EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE: THE ANONYMOUS TEXT, 1660-1790

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Everywhere and Nowhere: The Anonymous Text, 1660-1790

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Anonymity has a vexed place in the study of English literature. In the field of eighteenth-century literature nearly every work we study was anonymous in its first publication. Nonetheless, named authorship is often a key component in assuring a work’s canonicity; with few exceptions, works that remain anonymous are rarely taught or read. Indeed, we have difficulty conceiving of literary criticism without the author’s name as an organizing principle. The study of anonymity has thus focused less on anonymity as an object of inquiry than as a mystery to be solved or as the condition of textuality or a social condition within modernity. Each approach, however useful, does not account for the phenomenon of anonymous publication itself. My dissertation explores anonymous publication within the long eighteenth century. I examine both literary and non-literary texts to understand the cultural and literary role anonymous texts occupied within the print culture of the eighteenth century and how, increasingly, readers and publishers acknowledged anonymous texts as different from those with named authors. The distinction between named and anonymous texts I argue is central to the formation of the canon of eighteenth-century literature, in which anonymous texts are either recuperated through authorial attribution or disregarded as ephemera. Crucially, once this separation occurs, anonymous publication persists, but it does so largely unnoticed; the acknowledgment of anonymity as a distinct category of authorship coincides with its disappearance in literary history.
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Material from my second chapter will appear in Eighteenth-Century Life under the title “Attribution and Repetition: The Case of Defoe and the Circulating Library.”
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Introduction: Everywhere and Nowhere

Anonymity was everywhere in the literary world of the British eighteenth century; paradoxically, it was also nowhere. I mean the latter in two ways: first, anonymity was nowhere on or in a text because it is typically invisible; anonymity is, after all, the absence of the name. Secondly, anonymity was nowhere because the sheer number of anonymous texts produced in the period meant that anonymity was not an exceptional or, as I will call it throughout this dissertation, a remarkable feature of a text. Anonymity, because of its typicality, could, I argue, pass unnoticed in many of the texts published in the period because there was no expectation that anonymity, in texts we would understand as literary, was something out of the ordinary.

My argument runs counter to the dominant and commonsense view that the eighteenth century was the “age of the author” and that anonymity was a relic of the early modern period. Anonymity not only persisted in the period, it thrived with the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 which both ended pre-publication censorship and enabled the rapid expansion of print publication in England. The quantitative work of James Raven and David Brewer along with my own work demonstrates that much of the literary world of the eighteenth century was characterized not by the named, professional author, but by the absence of the name of the author. This history has, however, been obscured by the
practice of retroactive authorial attribution that has reduced the original anonymity of most eighteenth-century texts to a curious footnote or anecdote.¹

Thus, the “nowhere” of my title takes on a third valence; though anonymity was everywhere in the literature of the eighteenth century, it is almost nowhere in the current criticism of the period. The work of Robert Griffin,² however, has articulated both the theoretical and historical concerns surrounding anonymity for the scholar of the literature of the long eighteenth century. Central to Griffin’s work on anonymity in the British eighteenth century is the nuance he brings to narratives about the relationship between copyright and named authorship. As he has shown repeatedly there has never been, with a few brief exceptions, a requirement that an author’s name be printed on a book or pamphlet (“Anonymity” 887). That literary property and liability is linked to the absence or presence of an author’s name is a retrospective construction that is informed by modern concepts of authorship and property and projected into the period.³

Legal prescription is one mode, among others, that may work to create an expectation of named authorship on texts. If the naming of the author is a requirement for publication, then the practice of naming authors is normalized. In turn, as this practice is normalized, it creates the expectation within the reading public that texts need named

¹ Marcy North has written wonderfully on the effect of the consignment of anonymity to the footnote in the introduction to her *The Anonymous Renaissance* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2003), 8-10.
authors and those without are strange and exceptional. This is the modern expectation about authorial attribution; texts, especially literary texts, are expected to have named authors and those without are remarkable. That is, we understand the anonymity of a text to be immediately notable and curious. I argue throughout this dissertation that anonymity was not always obvious, that it was not always curious to readers and audiences of the eighteenth century. The lack of a legal requirement to attach an author’s name to a text is one way in which anonymity remained a typical and tacit feature of many texts.

The so-called coming of copyright to England with the 1710 Act of Anne, which enumerated the rights and responsibilities of publishers and authors, is often pointed to as a moment where the incentive of owning property in one’s writing would promote the attachment of an author’s name to a text. Such a view finds its origins in Michel Foucault’s thesis, which links the rise of the author to the moment “when the author became subject to punishment” and, in compensation, was “conferred the benefits of property.”

The key problem with Foucault’s thesis in its application to British print culture is that he writes indiscriminately of Western traditions of intellectual property in a way that does not distinguish between the regimes of copyright among different nations at a period of time when no international copyright law existed. In Britain, the 1710

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5 Foucault writes, “But it was at the moment when a system of ownership and strict copyright rules were established (toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century) that the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature” (1482 emphasis mine). Though some wish to connect property and liability in the context of early eighteenth-century Britain through
Statute of Anne made no requirement that an author’s name be attached to a text for copyright protection; further, as Griffin has argued repeatedly, the requirements for copyright protection make it such that texts entered for copyright protection were more the exception than the rule (“Introduction” 4). For example, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* was published without Defoe’s name attached; it was, however, one of his only imaginative works entered for copyright protection (by W. Taylor in August 1719). In the Stationer’s Company register, it was the name of the copyright owner, in this case Taylor, not the author, Defoe, under whose name the text was entered. Indeed, in the Stationer’s Company Register we see only very rarely a text entered for copyright by its author, rather than its publisher. The reason is quite simple; author’s typically sold their manuscripts outright. It was then up to the publisher to decide whether he (in most cases) would protect his property from piracy by entering it for copyright protection.

I would like to pause for a moment to consider the way in which what I have called the modern expectation about authorial attribution may manifest itself not in the context of property or liability but rather in the seeming simplest of things: library cataloging. Consider this 1876 letter to *The Library Journal*:

> Cataloguing an *authorless* work (to use a word more expressive than proper), whether it be anonymous, autonymous, pseudonymous, or whatsoever has not the real name of the writer, I consider labor but half paid, and, in consequence, most unsatisfactory. When finished, and the cataloguer turns over the cards for distribution, he relinquishes them with

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6 These requirements included the entering of the copy into the Stationers’ Company Register, the depositing of nine copies “for the Use of the Royal Library, the Libraries of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the Libraries of the Four Universities in Scotland, the Library of Sion College in London, and the Library commonly called the Library belonging to the Faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh respectively”, and the payment of six pence (8 Anne c. 19).
a feeling of regret at the incompleteness of his work. Nor does it end here. The possibility that the discovery of the real name of the writer may any day necessitate a thorough revision and remodeling of the cards, gives the librarian no rest or peace, until he himself, or, perchance, some more persistent co-worker, has brought it to light. Should the catalogue unfortunately (?) be printed, the more serious becomes the discovery. Erasures are then out of the question, and the printed entry must remain a useless incumbrance [sic], and a new and complete one must be made for the supplementary card.

But I will not occupy the valuable space of the JOURNAL by enumerating all the objections which are suggested by literary disguises – they are painfully patent to all those engaged in the thankless task of cataloguing - the fact of their existence my readers will hardly question. But where shall we look for remedy? Can we expect aid from the writers of book themselves? Shall they be asked to come out from their cover for our convenience? Our purpose will be well served if, in some future number of the JOURNAL, the experience of others may teach the most practical and satisfactory method of dealing with this evil as we find it.

