacqueline Labbe has proposed that the woman writer in the Romantic-period 'was understood to be inherently worth less than a man'.[19] The Darton ledgers allow us to corroborate but also complicate this hypothesis, at least for children's books. If we take only those titles bought directly from the author (not at auction) there is rough parity. The mean price paid to men was £16 5s 5d (median £10 7s); women on average received the slightly lower sum of £15 3s (median £10). Certainly, men could be equally as badly paid as women. In 1827 Darton gave John Luscombe £5 5s, plus 20 copies, 'for the copyright of a poem entitled "A Cousins Gift or Stories in Verse"' (fo.183; G600). The Revd John Young received £8 for *The Perils of Paul Percival; or, The Young Adventurer* (1841) (fo.249; G1070). Notably a Quaker couple were paid comparable sums for their separately authored works, Henry Dymond's *Instructive Narratives for Young Persons* (1825) and *Observations on the Parables of Our Saviour* (1825) bringing in £5 and £10, while *Eight Evenings at School* (1825) and *Bible Stories* (1826), by his wife Edith (née Frank), received £8 and £5 (fos.159, 163, 165; G271–4). This accords, then, with Betty Schellenberg's findings, derived from examining contemporary reviewers' responses to the general run of fiction, that the author's gender was seldom the only, and certainly not the principal, factor in the ascription of value to a work.[20]

However, the picture is very different if we analyse the figures Darton and partners paid for all titles (that is to say, including the notional values extrapolated from the shares bought at auction). On average, men were paid £319 15s 10d (with a median of £100) while women received just £20 13s 9d (median £10). The reason for such an enormous disparity is evident: men were almost always the authors of the anthologies, grammars and mass-market textbooks that commanded the highest prices (usually purchased by a conger of publishers), while women typically offered the fiction and verse for which the firm paid so much less. We can say then that the crucial factor in determining author pay was not gender so much as genre. Yet, of course, as in the book trade as a whole, the generic boundaries of children's publishing were carefully controlled. It was, in practical terms, difficult for women to break into the higher-status, higher-earning categories. At Darton and partners, no woman earned more than the sums paid to Priscilla Wakefield for her fictionalized travels. Or, to put it another way, the top 30 highest valued titles they published were all by men. At other publishing houses it may have been different, and women may sometimes have been able to publish high value titles anonymously or under male pseudonyms. One (probably isolated) example is Eliza

Fenwick, who, by her own account earned 150 guineas for compiling 'A class book bearing in the title page of Mr. David Blair', published by Sir Richard Phillips. Her story provides an interesting starting point for thinking about women's attitudes to their writing for children.

'As Much of a Trade to Live by as the Making of Vests and Pantaloons'?

In 1832, Fenwick, then in her late sixties, related to New York acquaintances her 'history of authorship'. Having had her 'brain a little turned by the reading Godwin's Political Justice & Mrs Wollstoncraft's Rights of Woman', she wrote, she had begun her career at the age of about 29 with 'a work of fiction' (evidently her novel *Secresy, or, The Ruin on the Rock*, 1796). She began another novel, she explained, but 'being then independent & sharing the dissipation of fashionable life' she 'thought no more of authorship', until that is, her 'wealth had vanished' and she was driven back to writing out of need. A chance introduction to Phillips led to commissions to produce 'translations from the French & compilations chiefly of school books', almost all of which she published under pseudonyms. These enabled her 'to earn a living and furnished a most expensive education' to her son. The 150 guineas was for compiling *The Class Book: or, Three hundred and sixty-five reading lessons adapted to the use of schools*, which Phillips published in 1806. It was in a thirteenth edition by 1858. 'In London,' she recalled, 'writing, I will not say literature, is as much of a trade to live by as the making of Vests and Pantaloons'.[21]

There is much here that confirms preconceptions about later eighteenth-century children's literature. Although she wrote what is now regarded as some of the most interesting children's fiction of the period (*Visits to the Juvenile Library*, published by Tabart in 1805) and one of the most innovative textbooks (*Rays from the Rainbow, Being an Easy Method for Perfecting Children in the First Principles of Grammar*, for William and Mary Jane Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1811), Fenwick's letter presents children's literature as hack work, requiring little genius or talent, possibly remunerative but not something to which one would usually wish to attach one's name, and undertaken chiefly by those in need of money. It is, as she presents it, a falling off from 'literature' to mere 'writing', equivalent to the work of the seamstress. Many modern critics have agreed. Nigel Cross, for example, claimed that 'probably more than

in any other branch of literature, women who wrote children's books did so to make money'.[22]

The problem with this construal is that, as we have seen, in the great majority of cases there was very little money to be made from writing for children. If they were seldom paid more than £20, and more usually less than £10, is it possible that all of Darton's authors, especially those writing fiction and verse, and especially women, were motivated mostly by money? Indeed, is it likely that they regarded themselves as professional writers? By their own accounts, the answer is usually that they did not. Almost innumerable dedications and prefaces present children's authors (male as well as female) as amateurs, venturing into public only with hesitancy, generally in the hope that what they had produced might be of more general service. 'This little work was not intended, originally, for the public eye', wrote Mary Mister, entirely typically, in the preface to *Mungo, the Little Traveller* published by Darton and Harvey in 1810; 'it was the evening employment of a mother, for the amusement of her child; and as it fully answered that design, she flatters herself it may prove to other children not an unacceptable present'.[23]

Should we believe these 'modesty tropes'?[24] By the time she wrote this, for instance, Mary Mister was already a published poet (under her maiden name, Mary Locke), and she would go on to write at least three more children's novels during the following five years. Investigating those few cases where we have reliable information about the actual circumstances surrounding the production and afterlives of eighteenth-century children's texts tends to bring up similar seeming contradictions. The hugely successful children's poets Ann and Jane Taylor, for instance, sought to project a determined amateurism, or had it projected for them. Their work 'did not spring either from literary ambition, of from calculations of gain', their brother Isaac insisted, adding that 'they shrunk from notoriety, and would most gladly have remained under the screen of anonymous authorship to the end of their course'.[25] Yet, although Ann and Jane had initially been paid only £5 for their contributions to *Original Poems, for Infant Minds* (1804–1805), with 'another £5 … afterwards added' and a further £15 for the second volume, their financial acumen, and ability to manage their literary property was such that, in 1818, at the expiry of the first term of copyright, the Darton firm paid each sister £100 plus £35 per annum for 14 years, amounting to an astonishing £590 each.[26] An unpublished letter from Jane to a fellow author, Mrs Hewlett, who had sought her advice on proper remuneration also vividly paints a picture of an author thor-

oughly engaged with the realities of the market. 'Publishers have *much* in their power—so that in whatever way a work is disposed of I believe it rarely happens that the author receives a *just* share of the profit', she pronounced, and explained how she and her sister had been '*very inadequately* paid' for their work. Since the '*extent of the sale* is indeed the only rule by which to judge what a work is fairly worth', she advised Hewlett 'to ascertain what number they print at each edition', and confided that she had begun to 'stipulate for a small addi[t]ional profit upon succeeding editions'.[27] Such private correspondence makes it harder to credit Ann and Jane's brother's assertion that 'material remuneration never took the foremost place in their regards'.[28]

Another highly professionalized writer for children, as revealed by her now well-known correspondence, was Charlotte Smith. Smith was an unusual children's writer, already a highly successful author of poetry and novels but also in great financial difficulty. Letters to and from her publishers Cadell and Davies reflect both her power in the market and her desperate need. Apparently at his suggestion, she first proposed a children's book to Thomas Cadell Senior on 11 June 1794. She would later, conventionally, write that she had been inspired by the 'extreme difficulty of finding any such books as were fit for my youngest daughter, a child of twelve years old'. Other letters make it clear that she was also ambitious to replicate the success of *Evenings at Home*, by John Aikin with contributions by Anna Laetitia Barbauld (although Smith named Barbauld as author), the first four volumes of which had appeared by 1794 and which, Smith apprehended, 'have had & still have an amazing sale'. Smith's next letters carried barely veiled threats to find another publisher, or to publish the book at her own expense (which she was sure would secure her greater profits but only after a longer period). But when in July Cadell and Davies offered her £50 for one volume (the same price she received for each volume of her novels for adults) she called it 'a fair price as to the labour because it is less labourious than a Novel', adding 'but I am persuaded the profits will be more'. The writing took her a little more than two months. She had by then suggested a second volume that, being accepted on the same terms, she completed in October 1794. *Rural Walks* was duly published early in 1795 in an edition of 1000 at the relatively expensive price of 2s 6d per volume. Writing to the duchess of Devonshire in February 1795, Smith claimed that 500 copies had sold within a month.[29] Smith offered Cadell and Davies a continuation. When they declined, 'alleging', Smith wrote, that they 'had lost by the first pub-

lication & had paid me too much for them', Smith again threatened to seek another publisher but also deployed the support of her aristocratic patron. She told Cadell and Davies that the duchess of Devonshire had agreed to promote any further volumes 'with all her interest' and had suggested that they be dedicated to her daughter. Having received a note from the duchess presumably to this effect, Cadell and Davies relented, although offering only £50 for two volumes since '£100 was considerably too great a Sum for a Work of his Description'.[30] It took a year for Smith to send the complete manuscript, and *Rambles Further* was published in June 1796.[31]

What is remarkable is how involved, and in control, the author was in every element of publication. The idea that Smith should write a children's book seems to have been Cadell Senior's, but its content was left entirely up to her. She had initially intended to include 'some easy lessons on botany', for example, but had herself taken the editorial decision that it 'could not be done without engravings, & that to nineteen persons in twenty, it w^{d} have been wholly uninteresting'.[32] Her letters show that she also sought to manage the timetable for delivering the manuscript, the delivery of proofs for her to check, the printing, the physical format of the published volumes and (notoriously, for Smith used her publishers as a kind of banking house to advance money on sums she would earn) the schedule of payments. She also herself attempted to get her work translated into French, and undertook what we would now call promotional work, encouraging her connections to spread good opinion about *Rural Walks*. '[M]y friends serve me very materially in forwarding the circulation of the Book', she wrote, since, even though she had sold the copyright, meaning that she would not draw any profit from higher sales, the success of her book could lead to a second edition, or 'will greatly assist in my getting a good price for any future work of the same sort'.[33] Cadell and Davies retained the power to accept or reject Smith's pitches, and if they agreed to publish, to set the rates at which she would be remunerated—a situation that Smith often claimed to prefer ('her approach to pricing was genteel', comments Judith Phillips Stanton).[34] Yet generally, when faced by Smith's threats and strategies, they submitted to her wishes, going back on their decisions not to publish and not to advance her more money and, at least according to their own account, paying her over the odds. Ultimately *Rural Walks* was successful, going through four editions by 1800 (as well as Irish and American editions, and French and Dutch translations). It is certainly noticeable that, as Smith ventured into children's literature,

neither her relations with Cadell and Davies, nor their dealings with her, were any less professional than when they were negotiating about works written for adults.

But Smith was an exception in many ways. The £50 or more per volume she earned for her children's books was high.[35] So too, apparently, was her attempt to live solely by her pen. The small sums that many children's authors were paid make it inevitable that they had alternative means of support, even if we do not often know what they were. Elizabeth Pinchard was the wife of a Taunton lawyer; Sarah Trimmer was married to a prosperous brick and tile maker; Jane West married a yeoman farmer. Many others, as revealed in their prefaces and in the Darton ledgers, were teachers of one sort or another, including Charlotte Palmer, Mary Weightman, Elizabeth Heyrick (who, following the death of a husband commissioned in the Dragoons, opened a small school in Leicester) and Hannah Kilham (who, being widowed only months after marriage, established schools in Nottingham then Sheffield, and died off the coast of Africa having set up schools in Gambia and Sierra Leone).[36] Smith was also unusual in her engagement with publication and post-publication processes, and in her conscious professionalism. It was apparently more common to surrender control to the publishers, particularly in the matter of establishing the value of literary property. While some of Darton's (male) writers did stipulate precise details of their contracts (how much they should be paid, the number of copies they would receive, in what bindings, the precise schedule of payments, conditions for future editions and so on: fo.107, G100; fo.197, G611), most women writers for whom we have evidence were more diffident, relinquishing control of their work and their remuneration. When, for example, Harriet Surtees agreed terms with Darton and Harvey for the sale of a manuscript she titled *A Present to the Little Christian* she suggested 'I will sincerely confess I think you have given for it more than its real value' (the sum agreed for the copyright was a mere £4). Surtees (whose address was in affluent Gloucester Place, London) was not writing for her livelihood. 'I believe you to have been actuated in so doing,' she continued, 'by the idea that the money it produced will be employed for the poor.' Moreover, she was entirely content to acquiesce to the changes suggested by the publishers, and concluded 'I leave you to make that alteration or any other you think advisable' (fo.131; G892).[37] Ann Taylor similarly recalled that 'for none of our productions did we ever stipulate a price, but left it to our publishers'.[38] And a letter to Darton from the husband of the prolific author Frances Bowyer Miller (née Vaux) pro-

nounces her 'much obliged by your remittance' (probably for a revision of Wakefield's *A Family Tour through the British Empire*) adding that 'the amount is precisely what she considered would be fair' (fo.201; G994). Even Wakefield did not always 'expect to be fully recompensed' (as she put it when sending a translation to Darton), declaring herself 'satisfied with whatever you choose to give' (fo.83; G304). Compare this with James Wells who wrote to Darton and Harvey in 1815 grudgingly thanking them for the 15 guineas they offered for his *Practical Treatise on Day-Schools*, 'if you cannot make it 20£ which I really think it deserves' (fo.91; G428).

Over the past two or three decades, studies of women's involvement in long eighteenth-century print culture as a whole have advanced in two different directions. It has been shown how some women writers were able to achieve acceptance and success, to become independent and powerful agents in the market and to earn a living from their writing. Against this, more recent work, drawing on sources such as appeals to the Royal Literary Fund, has demonstrated that success was available only to a few, and that for the majority of women writers, publishing offered only a meagre, erratic and unreliable livelihood. The analysis of children's print culture that I have presented supports both assessments. A small number of children's authors could (once established, and at least for a time) be successful professionals, earning well and controlling their own productivity. Wakefield, the Taylor sisters and even Fenwick and Smith fall into this category, although they still had cause to complain. They could be as successful as any male author, for gender was not in and of itself the main criterion by which literary value was judged. But on the other hand, the great majority of women writers of children's books were paid very little for their work, largely because, except in rare cases, the most remunerative genres seem to have been closed to them. Moreover, being unable (or unwilling) to exert their agency in the market, they commonly seem to have left financial and even creative decisions up to their publishers (as well, the Darton ledgers appear to demonstrate, as frequently authorizing their male relations to negotiate with the publisher on their behalf).

This did not necessarily compromise their professionalism. Even if emoluments were very limited, it is possible that women were still writing children's books for money, their hope being for a small, secondary income even if there was little chance of actually living by the pen. But theirs might have been a different kind of professionalism. In a letter to

Darton and Harvey, Georgianna Ancram begged to acknowledge 'the kind motive which made you take the little M.S.', meaning her *The East Indians at Selwood; or, The Orphans' Home* (1834). 'The pleasure it gave me was nearly equal to the deep and grateful joy with which the poor debtors I was so anxious to relieve received the money,' she added, concluding that '[i]f at any future time any subject should strike you in which you think I can be useful, I shall be happy thus to employ some hours, that pain and long confinement make tedious' (fo.221; G35). Her pay was £10, and evidently the money was not appropriated for her own enrichment. But what is striking is her willingness to turn her time and talents to *any* subject her publishers might suggest. She was simultaneously an amateur (as an economic agent in the marketplace) and a professional (in her willingness to write precisely what was required).

No doubt many women submitted their manuscripts to Darton and other children's publishers for artistic reasons, hoping to share what they considered to be their literary achievement and to receive acclaim for their work. With children's books specifically, however, perhaps the main motivation to publish was more altruistic. Our ideas of literary professionalism should certainly not exclude authors' determination to improve the quality of children's books available, or to bring moral, spiritual and social benefits to their readers. We might baulk at Isaac Taylor's condescending contention that 'Fame or no fame—income or no income, these writers asked themselves, or others about them, if they had written to good purpose'.[39] But it is probably true, and particularly so for those who submitted their manuscripts to the resolutely Quaker firm of Darton, that, for many, the didactic impulse, whether secular or religious, was more important than the economic or aesthetic. That they were paid so little supports this. They were in essence donating their literary and educational skills for the common good. Since the consumers were still paying, and the publishers were profiting, we might view these women writers as victims of systematic exploitation. Alternatively, we might regard their willingness to write for a profit that was public not personal as evidence of their sincere commitment to the common good and endorsement of the social value of children's reading.

Notes

1. Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling, eds., *The English Novel, 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Vol. 1, pp. 45–9 and Vol. 2, pp. 73–6.
2. Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).
3. Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Betty A. Schellenberg, 'Bluestocking women and the negotiation of oral, manuscript, and print cultures, 1744–1785', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830*, Vol. 5, ed. Jacqueline M. Labbe (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 63–83.
4. Jacqueline M. Labbe, 'The economics of female authorship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in the Romantic Period*, ed. Devoney Looser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 158.
5. Michelle Levy, 'Do women have a book history?', *Studies in Romanticism*, 53 (2014), p. 302.
6. S. Roscoe, *John Newbery and His Successors 1740–1814* (Wormley: Five Owls Press, 1973); Marjorie Moon, *John Harris's Books for Youth 1801–1843: A Check-List* (Cambridge: A.J.B. Spilman, 1976); Marjorie Moon, *Benjamin Tabart's Juvenile Library: A Bibliography of Books for Children Published, Written, Edited and Sold by Mr Tabart, 1801–1820* (Winchester and Detroit: St Paul's Bibliographies and Omnigraphics, 1990); Lawrence Darton, *The Dartons: An Annotated Check-List of Children's Books Issued by Two Publishing Houses 1787–1876* (London and New Castle, DE: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2004). Each of these firms had its own character, which naturally affected publishing practices and priorities. Quakerism was central to the Darton operation, for instance. William Darton Senior took a fellow Quaker, Joseph Harvey, into partnership in 1791. Note that, in what follows, 'Darton' has been used as a shorthand for all the varying configurations of the firm that arose as their heirs continued the business at Gracechurch Street until 1846 (and distinct from the separate firm, founded on Holborn Hill in 1804 by Darton's oldest son, also named William).
7. Mary Pilkington, for instance, who wrote to Messrs Vernor and Hood, on 23 July 1805 regretting that they 'have entered into an engagement not to

have any thing further to do with Children's Books'. British Library Add. MSS 78,687, f.127[r].

8. See for example Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 249.
9. Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 199–200.
10. The data presented is taken from the four bibliographies. All entries in Moon on Harris and on Tabart have been analysed but, for the Newberys, only the children's books (Roscoe's 'J' series) have been included. For the Dartons, only entries from William Darton Senior's firm, located in Gracechurch Street have been included in the numerical analyses (Lawrence Darton's 'G' series), and only those published before 1831. Only those items known to have been published have been included (not those known only through advertisement), and productions not classifiable as individual books (such as cabinets containing multiple titles, games and toys, and single sheets) have been omitted. Only the earliest known editions have been counted. Titles published by multiple publishers (for instance those in which one of the selected publishers owned only a share as part of a publishing partnership of 'conger') have been included. The dataset is large: 2134 titles in total, or which 392 were published by the Newberys, 805 by Harris and his son, 747 by William Darton Senior and partners, and 190 by Tabart. The earliest title dates from 1742 (Roscoe, J244) and the latest from c. 1843 (Moon, *John Harris*, cat. nos. 64 and 978A).

    My method has been to assign each entry in the four bibliographies to one of five author categories: (1) male; (2) female; (3) anonymous; (4) pseudonymous (which may or may not be gendered); and (5) attributed (those titles for which the author's gender has been suggested from external evidence). Evident pseudonyms ('Nurse Lovechild', 'Peregrine Puzzlebrains') have been included as anonymous, but feasible aliases ('A Mother', 'An Englishman') have been assigned to the appropriate gender category, as have convincing attributions (many of which are available from the Darton ledgers, for details of which see below). Translators have been included as authors. A degree of imprecision is inevitable. False names may have been used. Publishers sometimes reissued books in different formats or with different titles, meaning that certain items may count more than once. Also, in cases where a title from a previous publisher has been reissued (for example, a title first published by John Newbery and reissued by Harris), it will have been included under both publishers. As Raven puts it, having attempted a similar but smaller analysis in *The English Novel, 1770–1829*, 'It must be stressed … that no one should over-interpret figures derived from problematic materials' but this kind of analysis

produces the 'best available indication': Garside et al., *The English Novel*, p. 45.

11. Assigning titles to particular genres can be problematic, for example where a work combines different kinds of material, or is entirely *sui generis*. These, including the anthologies in which Darton specialized, have been assigned to a category only when a strong case can be made on the basis of preponderating material, but are otherwise omitted.
12. M.J.P. Weedon, 'Richard Johnson and the successors to John Newbery', *The Library*, 4 (1949), pp. 25–63.
13. Roscoe, *John Newbery*, p. 13.
14. Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 79.
15. The album of copyright receipts is in the Special Collections of the University of Reading, MS 2774. Its key data (the sums paid to authors), as well as information from the other two sources, are included in the bibliographical entries in Darton, *The Dartons* (see pp. xx and l). For ease of reference, I give in brackets hereafter both the folio numbers from the album of copyright receipts and the G-series catalogue numbers from *The Dartons*.
16. Wakefield described her 'usual' terms in letter to Darton and Harvey dated 31 August 1814 (fo.83; G997). On 23 March 1814, to settle a dispute about the exact nature of the interest Darton had purchased in her works, Priscilla and her husband Edward signed a memorandum handing over their whole interest in all books for a further £250 (fo.77; see Darton, *The Dartons*, p. 279).
17. Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London: J. Johnson and Darton and Harvey, 1798), pp. 124–6.
18. Too little data survives for fables, anthologies and other miscellaneous works to establish reliable averages. The figure for instructive literature is distorted by the £2496 at which Guthrie's *Geographical Grammar* was valued. Excluding that one title, the figure is £129 18s 5d.
19. Labbe, 'Economics of female authorship', p. 158.
20. Schellenberg, *Professionalization of Women Writers*, especially pp. 139–40.
21. Eliza Fenwick to a Mr. Moffat of New York, 10 June 1832. Fenwick material, box 2, New York Historical Society Manuscript Collection. I am grateful to Lissa Paul for sharing this information. See Lissa Paul, *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 57. For a brief description of Fenwick and her increasingly dissolute husband see the papers of Francis Place, vol. lxxvi, British Library Add. MSS. 35,145, fos.29–30. On *The Class Book* see Eliza

Fenwick, *Secresy*, ed. Isobel Grundy (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1998), p. 13.

22. Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 200.
23. Mary Mister, *Mungo, the Little Traveller*, 2nd ed. (London: Darton and Harvey, 1814), p. iv.
24. Betty A. Schellenberg, 'The professional woman writer', in *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789*, ed. Catherine Ingrassia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 42.
25. Isaac Taylor, *The Family Pen: Memorials Biographical and Literary, of the Taylor Family of Ongar*, ed. Isaac Taylor, 2 vols. (London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1867), Vol. 2, pp. 12–13 and see p. 17. See also Michelle Levy, *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
26. Darton, *The Dartons*, p. 253.
27. Jane Taylor to Mrs. Hewlett (probably Esther Hewlett, afterwards Copley), 18 June 1818, Ongar. British Library Add. MSS 78,689, fos.93–4, emphasis in original.
28. Taylor, *Family Pen*, Vol. 2, pp. 12–13.
29. Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell Senior, 11 June 1794; to Thomas Cadell Senior and William Davies, 2 October 1794; to William Davies, 25 June 1794; to Thomas Cadell Senior, 18 July 1794; and to Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, 8 February 1795, in Judith Phillips Stanton, *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). Stanton suggests that Smith received £80 for the two volumes: 'Charlotte Smith's "literary business": income, patronage, and indigence', *The Age of Johnson*, 1 (1987), pp. 375–401 (p. 391).
30. Smith to Cadell and Davies, 17 May 1795, and p. 197n2 in Stanton, *Collected Letters*.
31. Interestingly at an auction at the London Coffee House on 19 December 1805, Darton bought from Cadell and Davies 8/16th shares of both *Rural Walks* and *Rambles Further*, paying for them £23 19s and £25 4s, respectively (G868–89).
32. Smith to Cadell and Davies, 2 October 1794, in Stanton, *Collected Letters*.
33. Smith to the Duchess of Devonshire, 8 February 1795, in Stanton, *Collected Letters*.
34. Stanton, 'Charlotte Smith's "literary business"', p. 388 and Smith to Cadell and Davies, 20 April 1797, in Stanton, *Collected Letters*.
35. She received the same £50 per volume when she switched to Sampson Low for *Minor Morals* (1798). Then (as one would expect) when she shifted to more purely instructional works this increased to the 125 guineas Joseph Johnson paid her for the two volumes of *Conversations Introducing Poetry* (1804) and the £120 Sir Richard Phillips paid for her *History of England*

when it was posthumously published. Smith to Sarah Rose, 10 September 1804, in Stanton, *Collected Letters*. Stanton, 'Charlotte Smith's "literary business"', pp. 391–2.

36. Turner, *Living By the Pen*, p. 65; Darton, *The Dartons*, pp. 132, 153.
37. Since no copies of the book appear to survive, it is possible that Darton paid for the copyright but declined actually to publish her book.
38. Ann Taylor, *Autobiography and Other Memorials of Mrs Gilbert*, 2 vols. (London: Henry King & Co., 1874), Vol. 1, pp. 122–3.
39. Taylor, *The Family Pen*, p. 13.

'There Are Numbers of Very Choice Books'*: Book Ownership and the Circulation of Women's Texts, 1680–98

Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey

Introducing an auction catalogue that lists more than 1000 works from the combined libraries of the Dutch bibliophiles Gaspar Fagel and Stephen Le Moyne, the London bookseller John Bullord pushes quantity and exclusivity: 'numbers of very choice books'. This essay narrows the selection of choice books further than the trader intended by focusing on the female-authored texts that were advertised for sale in such catalogues in the late seventeenth century; what number of books written by women were held in early modern libraries? It emerges from our work on the RECIRC project (*Reception and Circulation of Early Modern Women's Writing, 1550–1700*), which runs until 2019.[1] RECIRC is researching the impact made by women writers in the early modern period from

*'To the reader', *Bibliotheca instructissima, sive Catalogus librorum in omnigena literature… ex bibliothecis… Casparis Fagel… & Stephani Le Moyne* (London: Mr Dawson, 1690).