A.E. Whitaker, Librarian

A.E. Whitaker’s January 16, 1876 letter laments the added labor that the anonymous text poses for the cataloger. It is not simply that the anonymous text lacks a key piece of information that must be entered in to a bibliographic field, but it is that the catalog entry is not stable; it is incomplete and any day subject to “revision and remodeling” (225). The cataloger lives in a state of constant unrest with “no rest or peace” “until he himself, or, perchance, some more persistent co-worker, has brought [the author’s name] to light” (226). The instability of the catalog entry is even more troubling should, as Whitaker tells us, “the catalogue unfortunately… be printed” because “[e]rasures are then out of the question, and the printed entry must remain a useless incumbrance [sic], and a new and complete one must be made for the supplementary card” (226). Whitaker fears the apparent stability imparted to the anonymous catalog entry through print. In print, the absent authorial attribution, or the attribution to “Anon.,” cannot be erased. The catalog

7Library Journal I (1876-77), 225-26.
entry, unstable because of the absence of the author’s name, is thus stabilized in its so-called instability through print. The anonymity of the text in the printed catalog cannot be undone through retrospective attribution; it can only be supplemented with an attribution.

Whittaker’s hyperbole about the “evil” of anonymity in cataloging speaks to the power invested in named authorship and the unrest that anonymity can cause. This is, however, due to Whittaker’s expectation of named authorship. The catalog makes available the category of the named author and in doing so creates anonymity as a problem to be solved when that name is found lacking. Anonymity, here, is made a problem by the conventions of nineteenth-century cataloging practices, not because the anonymous text is itself lacking. As we will see throughout my study, cataloging practices varied widely throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The expectations that Whittaker brings to cataloging in the late nineteenth century were not necessarily operating during the earlier periods where catalog entries typically cataloged texts by title, not author.

Similar to the conventions of cataloging rendering anonymity remarkable, Raven has argued that the standardization of the title page in the sixteenth century created a convention that made anonymity remarkable by “fix[ing] the absence of the author in obvious contrast to the other named participants in publication.”8 It is unclear how the absence of the author’s name could be “fixed” and made “obvious” if there was no prior expectation that an author’s name would be present on the title page. One would have to have some prior notion that an author’s name belonged on the title page alongside that of

the printer or publisher for that absence to be obvious. The appearance of a standardized place where an author’s name could appear and one noticing an absence there are two very different things. Like Whittaker, Raven imagines that printing convention follows reader expectation, but I argue that for many readers, it is those conventions that teach readers what to expect of the anonymity or authorship of a text.

In his discussion of the name of the author, Gérard Genette is careful to denaturalize our notions that named authors are “both necessary and ‘natural’” and demonstrates the varying history of practices of authorial attribution on texts. However, in suggesting that anonymity is like the name of the author, a “threshold of interpretation,” he assumes that anonymity is something that is evident to readers, that it is a threshold over which the reader must pass to enter into the text. Anonymity may be made evident to readers; however, it is not necessarily the case that anonymity is obvious. It is, after all, an absence that can only be noticed when we are expecting the presence of an author’s name.

What is absent in these analyses that take anonymity to be a given and visible category is an attention to the specificities of genre and medium alongside print convention that work to shape expectations about anonymity and authorship. The

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9 Raven sets his remarks during the sixteenth century following the brief period when royal proclamations required the author to be named as a means of controlling heresy and libel, and so he draws from the short-lived legal prescription the convention of named authorship. Henry VIII’s July 8, 1546 proclamation did indeed require the naming of the author, along with the name of the printer and the date of printing; however, as Lyman Ray Patterson notes, Henry died shortly after this proclamation and with his death his proclamations “would have ceased to have any legal effect”; additionally, all of Henry's statutes and proclamations regarding religion and opinions were repealed under Edward VI. See Lyman Ray Patterson, Copyright in Historical Perspective (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 25-26.

anonymity of a political pamphlet, newspaper, or libel, can be very different from the anonymity of a novel, a poem, or a play. The stories that do not attend to these differences have tended to flatten our sense of the multivalent ways in which anonymity worked throughout the types of texts published in the eighteenth century. Rather than understanding anonymity as a monolithic category whose functions may be explained across all kinds of texts, I seek to focus on the ways in which formal differences contributed in different ways to the visibility and intelligibility of anonymity in literary texts.

An anonymous piece of political writing such as a pamphlet or newspaper, for example, may very easily attract attention to its anonymity. Political writing is a form that enters into discourse for the specific purpose of intervention. As such, its authorship may be of interest for reasons of political persecution or prohibition. Its anonymity, then, is made evident when one asks, “who wrote that? I wish to punish him or her.” The expectations about anonymity and authorship in reading a potentially libelous piece of political writing do not necessarily translate to the practice of reading imaginative literature. The anonymity of a poem may simply not draw the same attention because it is typical of the form. In her history of the word anonymity, Anne Ferry notes the formal function of anonymous publication in poetry:

To describe this transformation of readers’ expectations in the simplest way: before that time a poem was conceived of mainly as a skillfully made object fashioned according to formal conventions, rather than as a personal expression of its author. Sometime after let us say 1798, readers grew more in the habit of finding biographical connections between the poem and the poet, a practice naturally encouraged by their opportunities
to trace among a number of works the shaping experience and expressive tendencies of a poet known to be the author of all of them. What Ferry suggests here is that anonymity may have simply been a formal feature of poetry consistent with expectations about the genre. Its anonymity may not have posed the problem to readers in the way in which our example of the potentially libelous newspaper would have. Further, she locates a transformation in the expectations of readers that seems to coincide with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. As I will show throughout my study, attention to, and expectations about, anonymity varies widely across the many genres of imaginative literature. The anonymity of the novel, for example, remains unremarkable far longer than the anonymity of a printed play.

The difference between the novel and the play in attention to anonymity is one of genre, but it is also one of medium. Like genre, differences in medium work to make anonymity more or less notable. In performances of all kinds, anonymity tended not to be remarkable; the figure of the actor or performer was a sufficient presence to allow anonymity to remain tacit. It is tempting to say, then, that print tended to make anonymity a remarkable feature of the text. As I have argued earlier, however, print did not necessarily make anonymity more noticeable. In the case of the novel, whose entire existence is in print, anonymity was typical and unremarkable. Medium works in a very special manner in relationship to anonymity. Where the medium defines or constitutes the form, as in performance or the novel, anonymity tends to remain a tacit feature of the

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12 I find Ferry’s claim suggestive, but I am not entirely convinced that one can date this transformation to 1798, particularly to the publication of the anonymous *Lyrical Ballads*. I agree, however, that Wordsworth’s “Preface” included in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* may have made explicit a different mode of poetic reading that more closely aligns the biographical writer with the figure of the poet.
text. The medium itself works to “author” the text in such a way that maintains anonymity as an unremarkable feature.

The central and structuring distinction in my dissertation is a conceptual difference between anonymity as a tacit or an unremarkable feature of a text and anonymity as an explicit or a remarkable feature of a text. I argue that due to its typicality among literary texts, anonymity was largely an unremarkable feature of these texts. That is, one’s attention was not drawn to the anonymity, unless it was signaled, for example, in an attribution to “Anonymous” or a text’s thematic treatment of its anonymity. Such a distinction assumes a certain kind of reader who has not been taught to attend to the anonymity of a text. Though I write in generality about readers’ expectations and attention to anonymity, I do not imagine all readers of literature to read in the same manner. Different reading publics\(^\text{13}\) bring different and varying expectations and attention to texts. The specialist reader, Gerard Langbaine, for example, whom I take up in my third chapter, was very interested in the anonymity of the playbooks he

\(^{13}\) I draw the term “a public” from Michael Warner to distinguish it from the largely undifferentiated “bourgeois public sphere” of Jürgen Habermas because it allows for the nuancing of different modes of reading among different audiences. For Habermas, the emergence of the public sphere in the British eighteenth century profoundly affected the reading practices of literature. He notes, “the relations between author, work, and public changed” such that the act of reading “became intimate mutual relationships… author and reader themselves became actors who ‘talked heart to heart’” (50). This is one model of the relationship between reader-text-author in which anonymity may indeed be of interest to the reader as he or she imagines some intersubjective relationship between him- or herself and the author. The more precise notion, offered by Warner of a variety of publics, self-organized and constituted through attention, allows us to differentiate between scholarly, critical, and “popular” (among others) reading publics all of whom may have varying expectations about and protocols for reading and attending to the anonymity or authorship of a text (65-124). See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991) and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
collected and cataloged; however, the novel readers in the circulating libraries, whom I take up in chapters two and four, likely brought very different expectations, if any, about the authorship and anonymity of the novels they read. My larger argument is the legibility of anonymity was not a given; it required readers of all sorts to be trained to look for it.

One such trained reader was Samuel Johnson, whose *Dictionary* defines anonymous as “wanting a name.” For Johnson, whose purpose in writing the *Dictionary* was to rein in the “wild exuberance” of the English language, this definition of anonymous carries with it a theory about the relationship between anonymity, names, and the empirical individual to whom the name refers. Johnson believes in the stability of the relationship between the word and its referent. The absence of this particular word, or signifier, the proper name, is not merely an issue of absence but of a want, or need, for the signifier. The signifier, the name, is important in this case because it bears a one-to-one relationship to that which it refers – the empirical individual. The first example of usage the *Dictionary* provides demonstrates this point, “These animacules serve also for food to another anonymous insect of the waters.” Here, “anonymous” is an adjective that modifies “insect.” The insect in this instance is “wanting a name” and once that name is found, Johnson suggests, there will be a stable relationship between the name and the insect to which it refers.

The second usage example, drawn from *Notes on the Dunciad*, follows this logic and introduces the issue of liability to the relationship between anonymity and naming:

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15 “Want” Johnson defines as being “without something fit or necessary.”
16 Johnson seems to slightly misquote a moment from John Ray’s *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691).
“They would forthwith publish slanders unpunished, the authors being anonymous, the immediate publishers thereof skulking.” Anonymity is figured here as a guard against punishment for slander. Its use is positioned within a very particular context, that of publishing a supposed slanderous text for which one might be punished, and it again assumes a stable and fixed relationship between name and individual that is upset by the absence of the name. Thus, without a name, one may not punish the actual person referred to by the name. The name for Johnson is not figural; it is a literal signifier.

Johnson’s usage of the term may seem familiar to the contemporary reader; to understand and identify a text as anonymous is to generally pose the question, “who actually wrote this?” In posing this question the underlying premise is that there is a literal and stable relationship between the name of the author and the individual to whom it refers. We have seen this in A.E. Whittaker’s letter in its understanding of the “evil” of anonymity; we also see it, I argue, in Roland Barthes’ understanding of the relationship between name-author-actual individual-text that composes “the work.” For Barthes, “The Death of the Author” is both figural and literal. Barthes wishes to “kill” the figure of the “Author-God,” but this figure is reducible to an actual individual.17 The slippage between this figural and literal “death” is evident in his critique of the Romantic view of authorship, most clearly articulated in Wordworth’s “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*:

> The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and *after*. The author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. (145)

Though Barthes is rejecting this view of the relationship of author to text, he does so by rejecting it entirely in favor of the “modern scriptor… born simultaneously with the text” (145). In this wholesale rejection of the prior model of the relationship between author and text, Barthes leaves intact the underlying assumption of correspondence between name and individual. The analogy of father to child slides from a figural relationship of an “Author”, whom may be believed in, to a text, to an empirical relationship between author and work. Barthes advocates moving toward some sort of figural relationship between “scriptor” and text, but he does so by arguing that there was, or is, some relationship between text and the actual individual who wrote it that must be rejected in favor of what Foucault names, derisively, a “transcendental anonymity” (1479).

Foucault’s critique of Barthes in “What is an Author?” points precisely to the underlying investment in the logic that connects the author’s name to an actual individual and poses anonymity as a means of escaping “the Author-God.” For Foucault, the relationship between the name of the author, the actual writer, and the text is not a literal one, not a one-to-one correspondence. It is instead a figural relationship; the author’s name is “…not a pure and simple reference, the proper name… has other than indicative functions. It is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description” (1480). The stability of the relationship between name and individual envisioned by Johnson and Barthes is undermined here because the name, for Foucault, works as more than a simple indexical term. The name, instead, takes on the character of something closer to a metaphor, which may signify not only the actual writer but the totality of his or her works and functions “as a means of classification” (1481).
As the name of the author takes on this metaphoric role, it undermines the stability suggested by the one-to-one relationship between authorial name and individual, as in Johnson, but it also undermines its own substitutive logic as metaphor, where the name stands in for its classificatory function, the totality of the *oeuvre*, the writing subject, etc. As with all rhetorical figures, the authorial name slips from a relationship of substitution for all these things to a relationship of association such that the name functions more like a metonym that may be associated with any and all aspects of production of the text. Such slipperiness is made evident by anonymity. Anonymity reveals the instability of both the name:referent combination of Johnson and the name:metaphor of the Foucauldian relationship by opening up (through the absence of the name) the metonymic nature of the author function. This, I suggest, is an extension or clarification rather than a challenge to Foucault’s thesis. A text does not need the name of the author to have an author function. Because it is a function, and a metonymic one, any aspect of the text: its editor, publisher, format, genre, style, typography, or medium, etc. may serve the classificatory function typically reserved for the name of the author.

The explicitation of, or attention to, anonymity is an attempt, then, to reinvest anonymity with the stable referential role of the name, as articulated by Johnson, but it can only do so through a metaphoric logic of substitution that denies the metonymic nature of anonymity. The moment of announcing or noticing the anonymity of a text activates a chain of substitutions that, it is hoped, will lead to both the name and the actual writer. Thus, to attribute a text to “Anonymous” is not to accept its status as anonymous, but it is to begin a series of substitutions that will bring one closer to the correct, and necessary, authorial attribution.
Pseudonymity is similarly metaphoric and functions like the proper name of the author. The notion of the “false name” reveals the underlying substitutionary logic that assumes some correspondence to its referent – “the flesh and blood author.” It is for this reason that I distinguish between anonymity – the absence of any name – and pseudonymity – the presence of a false name – because the underlying substitutional logic of the pseudonym is fundamentally different from that of the associative logic of the anonym. Traditionally, pseudonymity is understood as either interchangeable with anonymity or a subset of anonymity. I, however, wish to separate anonymity and pseudonymity as operating very differently. One may group together the writings of Publius, for example, and if not identify an actual individual in the world, identify a similar or consistent mode of discourse in the world. One would be hard pressed to similarly group texts under the absence of any name.

Medium, then, in its role in and as author-function, plays a crucial role in maintaining anonymity as a tacit textual feature through its ability to draw the attention, through association, of the reader or audience away from the anonymity of a work to the bodies, texts, books, etc. that constitute it. The medium can thus function like an author while still withholding the referential logic invested in the name. The medium of an anonymous text does so because it appeases the epistemological uncertainty that may be engendered by the absence of the author’s name that is supposed to point to an empirical individual outside of the text. The empirical reality of the actor’s body on stage or the physical text held in the hand imparts the certainty of the observable, material world that may be threatened when, and if, no actual, individual writer is named in or on the text.
My dissertation works through this argument by exploring anonymous publication within the British long eighteenth century from 1660 to approximately 1790. I examine both literary and non-literary texts to understand the cultural and literary role anonymous texts occupied within the eighteenth century and how, increasingly, readers and publishers distinguished anonymous texts as being different from those with named authors. Following my interest in moving away from anonymity as a monolithic category and instead inquiring how it emerged as a coherent category over the course of the period, I work to impart greater specificity to the ways in which different media and genres interact with anonymity. Each chapter, then, is organized around the major and emerging literary genres of the period: poetry, drama, and the novel. My chapters demonstrate that expectations about anonymity work differently in each genre and that the historical transformations of these expectations work on different timelines for different genres and media.