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the perspectives of reception and circulation, building on scholarly work of recent decades that has centred on recovery and analysis of women's literary production. It participates in a shift away from recovery research toward interrogating women's place in literary history via the assessment of textual transmission and audience. Our use of the concept of impact cannot be untouched (and is therefore informed) by the contemporary drive to measure academic scholarship in sometimes controversial ways. Elsewhere in this volume, Katherine Binhammer critiques 'the neo-liberal university's appetite for quantification and empirical research' (p. 67). We cannot claim to be independent of the moment in which we research and write, and our project responds, in a historicist way, to the debates generated by that appetite. We argue that the quantitative moves advocated in this essay can generate new grand narratives as well as raising research questions that return us anew to the qualitative and particular.

In directing attention at wider questions of the impact made by women's writing, RECIRC complements the research of projects such as the *Reading Experience Database, New Approaches to European Women's Writing*, and *Travelling TexTs*, all of which have brought new insights to bear on the transnational exchange of texts, and the forms of non-elite readership, but have studied primarily eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writing.[2] Our research on early modern library catalogues—which have become increasingly accessible as book historians continue to uncover evidence in archives that recalibrates our sense of what an early modern library was—seeks to identify patterns in the ownership of female-authored works.[3] Of course, the acquisition of a book written by a woman does not necessarily imply that it was read (and for this reason, the *Reading Experience Database* draws a sharp line between reception and ownership, defining a reading experience as 'a recorded engagement with a written or printed text—beyond the mere fact of possession').[4] Nevertheless, the presence of a female-authored work in an early modern bibliophile's collection can yield insights about the extent of its circulation, the contexts that informed its procurement, and the character of the collections in which it was held. Which authors were most commonly collected? Was a particular type of collector more likely to acquire books authored by women? Did the gender of an author matter to the collector? Where feminist scholarship has combined with book history, it has tended to produce (excellent) histories of women's reading.[5] But this begs the question of which female-authored works found space in early modern libraries.

We analyse here ten printed auction catalogues, representing the libraries of 13 bibliophiles: clergymen, politicians, urban citizens and provincial gentry. The eighteenth century witnessed a boom in book auctions across Europe, meaning that the sources are more numerous than for the period under discussion here. We aim to build on the pioneering work of Alicia Montoya, whose study of 254 eighteenth-century Dutch auction catalogues uncovered more than 600 female-authored titles in circulation, involving 126 French, 62 English, 11 Italian, eight Spanish, five German, one Spanish-Mexican and one Circassian-French writers.[6] More than 400 book auction catalogues from England survive from 1676–1700.[7] These were title listings distributed in advance of a public auction of books, often including further publication details such as authors' names, dates or places of publication. Our sample of ten is relatively modest. We have excluded trade-only sales, which represent a large proportion of those surviving. These record stock in bookshops rather than capturing the concentrated activity of an individual bibliophile, where our interest lies. Those discussed here are catalogues of discreet collections, sold in the aftermath of the collector's death. In some cases, the sale occurred many years following his death as a result of families retaining legacies. The collections that finally came to auction could be truncated and edited, some of the original works reserved by the family for sentimental or financial reasons. The sample discussed in this essay represents only a fraction of these, but we hope to suggest ways in which such catalogues can be probed to arrive at broader perspectives on the consumption and presence of female-authored texts and open up new questions about the perceived importance of gendered authorship in the context of book ownership and resale value.

The first of our catalogues advertised for auction the combined libraries of the brothers William and Henry Coventry but distinguished between their collections, allowing a window into their different interests. The sale took place relatively quickly, one year after their deaths in 1686. Sons of Thomas Coventry, first Baron Coventry, both served in the military: Henry in the Dutch Protestant army, William as a royalist commander during the civil wars, and emerged as leading politicians at the Restoration. Their library catalogues attest to eclectic tastes; the histories, theological and classical works typical of learned men but also legal tracts, drama, memoirs and letter collections, in Latin, French, Italian, Dutch and English. This broad spectrum of interests allows for female-authored texts in some

numbers. Sir William's library contained seven female-authored works, in French and English. Madeleine de Scudéry's work is attributed to her in the catalogue entry: 'Conversations de Mad. Scudery' in an edition of 1682 published in Amsterdam.[8] Published in 1680, *Conversations sur divers sujets* was the first of a series of philosophical dialogues published by Scudéry in later life, anonymously, although her identity was clearly known to this cataloguer. Also in French, the first edition of '[Les] Memoires de Madam Colonne' of 1677 is listed.[9]

The remaining works authored by women in William's library were all in English and packaged into bundles.[10] As a privy councillor, Henry Coventry witnessed the (false) depositions of Titus Oates, contriver of the Popish Plot of 1678.[11] His brother collected pamphlets relating to the scandal, including two works by Elizabeth Cellier. A Catholic midwife, Cellier was accused of treason by a prisoner with whom she was acquainted, Thomas Dangerfield, in the aftermath of the Plot. On her acquittal in 1680, she published her version of events opposing that of Dangerfield, *Malice Defeated*, in which she additionally alleged the ill treatment and torture of Catholic prisoners—allegations for which she was to be convicted for libel, as described in her second published work, *The Tryal and Sentence of Elizabeth Cellier*. These are two of 28 items bundled together under the heading 'Pamphlets in Quires, Folio'. They jostle alongside such works as 'Articles and Rules for the Army' and 'Absalom and Achitophel'. But there is method to the aggregator's madness, for they form part of a series relating to the Popish Plot and others against Charles II. In addition to Cellier's texts are Dangerfield's narrative and answer to Cellier's *Malice Defeated*, narratives ascribed to the plot informers Titus Oates, Miles Prance, Robert Bolron and Edward Fitzharris, as well as pamphlets on the plots ascribed to Captain Wilkinson and John Hambden.[12]

Three works by Aphra Behn are listed among the bundles headed 'Pamphlets in Quarto, bound'. These bound volumes comprise mainly Restoration drama. Behn's *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* occur as two of seven plays in a single binding, alongside John Caryll's *Sir Salomon, or the Cautious Coxcomb*, Thomas Shadwell's *The Humorists*, Dryden's *An Evening's Love, or The Mock-astrologer* and William Joyner's *The Roman Empress*—all printed in London in 1671. (The seventh, 'Womans Conquest', could be John Jones's *Adrasta: or, The Womans Spleene, and Loves Conquest* (1635) although the anomaly of the date argues against this.) Behn's *The Dutch Lover* (1673) is bound with Dryden's

Conquest of Granada (1672, 1673), Shadwell's *Epsom-Wells* (1673), John Lacy's *The Dumb Lady* (1672), Webster's *The White Devil* (a later edition was published in 1672), Henry Neville Payne's *The Fatal Jealousie* (1673) and Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1673).[13] Behn is not collected, then, as a singular prolific author nor alongside drama of the same genre, but as one of many contemporary dramatists by a collector who strove to bind together plays published in the same year.

If William Coventry's female-authored books ranged from drama to polemic and French writing, his brother Henry's acquisition of women's writing tended toward prose. Three romances in folio are listed: Madame de la Fayette's 'Princess of Cleves, a Romance' in the English translation published in 1679; 'Clelia, a Romance' (in the English edition of 1678); and the 'Countess of Montgomery's Urania' (1621). Although both French romances were purchased in English translation, the first French edition of *Les Mémoires de la reine Marguerite* (Paris, 1628) suggests that Francophone women's writing was not off-limits. A fifth female author comes into view somewhat surreptitiously; Anthony Walker's *Eureka, Eureka: The Virtuous Woman Found* (London, 1678), or his 'Life of the Countess of Warwick' as it is listed here, contained not only his biographical funeral sermon on Mary Rich but also the first print publication of her selected works: scriptural and occasional meditations as well as her spiritual instructions to George, earl of Berkeley.[14]

Walker's edition of the countess of Warwick also formed part of a collection advertised in 1688 as 'contained in the library of a learned and eminent citizen of London', a shift to the urban merchant class. Extensively versed in theology and divinity—about half the catalogue is comprised of works of this kind—this collector also amassed a substantial collection of poetry, drama and history, as well as some fiction. This catalogue groups together biographical writing as 'lives' (forming a subsection of 'Miscellanies, viz. History, Philology, &c. in Octavo and Twelves' that runs from item 211 through to 246). This arrangement shows how these works were framed for sale. Walker's 'Life of the Countess Dowager of *Warwick*' is listed among many other individual and collective lives. Female lives figure relatively strongly in this selection: the 'Life, and Reign, and Death of the Illustrious Queen *Eliz.* of *England*' (1682), 'of Mrs. *Sarah Gylly*, by *Henry Woolnough*' (1661), 'of the Lady *Lettice*, Viscountess of *Falkland*' (1649)—she of the Great Tew circle and daughter-in-law to the author Elizabeth Cary; 'of Mrs. *Mary Frith*, commonly call'd *Mal-Cutpurse*' (1662), 'of *Henrietta Maria de Bourbon*, Queen to King *Charles*

I' (1667), 'of the Life and Adventures *Henr. Sylvia de Moliere*' (1672) and 'of Mrs. *Mary Simpson*, with several other Sermons'. These queens, aristocrats, members of the middling sort and notorious criminal mingle with lives of the poets (Donne, Herbert), divines (Joseph Hall, James Ussher), aristocrats, politicians and leaders (Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury; Thomas More; John Wilmot, earl of Rochester; King Charles I; Oliver Cromwell) as well as middling folk such as '*Joseph Allein* late of *Taunton*' and collectives ('the English Martyrs and Confessors in Church and State'). The political and social demographic, from the debauched to the devout, points to a collector with catholic tastes and a sustained interest in life-writing that is foregrounded by the bookseller. But the cataloguer's limitations are inadvertently betrayed by the inclusion of a second female-authored work: the fictional *Memoirs of the Life of Henriette-Sylvie de Molière* by Madame de Villedieu, in the 1682 English translation of the first part.[15] That this is the only fictional biography in the subsection suggests that it is the work of an auctioneer not entirely familiar with the contents. However, the fact of the arrangement indicates the emergence of biography and autobiography as substantial fields of interest for late seventeenth-century readers and book purchasers.

The collector himself acquired more fiction in French by women writers: three of Scudéry's early works, *Artamènes, or the Grand Cyrus*, *Clelia* and *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*, in their English editions of 1655, 1660 and 1652, are listed, as is the English selection from her *Les femmes illustres*, published as *Several Witty Discourses, pro & con* (London, 1661). Another French romance, Marie Madeleine de la Fayette's 'The Princes[s] of Mon[t]pensier' is listed in the English translation of 1666. French memoir is represented by the duchess of Mazarin, published in English in 1676.[16]

This collector's encounters with English women's writing were focused primarily on poetry, unusual in our sample. Only one romance is included: Anna Weamys's 'Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia' (1651). On the other hand, four English poets were acquired. The first authorized edition of Katherine Philips's work, the 1667 folio, is listed as 'Madam Philips Poems and Translations'. Two interregnum works by Margaret Cavendish—again, in folio—were advertised: *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655) and *Natures Picture* (1656), both first editions. Anne Bradstreet's *Tenth Muse* is listed as 'by a Gentlewoman', following the title-page of the 1650 edition owned. While Cavendish and Philips, at least, might be anticipated, the presence of Scottish poet Anna Hume is

more striking. Her translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, *The Triumphs of Love: Chastitie: Death: translated out of Petrarch by Mris Anna Hume*, dedicated to Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and Frederick V, was published in Edinburgh in 1644. The eminent London citizen procured a copy. His cataloguer relegates Petrarch, foregrounding instead his female translator's name: 'Poems of Love, Chastity, Death, by Mrs. Anne Hume'.[17] Here, the emergent woman writer (whose work was only printed this once) supplants the canonical giant.

In all, 14 texts authored by women were owned by this London citizen, evincing an inclusive attitude that may be reflected in his acquisition also of the 'Gallery of Heroick Women', a 1652 English translation of the Jesuit Peter Le Moyne's 1647 *La galerie des femmes fortes*.[18] This biobibliography can be seen as a precursor to our modern literary histories of women's writing. It was part of a tradition that emerged with Boccaccio in the Renaissance and reached its apex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as exemplified in the work of George Ballard and Mary Hays.[19] For our London citizen, this illustrated *Gallery* provided useful context for his acquisition of women's texts; its relation of biblical and ancient types of strong women identified and expounded upon contemporary or recent exemplars, including Margaret More Roper and Jane Grey.[20]

A shorter auction catalogue, comprising 283 volumes, was advertised in 1684 in Tunbridge Wells, also anonymously, as 'the libraries of two eminent persons'. There is a patriotic cast to the pitch made by this bookseller, who points out that 'This Catalogue consists wholly of English books, being the Worke of our best English authors, and it manifests what great variety of incomparable Books have been published in our own Language, of all Subjects, and in all Volumes'.[21] Like that of the London citizen, this combined library is diverse. It includes works of theology and philology, sermons, histories, travelogues, plays, poetry and fiction. But unlike the London citizen's catalogue, the category divisions are minimal—folio, quarto, octavo—and hence, works of different genres are presented cheek by jowl. The collation of two men's libraries may account for some duplicates: both Scudéry's *Almahide* and Roger Boyle's *Parthenissa* occur twice, in the same editions (the English translation of 1677 in *Almahide*'s case). Her *Clelia* is included in the 1678 English-language edition. The only English author in this combined collection is Margaret Cavendish, either of whose *Philosophical Letters* (1664) or *Sociable Letters* (also 1664) could be signalled by the catalogue entry: 'Dutches of Newcastles letters—1664'.[22]

We know almost nothing about the Francis Bacon whose library was advertised for auction in 1686 as *Bibliotheca Baconica: or, A Collection of Choice English Books… formerly belonging to Mr. Francis Bacon, lately deceased*. Like the Tunbridge Wells catalogue, this is devoid of the more typical divisions according to format, genre or language, and benefits from a range that embraces natural history and travel as well as theology and divinity, poetry and romance. Again, we find Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clelia* (in the English translation of 1655). Four works by Margaret Cavendish—her *Plays*, *Poems* and *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (all printed in 1668), and *World's Olio* (1671)—are itemized, as is Katherine Philips's *Poems* (1678 edition).[23]

Thomas Scudamore's huge collection of 3638 works was advertised for sale in Dublin, rather than London, at Dick's Coffee-house in Skinner Row in 1698. John Ware, the bookseller, was savvy to accusations of library pilfering: 'Whereas it has been maliciously Reported, That the Best of the Books of this Auction are taken out [and] cull'd, Purposely to Discourage Gentlemen from Buying: These are to give Notice; That the Excellent Library of the said Mr. Scudamore is entirely in this Auction; as the Original Catalogue shall Prove.' Not only, then, was there a thriving market for auctioned books across the Irish Sea but it was cut-throat and competitive.[24] We gain unusual insight into the life and peregrinations of a Dublin bibliophile, as well as the vibrancy of the contemporary trade in books, from the short character provided in the bookseller's preface. Scudamore, we learn,

> was courted not a little by many of the best in this City, for his advice in the most Ingenious Books, and their Exact Editions. And such was the Curiosity of this Learned Man, that he used almost daily to walk his Rounds thro the Shops and Auctions, that some thing Rare or Valuable might escape his search.

His attention to matters of conservation is averred as a further proof of his collection's desirability: 'Nor was he more [per]quisite after the most Elaborate Impressions, than Careful to preserve [in] good Condition and Binding, such Books as he did Collect.'[25] Of course, the bookseller here was marketing his wares, establishing the quality and integrity of the collection advertised for auction. The grounds chosen for that quality—the bibliophilia of Scudamore in itself, the comprehensiveness of the collection, the mint condition of its contents—are equally revealing of the features prized in the market.

As might be expected of such a large library, many works of theology, classics and history are listed, as are a lesser number of philology and mathematics and a collection of plays and poetry that includes Shakespeare and Jonson. In terms of women's writing, it betrays a very specific interest in a very specific genre: the mother's legacy. The catalogue enumerates two copies of Elizabeth Joscelin's *Mother's Legacy* and one of Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*. Unfortunately, this catalogue supplies no further publication details, meaning that it is impossible to identify the particular editions Scudamore owned. However, these were among the most popular of female-authored texts in seventeenth-century English print culture. Joscelin's work went through eight editions between 1624 and 1684 and Leigh's enjoyed 23 editions between 1616 and 1674.[26] Scudamore also procured a copy of 'Scudery's Conversations on several subjects'; a 1680 English translation of the French edition that was owned by William Coventry.[27]

Six of our collectors were churchmen, and their libraries reflect the dominance of classical and theological interests among this group, with little and very precise space for women's writing. For example, the joint catalogue of books owned by the Dutch statesman Gaspar Fagel and Leiden theologian Stephen Le Moyne, advertised for sale at Sam's Coffeehouse in Ludgate on 3 February 1690 (and distributed in Oxford and Cambridge as well as various London locations), marketed Le Moyne's collection specifically at 'all the Learned' and Fagel's as a collection of 'so many Excellent Editions of the best Roman and Greek authors'.[28] Organized according to theology first, then history and philology, miscellanea and medicine, the catalogue of 1095 books (which does not distinguish between the two collections) embraces classical as well as contemporary works, mainly in Latin with some in French. The sole female-authored texts identified are poems by the Greek poet Sappho, whose work was in circulation in Greek from 1546 (in Henri Estienne's edition) and French from 1556.[29] The edition containing her poems that is listed here was an anthology of Greek and Latin poetry: 'Pindar, Sappho, Anacr[eon]. & alii poet. Gr. Lat.', a quarto dated 1626.[30]

Bibliotheca Warneriana itemized the extensive library of John Warner, the royalist bishop of Rochester, put up for auction in 1685, 19 years after his death. Warner's collection was shaped by his theological interests. Hence, the *Revelationes Sanctae Brigittae* is the only female-authored text in his enormous collection of 2383 works. The catalogue specifies this as the two-volume edition published in Rome in 1628. The fourteenth-century

Swedish saint had founded the Brigittine order and enjoyed continued circulation of her revelations throughout the medieval and early modern periods. Warner's copy was edited by Consalvus Durante, who had also published a single-volume edition in 1606.

We might expect the same theological thrust to the combined libraries of the Cambridge-educated clergymen William Outram and Thomas Gataker, advertised for sale in 1681. The auctioneer adverts to the multigenerational provenance of these libraries, claiming that he has the complete library of Outram 'and so much of the Library of Mr. *Thomas Gataker*, as was rescued out of the Flames of *London*, and preserved ever since in the hands of his Son [Charles] lately deceased, who made some Addition thereunto'. More than a joint collection, then, this enormous catalogue is witness to the conjoined libraries of two prominent clerical contemporaries, as well as at least one of their named offspring. Outram was a rabbinic and patristic scholar. Gataker was a close friend of the clergyman and polemicist Daniel Featley, and a religious controversialist of note himself. Perhaps their immersion in contemporary religious debates informed the acquisition of *A Legacy for Saints* (1654) by the millenarian prophet Anna Trapnel, her second printed work, of spiritual autobiography. Featley's most popular work, *The Dippers Dipt* (1645), had inveighed against Anabaptists and Independents; it went through six posthumous editions up to 1670. Gataker's publications chart a similar appetite for confronting religious radicals such as Trapnel. Both men were dead by the publication of an altogether different work—Madame de Villedieu's *Les galanteries grenadines*, a fictional 'secret history' of the kind that became fashionable in the 1660s and 1670s. The first French edition of 1673 is listed in the catalogue—likely an acquisition of Gataker's son, Charles.[31]

Little is known of the Reverend Thomas Grey of Dedham, Essex, whose substantial collection of 1584 works was prefaced by an assertion of its variety. Sidestepping the matter of biography by citing his funeral sermon instead, the auctioneer attests to the particular currency of patriotism in his characterization of a driven bibliophile: 'The English part is the best and largest hitherto published; wherein he seemed to attempt the compleating of the Works of all our English Divines, Antient and Modern, scarce anything of any Author of note being wanting that hath been published for 20 years last past.' This intervention suggests growing market demand for specifically English material, the reference to the collection's standing as being the 'largest hitherto published' pointing to trade competition. Alas, no English women made the cut. Madame de Villedieu's *Memoirs of*

the Life of Henriette-Sylvie de Molière makes a dual appearance; two copies of 1677 are listed. Their slightly different titles—'Memoirs of the Life and Adventures of Sylvia Moliese' and 'Memoirs of the Life of Sylvia Molier'—suggest that they were duplicates rather than miscatalogued.[32]

As is obvious, the numbers of female-authored texts present in these clergymen's collections are almost negligible. One woman among the Greek and Latin authors compiled in the Le Moyne/Fagel catalogue generates a statistic of 0.09 per cent; one woman among the vast trove of works owned by Warner constitutes 0.04 per cent of his collection; and two works among the total 2820 in the Outram/Gataker collection, 0.07 per cent.[33] Grey, whose amassing of a completist collection of English divines is prominently advertised, owned two copies of a single female-authored work; again, this amounts to a tiny percentage of 0.12. It seems safe to say, then, that those whose primary concerns were ecclesiastical and theological were not interested in works or genres that were composed by women. The proportions are modestly higher for those with less narrow acquisition strategies. William Coventry's collection of female-authored works made up 0.45 per cent of his collection; his brother's 0.57 per cent.[34] The London citizen's tally of 14 women's works constitutes 0.67 per cent of the 2075 items in that catalogue, and Scudamore's four works by women only 0.11 per cent of his grand total of 3638 books. Where the collections themselves are smaller, the proportions rise. For example, the Tunbridge Wells catalogue also enumerates four female-authored works, but these represent 1.41 per cent of a collection of 283 volumes. The six female-authored works acquired by Bacon amount to 3.27 per cent of his library of 183 books.

The female author whose work circulated most widely, both in terms of the range of works and their recurrence, is Madeleine de Scudéry. Six different works—*Almahide*, *Artamènes*, *Clelia*, *Ibrahim*, *Conversations on Diverse Subjects* and *Several Witty Discourses*—were in circulation and works authored by her are represented in six different catalogues (the exceptions are all six clergymen, again confirming the clerical lack of interest in these genres). *Clelia* is the most popular female-authored work in the sample overall, listed in four different collections. The anonymous London citizen emerges as the main collector of Scudéry's work, having acquired three of her romances (*Artamènes*, *Clelia* and *Ibrahim*) as well as the English selections published as *Several Witty Discourses*. The joint Tunbridge Wells catalogue, with two copies of *Almahide*, suggests that both 'eminent persons' possessed a copy; one also owned *Clelia*. It is clear

that different genres appealed to different collectors. Both Scudamore and William Coventry eschewed her romances but procured her more philosophical *Conversations on Diverse Subjects.*

The only author comparable in terms of penetration of these collections is Margaret Cavendish, seven of whose works occur in three different collections. There is no single text, however, that recurs. Her work particularly appealed to Francis Bacon, who owned *Plays*, *Poems*, *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* and *World's Olio.* The London citizen also procured more than one work and genre—*Philosophical and Physical Opinions* and *Natures Picture*—while one of the two eminent persons possessed her 'Letters'. Where Katherine Philips's sole published volume was acquired, it was in tandem with Cavendish, in the Bacon and London citizen catalogues. Where multiple works by Anglophone authors were collected, this appears to be symptomatic of a pronounced interest in particular genres, as is reflected in William Coventry's inclusion of three plays by Aphra Behn in his drama collection and of Elizabeth Cellier's pamphlets in a bundle centred on late Restoration plots—and also in Scudamore's acquisition of three mother's legacies by Elizabeth Joscelin and Dorothy Leigh.

The range of collections in which French female authors are gathered attests to their contemporary prominence. Mesdames de Villedieu and de la Fayette were also collected in numbers. Grey possessed two copies of Villedieu's *Memoirs of de Molière*; the London citizen a single copy; and Gataker's heir was likely the procurer of her *Galanteries grenadines.* Like Cavendish, she appears in three different collections. The London citizen also owned a copy of de la Fayette's romance, *The Princess of Montpensier*, while Henry Coventry owned her *Princess of Clèves.* Both men also secured French women's memoirs: the London citizen had those of the duchess of Mazarin; Henry Coventry those of Marguerite de Valois; and his brother those of Marie de Colonne.

We can, then, determine which women writers were most popular. But what kind of bibliophile collected female-authored works in any numbers? It was not those with the largest collections but laymen with the most eclectic span of interests who incorporated women writers to their libraries. The politician William Coventry peppered his collections of drama, politics and philosophy with works composed by women. His brother Henry's catalogue evinces an interest in romance and biography—making room for English and French fiction writers as well as the lives of Marguerite de Valois and Mary Rich. The London citizen's interest in this latter genre also encompassed Rich, romance writers and—unusually

in the sample discussed here—poetry by women. Conversely, those with a pronounced focus on divinity and theology—the catalogues of Thomas Grey, Fagel and Le Moyne, John Warner, Outram and Gataker—tended to be more targeted in their admission of female authors. The spiritual and religious impact of Saint Bridget and Anna Trapnel account for their inclusion in the latter two catalogues, as the longevity of her reputation does for Sappho in the Dutch catalogue. The presence of two copies of Villedieu's fiction in Grey's catalogue points, however, to the possibilities of the outlier even where divinity might rule supreme. We cannot be sure whether such outliers were deliberately acquired or accidentally appropriated but they disrupt patterns.

Eclecticism in author and genre is the byword here. Overall, 11 different English writers emerge from this survey of auction catalogues, represented by 18 different works spanning the genres of spiritual autobiography (Trapnel, Rich), political pamphleteering (Cellier), drama (Behn), romance (Wroth, Weamys), poetry (Bradstreet, Cavendish, Hume, Philips), the mother's legacy (Joscelin, Leigh) and philosophy (Cavendish). Six French authors are represented by 13 distinct works of a narrower generic range: romance (de la Fayette, Scudéry, Villedieu), memoir (Colonne, Marguerite de Valois, Mazarin) and philosophy (Scudéry). Where philosophical works by women are collected, it is notable that these are works by prolific authors (Cavendish and Scudéry) who experimented with different genres. It is also worth noting that the vast majority of works composed by French women were purchased in English translation. Those at the more elite end of our sample—the Coventry brothers and Charles Gataker (son of Thomas)—acquired editions in the original French, a distinction of education that is also reflected in the Greek and Latin versions of works by Sappho and Saint Bridget owned by the clergymen.