My first chapter considers the paradoxical use of “Anonymous” as a proper name in authorial attribution. On the one hand, anonymous means that a text is “wanting a name.” On the other, “Anonymous” provides that name. Explicit attribution of a literary text to “Anonymous” is a late development within the eighteenth century and appears most frequently in anthologies and miscellanies after 1770. I take two poems to be exemplary of this phenomenon. The first, “To Belinda,” published in Richard Steele’s *Poetical Miscellanies* (1714) bore no authorial attribution. When it was reprinted in John Nichols’ *A Select Collection of Poems* (1780), however, it was attributed to “Anonymous.” Nichols, however, does not rest with the attribution of “Anonymous.” Throughout the volume, he insists that though he has noted the anonymity of the poems
from Steele’s *Poetical Miscellanies*, he is confident that Steele is himself the author. Thus, the acknowledgement of anonymity is the first step to its undoing through attribution, while at the same time conferring its status as explicitly anonymous. The chapter then considers one of the most popular poems of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, “The Beggar’s Petition.” First published anonymously in 1769 as “The Beggar,” “The Beggar’s Petition” was widely reprinted in virtually every mode of print including: magazines, broadsides, newspapers, primers, anthologies, and even handkerchiefs. I examine the reprinting of this poem to trace the patterns of textual presentation of authorship and anonymity across time and medium. When published for instructional purposes for the private reader, the poem’s anonymity is often marked; however, when published for oral performance or a collective readership, its anonymity passes without attribution even to “Anonymous.” The acknowledgement of anonymity, I argue, centrally depends on its intended medium and audience. Further, like “To Belinda,” attributing the poem to “Anonymous” represents a middle state before it is attributed to one, or several, poets. In the case of “The Beggar,” it is lost to obscurity, while “The Beggar’s Petition” is often reprinted and receives repeated attributions and misattributions well into the twentieth century.

My second chapter follows from my analysis of the late eighteenth-century practice of attributing texts to Anonymous as a means of distinguishing them from texts with named authors. In this chapter I explore the dynamics of authorial attribution in two different ways. I first explore the identification of Daniel Defoe as “a novelist” in the attribution of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* to him through the mechanism of the circulating library. Noted for their traffic in anonymous and ephemeral novels, the circulating
libraries of the late eighteenth century nonetheless played a key role in the development of a literary culture that privileged named authorship. I take up the circumstances surrounding the late eighteenth-century attribution of long-anonymous novels to Daniel Defoe. One of the most prolific writers of the eighteenth century, Defoe was not known during his lifetime as a novelist. His works were published almost exclusively anonymously, and his name was not attached to a novel until the mid-1770s, when bookseller and circulating library proprietors John and Francis Noble attributed *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* to him. I argue that the establishment of a lasting authorial attribution depends upon its repeated circulation among a reading public. It is not simply the attribution on the title pages of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* that definitively linked Defoe to the works. Rather, these attributions occurred within the larger institution of the Nobles’ libraries whose publishing, advertising, and circulating practices repeatedly transmitted Defoe’s name linked to “his works” by means additional to the books in which they appeared. In doing so, the authorial attribution achieved wider circulation within the public than a single book could. By attaching the author’s name to these novels, the Nobles elevated their editions of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* above previous editions and other circulating library novels, and in doing so, contributed to the emergence of a coherent corpus of Defoe novels. I then turn to twentieth-century discussions of Defoe “the pamphleteer” and the contested and not-contested authorship of the political pamphlets *A Vindication of the Press* and *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* to demonstrate how practices of attribution may both shape and deny the reading of a text and an author.
As my first two chapters explore the various means by which anonymity was acknowledged, and in some cases undone, my third chapter examines the case of anonymous drama, to see how, and under what circumstances, readers and audiences became aware that a given play was anonymous. Recent scholarship has called attention to the curious difference in patterns of authorial attribution between printed and performed drama in the early modern and Restoration periods. While almost every performed dramatic piece was offered to the public with no advertisement of its authorship, nearly eighty percent of the same pieces when printed bore an authorial attribution. Similarly, my own research indicates a change in dramatic cataloging practices in the late seventeenth century, which set anonymous works apart from those with named authors by placing them in an entirely different section of the catalog. Key to this cataloging practice is the fact that catalogers only included printed plays. These catalogers were thinking of the play as a printed text, not a staged performance. However, only a fraction of the anonymous plays and entertainments presented on the early eighteenth-century stage made it into print. I argue that while in the theater of the early eighteenth-century performed pieces were overwhelmingly anonymous, it was only in the printing of plays that a ready distinction between anonymous plays and those with named authors was made. Anonymity was thus made a concern to play readers even as it remained an issue of little or no concern to theatrical audiences. Central to my chapter is my reading of Henry Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce and the Pleasures of the Town*, whose use of the play-within-a-play device explicitly articulates this difference between the performed play and the printed play. Much against the norm of actual theatrical
practice, Fielding places the author, the play’s hapless hero Luckless, at the very center of the performance.

While my first three chapters focus on the identification and undoing of anonymity throughout the eighteenth century, my final chapter examines two texts whose anonymity passes without remark and one that obsessively draws attention to its anonymity. I first examine two novels that, unlike *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, were published anonymously and remain so. While scholarship on the novel has been dominated by the study of works by named authors, I explore how these anonymous novels ask us to consider the functions of, and expectations about, authorship and anonymity in texts for mass consumption. My inquiry follows from Raven’s striking discovery that over eighty percent of new novels published between 1750 and 1790 were anonymous. The rise of the novel has been typically told as a story about named authors: Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding. I suggest that the rise of the novel may be alternately narrated as the emergence of a literary form characterized by its anonymous authors. I take up two novels, *The Generous Guardian* and ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, that were both published anonymously and feature anonymity in their plot through the device of the anonymous letter. The continuity between the form of the anonymous novels and the form of the anonymous letters reveals a lack of self-consciousness in the novels about their anonymity. The novels’ anonymity is simply the typical mode of authorship for the emergent form aimed at a mass audience. As a contrast to these tacitly anonymous novels, I conclude my chapter with a reading of Frances Burney’s *Evelina*, which, like ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and *The Generous Guardian*, was published anonymously by a circulating library publisher. *Evelina*, however, draws
attention repeatedly to its anonymity. In doing so, I argue that it works to elevate itself above other anonymous novels aimed at this mass audience. *Evelina* exemplifies the way that, like attribution to a named author, when anonymity is made remarkable it works to elevate an imaginative text and associate it with the emergent category of the literary, not simply “entertainment.”

That a text was anonymous, that it named no author, did not necessarily register with readers and audiences of the long eighteenth century. Rather, these readers and audiences learned to attend to the anonymity of the literary works they encountered through changes in publishing and cataloging practices and shifts in medium in the rapidly developing literary marketplace of the eighteenth century. My dissertation argues that the emergence of anonymity as a distinct characteristic of literature is a precondition to its disappearance in literary history because it is no sooner a characteristic then it must be explained or else the anonymous text is consigned to obscurity. Along the way, this process of making anonymity explicit and attributing these texts to named authors furthered the project of building the canon of English literature. Anonymous publication does not perish in the eighteenth century; rather, it gives way to this canon-building based on authorial attribution. The foundations of the canon rest on the intelligibility of anonymity and the notion that it is a given in a literary text. My work narrates how, over the course of the long eighteenth century, anonymity was made legible and taken to be an obvious feature of a text. That is, how anonymity was able to be, at once, everywhere and nowhere.
Chapter 1: Anonymous as Author

This chapter considers the historical emergence of Anonymous\(^{18}\) as an explicitly named author in eighteenth-century British literature and theorizes its function as distinct from anonymous texts without attribution. My concern in this chapter is two different and competing manifestations of anonymity in eighteenth-century literary texts: blank anonymity and attributed anonymity. Blank anonymity fulfills Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* definition of anonymous as “wanting a name” and is manifest in the absence of an authorial name. Attributed anonymity, on the other hand, calls attention to the anonymous status of the text by explicitly attributing its authorship to Anonymous.

These two forms of anonymity are separate, but related, issues in the study of anonymity. I'll name the function of anonymity in its deployment in a literary text “the anonymous function.” Here, the absence of the authorial name may work to unmoor the text from its social context of origination and creation. The anonymous text is not historicized and contextualized through the naming of the biographical writer. It is instead contextualized in its form and literariness. That is not to say that the text is set adrift as text or écriture, but rather that its contextual meaning adheres in its relationship to the form it takes and its proximity to other literary texts. In these cases, "the anonymous function" enables the relocation of a text from one given context to another. Attributed anonymity, then, is a counter move or response to the "anonymous function."