A key consideration in evaluating the impact made by women's writing on these collections relates to attribution: did booksellers know these were works authored by women? As auction catalogues, these sources cannot tell us the extent to which the gender of the author mattered to the collectors themselves but they can suggest the ways in which female authorship was perceived to impact on the marketplace. Booksellers' organization of catalogues varied, arranging their lists according to genre, language or often simply by format. Their attentiveness to what would attract buyers' attention is demonstrated by John Ware's preface to the Scudamore catalogue, in which he elaborates on his practice of abridging titles, fitting them to a single line by replacing lengthy titles with '&c.': 'as thereby to give the

Reader so clear and distinct a Notion of Such Books, as … necessary'.[35] Ware conforms with a more general picture whereby auction catalogues prioritized titles over all other publication details, including authors' names. Of the ten catalogues discussed here, there is again a distinction between those associated with clergymen's book collections and those of lay bibliophiles. The Fagel/Le Moyne, Warner and Outram/Gataker catalogues lean more heavily toward attribution: unattributed works comprise only 6–11 per cent of these lists. Grey, whose collection is advertised as specializing in English divinity, is slightly above, at 14 per cent. The remaining catalogues exhibit a higher proportion of works that are listed without authors' names attached, ranging from 18 to 23 per cent. These proportions demonstrate that the absence of authors' names is not a matter of gender in and of itself. Rather, it is immersed in matters of marketability. In the cases of Sappho and Saint Bridget, their established reputations—even celebrity—mean that their identification takes precedence over titles of their works. Anna Trapnel's radicalism, and the autobiographical justifications for her writing in the first place, equally warrant promotion of her authorship in the Outram/Gataker catalogue. Of the laymen's catalogues, all seven female-authored works entered in William Coventry's list are correctly attributed. But thereafter, there is considerable variation.

The case of Madeleine de Scudéry, whose works were published both anonymously and pseudonymously (under her brother's name) but who was rumoured to have authored them herself, elucidates attribution practices and allows us to probe the extent to which the author's gender impinged on the marketplace.[36] Where Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips and even Anthony Walker (Mary Rich's editor) are unfailingly flagged as authors in these catalogues, Scudéry's authorship elicited diverse approaches. Her *Conversations sur divers sujets* is identified as 'de Mad. Scudery' in William Coventry's catalogue but *Clelia* is attributed to 'Monsieur Scudery' (as it was published) in that of his brother. The Scudamore and London citizen catalogues opt for gender neutrality, simply assigning 'Conversations on several subjects' and *Several Witty Discourses* to 'Scudery'.[37] Most interestingly, the novels themselves had acquired sufficient reputations by the late seventeenth century to be sold without any authorial association at all. The London citizen's catalogue—which goes to some lengths to attach *Several Witty Discourses* to its author's surname—simply advertises *Artamènes*, *Clelia* and *Ibrahim* as they are. All three of Scudéry's works that belonged to the two 'eminent persons' are unattributed: *Almahide* (both copies) and *Clelia*. Again, her

fiction (in this case *Clelia*) is saleable without an author in the Bacon catalogue (which does name Cavendish and Philips). Only one of the four editions of *Clelia* is attributed, suggesting that it was the specific work that made the impact rather than its association with the particular author. In summary, then, where the author's name may have helped sell more generically titled works, it was attached to the title. But where the title was immediately recognizable, that was deemed sufficient to stand alone.[38] Life writing was tied to its subject; hence, all the memoirs authored by French women are attributed—even to the extent that Villedieu's *Molière* was mistakenly catalogued with biographies in the London citizen's catalogue, and its subject equated with its author in the Grey catalogue. This primacy of genre is also reflected in the Scudamore catalogue, in which the signalling of the mother's legacy overrides any authorial assignations.

Our project sets out from a position of defining 'choice books' as those authored by early modern women and aims to calculate exactly their numbers as the first step toward more qualitative questions about the popular and the niche, and the extent to which gendered authorship factored in early modern book-ownership. The percentage of female-authored works contained in the collections of these 13 bibliophiles ranges from 0.04 to 3.27 per cent—slim pickings in terms of bare figures. (Although it is worth bearing in mind that only three decades ago, in 1983, the percentage of female politicians in the UK parliament was 3.5.[39]) But women's writings are present in these libraries of clergymen, politicians and the merchant class. Our preliminary findings point to sustained impact in the case of certain authors. Scudéry and Cavendish feature prominently. But Behn, de la Fayette, Philips, Rich and Villedieu are also represented numerous times. French authors predominate over English (or Scottish). There is diversity regarding the kinds of female-authored works that appealed to different types of reader—a picture that should be significantly enhanced as our research progresses and promises to enrich the women's literary histories we write by attending to reception as well as production. Strikingly, these works were all printed volumes. This may be characteristic of the materials advertised for sale in auction catalogues—a caveat that reminds us to be alive to the limitations of our sources. It certainly showcases the need for further research on other forms of booklist. Since Margaret Ezell's call to arms in *Writing Women's Literary History*, scholars have recognized that early modern women's writing circulated widely in manuscript rather than print.[40] We anticipate that manuscript volumes are more often registered in catalogues and records of libraries

that were not aimed at the marketplace. For example, Andrew Cambers's reconstruction of the library of Lady Margaret Hoby via her diary entries identifies 'some meditations of the Lady Bowes hir Makinge', unpublished works that circulated regionally.[41] We need to test the idea that auction catalogues, directed at the marketplace, privileged print culture. We need to uncover the ways in which women's manuscript writing materialized in early modern book collections and we need to probe the nuanced attitudes among booksellers, buyers and collectors regarding the gender of an author—attitudes that threaten to counter our own definition of the choice book. If the most popular female authors earned their popularity in non-gendered terms, and the outliers earned their place on the basis of their ideas and textual content (allowing, conversely, for the non-acquisition of those whose ideas confronted the reader), then our approaches to the writing of women's literary history must be vigilant in forging modern ideas about gender while listening to the ways in which it may not have coloured early modern reception.

Notes

1. Research for this chapter was funded by the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–2013/ERC Grant Agreement n. 615545).
2. http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/; www.womenwriters.nl/index.php/Women_writers%27_networks and http://heranet.info/ttt/index, accessed 8 October 2015.
3. See, for example, the shifting picture of the library belonging to Staffordshire gentlewoman Frances Wolfreston, the tally of which has steadily increased since Paul Morgan's seminal essay, which identified 107 books ('Frances Wolfreston and "hor bouks": a seventeenth-century woman book-collector', *The Library*, 11 (1989), pp. 197–219; Arnold Hunt's discovery of an additional 29 books ('Libraries in the archives: researching provenance in the British Library', in *Libraries within the Library: The Origins of the British Library's Printed Collections*, ed. Giles Mandelbrote and Barry Taylor (London: British Library, 2009), pp. 363–84) and Sarah Lindenbaum's forthcoming work identifying a further 22 printed volumes. The *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* project has made accessible 316 booklists, mainly of university scholars, for the earlier period 1507–1653; the online version is open access at http://plre.folger.edu, accessed 8 October 2015.
4. www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/contribute_notes.php, accessed 8 October 2015.

5. For example, Julie A. Crawford, 'Reconsidering early modern women's reading, or, how Margaret Hoby read her de Mornay', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73 (2010), pp. 193–223; Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 196–255; William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 53–69; also Katherine Astbury and Gillian Dow, eds., 'Women readers in Europe: readers, writers, salonnières, 1750–1900', special issue of *Women's Writing*, 18 (2011).
6. Alicia C. Montoya, 'French and English women writers in Dutch library (auction) catalogues, 1700–1800', in *'I Have Heard About You': Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf*, ed. Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Janet van der Meulen and Pim van Oostrum (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), pp. 182–216.
7. A.N.L. Munby and Lenore Coral, *British Book Sale Catalogues 1676–1800: A Union List* (London: Mansell, 1977), pp. 3–19.
8. We cite only dates that are explicitly supplied in the sources.
9. Where a bookseller supplied the title in French, we interpret that to mean the work advertised was in the original French, and in English translation where the title is in English. In addition, this collection included a work sometimes attributed to Madame de la Fayette, itemized here anonymously as 'Journal Amoureux d'Espagne' (Paris, 1675), and *Accomplish'd Ladies Delight* (London, 1675), one of a number of unauthorized compendia of writings by the successful cookery and medical writer Hannah Woolley. *A Catalogue of Books, of … Sir William Coventry, and … Henry Coventry* (London, 1687), pp. 13, 14, 12, 23.
10. Throughout, where a bundle of pamphlets is treated as a single volume in the catalogue, we have treated it as a single item in our calculations. For this practice more generally, see Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
11. Alan Marshall, 'Titus Oates', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
12. *Catalogue of Books of Coventry and Coventry*, pp. 24–5.
13. *Catalogue of Books of Coventry and Coventry*, p. 25.
14. *Catalogue of Books of Coventry and Coventry*, pp. 41, 37, 33, 41.
15. *A Catalogue of Books… contained in the library of a learned and eminent citizen of London* (London, 1688), p. 33.
16. *Catalogue of Books… citizen of London*, pp. 26, 37.
17. *Catalogue of Books… citizen of London*, pp. 38, 26, 24, 40, 36. For an important recent interrogation of early modern Scottish women's literary

production, see Jane Stevenson, 'Reading, writing and gender in early modern Scotland', *The Seventeenth Century*, 27 (2012), pp. 335–74.

18. *Catalogue of Books… citizen of London*, p. 24.
19. George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (London, 1752); Mary Hays, *Female Biography, or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women of All Ages and Countries*, 6 vols. (London: Richard Phillips, 1803). For the genre of bio-bibliography, see Hilde Hoogenboom, 'Bibliography and National Canons: Women Writers in France, England, Germany, and Russia (1800–2010)', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 50 (2013): 314–41.
20. Peter Le Moyne, *The Gallery of Heroick Women*, trans. John Paulet (London, 1652), sigs. G^{r}-G2^{r}, Kk3^{v}-Ll2^{r}.
21. *A Catalogue of the libraries of two eminent persons…* (Tunbridge Wells, 1684), sig. A^{v}.
22. *Catalogue of the libraries of two eminent persons*, pp. 1, 3.
23. *Bibliotheca Baconica: or, A Collection of Choice English Books… formerly belonging to Mr. Francis Bacon, lately deceased* (London, 1686), pp. 2, 4.
24. For a lively account of the Dublin auction trade in 1698–9, see John Dunton, *The Dublin Scuffle*, ed. Andrew Carpenter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000). Mary Pollard identifies the Scudamore sale as the subject of Dunton's polemic; *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550–1800* (London: Bibliographical Society, 2000), p. 587.
25. *A Catalogue of Books… being the library of that learned and ingenious gentleman Thomas Scudamore, Esq* (Dublin, 1698), n.p.
26. Sylvia Brown (ed.), *Women's Writing in Stuart England: The Mother's Legacies of Elizabeth Joscelin, Elizabeth Richardson and Dorothy Leigh* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), p. vi. See also Jennifer Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).
27. *Catalogue of … Scudamore*, n.p.
28. 'To the reader', in *Bibliotheca… Cassparis Fagel… & Stephani Le Moyne* , n.p.
29. Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
30. *Bibliotheca… Cassparis Fagel… & Stephani Le Moyne*, p. 24.
31. *Catalogus librorum… Guilielmi Outrami… Thomae Gatakeri* (London, 1681), sig. A^{v}; pp. 60, 33. Trapnel's work is one of eight items itemized as a single bundle in the section 'tracts in Quarto'.
32. *Bibliotheca Greyana: Sive Catalogus librorum… R.V. Tho. Grey, de Dedham in com. Essexiae defuncti* (London, 1694), sig. A2^{r}, pp. 34, 36. There are also two copies of a work sometimes attributed to Madame d'Aulnoy, *The Novels of Queen Elizabeth* (1680), again titled slightly differently (pp. 35–6).

33. Furthermore, the Outram/Gataker catalogue lists 63 separate bundles, which collectively group together various texts. Thus, the total of 2820 items in this catalogue underestimates the precise number of individual items.
34. Our calculations are based on the overall number of 1100 items in William's catalogue; although there are seven female-authored texts, these are counted as five items because the Cellier and Behn works are grouped together in single-item bundles.
35. *Catalogue of… Scudamore*, n.p. Such market requirements enrich Franco Moretti's analysis of the gradual shortening of novel titles across the *longue durée*; 'Style, Inc.: reflections on seven thousand titles (British novels, 1740–1850)', *Critical Inquiry*, 36 (2009), pp. 134–58.
36. See, for example, Dorothy Osborne's speculation on her authorship; Dorothy Osborne, *Letters to Sir William Temple*, ed. Kenneth Parker (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 128.
37. Montoya finds that eighteenth-century Dutch catalogues tended toward this gender-neutral designation for Scudéry; Montoya, 'Dutch library (auction) catalogues', pp. 197–8.
38. Anna Hume's authorial usurpation of the famous Italian in the London citizen's catalogue entry for her translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi* (see above) further problematizes the issue although, as a singular example of such gazumping in our sample, it is impossible to draw conclusions.
39. *UK Political Info: A Resource for Voters, Students, Journalists and Politicians*, www.ukpolitical.info/FemaleMPs.htm, accessed 17 November 2015.
40. Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). See, for examples, the Perdita Project (https://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/html, accessed 23 October 2015); George Justice and Nathan Tinker, eds., *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, eds., *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
41. Andrew Cambers, 'Readers' marks and religious practice: Margaret Hoby's marginalia', in *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning*, ed. John N. King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 219–20.

Gender and the Material Turn

Chloe Wigston Smith

In the early nineteenth century, a British girl started a sampler (Fig. 3).[1] It was an ordinary thing to do and her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother had doubtless done the same. At the top of the linen canvas, she arranged letters and numbers in six horizontal bands, practising her stitches and motifs (heart, crown, ships). Her attention to letters and numbers was not unusual. It followed the shift from pictorial samplers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to the alphanumeric samplers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that, as Rozsika Parker has noted, 'provided evidence of a child's "progress" on the ladder to womanhood'.[2] Beneath the rows of letters and numbers, the girl added the title 'The Pleasures of Religion' followed by three lines:

> Tis religion that can give
> Sweetest pleasures while we live
> Tis relig

The stitches stop mid-word and the sampler's lower section remains a blank space. If the girl had continued her work, she would have embroidered at least the hymn's first stanza, plying her needle in praise of the comfort proffered by religion and God:

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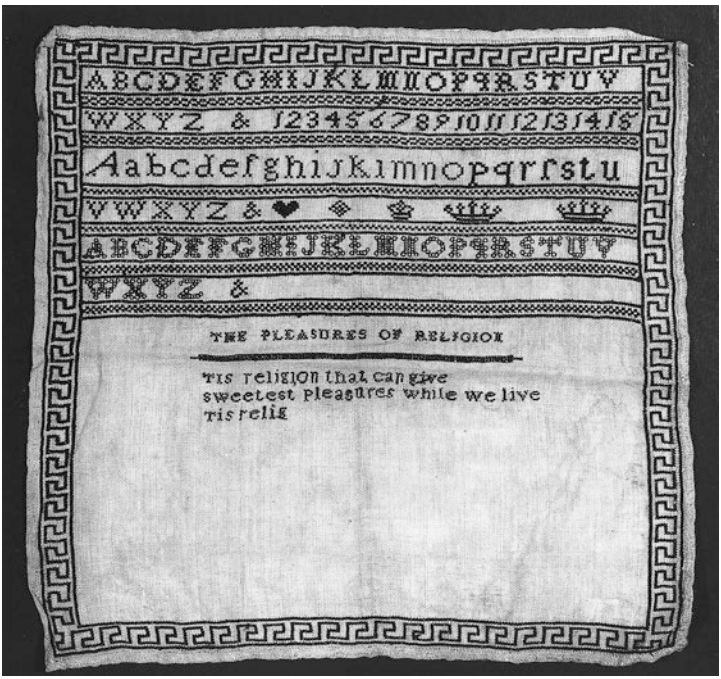

Fig. 3 Sampler, early nineteenth century, British, silk on linen canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.122.331

> 'Tis religion must supply
> Solid comfort when we die,
> After death its joys will be
> Lasting as eternity.
> If the Saviour be my friend
> Then my joy shall never end.

We will never know why she set down her needle at 'relig'. The sampler raises more questions than provides answers: Did the girl choose the verse or was it the selection of a parent or teacher? What could have distracted her from finishing it? Did her fingers rebel against the hymn's claims for the afterlife? Did she find new employment to occupy her hands and time? Did she neglect her sampler out of carelessness? Or did she find the 'solid comfort' of death?

I open with this sampler in order to underline my view that work on feminine material culture in the eighteenth century, too, remains unfinished. This essay contemplates the cross-pollination of gender studies and material culture studies, examining the turn toward artefacts, thing theory and domestic space in literary scholarship. Whereas women writers are often figured (then and now) as abandoning the needle for the pen, my essay centres on the aesthetic and literary rewards of reading material objects and how they might enlarge the feminist scope of women's material and authorial labour. The sampler above constitutes a strong example of the material and textual networks so vital to women and writers in the period, whether they traded their manuscripts via coterie circles or nodded to past and present authors in content and form. Rather than position the sampler above as a representative object—no historical object could bear such symbolic weight given the diverse categories evoked by the category 'material culture', we know so little about this particular object and, of course, it was created in the early nineteenth century—I wish to pause on it as just one example of the many artefacts that edge us closer to the material and textual layers of gender, objects and texts.

The sampler's unfinished lines are drawn from the first stanza of a hymn composed by the early eighteenth-century writer Mary Masters, a self-taught poet from Norwich. Her 1733 collection *Poems on Several Occasions* was the first by a woman to appear via subscription, according to Sarah Prescott, an entry into print that grew in popularity for women poets throughout the 1730s.[3] Masters' spiritual verse, including 'The Pleasures of Religion', was a staple in Protestant hymnals, especially those aimed at children. It found its way into many early-nineteenth century samplers created in Britain and America.[4] Whereas samplers were frequently used by mothers, governesses and teachers as educational tools to inculcate religious, moral and social values in young women, the popularity of Masters' hymn might have come as a surprise to the author herself. Her secular verse, argues Paula R. Backscheider, shows her understanding of 'the fetters society placed on women and the threat of a binary model of the sexes'.[5] Did the creator of the sampler know that Masters was the hymn's author? Was she aware of the feminist leanings of Masters' complete body of work? The sampler indicates, in many ways, the difficulties of sorting out the murky and uncertain relations between texts and objects and of collating the full meaning of the textual traces and lineages of material objects. Artefacts confound neat period boundaries (here splicing together the eighteenth-century textual source with nineteenth-century pious material practice) and combine text and craft in innovative ways.

How can the 'material turn' expand our sense of the past, the history of gender and the study of texts and language? Maureen Daly Goggin defines the 'material turn' in literary scholarship as 'a turn of attention to material objects and practices conducted by scholars who have traditionally focused almost solely on texts'.[6] Eighteenth-century scholars are blessed and burdened with deep and diverse collections of extant artefacts and a century in which new houses were built that required furniture, upholstery, wallpaper, tea tables, portraits, porcelain and statuary to fill them.[7] Printing presses groaned with books and pamphlets, women and men delighted in manipulating their dress to create new identities (if only for the evening), paintings found nine lives as engravings and commodity culture generated widespread desire across classes for new, shiny things. No longer considered ephemera secondary to the life of the mind, material objects possess broad-ranging capacities to articulate human and intellectual experience, even if significant challenges remain to defining an interdisciplinary field that embraces multiple frameworks such as sociology, object-oriented ontology, anthropology and art history.[8] My emphasis here focuses on gender and the material turn in literary studies, but I want to acknowledge that material culture studies in our period is an interdisciplinary venture in which divisions between types of scholars frequently fade to the background.

More recent efforts to assess the meaning and values of eighteenth-century things echo the recovery emphasis of early feminist scholarship in its revaluation of women's writing. Scholars of thing theory and material culture have recuperated a canon of objects large and small: wigs, fans, watches, pockets, feathers, guns and desks among many others. The parallels between feminist literary scholarship and material culture studies sharpen when we remember that women artists in the 1970s, energized by second-wave feminism, turned to conventional feminine skills such as sewing, knitting and cooking to address sexism and misogyny in American culture and the art world.[9] These artists put conventional activities to the service of feminist manifesto, yet such ironic reinventions are perhaps less available to scholars of the eighteenth century. Our interest in women and things requires a sceptic's gaze, lest we become complicit in circumscribing historical women to the things they made and wore, or were made to knit, sew, launder and keep. The study of material culture presents specific challenges to feminist scholars committed to reading both within and against the past. Ann Bermingham has cited similar difficulties in recapturing the equivocal role of fashion in the eighteenth-century marriage

market, positioning it as a form both of feminine agency and paternalistic control.[10] Even as the material life of the past provides opportunities to connect with the lives and writings of women, we should remain wary of the skills and accomplishments through which eighteenth-century moralists, like James Fordyce, sought to restrict women's knowledge. What eighteenth-century women created was tempered both by gender categories and traditional hierarchies between high and low art.

At the same time, the pervasiveness of feminine practices such as needlework and embroidery demand serious attention in our studies of women's writing, as do the material spaces inhabited by women writers and their readers. Such artefacts could mean economic self-sufficiency for their creators. In the case of marking samplers, Daly Goggin has noted that they 'served as a CV to demonstrate that to potential employers that the girl before them knew how to ply her needle'.[11] Yet domestic artefacts such as samplers, quilts, filigree work, shell work and any number of other drawing-room accomplishments denote the analytic risks of circumscribing women to an area of enquiry as much a product of period perceptions of femininity as our own contemporary fascination with what Bill Brown has described as the 'thingness of objects'.[12] As Parker argues in her classic feminist account of embroidery: 'Embroidery has provided a source of pleasure and power for women, while being indissolubly linked to their powerlessness.'[13] Parker's acknowledgment of the competing values of material culture underscores the scholarly care necessary to avoid replicating the satirist's gaze on outlandish fashions or the clergyman's prescriptions for simple attire that so pervaded period critiques of women's engagements with things.

Other methodological potholes await: the material turn might all too quickly exacerbate the spread of '[m]icro-histories of micro-moments, contextualized and historicized' that Katherine Binhammer warns against in her contribution to this collection (p. 67). Do we prioritize certain items at the expense of the full canvas of feminine material practices? Does the focus on a woman's hat distract us from other feminist questions we might pose about the representation of her body and mind? There are differences too between analysing the objects of self-adornment and those of craft. How do we understand, for instance, the differences between fine reticules, caps, cosmetics and more perfunctory shirts and household linens? Similar to print creations, not all material objects were created equal, rather they reflected degrees of skill, which were shaped by class, education, age and talent. This variety of quality and qualities raises questions

about the degree to which aesthetic standards play a role in interpretation, evoking Ros Ballaster's call here to consider the aesthetic merit of women's writing. Elsewhere in this volume, Jennie Batchelor notes how 'many works likely written by women may never be definitely assigned to a known author' (p. 82). As the sampler above demonstrates, problems of identification are likewise vexing to studies of feminine material culture. Hundreds of anonymous artefacts frustrate attempts to match literary usage to extant examples. Moreover, issues of individualism, circulation and representativeness complicate the relations between material culture and literature. To a limited degree, we can measure the popularity of women's writing via print runs, editions, copyright fees and periodical reviews. Fewer standards of print documentation exist for artefacts, for which the knowledge of repetition of themes, designs, media and execution depend on not only access to museum collections, but also on the knowledge of which types of pieces are housed where.

Amanda Vickery, in her study of the eighteenth-century domestic interior, poses the provocative question, 'how far can we read a sex in things?'[14] For Vickery there is no easy way to siphon perception from practice, given that objects circulated in homes and also in print, satire, shops and sales pitches. She concludes that 'Georgians took for granted a sex in things, further elaborating a vocabulary of gender difference in consumer tastes, material customs and expertise, however much daily experience confused any fixed associations'.[15] Many eighteenth-century men obsessed over the textiles that adorned their bodies, the veneered cabinets that concealed their letters and the family portraits that adorned their homes.[16] Horace Walpole's papier-mâché ceilings at Strawberry Hill, David Garrick's King Lear wig and William Cowper's sofa all suggest that material culture should be understood as a human interest. At the same time, the solid attention that the diverse stuff of eighteenth-century life has recently received, whether produced, worn or circulated by women or men, aristocrats and paupers should not blind us to feminist insights about the material world. These insights may be embedded in historical and cultural perceptions that impinged on women in the period—and whose traces continue to be felt and debated today—nonetheless discussions of fashion, needlework, mosaics and shell work convey the complexities of gender ideals in the period and how they manifested in the lived and literary experiences of women, real and imagined.

Above all, a feminist material turn requires us to take seriously the meanings of women's work in eighteenth-century literature. My emphasis

on women's labour squares with Batchelor's efforts to recover the value of feminine labour to the period's fiction: 'work is … a central preoccupation of the eighteenth-century novel, and not simply, as a threat to be avoided or a hurdle to overcome'.[17] Careful attention to artefacts focuses our gaze on the presence of women's work across genres: the gleaming leather chairs in Mary Leapor's *Crumble-Hall* (cleaned by the servant's hand); Pamela's embroidered waistcoat in Samuel Richardson's novel (evidence of her elite needlework skills that, like her literacy, anticipate her leap to a higher station); the milliner's counter teaming with caps, ribbons and fans in Frances Burney's *The Witlings* (selected and sold by Mrs Wheedle). Yet recent calls for a reconsideration of work in eighteenth-century literature have focused attention on the labour and craft of men. In her study of seafaring novels, for instance, Margaret Cohen notes how maritime fiction ennobles craft and survival skills as valuable forms of labour: 'If the novel has seemed to have so little to do with work, it may reflect less the absence of work in the novel than that novel scholars do not attend to novels where work appears.'[18] Cohen singles out the 'ennoblement of feminine labor' in landlocked domestic novels that 'test their heroines' mastery of a kind of feminine practical reason'.[19] For Cohen, the feminine counterparts to reading compasses, unfurling sails, finding shelter and trading goods can be found in social knowledge, letters, diaries and household accounts, rather than in scenes in which female characters stitch, embroider, clean and care for the canvas of private life. Such activities were ubiquitous for most women of all classes in eighteenth-century life. As Elizabeth Eger has noted, Bluestocking feminists—celebrated for their intellectual and print contributions—used craftwork to cement their friendships and circles; feminine accomplishments 'formed an integral part of everyday sociability and could be carried out within the domestic sphere, often in productive parallel with individual scholarship or the shared pleasures of conversation'.[20] As Dena Goodman has related about eighteenth-century France, the imaginative and literary work of women's letters and writing depended on the presence of objects such as writing desks, secretaries (with their locked drawers and secret nooks), inkstands, paper and pens. In her words: 'The power of writing stems in part from its dual nature as both a material and an intellectual practice.'[21] Intellectual work, letters and sociability rubbed up against the material artefacts that surrounded women, laying claim on their time, hands and creativity.

The very ordinariness of feminine material culture should not obscure its literary, cultural and economic values; to do so runs the risks of replicating

the period's own equivocal assessment of objects created by women. Women's material work went unpaid or underpaid, as its constituent role within gender identities of the period obscured its economic purchase. The conflict between its cultural capital and its financial devaluation is confronted by Daniel Defoe's protagonists who make repeated complaints about their inability to support themselves and their children through the type of piece-work, mending and sewing work deemed proper for many eighteenth-century labouring women.[22] Women's 'work' meant sewing and stitching—using the tools that they kept in their 'workbags'—whereas men's 'work' evoked any number of trades and professions.[23] I argue that a feminist approach to material culture can generate a poetics of women's work, one less visceral perhaps than Robinson Crusoe's shipwreck, but still palpable and present across a range of eighteenth-century genres. Bringing together gender and material culture allows us to make visible women's business, creativity and imagination and to reconsider references, small and grand, to the crafts that they manufactured in daily life. The study of such objects renews attention to the material labour that women were expected to accomplish and what this labour might relate about time and gender, traditions of multitasking, amateur artistry and the value of craft.

The very ubiquity of women's work with material objects—especially with textiles, threads, pins and needles—can lead us too easily to overlook the relentless activity of their fingers. The print record supplies ample evidence that tensions between the needle and the pen were articulated by women writers long before Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh voiced her grim question:

> The works of women are symbolical.
> We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
> Producing what?[24]

In her 1656 autobiography, Margaret Cavendish confesses that she has been 'addicted since childhood' to writing, preferring 'to write with the pen than work with a needle'.[25] Cavendish rejects social expectations by choosing the work of language and words rather than the labour of thread, fabric and stitches. Yet she was deeply tuned to the power of material objects, textiles and appearances, as made evident by her idiosyncratic and original approach to dress (notably lamented by Samuel Pepys): 'I took great delight in attiring, fine dressing and fashions, especially such fashions as I did invent my self, not taking that pleasure in such fashions as was

invented by others: also I did dislike any should follow my Fashions, for I always took delight in a singularity, even in the accoutrements of habits.'[26] Whereas Cavendish acknowledges her neglect of the needle, she records her immense pleasure in dress, fashion and self-adornment. As Kathryn R. King reminds us, the relationship between the needle and the pen 'was not always troubled or deeply antagonistic' in the long eighteenth century; in King's persuasive view 'linked needles and pens can be seen to figure the complex relationship of the writing woman to her identity as a woman, on the one hand, and her identity as a writer, on the other'.[27] For Cavendish and the later Bluestockings, there are no easy divisions between the pen and the needle, objects and texts. Recently rhetoricians have rejected the opposition between the pen and the needle, arguing for the correspondence between them: 'we consider needlework not *as an alternative to* discourse, but as a form of discourse; that is, we think of the needle *as* the pen'.[28] I am not so willing to collapse the two tools, especially when so much needlework defies discourse—and the grammar of language and the conversation of words—in inventive and imaginative ways. Objects like the sampler above keep mum on their histories, concealing their contexts. Eighteenth-century women produced evocative, ingenious and arresting forms of needlework and other handicrafts—one need only think of Mary Delany's gifted botanical collages as evidence—yet these objects communicate in ways (via methods and aesthetics) that overlap, yet also differ from the textual representation of feminine material culture.[29] We need neither erase nor overplay the boundaries between material cultures and texts.

This essay pauses on the feminist potential of the 'material turn' in order to consider how both the needle and the pen, together but not the same, might enrich our understanding of gender, time and labour in the eighteenth century. Many of the scholars whom I cite throughout this essay come from the fields of art history and history, yet I am keen to underscore what gender and the material turn brings to our comprehension of printed texts. Literary scholars can glean many insights from the strong work of curators, historians and art historians yet our focus on language, narrative and print culture yields benefits as well, one in which a sensitivity to the word and literary aesthetics can open up new readings as well as contemplate the multiple roles of the material within the print record. To that end, the remainder of this essay juxtaposes two depictions of feminine material praxis from the mid-eighteenth century: decorative porcelain needle cases and Sarah Scott's feminist philosophical

novels. As objects of study, needle cases and novels bear little relationship to each other in their scale, medium and manufacture. I am keen, however, to bring them into conversation in order to suggest how their representations of women's material practices might yield feminist readings of women's labour.

In the 1750s and 1760s, several porcelain factories produced fanciful needle cases that pictured parts of women in their designs, as illustrated in Fig. 4. These cases were sometimes described as *étuis*, from the Old French 'to preserve, guard, keep'.[30] They often mirrored the shape of the items they protected, such as needles, bodkins and cosmetics. Similar cases were

Fig. 4 Bodkin (needle) case with lid, c. 1765, English (South Staffordshire), enamel on copper with hand-painted and gilt decoration, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Richard P. Rosenau Collection, 1975-140-145a,b

made to carry pens, but not needles and pens together.[31] This example is large enough to hold a bodkin—a fairly mundane eighteenth-century object—a large needle with a flexible set of functions.[32] Sharp bodkins could pierce fabric, whereas blunt ones were suited to more decorative purposes such as styling hair and cinching a drawstring casing. London's Chelsea porcelain factory produced a number of fanciful versions at mid-century, which were copied by other porcelain manufacturers (as in the Staffordshire example here).[33] In this case, the woman gazes directly at us, her assured glance softened by the tilt of her head and the yellow shawl (with white medallions) that covers her hair. The pink blush of her cheeks echoes the rose colour of the bodice barely visible beneath the scarf. There is no space for the suggestion of shoulders, arms and hands on the case's narrow circumference, the body parts essential for using the bodkin housed inside. Needle cases often included French phrases. In this example, the words 'Inflexible en amour c'est folie' appear just below the case's seam. It is hard to imagine a less romantic item than the needle case, but the French words immediately transform it into a token of romance, with its cautionary advice against behaving too obstinately in love. Women should behave more like their needles, capable of combining countless fabrics and ribbons together, flexible enough to move back and forth through fabric. The needle case assures us that women would be crazy not to do so. The language cements the pictorial message already related by the case: women are materialized as things via the collusion of text and image. At the same time, the case suggests the power of the material over the textual with its incorrect grammar that elides verbs and articles (*Être inflexible en amour c'est la folie*). Such verbal concision points to this English object's misuse of fashionable French, even as its narrow circumference demands verbal contraction, making text secondary to the object's design.

In other mid-century British examples, the designs of needle cases dismember the feminine body or transform it into classical allegory. One Chelsea porcelain needle case depicts Diana turning into a laurel tree.[34] The figure raises her arm to touch the leaves growing from her head, stylized into a loose triangle that mimics the profile of a high wig. Her legs, falling beneath the needle case's seam, betray just a trace of pink flesh on her green trunk. The delicate needle case moulds Diana's triumphant escape into a small handheld object, an object of novelty equal to the figure's expression of surprise. Britain was not the only country to embody women (or parts of them) in needle cases: many other eighteenth-century porcelain manufacturers used images of women in their designs, including

producers in France, Germany and China.[35] One German example, from the Meissen Manufactory, shows an arm holding a heart that has been speared with a diamond encrusted bow.[36] The needle case is inscribed with a lover's lament: 'Mon Amour O … Sa Blessure Augmente.' Another German example appears to represent a woman's leg, with a ribboned garter, embroidered stocking and floral patterned mule.[37] The motto 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' encircles the top of the case, a sly reference to the 'order of the' garter that secures the stocking in place. The appeal of cases that collapsed aesthetic scale by turning women into tiny decorative parts, condensing vast sentiment and heraldic code into finger-length dimensions indicates how easy it was—and attractive and humorous—to imagine women as ornamental covers for their ordinary tools. The needle cases demonstrate the degree to which feminine material culture could be imagined as embodied practice. Needle cases were portable objects, easily tucked into the pockets that eighteenth-century women tied on beneath their skirts or attached to a chatelaine for exterior display. These corporeal needle cases turn women not only into objects, but also into the very tools that buttressed the ideal of the domestic woman, plying a needle that was always at the ready.

These mid-century needle cases suggest how even the smallest of things advertised the collapse of women and the material; such examples underline the degree to which Sarah Scott's novels resist cultural perceptions of women *as* material objects. At the opening of *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762), the narrator George Ellison describes a rich tableau of learning and handicrafts that evokes Eger's description of Bluestocking practices; the young women mix their study of books, translation, geography and music with religious painting, landscape drawing, wood carving, engraving, gown-making and fine embroidery.[38] The bulk of Scott's novel collates the interpolated tales of the Hall's inhabitants, many of whom have fled an urbane society that prizes dress and appearance as superficial signs of feminine value. At the Hall, however, Scott outlines a more stable approach to clothes and material culture. Just as their studies balance intellectual knowledge with practical skills and artwork, Mrs Maynard and Mrs Selwyn's protégées adopt an idealized balance between fashion and simplicity: 'the same neatness, the same simplicity and cleanliness appeared in each' (p. 61) and there was nothing 'unfashionable in their appearance, except that they were free from any trumpery ornaments' (p. 61). Scott strikes a familiar note in her rejection of the excesses of fashion, one sounded many times before and after the publication of

her novel. Mrs Maynard later explains that dress constitutes the eighth of 11 rules that regulate the community at Millenium Hall: 'Their dress shall be quite plain and neat, but not particular nor uniform' (p. 116). Her women are neither disconnected from the world of fashion nor forced to standardize their self-presentation, but rather they transmit their industriousness and intellect via their resistance to superficial ornamentation.

Scott's emphasis on simple dress anticipates her interest in women's manual labour, as she builds her case for the practical skills associated with women's artefacts. Women at all levels of society exercise their manual skills, yet their productions toggle between higher and lower forms of craft according to status. The class status of women and children produce hierarchies of handicrafts and domestic work; labouring women sew and knit, whereas the women of Millenium Hall create artworks in silk threads, filigree and copperplate. At the schools for children, the girls' education mixes a range of skills and manual techniques, as Ellison observes the pupils: 'Some writing, others casting accounts, some learning lessons by heart, several employed in various sorts of needle-work, a few spinning, and others knitting' (p. 196). These links among instruction, class status and feminine skills are reaffirmed in Scott's second novel about her Millenium Hall narrator, *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), which details more fully three different types of schools envisioned by the Millenium Hall women. The first school described for 'ladies' includes no mention of feminine accomplishments. The 'second rank of schools' is designed for young women without fortunes who will marry professional men or country gentlemen with very small estates: 'The accomplishments to be taught at these schools were of a more humble kind.' The students 'were taught to make their own gowns, stays, caps, &c. exercised in cutting out linen, mending it in the best manner, and with the most housewifely contrivance' (p. 95). Lastly the women set up a school for the daughters of shopkeepers, at which 'the only part of genteel education taught, was writing and accompts'. Their education focuses on 'All sorts of needle-work' with a particular emphasis on 'economy in their own dress.' The girls train in washing and clear starching, in addition to cookery (p. 96)—the technical skills key to a life of service or small trade. The lower a student's status at each rank of school, the more her education is grounded in things, to creating and caring for the stuff of life. Scott's descriptions of instruction incorporate the often unspoken hierarchies of material culture that divided and delineated different types of craftwork and artefacts across class lines.

The History of Sir George Ellison argues that material feminine labour forms the foundation for its vision of benevolence. Scott advocates here with greater rigor for the financial rewards of feminine artefacts and the skilled labour of women. The novel recounts Ellison's life prior to and following his introduction to the ladies of Millenium Hall but also enlarges his concluding promise in that novel 'to imitate them on a smaller scale' (p. 249).[39] Scott splices together Ellison's lucrative trade and unhappy marriage in Jamaica with his return to England, his receptive response to Millenium Hall principles and his happy remarriage. Throughout, Ellison proves attuned to the labour conditions of the disenfranchised and labouring poor. While a resident of Jamaica, Ellison rejects the violence of its slave economy and strives to improve the conditions of the enslaved men and women who form part of his first wife's plantation.[40] Eve Tavor Bannet sees Ellison's Jamaican experience as shaping his later sympathy for the condition of women:

> By linking slavery on the plantations to domestic life in conjugal societies and by marking similarities between men's cruel treatment of the wives and daughters, whom they considered their property, and their cruel treatment of their slaves, Scott also prepares the ground for Ellison's exposure to the superior government of Millenium Hall.[41]

The novel touches briefly on Ellison's introduction to Millenium Hall, but focuses more squarely on how his extensive efforts to 'imitating, as far as his fortune would reach it, the benevolent system he saw exercised' there (p. 47). Ellison's various schemes of improvement underscore the value of women's skilled labour. He begins by repairing and furnishing cottages for the parish poor, but demands that elderly men keep their new homes 'neat and clean' (p. 66), rather than relying on the help of female relatives. Women must prioritize their earning power over housekeeping and Ellison believes that poor women have the advantage over men, 'it was more easy [for women] to find out profitable employment; as they could nurse children thrown upon the parish, attend the sick, do plain work, and spin and knit sufficient cloathing for themselves, and all the rest of the poor, both male and female' (p. 66). Moreover, in Ellison's cottage community, men are asked to spin and knit 'and those who could not already do it, were made to learn' (p. 66). In so doing, these men either exercise or acquire domestic skills deemed feminine for centuries. Ellison uses his charity scheme to reorganize the gender conventions of labour,

asking elderly men to contribute domestic skills and prioritizing women as family breadwinners.

By the close of the novel, Ellison, now Sir George, finds a companion in his charitable plans; Lady Ellison shares her husband's benevolent spirit, but 'Her attention was more particularly directed to her own sex' (p. 196). In addition to distributing quality stays and infant clothes without pins (to protect the bodies of parish children), she develops a scheme for every local girl 'who at fifteen was sober, modest, industrious, and cleanly'. Scott here underscores the virtue of industry as a form of feminine agency. The young women are not only rewarded for their modesty, but also for their active hands. Lady Ellison singles out her charges with a scarlet ribbon, 'which became esteemed as a great badge of honour among them'. The ribbon advertises both the morality and industriousness of 'Lady Ellison's maidens', as well as the dowry of cottage, farm animals and neat apparel that she bestows upon their marriages.[42] The scarlet ribbon gathers such force as a material code that it alters the local marriage market. A potential suitor looks first for evidence of a scarlet ribbon rather than a young woman's appearance; 'he was directed more by the top knot than by the face in his choice of wife'. Further, the scarlet ribbon functions as informal sumptuary law, cementing its cultural capital: 'if any one presumed to wear the colour to whom Lady Ellison had not given it, the outcry against her assurance and presumption was so great, that she was reduced to lay it aside' (p. 197). Throughout the narrative, Lady Ellison and her husband manage their charity through material objects, whether developing the practical skills of labouring women or advertising their support of marriageable girls via vivid, bright ribbons. Scott's novel prescribes multiple forms of feminine self-sufficiency tethered to the material objects that women wear, create and exchange.

Even as Scott returns in insistent ways to the economic values of women's material labour, her descriptions skimp on the technical details of how and what her fictional characters make to support themselves, their households and their communities. Would further narrative details undercut her commitment to the economic and social rewards of feminine manual labour? Or does she avoid the collapse of women with artefacts that relied on arguments for an essential biological difference between the sexes? Neither *Millenium Hall* nor *George Ellison* provides complete answers to these questions. Both novels, however, return to the rewards of avoiding fashion culture's excess, steering clear of the porcelain needle

cases' aesthetic collapse of women with sewing objects. In the needle cases, the female figure becomes moulded to her tools, her body transformed into the ornamental cover for a bodkin. Scott's novels evade such embodied practice by turning to the economic and social advantages of women's work. Fictional women function as the agents of their own material productions, studiously neat and modest in their apparel, committed to reworking objects with their hands. In Scott's novels, there is little evidence to support the conflation of feminine bodies with objects. Material culture means serious business, as opposed to the French phrases of fanciful porcelain cases. Scott models a feminine economy of labour and prose that together defend the material and financial meanings of women's work for the educated, the middling and the poor. Her economy of description strikes me not so much as evidence of the absence of women's work in her novels, but rather as a form of aesthetic resistance to objects such as decorative needle cases and to print culture's infinite attention to feminine surfaces. The designs of these needle cases conflate women with their needles, imagining the female body as an object of ornament, a pleasing exterior that conceals the tools of labour. Scott's relative silence on the details of women's crafts, techniques and materials evades conventional perceptions of women as things. She supplies instead extensive narrative support for the social and economic values of women's work. The comparison between material objects and their literary representation opens up not only conversations between texts and things—and how they imagined feminine material practice—but also places renewed attention on how some texts argue for a different vision of craft. In so doing, Scott's novels remind us of how printed texts critique portraits of women's relations to objects, as well as the urgency of literary debates about the varied meanings of material culture. Few literary texts and physical objects partner to produce neat and tidy insights into the period. Yet their mutual interest in imagining women's relations to the material world underscores how a feminist approach to material culture and literary labour elucidates the tensions that surround gender, work and the tactile. The unfinished sampler with which I opened this essay highlights how much more there is to be discovered about the cultural, literary and imaginative representations of feminine material culture, as well as the methods and means of labouring eighteenth-century women, why they stopped and also started again.

Notes

1. My thanks to Kieran McCulloch at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for showing me a picture of this sampler.
2. Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1984), p. 85. Parker notes as well that by 'the seventeenth century samplers were becoming educational exercises in stitchery—individual tests of skill rather than storehouses of motifs' (p. 85).
3. Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690–1740* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 126.
4. Other samplers with this hymn include Sampler, 1829, British, silk on wool canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.122.77; Sampler, nineteenth century, British, wool, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.122.319; Sampler, Ann Memmott, British, 1831, Museums Sheffield, J1956.75; Sampler, Betty Goddard, American, 1828, Cooper Hewitt Museum, 1976-100-5-b.
5. Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 216.
6. Maureen Daly Goggin, 'Introduction: threading women', in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750–1950*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 5.
7. Early groundbreaking literary studies include: Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in* The Tatler *and* The Spectator (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). Examples of a 'second generation' comprise Ileana Baird and Christine Ionescu, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Thing Theory in a Global Context: From Consumerism to Celebrity Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013); Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, ed., *Women and Material Culture, 1660–1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Tita Chico, *Designing Women: The Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005); Laura Engel, *Actresses, Accessories, and Austen: Much Ado About Muffs* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Lynn Festa, 'Personal effects: wigs and possessive individualism in the long eighteenth century', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29(2) (2005), pp. 47–90; Jonathan Lamb, *The*

Things Things Say (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). Presses too have responded via series dedicated to material culture.

8. For a summary of conceptual approaches to objects, see Daniel Miller's chapter, 'Theories of things', in *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 43–78.
9. Elaine Hedges, 'The needle or the pen: the literary rediscovery of women's textile work', in *Tradition and the Talents of Women*, ed. Florence Howe (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 338–64.
10. Ann Bermingham, 'The Picturesque and ready-to-wear femininity', in *The Politics of the Picturesque Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, ed. Peter Garside and Stephen Copley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 105.
11. Maureen Daly Goggin, 'The extra-ordinary powers of red in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century needlework', in *The Materiality of Color: The Production, Circulation, and Application of Dyes and Pigments, 1400–1800*, ed. Andrea Feeser, Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Aldershot: Ashgate 2012), p. 37.
12. Bill Brown, 'Thing theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 28(1) (2001), p. 4.
13. Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, p. 11.
14. Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 261.
15. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 290.
16. On men and style see Timothy Campbell, *Historical Style: Fashion and the New Mode of History in Britain, 1740–1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550–1850* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Peter McNeil, *'Pretty Gentlemen': Macaroni Men and the 18th-Century Fashion World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, forthcoming).
17. Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 11.
18. Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 12.
19. Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 13.
20. Elizabeth Eger, 'Paper trails and eloquent objects: Bluestocking friendship and material culture', *Parergon*, 26(2) (2009), p. 113.
21. Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 9.
22. I discuss this problem of paltry remuneration in Defoe's fiction in *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), pp. 89, 101–2.

23. On definitions of women's work and its pervasiveness, see Laurie Yager Lieb, '"The works of women are symbolical": needlework in the eighteenth century', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 10(2) (1986), pp. 28–44 (pp. 29–30). See also Cecilia Macheski, 'Penelope's daughters: images of needlework in eighteenth-century literature', in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670–1815*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 85–100.
24. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, in *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, Vol. 3, ed. Sandra Donaldson (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), Book I, ll. 456–8.
25. Margaret Cavendish, 'A true relation of my birth, breeding, and life', in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 57. For a compelling discussion of how Cavendish compares her work to tailoring, see Emily Smith, 'Genre's "phantastical garb": the fashion of form in Margaret Cavendish's *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life*', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 11(3) (2006, https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/11-3/smitcav.htm).
26. Cavendish, 'A true relation of my birth, breeding, and life', p. 60.
27. Kathryn R. King, 'Of needles and pens and women's work', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 14(1) (1995), pp. 77–93 (p. 79).
28. Heather Pristash, Inez Schaechterle and Sue Carter Wood, 'The needle as the pen: intentionality, needlework, and the production of alternate discourses of power', in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750–1950*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 13–29 (p. 14), emphasis in original.
29. On Delany, see Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg Roberts, *Mrs Delany and her Circle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
30. s.v. 'étui', *OED*.
31. Porcelain cases sometimes included bottle-stoppers in the lid, indicating their function as scent containers.
32. The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns another copy of this needle case, see Bodkin case, late eighteenth–early nineteenth century, Staffordshire, copper and enamel, 90.14.14a,b. For another example of a needle case with a woman's head enveloped in a shawl, see Needle case, mid-eighteenth century, English, enamel and metal, Museum of London, A12207. This example also includes a French inscription: 'Pour l'honeur et l'amour'.
33. For a similar example of a Chelsea needle case, see Toothpick or bodkin case and cover, c. 1759–1772, Chelsea Porcelain Factory (London), porcelain, enamels and gold, Victoria & Albert Museum, 414:266/&A-1885. The factory produced at least two other designs with female heads, one with three female heads, and cases adorned with female masquerade figures;

see G.E. Bryant, *The Chelsea Porcelain Toys* (London and Boston, MA: Medici Society, 1925), pp. 174–8. See also the Irwin Untermyer Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for additional examples. These cases could also have been used to carry toothpicks. The Chelsea factory produced a similar line of whimsical figurines for seals, tobacco stoppers and cane handles (often grouped together under the category of 'toys').

34. *Étui* or bodkin case and cover, c. 1755–1756, Chelsea Porcelain Factory (London), porcelain with gold mounts, Victoria & Albert Museum, 414:263/&A-1885.
35. See Needle case (*Étui*), c. 1752, Vincennes Manufactory (France), soft-paste porcelain and gold, Metropolitan Museum of Art; 17.190.1076; Needle case, eighteenth century, Meissen Manufactory (Germany), porcelain and gold, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.1081; Needle case, eighteenth–nineteenth century, China, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), ivory, silk, metallic thread, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 44.136.32a,b.
36. Needle case, eighteenth century, Meissen Manufactory (Germany), porcelain and gold, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.1078.
37. Needle case, eighteenth century, Meissen Manufactory (Germany), porcelain and gold, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.1079.
38. Sarah Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall*, ed. Gary Kelly (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1995), p. 59. Hereafter cited in the text. Scott's visions of industrious and labouring women lead Batchelor to argue that *Millenium Hall* constructs 'a utopian alternative to domesticity in the form of a female community founded upon women's labour' (*Women's Work*, p. 44).
39. Sarah Scott, *The History of George Ellison*, ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), p. 249. All references to this edition. See Betty Rizzo's discussion of how the George Ellison of *Millenium Hall* does not quite square with that of the sequel in her introduction to this edition, pp. xxx–xxxi.
40. Discussions of Ellison's treatment of his slaves and plantation labour include Vincent Carretta, 'Utopia limited: Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and *The History of Sir George Ellison*', *The Age of Johnson*, 5 (1992): pp. 303–25; Eve W. Stoddard, 'A serious proposal for slavery reform: Sarah Scott's *Sir George Ellison*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (1995), pp. 379–96.
41. Eve Tavor Bannet, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 169.
42. Julie McGonegal, by contrast, emphasizes the repressive side of women's gift-giving in Scott's novels, arguing that 'An economy managed by women is, according to Scott's logic, especially proficient at converting its own violent impulses into benevolent intentions': 'The tyranny of gift giving: the politics of generosity in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and *Sir George Ellison*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 19(3) (2007), p. 301.