To name Anonymous as an author is an attempt to give context and reference by way of

\(^{18}\)Throughout this chapter I will differentiate Anonymous used a kind of authorial name from anonymous used to describe a text by capitalizing the first letter of the word.
an authorial name. The attribution to Anonymous would seem to suggest an acceptance of the anonymity of a text – Anonymous occupies the position of the authorial name. However, it is at the moment when the anonymity of a text is made explicit through attribution that the uneasiness surrounding anonymity is at its greatest. As I have argued in my introduction, the attribution of a text to Anonymous is an attempt to restore the logic of substitution of the authorial name in its absence. However, Anonymous is still an insufficient name that does not satisfy the desire for a name. Instead, Anonymous must always gesture both toward its absence and some biographical subject as it attempts to provide a referent and context for a text. When Anonymous is placed in the position of the author’s name on the page, anonymity is marked and shown to be an untenable authorial practice.

Anonymous literally calls attention to nothing. As such, little work has been done to differentiate between anonymous texts that are without name because they lack any attribution to an authorial name, be it a proper name or pseudonym, and anonymous texts that have their anonymous status marked. That is, there has been little attention paid to the difference between texts with the absence of a named author and texts that point to the absence of a named author. In her discussion of Genette’s claim in *Paratexts* that anonymity functions similar to the print conventions that announce an author’s name, Marcy North argues:

Unlike Genette, I view anonymity as a print convention in it own right, occasionally related to the conventions that announce an author’s name, but not bound as a subset to the name. Anonymity can nevertheless be very dependent on other paratexts for its visibility and functionality. Since it is not always visible as text, it must be read through the spaces, expectations, and frames that other paratexts establish. As such, anonymity is both something that exists within and through print conventions and something that is absent from them. (59)
I wish to extend North’s suggestion here that anonymity may be “read through the spaces, expectations, and frames that other paratexts establish” to attend to those moments where anonymity is made visible as text. In doing so, I offer a history of anonymous textual production that is not one continuous narrative in which some texts are produced with authorial names attached to them and some, for a myriad of reasons, are not. This chapter takes up the difference between anonymous texts that are attributed and those that are not to argue that there is a difference and that as it pertains to literary texts in particular, this difference is an historical phenomenon. Put simply, somewhere around 1770 literary texts began, increasingly, to be attributed to Anonymous.

This chapter moves across various kinds of anonymous texts – legal case reports, pamphlet exchanges, and poems in anthologies – to chart both the historical and epistemic movement in the attributions of anonymous texts and to theorize anonymity’s function within these texts. I begin with moments of explicit engagement with anonymity in non-literary texts in order to identify the textual role of what I call remarkable anonymity. Unlike attributed and blank anonymity, this remarkable anonymity does not identify the function of anonymous as a name or attribution of an author; rather, it identifies an explicit engagement in a text with anonymity itself. Understanding anonymity made remarkable is useful because in the explicit identification and engagement with anonymity, its presence describes or names the absence of a name but may not ascribe a text to Anonymous. Such attention to anonymity thus brings into relief the various functions of anonymity within a text that typically remain tacit within blank anonymity. Having theorized the functions of anonymity in these texts, I then move to the poetic anthology as a sight of the historical emergence of Anonymous as a subject to
whom the authorship of texts may be attributed. Set against texts of marked anonymity, the attributed and blank anonymous texts may be understood as participating in a shared set of ideas surrounding anonymity that are invoked by their attribution practices.

I. Anon. as Actor

Anonymous texts are marked by absence. It is, after all, the absence of the authorial name that marks them as anonymous – without name. What, then, does it mean to mark this absence? That is, what function does the explicit marking of a text as Anonymous serve? Take for example the report of a case from the High Court of Chancery, “Anon. February 18, 1742. first seal after Hil. term.”:

An attachment issued against a person out of this court, and the sheriff had the body in custody, and took a bail-bond for his appearance, which he delivered to the plaintiff, who moved at a former seal, that the sheriff might bring in the body; and the court made a rule upon him to shew cause why he did not bring in the body. (507)

Here, “Anon.” functions as Johnson’s Dictionary defines it, “wanting a name.” “Anon.” is used here as an adjective used to describe a quality of the case. That quality is that the names of the actors within the case are absent. Unlike like surrounding cases, Lingood v. Eade or Emes v. Hancock, in Reports, Anon. has no named plaintiff or defendant. This case, in its interest in the presence of the body of the plaintiff, is useful to exemplify the function of “Anon.” Just as the presence of “the body” is necessary to the court, the presence of a name, even if it is a name that marks the absence of a name is necessary.

Both the plaintiff and sheriff are without name and “Anon.” marks this.

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20 Reports 501
21 Report 507
Anonymous, however, is not only used in its adjectival form within *Reports*. Within the “Table of the Names of the Cases,” Anonymous is used to classify and organize the cases that it describes. Anonymous occupies the same position on the page and performs the same function as the proper names within the table of cases. The cases are organized by the names of plaintiffs and defendants in the table of cases, and *Reports* allows one to find cases by either the name of the plaintiff or defendant. Given the necessity of the proper name to the organization of the volume, the absence of those proper names must also be marked, and the table of cases from volume two of the 1765-68 *Reports* groups twelve cases together under “Anonymous.”

Anonymous has long been explicitly marked within print documents of legal proceedings. *Laws relating to the poor, from the forty-third of Queen Elizabeth to the third of King George II. With cases adjudged in the Court of King’s* (1739), collects case law relating to the poor and includes in its index of cases “Anonymus” for six cases. Likewise, *Reports of cases argued and determined in the High Court of Chancery* regularly includes Anonymous within its “Table of the Names of Cases” and case reports in each of its volumes throughout the period. Within these texts, anonymous serves a twofold purpose: it both describes a case as “wanting a name” and names a case. In fact, Anonymous becomes a name within these texts as it stands in for the absent or missing proper names necessary to refer to the cases. Anonymous, however, does not name the author of these cases. There is a reporter or, in the case of the 1765-68 *Reports*, a

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22 *Reports* vi
“collector,” behind these texts but there is no recognizable author from whom they originate. Anonymous marks the absence of the names of the actors in the cases. It is not meant to describe the absence of an authorial name in these texts or make explicit the origin of the text. Anonymous is a placeholder in cases where either the defendants or plaintiffs are without name. Within the legal discourse that these texts represent, the actors in the cases must be noted, even if their name is unknown or withheld. Anonymous thus functions to point to “flesh-and-blood” actors, or empirical individuals, whose presence must be marked as essential to the action of the cases.

I draw upon these cases and the examples from British legal historical documents to exemplify an essential theoretical point in my argument: Anonymous is not simply a substitution for the name of an authorial subject or a description of the condition of “wanting a name;” rather, Anonymous, because it does not refer to anything except absence, can serve various functions across texts of various discourses, or within the same text, to name or describe actors whose names are absent but who are not the author of a text, to classify texts around their shared absence of names, and, as we will see in the next section, inadequately describe and point to a nameless authorial subject.

II. Anonymous and the Insufficient Authorial Subject

Within the vast print marketplace of the British eighteenth century, texts that identified themselves as a response to “an Anonymous writer” or “an Anonymous Pamphlet” are innumerable. A survey of titles from throughout the period reveals in

24 The title page attributes collection of the volume to John Tracy Atkyns, who is likely responsible for the preface to the volume as well.
nearly every genre of writing, texts appear that respond to some previous anonymous
text. I will now take up a 1765 print exchange between French surgeon Jean Keyser and
English surgeon Jonathan Wathen regarding the use of mercury as a cure for venereal
disease as particularly illustrative of this kind of print exchange and the role of marked
anonymity within it. I draw upon this particular exchange to demonstrate a wider point
about the insufficiency of Anonymous to point to or describe an author because it only
refers to a textual presence, not an individual outside of the text. Anonymous must then
be shored up by attribution to an actual individual as a means of imparting
epistemological certainty.

Wathen’s *Practical Observations Concerning the Cure of the Venereal Disease*
*by Mercurials* is a treatise on the use of mercury to treat gonorrhea. In his introduction,
Wathen takes up a contemporary anonymous French treatise on the same subject,
*Parallele des differantes methods de traiter la maladie vénériene*. Wathen offers the
French from the original and then his commentary, which is largely in accord with the
anonymous author. One of the key areas of agreement between the anonymous author
and Wathen, and one which is the center of the exchange between Wathen and his
respondent Keyser, is the efficacy of “Keyser’s pills” in treatment. Wathen writes,
echoing the anonymous French author, “that this medicine is more slow, uncertain, and
dangerous, than any of the common internal mercurial preparations” (xiii).\(^{25}\) Wathen
readily aligns himself with the anonymous author in his assessment of Keyser pills.

It is the absence of the author’s name of *Parallele*, more so than the critique of his

\(^{25}\) Jonathan Wathen. *Practical Observations, Concerning the Cure of the Venereal
medicine, that so raises the ire of Keyser in his response to Wathen in *A Letter from J. Keyser, Surgeon and Chymist, of Paris, To Mr. Jonathan Wathen, Surgeon, of London* (1765). Keyser opens his letter to Wathen by positioning himself so engaged with his professional life that he had not taken notice of *Parallele* and its critique of his medicine. “My avocations as a surgeon admitting me very little leisure to read almost any of the numerous productions with which the presses are daily teeming, it is no wonder,” Keyser writes:

> that an anonymous pamphlet … escaped my notice, although on a subject in which I have professedly engaged myself; and this hide-and-seek author would in all probability have long triumphed unanswered in the attack he has made upon a medicine which, from its utility, has acquired the sanction and recommendation of some of the most respectable professors of the noble and beneficial sciences of physic and surgery, had I not been informed by my correspondent in London, that Mr. Wathen, a gentleman of some note in his profession of surgeon, had openly adopted the sentiments of this anonymous writer, and, unprovoked by me, who have not the honour of knowing him but by name, fallen most cruelly upon my medicine.

Keyser’s claim that his engagement with his profession and the volume of print publication coupled with the anonymous nature of *Parallele* is the reason that the pamphlet escaped his notice is a rhetorical move that positions him authoritatively outside of the pedestrian print exchanges into which he is entering. Keyser is a man for whom words refer to an empirical reality; the anonymous writer of *Parallele*, on the other hand, refers to some textual presence rather than an empirical individual external. The image of the teeming and undifferentiated press with which Keyser begins his address is thus crucial to his sense of print exchange and anonymous authorship. What serves to

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differentiate print texts for Keyser, and indeed this is the impetus for writing, is the
author’s name because it refers to an actual individual external to the text. The
anonymous author was easy to ignore among other print texts because the presence of the
author was only textual. However, when a text goes into print “adopt[ing] the sentiments
of this anonymous writer” with the author’s name, and a noted one, attached, Keyser is
compelled to take notice and respond.

Keyser claims he cannot take aim at the “hide-and-seek author” of Parallele and
so he must recur to Wathen to address the claims made against his medicine. Wathen fills
in a name for anonymous and becomes a subject to whom Keyser responds. Before
quoting Wathen’s paraphrase of Parallele, Keyser writes, “You are pleased to say, Sir,
for you must allow me to look upon you as the assertor, who stand forth the promulgator
of the tenets or reflections of an anonymous writer” (3). It is Wathen, not the author of
Parallele, who is held responsible for the claims against Keyser and thus addressed in
this passage and throughout the text. Indeed, Keyser even offers a vision of Wathen’s
composition of Practical Observations, “lay[ing] aside the lancet, and tak[ing] up the
pen,” to assert his physical presence in the composition of the critique.

In holding Wathen as “the assertor” of the critique of Keyser’s Pills, Keyser
insists upon quoting moments where Wathen is quoting “from the same anonymous
writer” (4). Rather than hold Wathen alone liable for the claims made against the
medicine, Keyser yokes the anonymous writer and Wathen together, their words
indistinguishable in the context of Keyser’s writing. The collapse between the two
authors, Anonymous and Wathen, is so complete that Keyser attempts to separate the two
later in the pamphlet, yet he cannot do so entirely. Keyser writes, “I come to that part of
your Introduction, where you attack me in your own person” (10). The implicit assumption on the part of Keyser is that Wathen has taken on the persona of, and thus stands in place of, the anonymous author of *Parallele* rather than, as Wathen actually does, quote and paraphrase the text. To make the separation between Wathen and the anonymous author, Keyser quotes, with editorial commentary, a particularly confused authorial moment from *Practical Observations*:

> You say, in the 13th page of your Introduction, “He (the author of the *Parallele*, &c.) asserts with me (observe that me Mr. Wathen!) that this medicine (of Mr. Keyser’s) is more slow, uncertain, and *dangerous*, than any of the common internal mercurial preparations.” (11)

There are three authorial voices in this passage: Keyser, Wathen, and Anonymous, and it is Keyser’s task to piece Wathen apart from Anonymous to correctly direct his refutation of Wathen’s “attack.” Keyser enacts this separation by adding his own voice parenthetically. The parenthetical commentary is first used to clarify that the masculine pronoun “he” refers to the author of *Parallele*. The commentary then emphasizes Wathen’s position relative to the now clarified “he” within the passage, “observe that *me* Mr. Wathen!” The final parenthetical insertion in the passage furthers clarifies the object upon which Wathen and Anonymous are in accord, “this medicine (of Mr. Keyser’s).” This final parenthetical insertion is unnecessary. By the eleventh page of the pamphlet, it is clear that the topic of debate is the efficacy and danger of Keyser’s medicine. Why, then, the need to clarify that “this medicine” refers to Keyser’s pills?

Through the use of the parenthetical commentary and textual emphasis, Keyser inserts both his voice and his name in the double-voiced declamation of his medicine. The passage is a representation of the larger print exchange between the three figures:
Anonymous, Wathen, and Keyser. The quotation of Wathen’s *Practical Observations* is doubly removed from the original commentary from *Parallele* and modified by both the parenthetical commentary and the use of italics. The clarification of the vague textual referents, “he,” “me,” and “this,” recasts the quotation as a three-way exchange in which Keyser textually points fingers at his accusers. The quotation is not a chance to provide textual evidence of Wathen’s slight; rather, it is a moment of direct engagement with the authors of the critique and their words. Keyser writes from the outset of his letter that he cannot attend to the “teeming” productions of the press, and so he must be able to differentiate and point to them as subjects of his address.

In his response to Keyser, *An Answer to the Letter of Mr. Keyser*, Wathen is keenly aware that the issue is not the criticism of Keyser’s Pills but the anonymous criticism of them and Wathen’s perceived endorsement of that criticism. Wathen writes,

> Permit me, however, first of all, to declare it as my Opinion, that a Writer, with or without Name, is entitled to just so much Respect as he has Reason and Facts to support what he advances; so that the greatest Names has no more Weight with me than the nameless, where the *ipse dixit* only is only their side. (1)

In his *Practical Observations*, where he first takes up the claims made in *Parallele*, Wathen never refers to *Parallele* or its author as anonymous. His introduction of the text focuses instead on the content of the work: “I have had the satisfaction to find some of my principal sentiments confirmed by the author of the *Parallele*… He acknowledges our ignorance of (and the impossibility of investigating) the nature of the venereal poison” (*Practical* ix). It is only in Keyser’s response that the anonymity of *Parallele* is marked. In positioning himself alongside or, as Keyser proposes, as the author of *Parallele*, Wathen need not mark the text’s anonymity. It is the content of *Parallele* that interests
Wathen, not the figure of the author behind it. Keyser must mark the anonymity of *Parallele* because it has entered into an exchange and must therefore be named and located. Keyser’s interest, as Wathen observes, is not in the text; it is in the author of the text. Anonymous is thus a means of projecting a figure to whom Keyser may respond. This projection offers a means of differentiating the subjects within the print exchange and positioning Keyser in relationship to these subjects. However, describing the author of *Parallele* as anonymous is insufficient because it has no referent outside of the text and Keyser must recur to Wathen to attribute the words and sentiments of the anonymous author to an actual individual.