Archipelagic Literary History: Eighteenth-Century Poetry from Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Sarah Prescott

Since the mid-1980s, the study of eighteenth-century women writers has transformed the landscape of literary studies. Feminist literary history has seemingly reached a moment of maturity where it can reflect upon its own practice and move beyond the initial stages of recovery and/or discovery of writers and texts. In addition, the emphasis on the novel as the key genre for demonstrating women's engagement in literary culture has shifted to include a range of important scholarship on a wide variety of genres and forms. Nevertheless, it remains the case that studies of eighteenth-century women's writing do not often take into account the significance of geographical location, national identity and linguistic choice for women's writing practice and production. British women's literary history in particular is mostly framed by an Anglo-centric context where 'Britain' is often used as a synonym for 'England'. In consequence, writers from Ireland, Scotland and especially Wales are either absorbed by an often unconscious Anglo-British

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bias or treated separately with regard to their national linguistic and literary traditions. The development of 'archipelagic' or 'four nations' criticism has started to devolve attention to locations and writers previously deemed geographically and significantly marginal.[1] Nevertheless, in a reflection of the dominance of the novel in earlier studies of women's literary history, 'four nations' criticism has similarly focused on fiction (especially the historical or national tale), as the key genre for uncovering national allegiance in the eighteenth century and Romantic period.[2] However, the British novel was of course resolutely Anglophone in the eighteenth century. Therefore, women who composed in the 'Celtic' languages of Britain and Ireland (Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh) are by definition excluded from discussion as their primary productions were poetic.

The research in this chapter is part of the project *Women's Poetry from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales: 1400–1800*, funded by the Leverhulme Trust.[3] The project was initially conceived in response to the lack of a genuinely inclusive and comparative archipelagic account of women's poetry across Britain and Ireland that could encompass Celtic material as well as Anglophone. The silent occlusion of women producing Celtic-language poetry in Britain and Ireland is shown by Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia's otherwise excellent *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century* that, despite the promise of its title, does not include any non-Anglophone poetry by women. The project's first objective, then, was to produce a multilinguistic anthology of poems in English, Irish, Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Ulster Scots and Welsh with parallel translations of the Celtic poetry in order to facilitate comparative analysis across a linguistic and cultural range of material.[4] In the light of Ros Ballaster's chapter on 'the place of the aesthetic in feminist literary history' in this volume, however, these plans for an anthology of women's poetry might seem retrograde. Ballaster makes the point that anthologies of women's writing 'can still only afford to include a handful of poems by any one woman writer to stand for her oeuvre as a whole'. She argues that in order for women to be in a position to be judged as writers, they would need to receive the kind of editorial attention afforded to Alexander Pope, for example, in the Twickenham edition of his works. In this respect, the *Women's Poetry Project* is doing the kind of groundwork established much earlier by anthologies such as Roger Lonsdale's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*. However, by providing translations of Celtic material not only alongside the original language but also intermixed with edited Anglophone examples means that this anthology presents an alternative view of women poets that does not focus necessarily

on introducing part of an individual writer's body of work. Indeed, many women in the Gaelic and Welsh contexts do not even have an 'oeuvre' as such, nor in many cases an authorial identity along the lines suggested by Ballaster as the first point for an aesthetic judgement call. While the *Women's Poetry* anthology will inevitably be selective, especially in its Anglophone sections, it will nevertheless offer a revisionist narrative of women's participation in poetic culture. Such revisionism will be achieved through a multilingual and comparative national approach rather than a rehabilitation or discovery of particular 'author figures'.

Therefore, while I agree with Ballaster's argument that the aesthetic is a category that finally needs serious consideration in relation to women's writing, what the *Women's Poetry* project has demonstrated thus far is that different linguistic and national contexts produce different expectations of 'value', 'authorship' and their relationship to genre, form and aesthetic judgement. Most women in the Gaelic tradition, for example, were composing in the shadow of bardic and strict metre oral traditions and for these women, and their Welsh counterparts, the Anglophone categories of professional and amateur are almost meaningless, as indeed, it could be argued, is the concept of the 'writer'. For the purposes of this chapter, my emphasis will fall on the use of one genre in the eighteenth century—elegy—and through it, a preliminary consideration of the ways in which different linguistic, national and cultural contexts inform women's poetic practice. A focus on elegiac poetry brings to the surface some of the broad differences but also the cross currents that affected the production, content and transmission of women's poetry from Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the eighteenth century. As Marie-Louise Coolahan notes in relation to women's writing in seventeenth-century Ireland: 'The value of genre as a category of analysis lies in its accentuation of affinity and correspondence. Genre allows us to locate the apparently unique or singular text alongside texts produced in the same or cognate tradition.'[5] In terms of an archipelagic approach, it is also clear that there are some intriguing intersections to be explored if we approach elegy in terms of its interactions across the three nations in question; be those interactions reciprocal or in opposition; be they informed by location, locality, language, status, politics, economics and/or religion. By looking at this body of poetry in a comparative context we are forced to ask different questions and come to potentially revisionist conclusions about the development of women's literary history in the eighteenth century that take into account both geographical reach and linguistic range.[6]

Ireland

For all three nations under discussion here, albeit to different degrees and for different reasons, the eighteenth century was defined by a shift from elite bardic and professional poetic culture to an increasingly fluid and diverse poetic scene more accommodating of the work of amateurs, poets of lower status and women. From the Tudors onwards, the social structures underpinning the status of the *fileadha* (the professional poets) were under increasing threat: 'As elite culture was destabilized, more vernacular kinds of verse began to be preserved by scribes; most particularly accentual verse, like the *caoineadh*—poetry whose metre is structured around stress rather than syllables.'[7] One result of this shift was that poems composed by women have survived as 'bardic and non-bardic verse was compiled by scribes in *duanairí*', the family poetry books that were previously the sole textual repository of bardic verse. The most famous example emerging from this shift is the work of the seventeenth-century poet Caitilín Dubh, whose five keens were preserved into *Duanaire Uí Bhriain* (*The Poem-Book of O'Brien*).[8] However, as Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha comments, although these developments opened up the field for middle-class male Gaelic poets, 'the work of Gaelic female poets in the eighteenth century seems to have had a more limited circulation, a circumstance which must have contributed to a disproportionate loss of women's writing over time'.[9] A key point to note about the keen, however, is its orality: 'The Irish *caoineadh* (anglicized as 'keen', 'keening') was chanted or sung. It was a central theatre of expression in the Irish language.'[10] The majority of surviving keens by women are directed to male figures related—as husbands, fathers, brothers—to the speaker of the lament. Through the ostensibly familial focus on male figures, the keen could, however, also become a female mouthpiece to express and disseminate political views.

Eighteenth-century keens by Irish women include 'Is mise chaill an planda dílis' ('On the Death of Her Brother, Seoirse') (1725) by Máire Ni Reachtagáin (d. 1733); 'A dhearbhráthair ó mo mhíle díth thú' ('O brother, I have lost my dear one') by Máire Ni Dhonnagáin (fl. 1760); 'An tAthair Nioclás Mac Sithigh: Caoineadh do chum a dheirfiúr' ('Father Nicholas Sheeny: A Lament Composed by his Sister') (c. 1766) by Cáit de Búrca (fl. 1766); and the most well-known 'Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire' ('The Funeral Lament for Art Ó Laoghaire') by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill (c. 1743–c.1800).[11] There is a further poem, 'Caoineadh Shéamuis Mhic Choitir' ('The Lament for Sir James Cotter') that is attributed to his nurse. Sir James Cotter was hanged in Cork in 1720 upon being charged

with the rape of a Quaker, Elizabeth Squibb.[12] Both 'Caoineadh Shéamuis Mhic Choitir' and 'An tAthair Nioclás Mac Sithigh: Caoineadh do chum a dheirfiúr' clearly have a female voice at the forefront: the old nurse who proudly reflects on the attributes of Sir James and angrily refutes the charge of rape; and the bitter and angry defence of her brother and attack on his enemies by the sister of Nicholas Sheehy. The first stanza of 'Caoineadh Shéamuis Mhic Choitir' celebrates the status and glamour of Sir James but also evokes the political context and religious divisions in Ireland at the time in relation to the English:

> Mo chéad chara tú
> Is breá thíodh hata dhuit,
> Bhíodh sráid dá glanadh dhuit,
> Bóithre dhá ngealadh dhuit,
> Cóiste ocht gcapall duit
> Is Sasanaigh ag umhlú go talamh duit,
> Is ní le taitneamh duit
> Ach le haonchorp eagla. [13]
> (My very first friend,
> You looked so well in a hat,
> With your silver-hilted sword,
> They used to clear the roads for you,
> Your coach had eight horses,
> And the English bowed down to you,
> Not that they liked you;
> They were frightened to death of you!)

Sir James (1689–1720) of County Cork was the son of the Sir James Cotter (c. 1630–1705) who was 'a leading Jacobite in the South of Ireland'.[14] As a result of the Penal Laws, Sir James the younger would have been required to receive a Protestant education and to 'repudiate his Catholic heritage as a condition of inheriting his ancestral lands' in 1705. The fact that he instead became a leading Jacobite and 'the chief hope of the Catholic Jacobite cause' in Ireland is suggested to be the reason for his hanging on what were seen as trumped-up charges.[15] The last stanza of the keen, for example, focuses vitriol on the 'pagan' (literally: 'without baptism') 'Betty Squibb' who is described as coming across the sea to destroy Sir James and, more significantly as a woman who 'never knelt to a priest/And never said her prayer' ('Nár chrom a glúin chun sagairt—Is ná dúirt riamh a paidir').

Cáit de Búrca's lament for her brother Nicholas Sheehy (1728–1766), the parish priest of Clogheen, County Tipperary, also has a political context

in addition to being presented as the grief of a sister. Sheehy was 'hanged, drawn and quartered in Clonmel, County Tipperary on 15 March 1766' and, similarly to Sir James Cotter, the charges were false and made because he was a political threat and in specific reaction to his anti-tithe activity as part of the Whiteboy movement in Tipperary in the 1760s.[16] The lament provides the context for his death, names his enemies specifically and hurls insults at them as well as dramatizing the grief and sorrow of the sister in the formulaic refrain often used at the start of a new verse: 'my long bitter sorrow/my bitter sorrow/my bitter grief and sorrow/my long, sharp grief'; as shown here in the fourth refrain, which refers to Sheehy's severed head left on display outside the prison:

Mo chreach ghéar fhada ghoirt,
A shagairt an urla ghil!
Agus ní bréag domhsa sin,
Gur bhinne liom do ghuth,
'S an ceol binn do bhí i mbarr do ghoib
Id' sheasamh os cionn coirp,
Ná an chéirseach 's ná an druid,
Ná an chuach i mbarr an toir,
Cé go mbeidh do cheann bán anocht go dubh
Ar spair an phríosúin thoir, a dhriotháir ó![17]
(My long bitter sorrow,
Priest with the shining forelock!
And I tell no lie,
The sound of your voice,
And the music you sang,
Standing over a corpse,
Was sweeter to me
Than blackbird or starling
Or the cuckoo perched high,
Although east of here tonight,
Your fair head will turn black
On a pole outside the jail,
brother dear!)

The lament serves as a multilayered memorial that works to commemorate but also to revenge: 'Its formulaic construction, elaborate invective, and naming of names ensured that the dead man's enemies, and those who had betrayed him would continue to be vilified, while the injustice perpetrated against him remained vivid in popular memory.'[18]

Gerardine Meaney notes of Irish women's literary culture in the eighteenth century that most of the poetic output was produced in a society that was 'militarily, politically, and economically defeated'.[19] The oppositional context in Ireland is clear from the keens discussed above, where many of the deaths commemorated occur as a direct result of a clash of cultures and religion between the Catholic Irish and the Protestant ascendancy, specifically as a result of the Penal Law of 1695. Meaney suggests that the eighteenth century is 'the final phase of that particular form of Irish literary culture', and that this period in history 'sees both the end of one form of literary expression for women and the beginnings of an English language literature by women, written in Ireland, initially by settler and plantation women who definitely did not consider themselves Irish, and thereafter by Anglo-Irish women who were very conscious of their hyphenated identity'.[20] As a result, there is a split between oral vernacular forms in Irish, as above, and an Anglophone literary culture as women's writing develops over the century. By contrast, vernacular Scots was enthusiastically engaged in and accompanied by an investment in and preservation of a rich and vibrant song tradition that very much defines eighteenth-century Scottish poetry. The rise of Anglophone women's poetry in Ireland, then, must be considered partly in the light of the fact that as one language was declining, 'another began to provide new opportunities for expression'.[21] However, these new opportunities were not straightforward for Anglophone Irish women writers. As Stephen C. Behrendt notes: 'Before 1770, Catholic women who wrote did so exclusively in Irish; their entry into the Anglophone publishing community by the century's end was tied to the developing debate in Ireland about nationhood and patriotism.'[22]

Anglophone elegies by eighteenth-century Irish women show a diversity paralleling those written in English by women in Scotland, Wales, and also England, and on first glance bear very little resemblance to women's keens in Irish. For example, early in the century, an elegy to a family dog, written by Mary Monck (c. 1678–1715), daughter of Robert, first Viscount Molesworth, was posthumously published in her *Poems* in 1716.[23] However, a further sub-genre of elegy that could be said to continue the keen's use of elegy for political utterance is poetry by women on the death of key public figures in Ireland, specifically the deaths and related accessions of British monarchs. A similar trend is seen in Wales in the poetry of the Hanoverian Whig, Jane Brereton (1685–1740).[24] One mid-century Unionist example is 'On the Death of his late Majesty and

on the Accession of his present Majesty to the Throne' from Dorothea DuBois' *Poems on Several Occasions by a Lady of Quality* (Dublin, 1764). The poem extols George II as a 'father' and 'friend':

> He, as a tender Parent, anxious strove
> To raise his People, and to shew his Love;
> The Monarch, and the Man, he equal wore,
> Nor, as the Monarch, priz'd himself the more:
> Thus did he live—and thus lament'd dy'd
> *Britannia*, *Scotia* and *Hibernia*'s Pride.[25]

The second half of the poem welcomes and praises George III and Frederick, Prince of Wales as continuations of the dead king's virtue so that '*Britannia*'s Genius' will guard against '*Gallic* Foes'.[26] The collection itself opens with a dedicatory poem 'To the King' dated from Dublin on 27 April 1764. DuBois' collection is interesting on a number of levels, and also includes a very different kind of elegy in the poem 'On the Death of a young Lady who was inoculated for the small-pox'.[27] However, it is the congratulatory royalist-loyalist strain shown in her work that was to become prominent in the work of Anglophone Irish women poets such as Jane Elizabeth Moore in her *Miscellaneous Poems on Various Occasions* (1796). The nationalist satirical poems of Henrietta Battier are also loyal to the British monarchy, despite her association with the United Irishman and what Stephen Behrendt calls her 'stridently anti-ministerial poems' from *The Gibbonade; or Poetical Reviewer* (1793–1794). Indeed, although her contempt for the ministers is clear, George III is still figured as a parent, as in du Bois' elegy to his father:

> Long, long, may George parental blessing give,
> To Erin's sons, and filial love receive;
> And may THAT TITLE, dreadful to the ears
> Of evil speakers—and *ignoble* peers,
> UNITED IRISHMEN—for ever be,
> A Stengthen'd term, for virtuous Liberty.[28]

By separating George from Pitt and the Tories, Battier could be seen to employ a 'rhetorical device', which afforded the author 'at least some measure of insulation against the painful consequences of political opposition by an avowedly ardent Irish patriot'.[29] However, the imminent bloodshed of the Rising of 1798 was to change the tone of the way in which women poets expressed both royalist loyalty and national patriotism into the nineteenth century.

As in Scotland and England, eighteenth-century Ireland also witnessed the rise of labouring-class Anglophone women poets; another clear departure from the elite framework of Gaelic poetic culture.[30] *Poems, By Ellen Taylor, The Irish Cottager* appeared in 1792, printed by G. Draper in Grafton Street, Dublin. Taylor was the daughter of a cottager and had worked as a servant before keeping a small school. She is presented in the introduction through the typical eighteenth-century frame of the untaught genius further informed by a feminine delicacy and sensibility in spite of her class origins: 'It now becomes almost a duty of the generous public, to prevent this beautiful field flower from being buried (like Burn's mountain daizy [*sic*]) beneath the oppressive Ploughshare of poverty, and which may be prevented by the fate of her Poems; the profits, and some liberal subscriptions, being intended for her sole use and emolument.' In the event, the volume only attracted 42 subscribes, significantly less than most other eighteenth-century women poets usually achieved.

The introduction to her 14-page collection emphasizes the many distresses Taylor suffered in her life and her role as a nurse to her brother in his last lingering illness. In keeping with this profile, the poems themselves are either elegies or elegiac in tone and subject; including a 'fragment' of a poem on the death of the brother which describes her feeling bereft after his death, 'As one who banish'd from his native Isle, Thro foreign parts to roam a poor exile'.[31] The 'signature' poem (which led to her 'discovery'), 'On seeing the Print of a Female Figure in a weeping Attitude, leaning on an Urn' is in effect also an elegy for her brother and an expression of her lonely grief at his loss. There is also an elegy written on the death of a Miss Porter who, from the internal evidence in and titles of the poems, was Taylor's mistress in the house where she was a servant. 'On Miss PORTER, who died of a Decay, the Daughter of her MASTER' is an interesting example of an elegy written by a servant to their employer; as we also see in the Scots poet Isobel Pagan's work.[32] Taylor's other elegies include one 'On the Death of Mr MARK, a Merchant in LIMERICK', which shows the poet learning of the death of a friend through a public paper, and a further poem 'On the Death of the Rev. Mr. —'. Overall, Taylor's poems are characterized by her conventional use of the rhyming couplet but her particular combination of thematic concerns and her lower-class status make for fascinating reading. On one level her poems are clearly conventionally religious in an Anglican sense, stylistically conservative and sometimes informed by classical reference and phraseology. On the other hand, the collection is specific not only to her class status but also to her locality. In 'This POEM address'd to a GENTLEMAN,

who had lent her some BOOKS' she mentions Milton and Thomson as favourite poets, referring to *Paradise Lost* but also to the way in which Thomson especially 'Despises not the Peasant's humble lot, Nor scorns to peep into the meanest cot'.[33] Her poems also refer specifically to her locality and to other parts of Ireland; she hears about the death of a friend in Limerick via a newspaper, and she writes a poem to a 'fellow servant' who has gone to Dublin, 'our grand Metropolis', to visit friends leaving Mary feeling lonely in 'The Mansion'.[34] These strands come together in 'Written by the Barrow side, where she was sent to wash Linen', which evokes her menial occupation, her melancholy, her classical learning and phrasing but also the loco-specific context (the River Barrow, south-east Ireland) of her poetic production which firmly places her in a very different relation to the Anglophone medium and anglicized style of her poetry:

> THY banks, O Barrow, sure must be
> The Muses choicest haunt;
> Else why so pleasing thus to me,
> Else why my soul enchant!
> To view they dimpled surface here,
> Fond fancy bids me stay;
> But Servitude with brow austere,
> Commands me straight away.[35]

As these examples demonstrate, Irish women poets writing in English use a recognizably English idiom, which is also true of Anglophone women poets in Wales. Although the language choice for poetry in Ireland was not as simple as a choice between Irish and English, code-switching, macaronic or hybrid linguistic idioms are less common in women's poetry than that by men.[36] The complex exception, of course, would be women using Ulster Scots, but at present there only seems to be one example, Olivia Elder (fl. 1769–1780), in the eighteenth century before we get to the work of Sarah Leech (1809–c. 1830) in the early nineteenth.[37]

Scotland

There are clear analogies between the Irish Gaelic context and women producing poetry in the Gàidhealtachd in eighteenth-century Scotland, such as the primacy of the lament, political comment and the continued use of traditional bardic paradigms and themes despite the weakening of bardic culture. From the evidence it appears that more examples of women's

poetry survived from eighteenth-century Scotland than in Ireland, mostly due to the way in which the oral tradition of song was carefully preserved by the enthusiasm of late-eighteenth century collectors in particular.[38] In addition there is a sense of formal development not found in Ireland:

> The syllabic metres with which elite women engaged evolved. New metrical forms—such as the waulking song (*òran luaidh*), sung by women in the process of fulling cloth—were developed and practiced. The Scottish tradition also preserves substantial bodies of work by individual women of whom perhaps the most accomplished were Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh (Mary MacLeod) and Sìleas na Ceapaich (Sileas MacDonald).[39]

There are also clear points of correlation between the tradition of keening in Ireland and the function of the lament in Scottish women's poetry.[40] Eighteenth-century lament poems by women in Scottish Gaelic include those by Catrìona nighean Eòghainn mhic Lachlainn (fl. 1700–1720s), Mairghread nighean Lachlainn (Margaret, Lachlan's daughter) (d. c. 1750), Jessie nighean Stiùbhart of Appin (fl. 1740s), Anna Campbell of Scalpay (fl. 1760s–1770s), and Màiri Nic Phaìl.[41] As with the examples in Irish, laments in Scottish Gaelic were strongly politicized as well as serving personal outpourings of grief. Probably the most celebrated is Mairghread nighean Lachlainn's 'Gaoir nam ban Muileach' ('The dirge of Mull's women'), which was composed in response to the death of Sir Iain Maclean of Duart (b. 1670), who died of consumption in March 1716. Maclean was a pro-Jacobite chieftain who had spent many years at Saint-Germain at the exiled court of James VII and II but returned to Britain in 1702. Although he initially expressed allegiance to George I on his succession in 1714, he remained under suspicion and his loyalty was further thrown into question by his later support for James Francis Edward Stuart. The opening verse of the 'dirge' makes clear the collective lament of the Mull women, which is channelled through the voice of Mairghread:[42]

> 'S goirt leam gaoir nam ban Muileach,
> Iad ri caoineadh 's ri tuireadh
> Gun Sir Iain an Lunnainn
> No san Fhraing air cheann turais,
> 'S trom an sac thug ort fuireach;
> Gun thu dh'fhalbh air an luingeas
> Gur h-e adhbhar ar dunach—

'S òg a choisinn thu 'n t-urram sna blàraibh,
'S òg a choisinn thu 'n t-urram sna blàraibh.
(Bitter to me is the Mull women's cry
As they mourn and lament
That Sir John's not in London
Or in France on a tour,
Heavy's the load that forced you to stay;
Your not going off with the fleet
Is the cause of our misery—
You won honour young in the battlefields,
You won honour young in the battlefields.)

Although directed at one individual, the elegy clearly has a much broader purpose to make political pro-Jacobite comment as well as to remark on the fate of the Maclean family of Duart. Mairghread composed at least 11 extant songs, all addressed to members of the Maclean family. Yet, in spite of the detail of these songs with regard to their subjects, 'we know very little about [the poet], her life, her place or date of birth or death, her ancestry or her relatives; there is even doubt about her surname'.[43]

The category of the elegiac lament in eighteenth-century Gaelic women's productions has no direct counterpart in either Scots or Anglophone poetry from Scotland. However, the pro-Jacobite sentiments of many Gaelic laments persist through the oral ballad and song tradition continued in Scots poetry and found, for example, in the work of Carolina Oliphant, Lady Nairne (1766–1845).[44] In her career, the upper-class, and educated Oliphant composed a substantial body of original 'traditional songs' that circulated by means of oral performance; she also contributed material to one of the most famous Scots song collections, *The Scots Musical Museum* (six volumes, 1787–1803). However, she did not acknowledge her authorship and was not known for her productions in her lifetime; the poems included in *The Scots Musical Museum* were submitted under the pseudonym, 'Mrs Bogan of Bogan'. The last two stanzas from 'The White Rose o' June' shows the romantic nostalgia through which her Jacobitism was expressed and the way in which political loyalty to a cause is reconfigured as longing for a lost lover:[45]

Mair fragrant and rich the red rose may be,
But there is nae spell to bind it to me —
But dear to my heart and to fond memorie,
Tho' scathed and tho' blighted the white rose may be,

O the white rose, the white rose, the white rose
o'June,
O may *he* that should wear it come back again sune!
An' oh! may the true hearts thy perils who share,
Remember'd wi' tears, and remember'd in prayer,
Whom misfortune's rude blast has sent far awa,
Fair breezes bring back sune to cottage and ha';—
Then, O sing the white rose, the white rose o' June,
An' may *he* that should wear it wear Scotland's auld croun![46]

As Margery Palmer McCulloch states: 'Lady Nairne's composed songs are part of a many-stranded tradition of the vocal music of Lowland Scotland which expressed itself in a particularly rich and interactive way in eighteenth-century Scottish life.'[47]

An earlier eighteenth-century example of the transition of the oral to print and the range of registers at play in Scotland at this time is the elegiac song 'The Flowers of the Forest', which occurs both in Scots, by Jean Elliot (1727–1805), and in an Anglo-Scottish rendition by Alison Rutherford (Mrs Cockburn).[48] As Catherine Kerrigan explains:

> A classic example of what happens to a work when it moved from an oral to a written form is 'The Flowers of the Forest'. This is a very old song about the Battle of Flodden (1513) [...] While both poems are gentrified versions of the original, in Jean Elliot's poem the Scots vocabulary and rhythm preserve element of the older tradition. On the other hand, the poem by Alison Rutherford (Mrs Cockburn) is an Anglicised and literary version which has reduced the force and vitality of the old ballad to a tinkling prettiness.[49]

The divergence between the two versions is clearest from the second verses of each poem, reproduced below (Cockburn has four verses; Elliot has five):

(Cockburn)
I've seen the Forest adorned the foremost
With flowers of the fairest—most pleasant and gay:
Full sweet was their blooming—their scent the air perfuming;
But now they are wither'd and a'wede away.

(Elliot)

At buchts, in the morning, nae blythe lads are scorning	*cattle-pens*
The lasses are lonely, and dowie, and wae;	*sad*
Nae daffin', nae gabbin', but sighing and sabbing	*d a l l y i n g , gossiping*
Ilk ane lifts her leglen, and hies her away.	*stool*

The poems are the only surviving pieces by their respective authors but it is clear to see and hear the differences between them in terms of the predominance of Scots in Elliot and the, mostly, anglicized language of Rutherford; although there are still some similarities in the use of the refrain 'a'wede away' in both and in Rutherford's used of the word 'drumly' for muddy in the third stanza. Nevertheless, Rutherford's version is more an abstract rendition with 'Fortune beguiling' (stanza 1, l. 1) providing a stark contrast to Elliot's image of the once happy now mourning lasses at their milking where their happy singing has now turned to lament 'But now they are moaning on ilka green loaning' (l. 3). Where Elliot goes on to describe the lack of men at the harvest and at shearing time in her third stanza, Rutherford instead evokes the 'Tweed's silver streams' turning darkly to mud as they roll away from the 'sunny beams' into mud and darkness. Elliot's extra fifth stanza really marks the difference between the two pieces, however, as here it is the English who, 'by guile wan the day', leaving the prime of Scottish youth 'cauld in the clay':

> Dule and wae for the order sent our lads to the Border;
> The English, for ance, by guile wan the day:
> The Flowers of the Forest, that foucht aye the foremost,
> The prime o' our land are cauld in the clay.

Despite Catherine Kerrigan's view of the relative merits of the two pieces, it is clear that they are both powerful in their own way as forms of lament for a lost generation of Scottish young men killed in battle and commemorated by these two women writers in very different yet occasionally overlapping registers. Reading the two poems in tandem also epitomizes the varying influences on Scottish women's poetry at this time and the way in which even the most anglicized poem can betray its Scottish roots. Indeed, this archipelagic mix of registers is surprisingly common in single-authored collection published by Scottish women poets. To take another eighteenth-century example: the anonymously published collections, *Poems* (c. 1785) and *Original Poems by a Lady* (1786) by Christian Carstairs (fl. 1763–1786) initially appear to be thoroughly anglicized in the use of elegy. Carstairs' elegies are mostly in a personally creative mode representing private grief within a close social group, such as 'On seeing Lady H— after the Death of a favourite Daughter'. Yet the collection also includes ballads and songs with what seems to be no sense of awkwardness between registers. Many of the poems are dated to specific Scottish

locations, but she also writes about the impact of her family's engagement with British imperialism in India.[50] Taken in context, it can be argued that Carstairs' mixture of linguistic register (also a product of the interaction between print and oral) is representative: symptomatic of the tensions but also of the mutually informative interactions between Anglophone literary culture and vernacular and idiomatic verbal cultures across the British-Irish archipelago.

Wales

As in Ireland and Scotland, Welsh women poets also benefited from the slackening of elite male bardic strictures in the period.[51] Examples range from the use of the strict-metre *cywydd* in Angharad James' (1677–1749) lament for her son Dafydd and her *englynion* in memory of her sister Catherine James, to the ballad-form songs of Susan Jones o'r Tai Hen in 'Cerdd a wneath gwraig alarnad am ei merch' ('A poem composed by a woman elegizing her daughter') (fl. 1764); Grace Roberts o Fetws-y-coed, plwyf Llangair's ballad 'Coffadwriaeth am Gaenor Hughes o Fydelith' ('In memory of Gaenor Hughes o Bydelith') (fl. 1766–1780); and Florence Jones' (fl. 1775–1800) 'few words' on the death of Emi Jones: 'Ychydig o eirie am farwolaeth Emi Jones.' What is clear across all these productions is the localized contexts from which they emerge and the fact that they uniformly eschew political comment. We see this pattern in Angharad James' poem to her son Dafydd: 'Cwyn colled Angharad James ar ôl ei mab D[afydd] W[iliam]' (Angharad's lament for the loss of her son Dafydd Wiliam, 1729). Angharad James was born into a comfortably wealthy yeoman farming family of Gelli Ffrydiau in the Nantlle Valley in Caernarfonshire.[52] After her marriage to William Prichard she lived with him on his rented farm on the Gwydir estate in Penamnen Valley, Dolwyddelan, north-east Wales. Ten poems by James survive, mostly free-metre poems set to popular tunes. In addition to her own productions, she also produced the 'Llyfr Coch Angharad James' ('Angharad James' Red Book'), in which she collected and transcribed manuscripts of Welsh poetry. The book itself is lost; Nia Powell notes that it may have last been seen in the mid-1800s; the last reference to it is 1861.[53] However, what does survive is a manuscript that lists the contents of the volume showing that James transcribed work by more than 100 poets such as Iolo Goch, Dafydd ap Gwilim, and Siôn Tudwr.[54] The existence of the Red Book is evidence that a woman from a wealthy yeoman class engaged in localized

literary circles and had access to bardic poetry as a poetic curator as well as creator. The two activities were mutually informative as James herself practised strict-metre poetry, historically the preserve of the professional bardic guilds, as the elegy below demonstrates. Her practice raises interesting questions about the extent to which the demise of strict metre could have enabled a wider range of women to engage in poetic activity in Welsh while simultaneously informing their practice.

The lament for Dafydd is a strict-metre *cywydd*, which was one of the most commonly practised bardic forms, especially in terms of the elegy. However, James uses strict-metre to write what is a very personal expression of grief by a mother on the premature death of her son in the local context of her family status and the added loss of her husband. Despite the traditional strict-metre form this is very different from the public, national and political elements of the laments in Scottish Gaelic and the Irish keens; although it too is by a woman addressed to male members of the family in her role as grieving mother and widow. The poem centres on the conceit of a beautiful garden in which Dafydd grew and blossomed as the main shoot/hope of the family and symbolic of their local status in the Penamnen Valley:

Yr oedd gardd o iraidd goed,
Fwyngu, yn llawn o fangoed,
Ddifyr iawn, lawn eleni,
Ddydd a wn, o'm eiddo i.
Torrwyd o'm gardd yr hardda'
Impyn sâd o dyfiad da;
Impyn pêr, un tyner teg,
Ar ei godiad, rym gywirdeg,
Yn gyff'lybol, weddol wych,
Ar fyr, i dyfu'n fawrwych.
Lili 'ngardd, a hardd oedd hwn,
Penna[1] cysur, pe cawswn:
Pen congol, pen ysgol oedd,
Pen y glod, pinegl ydoedd;
Pen fy ngwinllan wiwlan wedd,
Union, a phen fy annedd;
Pen adail impyn ydoedd,
Alpsen Penamnen a oedd. [55]
(There was a garden of green trees,
mild and dear and full of small plants,

very pleasant, full this year,
a day [or time] I have known, that belonged to me.
Cut from my garden was the most beautiful
solid shoot
(a tender one and fair),
Growing (strong and handsome,
comely and fine), likely
shortly to grow big and splendid
He was the Lilly of my garden, and he was handsome,
my principal comfort, should I have had him;
cornerstone, he was the best scholar,
high in esteem, he was the very pinnacle;
he was the head of my fair vineyard/orchard,
[he was] honest and the head of my household.
He was the main shoot/scion of my house,
He was the pinnacle of Penamnen.)

James' elegy shows a range of influences within the *cywydd* that mix together conceits from English lyrical poetry with the strict-metre form and her own personal grief: 'Angharad's art thus combines an appreciation of the past with knowledge of more modern poetic genres.'[56]

While Anglophone Welsh women writers such as Jane Brereton and Anne Hughes Penny shared Angharad James' antiquarian interests in the Welsh bardic past, there is no evidence of women writing in English from Wales trying to approximate bardic metre or Welsh-language grammatical constructions in their poetry. In this respect, Anglophone Welsh poets are similar to their Irish counterparts in that the sense of national distinctiveness is conveyed more regularly through the depiction of social networks and the evocation of local places. Anglophone Welsh women poets did produce elegies to public figures but also used the genre to explore more personal or familial grief, often in the same volume. Jane Brereton's 1744 collection, for example, includes the personal and reflective 'A Thought. Occasion'd by the Death of a Friend' as well as a range of Cambro-British politically inflected poems addressed to the monarch in anticipation of du Bois and Moore in Ireland.[57] Jane Cave (1754–1813) used the genre to make her allegiance to Methodism clear in the mid-eighteenth century but she also wrote elegies in a more personal context too and her *Poems on Various Subjects* (1783), which went through various editions, is a mixture of topics such as childbirth and social and family networks alongside more abstract poems on religion and death as well as

verse on public figures and public events.[58] Her 1783 collection contains a designated section for 'Elegaic Poems', which contains ten poems ranging from an elegy to the leader of the Methodist movement in Wales, Howel Harris, to a poem 'On the Death of the Author's Mother'. Given her roots in her birthplace of Brecon, South Wales, and her family connections to the Welsh Methodists, it is not surprising that the elegy reveals a personal connection to Harris as well as an acknowledgement of his public profile. Through her elegy to Harris, Cave is thus successful in praising a male figure in her life but is also using his memorial to further the Methodist cause, an approach she continues in a further elegy to the famous Methodist preacher George Whitefield, 'On the Much Lamented DEATH of the Rev. Mr. WHITFIELD'.[59] Although these elegies clearly stem from a Welsh context, Cave's practice is closer to her Anglophone Irish and Scottish counterparts than women writing in Welsh. Such a mixture of topics on difference social scales, which we also find in Irish and Scottish Anglophone poetry, would be very unusual in Welsh language women's poetry mostly due to the different size and makeup of the audience. The closest example of a Welsh-language Methodist woman poet is Ann Griffith (1776–1805). Yet in complete contrast to Cave's public use of elegy, Griffith's (free-metre) hymns were not written down but remembered by her maid, Ruth Evans, and related to her husband after Ann's death.[60]

A comparative account of elegy across different national contexts and language groups reveals some of the broad differences yet also archipelagic points of intersection between women's poetry in Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the eighteenth century. Indeed, despite the diverse locations of production, a common theme that emerges strongly is women poets' response to their place in structures of local and national political belonging albeit through very different uses of poetic metre, linguistic register and socio-political scale. Nevertheless, the context for these responses is often sharply delineated. For the women of the Gàidhealtachd in Scotland, grief is localized, clan-based but also politicized and formalized. Similarly for Irish women poets, laments are socially and politically inflected in a manner that has little connection to the exclusively familial circles of grief evoked by Anglophone poets in all three nations. In Wales, elegy is similarly localized, but the use of strict metre in Welsh verse implicitly draws out private grief into a broader terrain of bardic lament and a national tradition of elegiac song. All these factors fundamentally impact on the question of aesthetic value and emphasize the necessity, even now, for

an anthology of the type the project is producing. If this comparative cross-national and multilinguistic context is not taken into account, on what terms do we decide which poems are especially fine, worthy of editorial scrutiny or further study? The fact that we cannot even ascribe a definitive surname to at least one of the poets discussed here (Mairghread nighean Lachlainn) suggests that a different approach is needed to address the question of value than that which elevates a particular poet's oeuvre. Questions instead are raised about context and authenticity. Do we prefer Alison Rutherford's (implicitly debased in Kerrigan's reading) anglicization of a song lamenting the Battle of Flodden or the Scots version of Jean Elliot who at least, it is assumed, approximates elements of an 'older tradition'? The lines of judgement are inflected here in ways that in fact reverse expectation and privilege forms closer to oral production than that of manuscript or print and thus necessitate different ways of reading, appreciating and judging. Indeed, if pushed to make an aesthetic judgement along the lines Ballaster suggests as to which poet or poem we would single out as especially 'fine', we might well turn to those that survive in Scottish Gaelic, Irish and Welsh. Although we know very little about the women who produced them or the circumstances of composition, the 'Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire', 'Gaoir nam ban Muileach' or 'Cwyn colled Angharad James ar ôl ei mab Dafydd Wiliam' may in fact emerge as the high points of women's poetic achievement in the eighteenth century.

Notes

1. The key works are in the early modern period: John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics, 1603–1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Kate Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
2. For example, Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
3. The team comprises: Sarah Prescott (UCD, Dublin); Cathryn Charnell-White (Aberystwyth); Kate Mathis (Edinburgh); Sarah Dunnigan (Edinburgh); Marie-Louise Coolahan (NUI Galway); Wes Hamrick (NUI Galway).
4. Again the only precedent is in the early modern period: Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, eds., *Early Modern Women Poets: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
5. Marie-Louise Coolahan, 'Women's writing in seventeenth-century Ireland', *Literature Compass*, 7(12) (2010), pp. 1049–61.

6. The team is producing an anthology of selected poems (edited and translated into English) and an accompanying critical study for the period 1400–1800.
7. Marie-Louise Coolahan, *Women, Writing, and Language in Early Modern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 16.
8. Coolahan, 'Women's writing in seventeenth-century Ireland', p. 1052.
9. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Courts and Coteries II: c. 1500–1800', in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 4, ed. Angela Bourke, Siobhán Kilfeather, Maria Luddy, Margaret Mac Curtain, Gerardine Meaney, Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, Mary O'Dowd and Clair Wills (Cork: Cork University Press in association with Field Day), p. 359.
10. Angela Bourke, 'Lamenting the Dead', in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish* Writing, p. 1365.
11. Apart from 'A dhearbhráthair ó mo mhíle díth thú', all these poems are translated in Bourke et al., eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 4. 'Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire' is a long poem that is seen 'as the pinnacle of Irish women's literary achievement in the eighteenth century' and is a late example of the oral lament 'composed in performance' (p. 1372). Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill was the wife of Art Ó Laoghaire who was shot dead on 4 May 1773.
12. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. IV, pp. 1367–8.
13. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. IV, p. 1368.
14. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. IV, p. 1367.
15. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. IV, p. 1367.
16. 'The Whiteboy movement, which began in County Tipperary in 1761, used secrecy and violent action to oppose oppressive policies, such as the fencing of common land and the imposition of tithes', Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing IV*, note 2, p. 136.
17. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. IV, pp. 1370–1.
18. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. IV, p. 1369.
19. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. V, p. 765.
20. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. V, p. 765.
21. Bourke et al., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. V, p. 765.
22. Stephen C. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 248.
23. Reprinted in Andrew Carpenter, ed., *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), pp. 75–6.
24. See Sarah Prescott, 'The Cambrian muse: Welsh identity and Hanoverian loyalty in the poems of Jane Brereton (1685–1740)', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38(4) (2005), pp. 535–54 and *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 2008).

25. Dorothea DuBois, *Poems on Several Occasions by a Lady of Quality* (Dublin, 1764), p. 29.
26. DuBois, *Poems on Several Occasions*, pp. 30, 31.
27. DuBois, *Poems on Several Occasions*, pp. 44–7.
28. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community*, p. 271, emphasis in original.
29. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community*, p. 271.
30. A more famous Scottish example is Janet Little, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, the Scotch Milkmaid* (Air, 1792). The collection includes one (anglicized) elegy where Little impersonates the voice of the grieving husband, 'Amanda: An Elegy on the Death of Mrs. — Personating her Husband', pp. 83–5.
31. Ellen Taylor, *Poems, By Ellen Taylor, The Irish Cottager* (Dublin: G. Draper, 1792), p. 3.
32. See Isabel Pagan, 'McLellan's Lament for his Master's Death', in *A Collection of Songs and Poems on Several Occasions* (Glasgow, 1803).
33. Taylor, *Poems*, p. 7.
34. Taylor, *Poems*, p. 13. Andrew Carpenter identifies the house where she was employed as a maid as being near Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny. *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, p. 473.
35. Taylor, *Poems*, p. 8, stanzas 1–2.
36. See Carpenter, *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, pp. 6–23.
37. An example of Elder's work is printed in Carpenter, *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, but is not in Ulster Scots, p. 343. The unpublished manuscript of her poetry in the National Library of Ireland (NLI MS 23254) reveals her writing within a circle of women friends in Co. Derry in the 1760s. Sarah Leech's poetry is printed in Frank Ferguson (ed.) *Ulster-Scots Writing* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008).
38. Such as the Revd Ewan MacDiarmid and Revd James Maclagan who were engaged in committing the oral traditions to writing. The earliest printed anthology of Gaelic poetry was Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's (Alexander MacDonald's) *Ais-Eiridh na Sean Chánoin Albannaich* ('The resurrection of the ancient Scottish language') in 1751, and the earliest to contain the work of women poets was his son Ranald's volume, *Comh-chruinneachidh Orannaigh Gaidhealach* (usually known as the Eigg Collection), in 1776. I am grateful to Kate Mathis for providing these references.
39. Coolahan, 'Women's writing in seventeenth-century Ireland', p. 1052. See also Anne C. Frater, 'Women of the Gàidhealtachd and their songs to 1750', in *Women in Scotland c. 1100–1750*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), pp. 67–94.

40. For the central place of elegy and lament poetry in Gaelic culture see Joanna Martin and Kate L. Mathis, 'Elegy and commemorative writing', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Literature, 1400–1650*, ed. Nicola Royan (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2016).
41. Many other examples are not associated with named authors. For Màiri Nic Phaìl, whose only surviving elegy compares the deaths of her foster-son and her biological son in the same accident, see Anne Frater, '*Clann* and clan: children of the Gaelic nobility, c. 1500–c. 1800', in *Children and Youth in Pre-Modern Scotland*, ed. Janay Nugent and Elizabeth Ewan (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), pp. 92–3.
42. Trans. Ronald Black, *An Lasair: Anthology of 18th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse* (Edinburgh, 2001) pp. 60 and 61. Black's text is taken from W.J. Watson, *Bardachd Gàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry 1550–1900* (Stirling: A Learmonth & Sons, 1959), pp. 133–9. I am grateful to Kate Mathis for providing these references.
43. Ó Baoill, *Mairghread nighean Lachlainn*, p. 13.
44. Caroline Oliphant, *Life and Songs of the Baroness Nairne with a Memoir and Poems of Caroline Oliphant the Younger*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Rogers (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1896).
45. See also her famous Jacobite song 'Will ye no come back again', printed in Catherine Kerrigan (ed.), *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 179–80.
46. Oliphant, *Life and Songs of the Baroness Nairne*, pp. 138–9, p, 39.
47. Margery Palmer McCulloch, 'Women, poetry and song in eighteenth-century Lowland Scotland', *Women's Writing*, 10(3) (2003), p. 467.
48. Both are printed in Kerrigan, *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, pp. 162–3. All line references are cited parenthetically in the text.
49. Kerrigan, *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, p. 6.
50. Locations include Burntisland Castle, Kinross, Kinross-House, Pitfirren and Edinburgh.
51. Nia Powell calculates: 'Of 4000 entries in the index to Welsh strict-metre poetry in manuscripts before 1800, a mere thirty-nine represent women who composed in strict metre.' However, 'By contrast the eighteenth century has been called a period of "renaissance" in the strict metres'; 'Women and strict-metre poetry in Wales', in *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*, ed. Michael Roberts and Simone Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 129, 140.
52. Nia Powell, 'Women and strict-metre poetry in Wales', pp. 141–2.
53. Nia Powell, 'Women and strict-metre poetry in Wales', p. 143.
54. NLW MS 10257 B Llyfr Coch Angharad James ff. 78–86.
55. Cardiff MS 64, 361 and Cardiff MS 84,45. Translation Cathryn Charnell-White.

The Welsh text is edited by Charnell-White in *Beirdd Ceridwen: Blodeugerdd Barddas o ganu Menywod hyd tua 1800* (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 2005), pp. 159–61.

56. Nia Powell, 'Women and strict-metre poetry in Wales', p. 142.
57. Jane Brereton, *Poems on Several Occasions: by Mrs Jane Brereton. With Letters to her Friends, and An Account of her Life* (London: Edw. Cave, 1744)
58. See Norbert Schürer, 'Jane Cave Winscom: provincial poetry and the metropolitan connection', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36(3) (2013), pp. 415–31.
59. See Sarah Prescott, 'Anglophone Welsh women's poetry 1750–84: Jane Cave and Anne Penny', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750–1830*, ed. Jacqueline M. Labbe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 102–24 and Catherine Brennan, *Angers, Fantasies and Ghostly Fears: Nineteenth-Century Women from Wales and English-Language Poetry* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 2003).
60. The hymns are printed in Thomas Charles (ed.), *Casgliad o Hymnau* (Bala, 1806).

The 'Biographical Impulse' and Pan-European Women's Writing

Gillian Dow

> She uses neither her own name nor one that she has chosen. Her stories are not reducible to her; rather, they are written from within a tradition that encompasses her and at the same time allows her to express herself.
>
> Elena Ferrante, *The Guardian*, 16 October 2015

So writes the Italian novelist Elena Ferrante—the pseudonymous author of the critically acclaimed 'Neapolitan' series—about Jane Austen's anonymity. In singling out Austen's 'choice' to remain 'a Lady' on publication, Ferrante deals anachronistically with the literary marketplace in England in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. As Jennie Batchelor explores in this collection, the question of anonymity and pseudonymity is a vexed and complex one for women throughout our period: book historians in recent decades have demonstrated that anonymity was standard when Austen herself was publishing. Ferrante's article serves rather as a passionate assertion of her own right to anonymity in the twenty-first century, and as an introduction to her own love of Austen. Even while Ferrante defends a woman writer's right to remain unknown, her knowledge of and interest in the writer's life intrudes when she writes of Austen's 'lady narrator'. In Ferrante's words, 'the disorderly world of

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the everyday—interrupts her, forcing her to hide the pages'. No matter how fully Ferrante seems to have rejected the biographical impulse in her reading of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)—and her article takes in a broad sweep of classical European fiction with specific examples from Goethe and Tolstoy—with this reference, we return to the biographical commonplaces. We are back at the Austens' home in Chawton, back to the creaking door interrupting the creative genius' pen. We cannot un-know what we know (or what we think we know) about the woman behind the writing. Many readers, if not Ferrante herself, would not wish to: as Terry Castle wrote 20 years ago, in her infamous review of Austen's letters edited by Deirdre Le Faye, readers of Austen's fiction are 'hungry for a sense of the author's inner life'.[1] And these readers still include the most hardened and dedicated of literary theorists.

In a recent *Vanity Fair* interview 'The mysterious, anonymous author Elena Ferrante on the conclusion of her Neapolitan novels', Ferrante railed against the tendency in both the publishing industry and the media to 'shut women who write away in a literary gynaeceum'.[2] Like many women writers before her, she finds this reductive: 'there are good women writers, not so good ones, and some great ones, but they all exist within the area reserved for the female sex, they must only address certain themes and in certain tones that the male tradition considers suitable for the female gender'. This unknown Italian woman writer writing on an English woman writer, and about the tradition of writing about women's writing more generally, serves as a convenient shorthand to set out what this chapter will attempt to map out and explore: the biographical impulse in transnational women's writing, the impulse, when writing their own history, and literary history, for women to look beyond their own national boundaries to examples from other nations. For despite individual concerns about privileging the author above the sex, the biographical impulse has been crucial to the Anglo-American feminist recovery project. And despite the oft-repeated cry among specialists of British women's writing that the recovery project is, or may soon be, or indeed *should* be, over, the biographical impulse is still crucial to the recovery of the tradition of women's writing elsewhere in Europe today.

Biography, as a discipline, was felt to be in need of defence in the closing decades of the twentieth century, with tensions between more theoretical approaches and the writing of lives. 'Why biography?' an edited collection entitled *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography* by Peter France and William St Clair asked in 2002. The editors and contributors took as their starting

point that in the twentieth century, literary biography was an increasingly discredited genre in the academy, despite its immense popularity with what Virginia Woolf famously called 'common readers'. The whole of *Mapping Lives* is an attempt to 'reclaim' biography as a serious branch of literary criticism. As France and St Clair put it neatly in their introduction, 'often biographies of poets prove more attractive than the poems themselves, and it is against this all-too-human tendency to prefer life to letters that so much twentieth-century literary theory, from Russian Formalism to post-Structuralism, rejected the "biographical fallacy"'.[3] The resulting essays, in one way or another, argue a case for biography as a genuine humanist discipline, one with classical roots and a long and venerable tradition.

France and St Clair's collection focuses very little, however, on the writing of women's lives. Just one essay, by Kay Ferres, looks at gender and biography, tracing 'the intersection of life and art', a central theme to feminist work in history, literary studies and biography.[4] A large portion of Ferres' essay focuses on Ellen Moers' 1976 *Literary Women* as 'an unconventional kind of collective biography', in which the individual is not privileged.[5] What Ferres does not stress—although it is implicit in her critique—is that Moers' 'collective biography' is a collective *pan-European* biography, where British, French and American women are linked through 'the fact of their sex', as Moers herself puts it in her introduction.[6] Yet this is what makes Moers' work somewhat unusual for its time. While feminist literary historians were drawing up national accounts of new literary canons in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s—often going to great lengths to stress that the history of *German* women's writing was not the history of *French* women's writing, which was not the history of *British* women's writing, and so on—Moers wanted to claim the importance of sex over nation. She was not the first to do so.

In this chapter, I want to trace the biographical impulse to write women's lives by taking a pan-European approach, an approach that endured throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Heavily theorized accounts of literary history have scorned what they have considered as 'amateur' approaches to literature that privileges the life alongside the writing, and early bio-bibliographical surveys of women by women have, as a result, been largely neglected. Re-examining them—and their contemporary and subsequent reception—changes how we look at the history of European women's writing, and complicates easy assumptions about how far the recovery project has come, and what remains to be accomplished.

Pageants of Great Women: From Boccaccio to the *Bloomsbury Guide*

> What of the keen de Staël? Quick of tongue,
> polished of pen? Of Manon Roland, what—
> Leader of men, unconquered even in death?
> Boast of romancers—'twas a woman's hand
> That penned a novel first—de Scudéry's!
> And on her follow her disciples twain,
> English Jane Austen and George Sand of France.

Cicely Hamilton's *A Pageant of Great Women* (1910, cited above) uses the voice of 52 notable women to make an intervention in the suffrage campaign. Hamilton herself was a founder-member of the Women Writers' Suffrage League, and her pageant draws together a pan-European cast, tracing links between them. Her focus, for the 'learned ladies', is predominantly on the long eighteenth century. For Hamilton, Jane Austen and George Sand are the 'disciples' of Scudéry, and of the novel tradition the French woman started in the seventeenth century: Scudéry is 'first', even if the fame of her disciples has now eclipsed her own. Like Vanessa Bell's 1933 project to create a dinner service of 'Famous Ladies' for the new director of the National Gallery, Kenneth Clark, and the second-wave feminist projects that became Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (first exhibited 1979), or Caryl Churchill's play *Top Girls* (first performed 1982), this is twenty-first-century art as polemic.[7] In Hamilton's *Pageant*, Joan of Arc appears alongside Catherine the Great; Vanessa Bell has dinner plates with portraits of Christina of Sweden and Charlotte Brontë; Caryl Churchill has Pope Joan and Lady Nijo as guests at *her* dinner party; Judy Chicago seats Eleanor of Aquitaine at the same table as Artemisia Gentileschi, Mary Wollstonecraft next to Sojourner Truth. Temporal and national boundaries are crossed in these tributes to an empowered female tradition. Of course, as scholars of women's writing have been quick to observe in the past 15 to 20 years, the twentieth-century emphasis on the 'feminist' has been at the expense of the conservative and sentimental. Sophie Cottin, in these twentieth-century rewritings, loses out to Mary Wollstonecraft; Hannah More to Germaine de Staël; Luise Gottsched to Josefa Amar y Borbón.