The explicit description of the author of *Parallele* as anonymous by Keyser and the subsequent attribution of the words and sentiment of that author to Wathen is not unique to this pamphlet exchange. Rather, this exchange exemplifies the way in which anonymity, when marked, is approached within texts. Such marked anonymity describes and points to a nameless authorial subject, but does not do so satisfactorily. Because anonymity when remarked upon points to an absence, even as it names that absence, it invites epistemological uncertainty – Keyser knows there is an author behind *Parallele* yet he does not, and cannot, know who it is apart from the text. An author has been described and pointed out, yet that authorial presence exists only within the text itself. The attribution to Wathen is paradigmatic of an attempt appease this uncertainty of marked anonymity by attaching the name of an individual to the words of an explicitly anonymous author.

Anonymity made remarkable is thus a phenomenon through which we can approach attributed and blank anonymity within literary texts. The assumptions and
uncertainties of marked anonymity inform the attribution practices of these literary texts though they only rarely engage anonymity with the attention of the Keyser and Wathen exchange. However, we will see these assumptions emerge throughout the following texts – in the footnotes, prefaces, indices, and tables of contents – and understand the effect they have on the content, circulation, and reception of the anonymous text.

III. Unattributed and Attributed

This section examines the emergence of Anonymous as a figure to whom authorship is explicitly attributed in literary texts. An examination of nearly one hundred and fifty multiply-authored anthologies of poetry, prose, and song from 1700-1799 reveals an emerging tendency to attribute anonymous works explicitly to Anonymous only after 1770. While Chancery Reports and religio-politico writing attributed texts explicitly to Anonymous as their author throughout the period, literary texts only very rarely did so prior to 1770.27 I take the late eighteenth-century reprinting of several poems included in Richard Steele’s 1714 Poetical Miscellanies by John Nichols as exemplary of this transformation in attribution practice. In his practice of attributing anonymous poems from the Steele volume to Anonymous, Nichols operates under the assumptions about marked anonymity at work in the pamphlets and case reports considered earlier in the chapter. Nichols’ attributions function not simply to name the absence of the author’s name but also unsuccessfully appease the uncertainty brought about by this absence by consistently attaching the name of an individual to the words of an explicitly anonymous

27 My research has found two such texts: A Hymn to Money, a twenty-six page satyr whose epistle dedicatory is signed by “Anonymus,” and “A Question” “By Anonymus,” published in The Faithful Memoirs of the Grubstreet Society (1732). This epigram also appears in Certain Epigrams in Laud and Praise of the Gentlemen of the Dunciad (1732) with the attribution to “Anonymus.” Alexander Pope is the generally accepted author of this epigram.
“My Name,” Richard Steele writes at the beginning of the epistle dedicatory to his *Poetical Miscellanies*, “as Publisher of the following Miscellanies, I am sensible, is but a slight Recommendation of them to the Publick; but the Town’s Opinion of them will be raised, when it sees them address’d to Mr. Congreve.” William Congreve receives a laudatory poem and is appealed to as the patron of the volume by Steele through this epistle dedicatory. Steele begins by noting the inadequacy of his own name on the volume to endorse the poems therein contained. Congreve’s name when associated with *Poetical Miscellanies*, Steele asserts, “gives a hopeful Idea of the Work,” because, “He is an acknowledg’d Master of the Art He is desired to Favour.” Through his poetry and plays, the name “Congreve” has been established as a kind of commodity upon which Steele hopes to trade in his epistle dedicatory.

While the authorial name is central in the epistle dedicatory, it is unclear how important the authorial name is to the remainder of the volume. *Poetical Miscellanies* is filled with anonymous poems. More than half of poems in the collections are without a named author. The title page promises “original poems and translations” “By the best Hands.” Indeed, the table of contents announces poems by Mr. Pope, Mr. Philips, Mr. Parnell, Mr. Tickell, Mr. Gay, Mr. Eusden, Mr. Steele, Mr. Budgell, and others. However, alongside poems and translations from these named authors sit poems that are

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29 “To Mr. Congreve, Occasion’d by his Comedy, call’d, *The Way of the World*” by Steele

30 ibid

31 Forty-seven of the eighty-three poems in the collection are anonymous.
attributed neither to a named author nor to the suggestive placeholder for the author’s name - Anonymous.

Anonymous poems in the print marketplace of the early eighteenth century were hardly an anomaly. What is important about the anonymous poems in the collection is that the anonymous status of these works is utterly unremarkable to a collection that seems otherwise so interested in the authorial name. “To Belinda” sits in same table of contents with “The Wife of Bath her Prologue from Chaucer By Mr. Pope.” “To Belinda” has no attribution; it needs none. It is an anonymous verse in a collection predominated by anonymous verse. In this table of contents, a variety of attributions are given: to named authors, to “the author of,” to “several hands,” and to “the same hand.” However, several poems sit in the table with no attribution at all. These poems are anonymous, but unattributed. On the poem itself, the authorship of “To Belinda” is similarly unattributed.
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MISCELLANIES. 43

The Swain pursu’d the God’s Advice;
The Nymph was now no longer Nice.

She smil’d, and spoke the Sex’s Mind;
When You grow Daring, We grow Kind:
Men to themselves are most severe,
And make us Tyrants by their Fear.

To BELINDA.

In Church the Prayer-Book, and the Fan display’d,
And solemn Curt’seys, shew the wily Maid;
At Plays the leering Looks and wanton Airs,
And Nods and Smiles, are fondly meant for Snares.
Alas! vain Charmer, you no Lovers get;
There you seem Hypocrite, and here Coquet.

“To Belinda” from Steele’s 1714 Poetical Miscellanies (ECCO)
“To Belinda” appears again in John Nichols’ fourth volume of the 1780 A Select Collection of Poems with Notes Bibliographical and Historical, which reprints much of the content from Steele’s Poetical Miscellanies. Whereas in the 1714 volume Steele discounted the ability of his name alone to recommend the poems, the 1780 Select Collection features an engraving of Steele as its frontispiece. It is Steele, not Congreve, who is to endorse this collection in both name and image. Indeed, Steele’s name has such weight with Nichols that in lamenting the dearth of poetry by Steele in a note to “Horace, Book I. Ode VI. Applied to the Duke of Marlborough,” Nichols writes that, “it is rather surprising that we have no more of his [Steele’s] poems. I imagine, however, that some of the verses by anonymous authors in this volume, which are said to be from Mr. Steele’s collection, are his own” (14). Nichols wishes to attribute to Steele poems of unknown authorship from the Poetical Miscellanies as means of endorsing their inclusion within his own Collection, as the watchful engraving of Steele on the frontispiece endorses the collection as a whole.

The most striking example of Nichols’ desire to attach Steele’s name and names in general to his collection is the reprinting of “To Belinda.” “To Belinda” appears among many anonymous poems from Poetical Miscellanies. The source of the poems “From Steele’s Collection” is noted, and, more importantly, the collection makes explicit their anonymous authorship. Anonymous occupies the position of the author’s name on the page underneath the titles of the poems. In the case of “To Belinda,” the anonymous status of the poem is further qualified by a note from Nichols that states, “Some of these poems, as I have already mentioned, I believe to be Mr. Steele’s” (74).
MISCELLANY POEMS.

TO BELINDA.

ANONYMOUS; FROM STEELE'S COLLECTION.

In Church, the prayer-book, and the fan display'd,
And solemn curt'sies, threw the wily maid;
At Plays, the leering looks and wanton airs,
And nods and smiles, are fondly meant for snares.
Alas! vain Charmer, you no Lovers get;
There you seem Hypocrite, and here Coquette.

TO FLAVIA. FROM THE SAME.

Nature, in pity, has deny'd you shape,
Else how should mortals Flavia's chain escape?
Your radiant aspect, and your rosy bloom,
Without this form would bring a general doom;
At once our ruin and relief we see,
At sight are captives, and at sight are free.

ON NICOLINI'S LEAVING THE STAGE.

FROM THE SAME.

Be gone, our nation's pleasure and reproach!
Britain no more with idle trills debauch;
Back to thy own unmanly Venice sail,
Where luxury and loose desires prevail;
There thy emasculating voice employ,
And raise the triumphs of the wanton boy.

Some of these poems, as I have already mentioned, I believe to be Mr. Steele's. N.