And yet these pan-European bio-bibliographical accounts by women of women have roots much further back than the first- and second-wave feminist rewritings of the twentieth century, and—to an extent—were always polemic. Giovanni Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (*Famous Women*, 1361–1375) may have been, as Virginia Brown has claimed, 'the fountainhead of the European tradition of female biography', but his is just one of a great many works of this nature in the centuries to follow, many of which were female-authored.[8] The earliest of these female-authored 'biographies' is now recognized to be Christine de Pisan's *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (*The Book of the City of Ladies*, 1405), a work that argues the merits of illustrious women through history and mythology, and classifies their role in contemporary society. Pisan was a key interventionist in the *Querelle des Femmes*, a genuine debate about women's nature, and her role in society. Far more than a mere reorganization of Boccaccio's sources, the significance of Pisan's *Le Livre de la cite des dames* as a proto-feminist text is now recognized—although still far more in Anglo-American scholarship on medieval women's writing than in Christine de Pisan's native France.

The full flourishing of women writing women's lives did not become apparent until the long eighteenth century. Amy Culley, in her 2014 *British Women's Life Writing, 1760–1840* expresses a particular interest in 'the rare occasions when friendship or identification works across … national boundaries'.[9] In fact, these border crossings were much less rare than Culley suggests. Many notable women participated in what some scholars in continental Europe have identified as a pan-European proto-feminist project. This desire to look across borders to further their own learning and the cause of female education more generally can be neatly encapsulated in the correspondence between the learned Dutch scholar and linguist Anna Maria van Schurman and Lady Dorothy Moore, the Anglo-Irishwoman who travelled to the Netherlands as a governess in the mid-seventeenth century. 'I have heard about you, my beloved friend, honourable Lady,' writes van Schurman to Moore. The resulting correspondence continued in Latin and Hebrew, and put van Schurman in contact with Bathsua Makin: her network also included Marie le Jars de Gournay, whose *De l'égalité des hommes et des femmes* was published in 1622, the Danish Birgitte Thott, whose translation of Seneca's *Philosophus* was published in 1658—the first complete translation of a classical author into Danish—and many more scholarly women of her own period.[10] Van Schurman also corresponded with Madeleine de Scudéry, another early

French woman to write a compilation of female biographies: her 1642 *Les Femmes illustres, ou les harangues héroïques* contains voices of ancient figures, arguing against men and about their position in history.

The turn to book historical approaches in recent years has put increasing emphasis on the private library collection. Here, we may be drawn to see the early modern private collection as a bio-bibliographical compilation, and to see a pan-European collection no matter the country in which the collection is to be found. The essay by Marie-Louise Coolahan and Mark Empey in this book examines the female authors represented in ten auction catalogues in the seventeenth century, and shows a cross-channel representation of female-authored texts in this period: Scudéry, la Fayette and Villedieu stand alongside Behn, Hannah Wolley, Anna Weamys and Katherine Philips. This trend certainly continued throughout the long eighteenth century. There are a remarkable number of French women writers on English library shelves dating from that period, or recorded in library catalogues for collections that no longer exist intact. The Corvey Library, in Germany, famously housed the largest collection of popular fiction in English published between 1798 and 1834 in existence, a great deal of which was female-authored: the Sheffield Hallam Corvey project explored the British women writers in that collection. The 1818 catalogue for the Godmersham Park Library collection in Kent, once belonging to Jane Austen's brother Edward Knight, records numerous volumes of French women's memoirs. Ownership, of course, does not mean a text was read: in the case of an 1809 edition of Madame de Maintenon's *Memoirs* held in the Godmersham Park Library, there is little sign the volumes have been pored over in the way that someone went through the Godmersham copy of Mary Brunton's *Self Control* (1811).[11]

Present on library shelves and in bio-bibliographical compilations, Scudéry's romances—works such as *Ibrahim, ou l'illustre Bassa* (1641) and *Clélie, histoire romaine* (1654–1660)—were popular and influential across Europe. So, too, was her *Femmes illustres*: eight French editions in 25 years (1642–1667), two German editions (1654 and 1659), and three English editions (1693, 1714 and 1728).[12] Scudéry's Cleopatra, whose 'argument' against Mark Anthony features as one of the 'harangues', must surely have inspired Sarah Fielding in her *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1752): just one of the cross-channel literary connections made by French and English women in the long eighteenth century.

The writing of biography and collective 'lives' is a major component of a Western European Enlightenment project that emphasizes rational

dissent in the eighteenth century. But the earliest compilation to focus exclusively on women *writers* by a woman was written neither in French nor in English, but in Italian. Luisa Bergalli's *Componimenti delle più illustre rimatrici d'ogni secolo* (*Compositions of the Most Illustrious Female Rhymers of Every Century*) was published in Venice in 1726. Although the title of the work gives no sense of a national agenda, it has one, even in an age when a sense of a modern Italy as we now understand it was in the future. Bergalli focuses exclusively on *Italian* women poets. This signals a change: it is a deliberate emphasis on writing national literary histories that is one of the key emerging themes in bio-bibliographical compilations of the later eighteenth century.

In a 2014 essay focusing on these bio-bibliographical studies as a transnational genre, Hilde Hoogenboom examines more than 100 compilations focusing on women from Italy, France, England, Denmark, Germany and Russia, published over six centuries. Hoogenboom suggests that around 1700, three separate narratives develop that place women at the centre of debates about national literatures:

> Compilers created separate collections of women writers by nation and language as representative of a nation's enlightenment. Literary histories of newly envisioned nation states, however, included mainly men, writers in their national literatures. Finally, as literary histories naturally focused on their own literatures, they eliminated the often significant, even overwhelming presence of foreign literatures.[13]

This is significant, and has had long-lasting effects on the story of the rise of the novel in particular. Foreign women writers and translators have been excluded from national accounts of the novel until very recently: there has been little place for Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni in the story of the British novel in the 1750s, or for Ann Radcliffe in the story of the French novel of the 1790s, or for the Dutch writer Isabelle de Charrière, publishing in French from Switzerland, in the story of any novel, anywhere. Work has been done—by Katherine Astbury, Ros Ballaster, Mary Helen McMurran, Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, to name a few—to complicate the national tales told by eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers and critics and to place women's writing in a feminized cosmopolitan space. And Claire Buck's introduction, in the *Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature* (1992) sets a broad and ambitious agenda: 'to bring together … information about writing by women from all periods and from the whole world', since 'English-speaking countries know far

too little about the wealth of writing by women of their own nationality' and 'the problem has been exacerbated in the case of writing in foreign languages'.[14] Since 1992, scholars of women's writing have worked hard to ensure that English-speaking countries know much more about the wealth of writing by women in English: by editing their texts, including their work in anthologies, teaching them to their undergraduate students and more.

But the case of women's writing in many other languages has barely progressed, despite the valiant efforts of several projects that have received funding from the European Union. Women's writing is still sadly neglected—not taught, researched, edited or indeed much read—in too many countries. To put it quite simply, in many countries, we just don't know who the women writing were—down to the most basic of dates of birth and death, and a list of publications. We don't know who read them or who they influenced, either inside or outside their country of birth or residence. Even in the case of the British Isles, Sarah Prescott's essay in this volume demonstrates convincingly that the Scottish, Irish and Welsh poetic traditions have been lost to an account that privileges work in English, and in prose. The 'lost' traditions of Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Scandinavia and smaller linguistic groupings also need to be championed, and indeed integrated into a European account of women's writing. Large-scale quantitative research is needed, alongside a focus on reception, to recover these—and other—contributions. This work is hampered by national agendas that still dominate in a landscape where scholarship is driven—and evaluated—by disciplinary agendas and nationally set objectives.

Female Biography and *De l'influence des femmes*: Alternative Writings of Women's Lives

A nationalist agenda certainly drove George Ballard, in his much-discussed *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (1752), to make the assertion that 'the present age hath produced a great number of excellent biographers', and to lament that 'ingenious women' of England 'have been passed by in silence' by them.[15] Learned foreigners have done this service to the women of their nation, and Ballard stakes the claim for the necessity of his work with the extraordinary statement that 'England hath produced more women famous for literary accomplishments, than any other nation in Europe'—extraordinary, because at the time of his writing, the trailblazers were predominantly French.

In the eighteenth century, for example, it was French women who picked up the torch and wrote national histories of French women's writing before British women were doing so for their own countrywomen. Louise-Félicité Kéralio's unfinished *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages français composés par des femmes* (1786–1788) was an extremely ambitious encyclopaedic project intended to anthologize as well as analyse women's literary contributions. It ran into problems in the sections devoted to the seventeenth century, however: the final voluminous volumes are devoted to Madame de Sévigné's life, and reprinting her celebrated correspondence. And then, with the turmoil of the 1790s, the stakes for the writing of women's lives, and of women's literary history, increased dramatically.

Two works of bio-bibliographical compilation, appearing within less than a decade of each other at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and on either side of the Channel, explore the tensions created by a rising nationalism. In states whose borders were being re-envisioned by the Napoleonic armies, and where the need was felt for 'national biographies', Mary Hays's *Female Biography; or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of All Ages and Countries* (1803) and Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis's *De l'influence des femmes sur la literature Française* (1811) are worth examining for their attempts to write women's lives. These are very different works in terms of scope—Hays' six volumes represent an ambitious, encyclopaedic approach to female biography in general, Genlis's one volume is a more succinct appraisal of women's *literary* lives. However, both writers engage explicitly with what it means to write women's lives in a society whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are patriarchal. They also challenge the image of the Romantic writer as solitary genius—a model that has excluded much women's writing of the period 1770–1830, and especially women's life-writing.

In the light of feminist scholarship on the French Revolutionary period in the past 30 years, it is clear that the dominant culture viewed educated women—or, indeed, women per se—as dangerous.[16] Aristocratic women in particular were seen to be at blame for the current state of France. Candice E. Proctor in *Women, Equality and the French Revolution* states that immediately after the French Revolution 'a growing segment of French society believed that the women of the Ancien Régime had both ruled and ruined their nation'.[17] Indeed, the misogyny of the Jacobin Revolution may have been partly motivated by the idea that powerful women belonged to an age of despotism: when the court—and the exertion of public power dependent on birth—was replaced by an all-male

elective and representative assembly, women were excluded from public affairs. As Elinor Accampo puts it, 'the Revolution created a new language of political culture that translated it into the modern "gender system" in which men could only govern themselves virtuously in the public sphere if women were eliminated from it'.[18]

This culture of male hegemony was soon to make the queen, Marie-Antoinette, the supreme scapegoat and embodiment of the excesses of the Ancien Régime. It was ever thus: Sara Maza, in *Private Lives and Public Affairs*, is just one scholar to have pointed out that '[h]ighly visible and influential women are often the targets of public anger in periods of political upheaval, regardless of time and place'.[19] The misogyny of the Revolutionary years in France does, however, appear exceptional. Maza herself presents the attacks on Marie-Antoinette during the 1780s as symptomatic of a period that condemned female rule as the worst and most corrupt form of power. 'From the 1760s to the 1790s,' she writes, 'female power was seen by many as the embodiment—quite literally—of the worst of personal, hereditary, and despotic rule.'[20] Other women than Marie-Antoinette were of course demonized during the period—Louis XV's mistress du Barry, the princesse de Lamballe and the duchesse de Polignac, the Girondins Charlotte Corday and Marie-Jeanne Roland and the feminist Olympe de Gouges, are some prominent French examples. The same biased perspective was operating in Britain, as extensive recent commentary on women writers and the 1790s has discussed, and a great many women writers and public figures were memorably classed as 'unsex'd females'. Mary Hays—'flippant HAYS'—was just one of the women represented in Richard Polwhele's 1798 poem, which attacked 'Gallic freaks'.[21]

The decision made by Hays to include so many French women in her *Female Biography* is, in light of the attacks on her person and on her writings, a bold one, and was recognized as such by her contemporaries: 'the morals are too French for my taste', wrote Lucy Aiken in a letter to a friend in early 1803.[22] Exactly one-fifth of her 302 entries are biographies of French women. Hays's title is clear—she will include 'illustrious and celebrated women, of all ages and countries'—her style combative—'my pen has been taken up in the cause, and for the benefit, of my own sex'.[23] Later in her preface, Hays attempts to pre-empt criticism that 'but little new is brought forward' in her work: 'my book is intended for women, and not for scholars'.[24] There is a direct recognition here that women's lives appeal to, and inspire, women themselves. And there is an

acknowledgement, too, that some will class this work as derivative. In her preface, Hays describes her work as collecting and concentrating. But she uses a comment by Pierre Bayle—whose *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) was one of her sources—to justify and evaluate her enterprise: 'to abridge with judgment, is of literary labours one of the most difficult'.[25] She seems not to have been able to convince later generations of readers of her innovations. By the 1970s, as Hays' recent editor Gina Luria Walker points out, '*Female Biography* was relegated to the critical dust bin of "hack work"'.[26]

Mary Hays made extensive use of previously published sources on continental women. Like many of her contemporaries, Hays did not necessarily acknowledge where she took her information from: citing sources for this kind of work was not yet standard practice, and although this has, in the past, led to anachronistic accusations of 'plagiarism', scholars in the twenty-first century are more inclined to seek for, and find, innovation. An essay forthcoming in the journal *Women's Writing* by Séverine Genieys-Kirk explores the use Hays made of Ann Thicknesse's *Sketches of the Lives and Writings of the Ladies of France* (1778; 1780–1781) as a key source for her *Female Biography*.[27] Genieys-Kirk rightly observes that Thicknesse and Hays had conflicting agendas. Thicknesse dedicates her 1778 *Sketches* to Elizabeth Carter, and she lists distinguished English women of the Bluestocking circle elsewhere—Elizabeth Montagu, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Hester Chapone—in a clear domesticating agenda: these are *French* women, who may be of interest to their English counterparts. Hays, on the other hand, goes for a universal approach. In her introduction, Hays holds up the lives of Catherine II and Madame de Maintenon as examples for her readers: these may have been extraordinary women's lives, but they were not extraordinary *Russian* or *French* women's lives.

More interesting still is the use Hays makes of Marie-Jeanne Phlippon Roland. Here, Hays is certainly not concerned with defining Englishness in relation to the cultural otherness of France. Nor does she expect her readers to have this preoccupation. Rather, the gender identity shared with this most 'Romantic' of Frenchwomen is the most important aspect of Hays's biographical account of Roland. Certainly, Hays worked from the English translation of Roland's own *Mémoires*, published in 1795, and, in a more complete translation in 1796: she may also have referred to the original French. A note, at the beginning of Hays' entry on Roland, claims that 'the language of Madame Roland will be adopted in this memoir whenever it is practicable'. Indeed, Hays sometimes uses different vocabulary

from the English translation that was her source to suit her own emphasis: she translates 'un ame celeste' as 'celestial mind', where the 1796 translation uses 'heavenly mind'.[28] Here, to be closer to her heroine, the lexical field remains identical. And yet when she feels Roland's comments on the role of women are misplaced—in a section on the 'domestic cares' that became the young Marie-Jeanne Phlippon's concerns on the death of her mother—Hays stresses the universality of the female condition in a footnote: 'Madame Roland's acquaintance with her sex could not have been very extensive. Has their education been such that we may reasonably expect from them method, activity, vigilance, and wisdom? Alas, no! These are great qualities, and rarely combined.'[29] Here, as so often in the work of women writers of the long eighteenth century, the call for better education for women transcends national boundaries.

Coming just eight years after the publication of Hays's *Female Biography*, Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis's *De l'influence des femmes sur la litterature française* is a hydra-headed publication, at once a collective biography of French women writers and an attempt to write women's literary history from an international perspective.[30] The two-page 'Avertissement' to *De l'influence des femmes*, opens with Genlis's statement of purpose. A number of lengthy works have been written about women writers, she tells us; but most of the writers discussed are second-rate, and no longer heard of. In addition, Genlis points out that no one has concentrated on women as protectors of literature, or as promoters of learning, and this needs to be rectified: after all, almost all Oxford colleges were founded by women. Genlis implicitly calls for a real reappraisal of women's history. She places the writers and patrons she examines in the context of their historical era, and giving greater emphasis to the background of their works than to presenting analyses of the works themselves.

The first chapter of *De l'influence des femmes*—'Réflexions préliminaires sur les femmes'/'Preliminary reflections on women'—is therefore a discursive essay in which Genlis traces a linear history of literary women from the Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century. Forty-four women have individual biographies devoted to them in *De l'influence des femmes*, and many more are mentioned in the course of the initial chapter and indeed in the biographies themselves. The list of women discussed is diverse, including such figures as Lafayette and Dacier, translator of Homer and Sappho and the most celebrated Hellenist of her day, and even women from outside France such as Mary Queen of Scots. A note on the first page of the main text explains that foreign women have been incorporated, since they have been great protectors of French literature.

By focusing on both foreign women writers and patrons and their French counterparts, and including different types of writing (not solely imaginative literature but, for example, history, and indeed life-writing) Genlis aims for interdisciplinarity. She refuses to admit that there is such a thing as 'littérature proprement dite' and does not agree that the domain of 'haute philosophie' should belong to male writers and thinkers. Indeed, she is critical in her examination of literary genres, highlighting not only those areas where women have 'excelled', but also where they have 'not equalled' men's output. Tragedy and epic poetry provoke lengthy discussion in *De l'influence des femmes.* No woman writer, Genlis states unequivocally, has ever equalled the productions of Racine or Corneille. Genlis defends this 'failure' by arguing simply that women are victims of inferior education. Genlis recognizes a problem in the way her contemporary commentators consider genre and classify which works are important. Women writers, she clearly points out, have excelled not only in the writing of letters and in the epistolary novel, but in the novel form in general. Through her explicit comparisons (for Genlis, the novelists Madame de Lafayette and Françoise de Graffigny are 'worth' more than their counterparts Marivaux and Prévost), Genlis illustrates how far women have been excluded from the public sphere by arbitrary judgements about which works of literature are 'worthwhile', and she insists on the importance of context when attributing merit. Her work, from this perspective, is a rejection of what we might now view as neo-formalism. Like Ros Ballaster, in this collection of essays, Genlis is wary of the aesthetic judgement of *belles-lettres*: she points again and again to the opportunities for both training and practice in style that men have always had. As such, her words seem remarkably fresh and prescient.

Genlis has a deep mistrust of the literary establishment, with her scorn reserved for the Académie Française. This body has often been at fault in its reluctance to judge works and authors strictly on their merits: men assign the honours, and they exclude women, and give praise to 'médiocres' talents. Genlis even goes as far as to imagine a female academy: such a body would conduct its affairs with more impartiality, she feels convinced.

The remainder of *De l'influence des femmes* is composed of sections on individual writers or patronesses that are wildly different in length. Marguerite de France, daughter of François I, receives just half a page while 79 pages are consecrated to Maintenon—a woman who had, of course, received lengthy treatment in Hays's biography.[31] In general, however, Genlis's pen-portraits of women writers are carefully considered, and show evidence of both thorough research and sound judgement. In this

age when literary biography was an emerging genre—in France more than in Britain—her achievement is all the more remarkable. Genlis's individual entries still provide a valuable introduction, and basic bibliography, for many of the women writers selected by her.

But what are we to make of the project as a whole? Was it a conscious decision to set up an alternative literary history, as Joan Hinde Stewart has argued?[32] Here, even the most determinedly resisting twenty-first-century feminist reader comes somewhat unstuck, for Genlis's work is replete in contradictions. She speaks admiringly of a seventeenth-century female *République des Lettres*. But she gives no inkling of a female republic of letters in her own age, and no sense of solidarity with her contemporaries. Although she finds models for other literary women across Europe that go back centuries, Genlis constantly stresses the originality of her own work, rather than her debt to other women writers. Indeed, in some of her statements she deliberately distances herself from the main thrust of what we might read as the feminist argument.

More importantly, perhaps, the conditions under which *De l'influence des femmes* was composed present problems for the modern-day reader who wishes to view the work as a seminal text in the tradition of women writing women's literary lives. Genlis's essays on women writers were originally commissioned by Louis-Gabriel Michaud for his multi-volume publication *Biographie universelle* (also 1811). This was a production with a national agenda that was to set the standard for the writing of French lives throughout the nineteenth century, much as the *Dictionary of National Biography*—inspired by both the *Biographie universelle* and the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1875)—set the standard for the writing of British lives from 1885. Genlis had even received a sum of money in advance for her labours. When Genlis learned that her collaborators on the project were such liberals and 'irreligious' people as Suard, Auger and Guinguené, she withdrew and brought out the articles she had already written as *De l'influence des femmes*. If Genlis merely collected together biographical details that she had written for entirely different purposes and published them as a book so as not to waste weeks of labour, then to what extent can we argue a case for either her proto-feminist credentials?

Genlis herself does not shed much light on the answer to this question in her *Mémoires*.[33] One must turn, then, to the internal evidence offered by *De l'influence des femmes* itself. Genlis's discursive opening essay was clearly not written with publication in the *Biographie universelle* in mind: it is written to justify the publication of the bio-bibliographical portraits

as a coherent, standalone narrative. On examining the individual biographies of women writers and literary patrons, it is also obvious that some of the details in the portraits must have been added after the articles had been written, since they could not possibly fit the original brief. And Genlis's statements throughout show that she has a clear awareness of early canon-formation and an interest in the position of writing women in society. *De l'influence des femmes* is much more than a collection of biographical articles, it is the culmination of thinking throughout a long and varied writing career, and it—like other biographical writings by women, both then and now—contains significant elements of autobiography too.

Genlis's reconsideration of 'the canon', her 'placing' of Lafayette, Riccoboni and Graffigny above Marivaux and Prévost, seems still more radical now, given that certain rankings were to become only more entrenched as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries progressed. It was not until 1993 that a new translation of Françoise de Graffigny's 1747 *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* was published by the MLA, encouraging specialists of the French novel outside of France to rethink the canon; Marivaux's *La vie de Marianne* and Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* have never needed to be championed in this way.

It is unsurprising that the work provoked outrage in the French periodical press. The *Gazette de France* published a disparaging review immediately after publication, and this was rapidly followed by a series of long reviews in the *Journal de l'Empire*. These reviews, appearing in the edition for 25 May, 5 June, and 1 July 1811, and signed 'T.', were written by the critic Louis-Simon Auger.[34]

Auger is determined to find fault with Genlis's work where he can, even at the expense of the evidence. He is particularly disturbed by the plan of the book, which, in his opinion, promises much and delivers little: it is a mere chronological biography, comprised of articles that bear no relations to each other, some excessively dry, others excessively prolix. Where is the 'plan' of a book that offers 'pêle-mêle' queens, princesses, mistresses of kings and members of the bourgeoisie, women who have not written one line and others who have written volumes, women who wrote verse and women who wrote prose.[35] Auger clearly finds something ridiculous in the idea of writing women's literary history at all. As one of the collaborators on the *Biographie universelle* project, Auger was guaranteed to object to Genlis's use of articles originally destined for this work in a separate publication.

Auger's articles, largely because of their later publication in pamphlet form, are perhaps the most memorable of the attacks on Genlis's *De l'influence des femmes*. They did much to enhance the career of the journalist, lending him, at the very least, notoriety. In the second edition of the *Biographie universelle*, the article on Auger goes as far as to call the quarrel with Genlis one of the notable points in his career as a polemicist.[36]

Other journalists were almost as scathing as Auger in their assessment of *De l'influence des femmes*. Senancour, for example, writing in the *Mercure*, highlights many of the same points.[37] Genlis is severe in her criticism of some women writers, therefore he need not worry about being too critical of her; some of the articles are too long, whereas others are too short; her criticism of Fénelon is unjust—the list goes on. But once again, Senancour's attacks on style and content seem often motivated by a discomfort with the subject-matter—and its author—in general. Genlis, aged 65 in 1811, was one of the few representatives of the Ancien Régime still alive. As an elderly aristocratic widow, she was clearly seen as 'fair game'.

In Britain, there was no translation of *De l'influence des femmes*—very unusual for a work by Genlis in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, and clearly because of concerns regarding the subject matter. The British reviews that do exist, unaffected by the scandal of the *Biographie universelle*, were less aggressive than the French accounts. The reviewers did, however, voice similar concerns in many instances. And national pride—and concerns for national taste and morals—is also addressed. *The British Review, and London Critical Journal* published its review of *De l'influence des femmes* in the December edition for 1811, its 24-page article being the first item in this issue.[38] The reviewer is sceptical about the project of holding *French* women up for admiration:

> From contemplating the sickly cast of female literature, principles, and manners, which this volume of petticoated French worthies presents to us, it is impossible not to turn for refreshment to the estimable character of a genuine English lady, literate without pedantry, elegant without affection, dignified without constraint, cheerful at home and circumspect abroad, gentle, humane, devout. We should greatly prefer the domestic circle of such a person, to what are called the 'good societies' of Paris. A Mrs. Elizabeth Carter is more to our taste them a Madame du Deffand, a Miss Talbot than a Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, and a Mrs. Hannah More than even a Madame de Genlis.

So much for any attempt at pan-European female biographies! The subject of the article, and Genlis's own involvement in both the Ancien Régime and the revolutionary years, enables the journalist to expand on the supposed 'good societies' of Paris. The low intrigues, selfish passions, and jealous rivalries 'which lay half concealed under the gaudy covering' in France are juxtaposed with the 'good society' of England, in which 'cleanliness, manliness, and modesty ground politeness upon esteem'. Nevertheless, Genlis must be given some credit: she has 'emerged from the "good societies" of old France, and from the worst contamination of the revolutionary period, without a total depravation of principle'; and the review closes with the journalist's 'sincere thanks to her for the general good tendency, vigorous composition, and instructive contents of this latest of her labours'.

Both Hays and Genlis were grappling with how to write women's lives in a period when doing so was fraught with anxieties about the public and literary woman more generally. In a period when accounts of 'national' literatures were already being written—and largely excluding women from the narrative—each responded differently to the same anxieties: Hays, by claiming that the women whose lives she wrote were citizens of the world; Genlis, by claiming that foreign women have been important literary patrons in France, and that her *French* women were more worthy than the male contemporaries that were being promoted as exemplars by the critics of her own age. In both cases, their works could be seen to be failures for two centuries after production. And although Hays's *Female Biography* is now benefitting from an international team of researchers working on the women whose lives she wrote, and of a major new edition, edited by Gina Luria Walker (2013; 2014), part of the Chawton House Library series of women's memoirs, Genlis's work sits untouched—and largely unevaluated—on library shelves across the continent.

That said, the same tensions explored by both Hays and Genlis punctuate the literature of the nineteenth century, and, as Alison Booth has pointed out in her 'Collective Biographies of Women' project, prosopography or collective biographies continued to flourish from the 1830s onwards, and were almost always transnational in design.[39] Subsequent generations of women thought about how best to present women's history and their literary lives. Felicia Hemans's *Records of Women* (1828) takes women from different cultures, and different periods of time, presenting exemplary lives to explore what it means to be a woman. In 1869,

the Romanian Dora d'Istria (1828–1888), who published only in French, brought out *Des femmes par une femme* in Brussels: a cultural history of women's achievements with a clear biographical drive. George Eliot may have said she viewed biography as a 'disease', and lamented the obsessive fascination with Dickens' life after his death in a letter to her own publisher in 1874.[40] But 20 years previously, in an article for the *Westminster Review*, she had certainly been driven by the biographical impulse when she examined the writings of French women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in her essay 'Women in France: Madame de Sablé'. For Eliot, French women writers' lives informed their writing, and only an understanding of those lives can lead us to understand their importance as literary figures. Eliot sees French literary foremothers where she sees none in her own nation: in France 'woman has had a vital influence on the development of literature … in France alone, if the writings of women were swept away, a serious gap would be made in the national history'.[41] In writing Anglo-American literary history, we have reclaimed many of the eighteenth-century British women that Eliot had little knowledge of, but in doing so we have marginalized their French counterparts.

We still need to write literary women's lives, because we need—at the very least—to know who these women were, what they wrote and when they wrote it. Or, put another way, we ignore the prior writing of women's lives—literary history before the term was invented—at our peril. Paying attention to the configuration of these accounts in the past alerts us to serious flaws in our current efforts—we remain too Anglo-centric, too focused on the novel, too inattentive to manuscript and material culture and to forms of life-writing. We cannot even take it for granted that the work carried out predominantly by Anglo-American feminists on British and French women's writing of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s has been so fully assimilated as to make it a part of any national literary histories. Here, neo-formalism may represent a real risk to the study of women's writing in some national accounts.

In his preface to a new *Cambridge Introduction to French Literature* (2015), Brian Nelson writes 30 chapters in what, he takes care to insist, is 'an introduction, not a history'. Twenty-nine essays focus on individual authors: for the long eighteenth century we have 'Voltaire: the case for tolerance'; 'Rousseau: man of feeling'; 'Diderot: the enlightened sceptic'; 'Laclos: dangerous liaisons'; Stendhal: the pursuit of happiness'. And 'Madame de Lafayette: the birth of the modern novel' stands alone, the only woman named in the chapter titles, the only woman to represent any

sense of a tradition of women writing in French. Nelson seems to be aware that his choices may appear to some readers to be provocative. His selection, he claims, is determined partly by his own preference and taste, with two important modifiers: 'they should all, by common consent or arguably, be major writers (though there is no suggestion that a particular kind of "canon" is being promoted)'.[42] Such an approach—whether or not by design—*does* promote 'a particular kind of "canon"'. We have returned, with new studies like Nelson's, to readings of 'major' writers and 'major' texts, an approach that nearly always excludes the diversity and range of women's writing in the long eighteenth century. This can only be seen as a retrograde move: it is one that the contributors to this collection would all wish to avoid.

Notes

1. Terry Castle, 'Sister-sister', *London Review of Books*, 3 August 1995, p. 3.
2. 27 August 2015, www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/08/elena-ferrante-interview-the-story-of-the-lost-child
3. Peter France and William St Clair, eds., *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 2.
4. Kay Ferres, 'Gender, biography, and the public sphere', in *Mapping Lives*, p. 306.
5. Ferres, 'Gender, biography, and the public sphere', p. 305.
6. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. xi.
7. I am grateful to Tony Yablon, who first drew my attention to Vanessa Bell's designs for the dinner service by showing me the design for the Charlotte Brontë plate in his own collection.
8. Virginia Brown, 'Introduction', in *Famous Women*, ed. Giovanni Boccaccio, trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. xxi.
9. Amy Culley, *British Women's Life Writing, 1760–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 5.
10. See Mirjam de Baar, '"God has chosen you to be a crown of glory for all women!" The international network of learned women surrounding Anna Maria van Schurman', in *I Have Heard About You: Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border*, ed. Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Janet van der Meulen and Pim van Oostrum, (Uitgeverij Verloren: Hilversum, 2004), pp. 108–35.
11. Approximately one-third of the Godmersham Park Library as recorded in 1818 is now held on deposit at Chawton House Library, Hampshire, as

the Knight Collection. The copy of *Self-Control* in this collection contains some pencil comments in the margin, and a great deal of underlining.

12. Details given in Hilde Hoogenboom, 'The community of letters and the nation state: bio-bibliographic compilations as a transnational genre around 1700', in *Women Telling Nations*, ed. Amelia Sanz, Francesca Scott and Suzan van Dijk (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), p. 278.
13. Hoogenboom, 'The community of letters and the nation state', p. 274.
14. Claire Buck, ed., *The Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), p. vix.
15. George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain, Who Have Been Celebrated for Their Writings or Skill in the Learned Languages Arts and Sciences* (Oxford: printed by W. Jackson, for the author, 1752), p. vi.
16. Carla Hesse, in her 2001 study *The Other Enlightenment,* discusses the origins of this belief, in relation to the Revolutionary trials of women, where working-class illiterate women, 'les poissardes' were also vilified. Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
17. Candice E. Proctor, *Women, Equality, and the French Revolution* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), p. 38.
18. Elinor Accampo, 'Class and gender', in *Revolutionary France: 1788–1880*, ed. Malcolm Crook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 99.
19. Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 172.
20. Maza, *Private Lives*, p. 208.
21. Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females: A Poem, Addressed to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798).
22. Lucy Aiken, letter dated 27 January 1803, cited in Gina Luria Walker, 'The invention of female biography', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 29 (2014), p. 81. I am grateful to Gina for her comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
23. Mary Hays, *Female Biography; or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of All Ages and Countries* (1803), Vol. 5, ed. Gina Luria Walker (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), p. 3.
24. Mary Hays, *Female Biography*, Vol. 5, p. 7.
25. Mary Hays, *Female Biography*, Vol. 5, p. 8.
26. Gina Luria Walker in Mary Hays, *Female Biography*, Vol. 5, p. xv.
27. Séverine Genieys-Kirk, 'The turbulent seas of cultural sisterhood: French connections in Mary Hays's *Female Biography*', *Women's Writing*, special issue on 'Female biography', ed. Gina Luria Walker and Mary Spongberg, 2016.
28. Mary Hays, *Female Biography*, Vol. 10, pp. 106, 584.

29. Mary Hays, *Female Biography*, Vol. 10, p. 178.
30. Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, *De l'influence des femmes sur la litterature française, comme protectrices des lettres et comme auteurs; ou précis de l'histoire des femmes françaises les plus célèbres* (Paris: Maradan, 1811).
31. As we saw in the previous chapter, Genlis had already published a historical novel with Maintenon as the principal character. The critics' accusations that Genlis reproduced already published material in new works were occasionally justified.
32. Joan Hinde Stewart, 'Morals: Sophie Cottin and Félicité de Genlis', in *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), pp. 187–98.
33. These details appear in Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, *Mémoires inédits sur le XVIIIième siècle et la Révolution française* (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825–1828), Vol. 5, pp. 278–96.
34. Auger was to publish the three articles on *De l'influence des femmes*, two letters, and a further article on Genlis's *Examen critique de la Biographie universelle* together as an 84-page pamphlet: Auger, *Ma Brochure*.
35. Auger, *Ma Brochure*, p. 11.
36. See the article on Auger in the *Biographie universelle* (2nd ed., 45 vols., 1843–1861).
37. Brian Rigby, 'Étienne Pivert de Senancour (1770–1846)', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. Peter France (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1995), p. 756, highlights Senancour's most important work as *Obermann* (1804). Rigby continues, 'his bleak and comfortless philosophy of life, his misanthropy and misogyny, his failure to find adequate energy and reasons for action and belief—all appealed to those later writers who saw in him a fellow spirit (Sainte-Beuve, Matthew Arnold)'.
38. *British Review and London Critical Journal*, December 1811, pp. 283–306.
39. See http://womensbios.lib.virginia.edu/about, which expands on Alison Booth, *How to Make It as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
40. George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, Vol. 6, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954–78), George Eliot to John Blackwood, 20 February 1874.
41. George Eliot, *The Essays of George Eliot. Complete. Collected and Arranged, with an Introduction on her 'Analysis of Motives'*, ed. Nathan Sheppard (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), p. 32.
42. Brian Nelson, *The Cambridge Introduction to French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. ix–x.

Postscript

Cora Kaplan

Sometime in the next few years—we can quibble about the exact date—we will, to my astonishment and delight, be reaching the half-century of Anglophone feminist criticism coincident with, and to a great extent triggered by, the 'second wave' of the women's movement. The future of this area of work is poised on contradiction. We do well to be reminded about the ongoing negative effects of neo-liberalism and global recession on the humanities: its impact can be felt in the shift of institutional priorities, the severe constraints operating on both on higher education research funding and on publishing prospects. Yet in spite of those sobering facts, although within the revised parameters that are dictated by them, feminism is undergoing a resurgence helped by the opportunities that new media provide. Critical work on women and gender remains a thriving academic field. As this collection shows so brilliantly, several generations of scholars of early women's writing have fascinating projects in hand and a varied and busy research future in prospect.

Major milestones inevitably stir memories. My working and writing life happens to coincide with that half-century, and lately I have been 'thinking back', in Virginia Woolf's evocative phrase, through its earlier, eventful years, as a route to imagining its twenty-first century future. It has involved a good deal of pleasurable rereading, which has in turn led to some revisions of what had become, perhaps, too well-honed a narrative of the birth and growth of a field of work.

J. Batchelor, G. Dow (eds.), *Women's Writing, 1660–1830*,
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My first publication in 1975—*Salt and Bitter and Good: Three Centuries of English and American Women Poets*—was as a self-identified feminist critic, a neologism that to begin with, did double-duty as a challenge to colleagues and readers. Trying it out as a professional moniker at Sussex University in the mid-1970s felt like a bold act in itself. The book's coffee table format—heavy quarto hardback, ludicrously wide margins, drawings of the poets—also came in for some mild ridicule. 'It *looks* like an elegant tombstone', opined my colleague and friend, the late poet and critic Andrew Crozier. He had a point. The book had been designed by my expat American publishers in London, Paddington Press, to appeal to a newly created audience of 'common', not academic, women readers, solvent and of course middle-class, who, enthused by the women's movement had discovered an appetite for women's writing. In today's climate, academics often long for a 'crossover' publication—a trade imprint that will also be valued for its original research. In the early to mid-1970s, much of what feminist literary critics wrote or edited was by default published by the new feminist presses or by other small independent publishers. Neither the market niche nor the academic imprimatur for such work existed, nor was it instantly or easily acquired. (Perhaps some young feminist researcher is even now giving the same learned attention to the complex development of that market as others are now doing to the changing nature of print culture for women writers in the long eighteenth century.)

Not every critic or literary historian who wrote on women writers in the 1970s thought of themselves as feminists, let alone feminist critics. 1975 was the year of Marilyn Butler's groundbreaking book *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, which had been preceded three years earlier by her magisterial *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, each of which not only radically challenged prior accounts of these two key eighteenth-century women authors, but the existing histories of the novel in English. Butler always maintained that she wasn't a feminist, and although the evidence of the work itself often belies it, we must respect her refusal. Rereading *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* with and against my own and other work from the mid-1970s, including Ellen Moers now canonic *Literary Women* (1976) prompted some thoughts about the very different tones and aims—as well as surprising convergences—in work that engaged women's writing in these years.

The mood of the early 1970s feminism may have been fuelled by anger against injustice but it was anger transformed into collective exhilaration and verbal excitement. Principles were embodied in mantra that have in

fact worn surprisingly well—'a woman's right to choose', 'the personal is political'. Journal titles flaunted their disdain and disgust with centuries of misogyny: *Red Rag*, *Spare Rib*. It was a decade that saw a whole raft of anti-sexist neologisms enter public discourse, inevitably generating a countervailing clutch of misogynist insults. In memory, I think of the discursive temperature of the time as always turned up. Relentlessly hyperbolic at work, at home, at political meetings, at play—in oral interaction at least a perpetual war of ideas, rather as Butler describes the 1790s, it was exhausting as well as exciting.

Would I find that heat and light, all that invention and invective, reflected in the literary critical writing on women of the time, as I turned back to it so many years on? I half hoped so, for if not then, when? After all, this was the period before feminism was fully institutionalized, before the boundaries of the field or of research in it were set—surely we had a certain freedom to write as we liked? How much did we actually exercise it?

I read Butler's *Jane Austen* soon after it came out and I well remember my awe at its scholarship, but especially at the bold discursive authority with which it plucked Austen from the airless critical bubble of new criticism and female exceptionalism, and thrust her back into the hurly-burly of her political/historical moment. Yet I was puzzled and disappointed not to find, in what was nevertheless a polemical study on many levels, any overt anger—especially of course, no rage about gender—that is, for me at the time, no upfront 'feminism'. Yet rereading Moers, who did, as I remember, think herself of as a feminist, as well as my own book, not looked at in many years, I was struck with how relatively restrained the tone of both was, not over-cautious by any means in its claims, but certainly careful of its rhetoric. What we were saying about women's writing, and the wider culture that ignored or downgraded it, was radical enough, without verbal pyrotechnics. We may have been inventing neologisms such as 'heroinism', recovering lost voices, reconceiving literary traditions, constructing new genealogies, but we were, it seems, mindful that the audiences we hoped to bring into being, for that is what feminist criticism in its early years was about in great part, were not to be won by shock tactics. And if we didn't have proper restraint, our editors and publishers did. In my anthology's introductory essay on women's poetry I discussed the common association of women and flowers, and their use and transformation over the centuries by women poets. I'd crafted a phrase of which I was rather enamoured to explain the poetic preference for roses, tulips and

lilies: 'Cupped flowers they resemble a cunt.' But this impish interruption of polite discourse, rashly intent on reclaiming the sexual argot used to insult women—a move controversial even within feminist circles—was an expletive too far for my conservative publishers, hence the bland if wilted revision to 'cupped flowers, they resemble the female sexual parts'.

It is almost impossible to convey to our students today the tone and mood of British academic life in the 1970s without sounding like parodies of grumpy old—and relatively privileged—women relating the hardships of their early careers to the stressed-out young, burdened with higher teaching loads and endless bureaucratic oversight. The euphoria associated with the feminist project, fuelled by youthful optimism, a heady feeling of a whole world of discovery before us, can't be minimized, but neither can the reaction to it, and the two things made for a wildly oscillating sense of achievement and frustration. I was, for example, very lucky to have joined one of the most innovative, modernizing universities in Britain in 1969—but the faculty at Sussex was also overwhelmingly male and overwhelmingly educated at Oxbridge—women rarely even made appointment shortlists in literature. Informally 'modern' in its social codes—students called us by our first names—the university still respected hierarchy. When, in that decade, I proposed to the meeting that reviewed prospective courses, a final year, two-term special subject on Emily Dickinson, surely even then a safely canonical figure, I was told by Professor Lawrence Lerner, himself a minor poet, that she wasn't a good enough writer to merit such intensive study. Nobody, as I recall, challenged him, and in the end I had to compromise, and taught Dickinson in tandem with Walt Whitman—an excellent pairing as it turned out.

To balance that episode, it proved a tad easier to get courses devoted entirely to women as object or subject approved—'Studies in Feminism', 'Women in American Society', all elective courses proposed and taught by women faculty—than to shoehorn more women writers or even a gender perspective into more traditional period or topical courses taught by male colleagues. They were extremely proud of themselves if a woman writer took up one week of a ten-week course.

That difficulty of integrating women and gender into the wider framework of literary studies reflected another kind of issue that, I now think, affected the way in which feminist criticism of that decade tended to position women writers as apart from, rather than in relation to, their male contemporaries. We were, in the lingo of the time, emphasizing 'difference', not 'sameness', whether our views of the origins of that difference

were nature or nurture. What we wanted to highlight was the unique and uniquely gendered in women's writing, in subject matter, in its treatment, and in style, to emphasize connections between women writers. At the same time we tended, as Ros Ballaster points out in this volume, to avoid confrontations about aesthetic standing, either with contemporary writers, or with the larger literary canon, the kind of confrontation I had so significantly lost in relation to Emily Dickinson. The aesthetic itself was, from my socialist-feminist perspective, too biased a term, socially and culturally, to be of much value in itself. In the introduction to *Salt and Bitter and Good*, I looked critically at the value-laden introductions to nineteenth-century anthologies of women's verse, but I stopped well short, for example, of suggesting that Dickinson was the 'best' American poet of the mid-nineteenth century, or that Barrett Browning was more innovative than Tennyson, or even that to consider Barrett Browning as a major nineteenth-century poet would be to change the way the whole period and genre were seen. An emphasis on 'influence'—if it were male—could also generate anxiety for the critic, and not in the androcentric, oedipal mode that it was understood by Harold Bloom. A couple of years later, editing Barrett Browning's novel-poem *Aurora Leigh*, long out of print, I wrote a lengthy introduction that, incredible to me now, barely mentioned Robert Browning and never considered his influence on a work written almost a decade into their association and marriage.[1] His exclusion was deliberate and strategic, but it was an often-used strategy that pinpointed a potentially vulnerable spot in feminism's modern war of ideas.

Reading Butler's *Maria Edgeworth* and *Jane Austen* in tandem with the self-declared feminist work of the 1970s highlights the advantages of *not* taking such a position. Butler is able to give a revised account of Edgeworth's father's influence on his daughter that, in her introduction, brushes away the 'influential myth' that since Edgeworth's women biographers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were bent on 'making Maria Edgeworth attractively feminine', 'she must have an unamiable father, because women like that do not write, from choice at least, about education, class, and economic relationships'. Even if this 'peculiarly insidious legend' was lent Virginia Woolf's 'wit and authority' it is wrong, and needed righting.[2] Richard Lovell Edgeworth will loom 'larger than his daughter' in the first part of Butler's biography because 'no account of the origins of the novels can exclude parts of Edgeworth's experience, or the continuous interaction from Maria's earliest years between her mind and her father's'.[3] This seems so manifestly right, even obvious, to me

today, that I can see that there has been for some time now a seismic shift in critical and feminist thinking, a move, as Harriet Guest put it in 2000, 'from the study of the experience or writings of women as a separate category of literary or historical analysis, and toward the complex involvement of women and of gender difference in all areas of eighteenth-century life and thought'.[4] In the 1970s one could, as Butler did, consider Edgeworth and Austen fully inserted in the life and thought of the eighteenth century only if one stepped back from a full frontal analysis of their role as women or of gender difference.

What made this more difficult I think, was the over-idealization that certain kinds of feminist analysis seemed to require of its founding figures and leading writers and thinkers, often coupled with what we might call a daughterly discontent at their supposed limitations. Work on Mary Wollstonecraft in the 1970s and early 1980s suggests something of the volatility of these identifications.[5] Wollstonecraft had been brought back as a founding feminist by libertarian thinkers like Emma Goldman and Virginia Woolf, who honoured her passionate life more than they valued her actual writings. American academic Eleanor Flexner, whose own feminist image depended on rational and respectable middle-class femininity, was irresistibly drawn to Wollstonecraft, but had, as well, a visceral distaste for Wollstonecraft's emotional and sexual excesses—her 'aberrations'—which she saw being frighteningly reproduced in the rampant enthusiasms of the women's movement second wave. From the safety of her institutional enclave, she raps Wollstonecraft over the knuckles for the undisciplined, digressive nature of her prose: 'She is incapable either of the coherent organization of ideas or of avoiding repetition.'[6] Just as late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women writing on Edgeworth wanted to keep her image and person 'feminine', and could not therefore explain her wide-ranging interests except through her father's malign influence and interference, so Flexner cannot 'explain' or 'understand' aspects of Wollstonecraft's temperament that deviated from a conventionally understood liberal feminist standard. Yet some socialist-feminist critics of the early 1980s, myself among them, didn't do much better: neither Mary Poovey nor I could resist the psychologizing, moralizing impulse, ticking Wollstonecraft off for denying female sexuality in her work, for, in other words, not being *more* positive about female desire.[7] This urgent need both to elevate and reproach Wollstonecraft is even echoed in a rare, unguarded moment in Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, where she, like Woolf or even Goldman, praises Wollstonecraft's 'eloquent life,

telling of battles fought against economic dependence and rigid, unequal sexual conventions' but is deeply disappointed that in *The Wrongs of Women*, 'the novel in which she tries to make use of this material' she creates a 'heroine who is what she ought not to have been, a passive vessel of suffering'.[8]

Rereading these reactions to Wollstonecraft I had a sudden burst of affection for the varieties of identifications that marked the response that women critics had to her in the 1970s and 1980s. It indicated, above all, how alive she was for us, and how much who she had been and what she had written stood for in the fate and future of women's liberation in the West, something we were sure was nearer in hand than it has proved to be.

Today the politics of sexuality are infinitely more complicated than they were in the 1970s and early 1980s. There is, of course, more consciousness and consensus within the public sphere about women's rights and wrongs, yet many of these latter remain in spite of considerable social, economic and cultural advances. Parity in the workplace across the board, as well as in political representation is still a long way off, and the economic effects of austerity policies have fallen most heavily on women and children. Reading the daily papers and watching the media, checking out feminist blogs, one sometimes gets the feeling that feminism is both everywhere and nowhere—no shortage of women's voices to speak up for us, but a dispiriting return of recalcitrant issues year on year. One significant difference that cannot be discounted is that no matter how many online petitions one signs, there is no longer a mass social movement that in spite of its internal divisions served in these earlier decades as a powerful referent and audience for writing on women. Is our shared literary historical and critical project made more parochial and inward-looking by no longer acting as a significant or meaningful outlet for women's voices, or responding to a less urgent desire for precedents and heroines? May it be that it gives our work more critical distance but also makes it less engaged with wider wars of ideas?

'No book is improved by being taken out of its context', Marilyn Butler wrote polemically in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*,[9] but this sound historicist imperative is in one sense defeated in its very articulation, which already speaks from the present to the past. How one interprets that context shifts, inevitably, with the present: it is not just an effect of greater information, critical fashions or refined theoretical tools. There are always at least two conjunctures, possibly several, at play in a return to the past—that is the necessary condition of the historical and critical project. The

most scrupulous self-awareness, as tiring in its way as complete immersion in a political moment, won't keep us psychically or intellectually from drawing that past into our living moment.

We need to pause, therefore, in this retrospective engagement and think in some detail about how we go about reconstructing the last half-century of work on women without representing it simply as linear progress. For if, in our effort at a sober and rational historicization of ourselves, we begin to think of the perceived limitations of that earlier moment of criticism as 'aberration' and of our affective relationship *then* to our objects of study as 'what it ought not to have been', we are missing not only an opportunity of understanding the past of our discipline, but of the past itself.

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Sometime in the early to mid-1970s, it became noticeable that the desks in the British Library, in its august old home in the British Museum, were occupied by an increasing number of feminists, researching and writing about women. As some of us gathered for tea and conversation in the hospitable coffee shops of Great Russell Street—or if the rain was pelting down, as it so often was, in the dark, dank windowless reader's tea room in the British Museum basement, famous for its stewed tea, watery coffee and stale cheese rolls—a collective fantasy took shape, at once modest and grandiose. Soon, very soon, we would be a critical mass—so many that one day, at opening time, a monstrous regiment of women would, simply by virtue of being early birds, occupy all the desks in the main reading room, and perhaps in the North Library as well, where Karl Marx once worked. I think of this as a modest fantasy, for while it claimed for us parity of intellectual ability and activity with men, as did many women in the long eighteenth century—in Sarah Fyge Egerton's words from 1703—we will our Rights in Learning's World maintain;/wits Empire, now shall a Female Reign',[10] it represented, as we well knew, only a beginning of a dauntingly large, and perhaps unrealizable project. Inspired by the ubiquitous street theatre, happenings, and endless demos of the 1960s and 1970s, storming the reading room seems in retrospect a rather sedate fantasy compared to the wilder, imaginative activism going on outside, which itself never matched the creative and dangerous theatricality of the Suffragette movement. Yet it did symbolize a grandiose dream: a determination to change the common sense of gender, the history of culture, of politics, of science and society—the face of knowledge and its everyday effects. As an imagined event, the Monday morning library takeover was only one of

many fleeting utopian scenarios that buoyed us up in those exciting but stressful years when we were absorbed not only with our challenge to the patriarchal state and its institutions, but with conflicts within feminism itself, about its analysis, its politics, its priorities. Today scholars of all or no gender writing about women's literary contributions alone could fill the old, and new, British Library reading rooms several times over. We have, at Chawton House Library, not just a room, but a whole study centre of our own. As the questions addressed in this volume suggest, we must and will continue to think hard together about our research on women's writing, and its contribution to change in our own tumultuous times.

Notes

1. Cora Kaplan, 'Introduction', Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh and Other Poems* (London: The Women's Press, 1978), pp. 5–36.
2. Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 6–7.
3. Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 9.
4. Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 2.
5. For a longer discussion of twentieth- and twenty-first-century responses to Wollstonecraft, see my 'Mary Wollstonecraft's reception and legacies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 246–70.
6. Eleanor Flexner, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 164.
7. See Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Cora Kaplan, 'Wild nights: pleasure/sexuality/feminism', in *Formations of Pleasure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 15–35.
8. Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 49.
9. Butler, *Jane Austen*, pp. 3–4.
10. Sarah Fyge Egerton, 'The emulation', in *Poems on Several Occasions, Together with a Pastoral* (London, 1703), pp. 108, 109.

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