Long,

"To Belinda," "To Flavia," and "On Nicolini's Leaving the Stage" reprinted in A Select Collection (1780)
In their original context from *Poetical Miscellanies*, it must be remembered, the anonymous status of the many anonymous poems goes unremarked upon in both the table of contents and the poems themselves. In *Poetical Miscellanies* (1714), Anonymous has no authorial position on the page for “To Belinda.” *A Select Collection* (1780) makes explicit the absence of a proper authorial name by placing Anonymous in the position of names like Mr. Prior and Mr. Steele elsewhere in the collection. The unremarkably anonymous poems of *Poetical Miscellanies* become remarkably anonymous, as Nichols’ notes show, in their reprinting in *A Select Collection*.

Foucault has suggested that the author function, that is, the role of the authorial name, within narrative discourse assures a classificatory function. Griffin extends and challenges Foucault and describes the function of the name of the author as such: “Rather than invoke the flesh-and-blood writer, the name signals the status of a certain kind of writing, works as a principle of classification, and establishes a relation of homogeneity and filiation between texts” and argues, unlike Foucault, that anonymity did not disappear with the advent of copyright, nor did changes in the law necessarily lead to changes in the prevalence of anonymous texts (“Introduction” 9). Anonymous, like Mr. Prior or Mr. Steele, is an authorial name. Within *A Select Collection*, the classificatory function of the authorial name is evident. Anonymous groups together otherwise disparate poems within the table of contents and the texts themselves under a shared absence of names. Additionally, *A Select Collection* groups “To Belinda,” “To Flavia,” and “On Nicolini’s Leaving the Stage,” all anonymous poems from the Steele volume, together in both the table of contents and on the page as, “From the same” (74). “From the same” seems deliberately vague; “from the same” suggests that they are all from the same volume -
“Steele’s Collection.” “By the same” is the phrase used by the collection to signal shared authorship. “The Contrary Agreements,” for example, is “by the same” as “Love’s Conquest,” by Mr. Jackson (358). However, in the case of the poems from the Steele collection, “from the same” collapses into “by the same” as the attribution of “To Belinda,” “Anonymous; From Steele’s Collection” suggests not only Steele’s collection as an original source but Steele himself as the originator. As noted previously, the attribution of Anonymous in “To Belinda” is footnoted and Nichols suggests, “Some of these poems… I believe to be Mr. Steele’s” (74). The three poems are, then, grouped as both from the same volume and from the same author, whom Nichols believes to be Steele.
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Table of contents of *A Select Collection* (1780)
I argue that for Nichols to note a text being “by the same” is the same as being “from the same.” The attribution of Anonymous in *A Select Collection* slips from its function to group texts without a known author to attempting to substitute the name of an author in place of its absence. By attributing the poems to Anonymous and then twice linking the anonymous poems to Steele, Nichols, who makes a point to sign his notes “J.N.,” is not simply using Anonymous as a means of classifying poems for which he has no authorial attribution. In its explicit attribution, qualified with editorial textual apparati, Anonymous becomes the originator of these poems. Anonymous fills a felt need for someone to have authored these poems. The unattributed poems of *Poetical Miscellanies* will not do. Further, by linking Anonymous with Steele, Nichols identifies the problem of the unknown authorship of the poems and attempts to solve it by suggesting that the poems may be attributed to the very man whose presence on the frontispiece endorses *A Select Collection* – Richard Steele.

The explicitation of the anonymous status of the poems from Steele’s volume is not an isolated decision made by a publisher of reprinted poems. Rather, it represents a larger historical movement in which the anonymous status of literary texts is marked and made explicit by attributing them to “Anonymous.” This transformation is not complete within the period, nor does it hold true for all printed texts; however, within the period from 1770 to 1800 there is a remarkable increase in the number of anonymous literary texts that are marked or attributed explicitly to “Anonymous.” Attributed anonymity attempts assuage the uncertainty engendered by anonymity by placing a name of an author, Anonymous, where there is none. Anonymous is, however, an insufficient attribution and brings with it further attributions. That is, to attribute a text to Anonymous
is not to end the uncertainty of unnamed authorship. Rather, attributed anonymity holds a place for the absent proper name and allows editors, collectors, respondents, readers, etc. to attach the name of an individual to the words of an explicit anonymous author.

IV. Attributed Anonymity and Circulation

“Rev. T. Moss A.M. Minister of Brierley Hill Staffordshire” is the accepted author of the poem “The Beggar.” “The Beggar” appeared in 1769 as part of the anonymous Poems on Several Occasions which was “published at the Request of a few Friends who were pleas’d to honour them with their Approbation,” with its author supposedly “stipulating that his name should be affixed to no more than twenty copies.”

“The Beggar,” despite its inclusion in contemporary collections of eighteenth-century verse and the attribution of the 1783 poem The Imperfection of Human Enjoyments to “The Reverend Thomas Moss… Author of the Poem Entitled ‘The Beggar,’” is rarely considered in the canon of eighteenth-century poetry.

However, in its adaptation and circulation as the anonymous “The Beggar’s Petition,” “The Beggar” became of the most popular poems of the late eighteenth century. “The Beggar’s Petition,” Salopiensis writes to the Gentleman’s Magazine in 1790:

32 From the handwritten attribution on Poems on Several Occasions held by the British Library.
33 “Advertisement.” Poems on Several Occasions. Wolverhampton: G. Smart, 1769.
has, by the force of intrinsic merit, found its way into almost every collection which has been made for several years past, but, what I think a great injustice to the author, has always been inserted without a name. Whilst every admirer of genuine poetry is delighted with its beauties, the author’s name is only known in the circle of his friends.  

Salopiensis identifies the seeming paradox central to my analysis of the circulation of “The Beggar’s Petition” as an anonymous text. “The Beggar’s Petition” is wildly popular because of “intrinsic merit” and “its beauty” and yet, this popularity seems to be despite the name of its author not attached in its circulation. Its reception by “admirer[s] of genuine poetry” can account for its popularity even though its origin of poetic production is unknown and likely did not matter to most readers’ and listeners’ experience of the poem. Salopiensis acknowledges the anonymity of “The Beggar’s Petition” and expect that other readers, too, will wish to know who the author is. He thus writes to give the author his due and identify “Rev. Thomas Moss” as the writer of the poem.

This attribution did not seem to matter. “The Beggar’s Petition” continued to circulate anonymously and with false attributions well into the nineteenth century. Despite Salopiensis’ 1790 letter attributing “The Beggar’s Petition” to Moss, when *The Gentleman’s Magazine* reprinted the poem in 1791 it appeared with no authorial attribution.  

The reason for this is simple: Thomas Moss did not write “The Beggar’s Petition.” As noted previously, Moss in 1783 published a poem whose title page attributed it to “Author of the Poem Entitled ‘The Beggar.’” The poems are nearly

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37 *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. Vol. LXI pt II (September 1791): p. 852 Tellingly, a footnote to the poem refers to the correspondent from whom the magazine received a copy of the poem.
identical with changes to the title, minor changes in phrasing in the poem,\(^3\) and changes to the textual presentation. However, the phenomenally circulated poem, “The Beggar’s Petition,” cannot be attributed to Moss as its author nor can “The Beggar” be regarded as an origin for “The Beggar’s Petition.” “The Beggar” is a source for “The Beggar’s Petition” and Moss most likely the author of that source. I argue that through its circulation, and its various attributions, “The Beggar’s Petition” created anew both its origin as text and the person responsible for that text. My argument is not that the authorship or anonymity of “The Beggar’s Petition” was not of interest to its contemporaries; indeed, the evidence suggests quite the opposite, but that this interest was incidental to the much broader reception and circulation of the poem that constitutes its textual origin and authorship.

This section primarily considers “The Beggar’s Petition” as it appears across a variety of anthologies in the late eighteenth century. The anthology is a crucial locus of anonymous texts because the form in which they appear authorizes the text in lieu of what may be authorized by an author’s name. The context in which a text appears takes on importance in the categorization of the text. Texts in eighteenth-century anthologies Barbara Benedict has suggested:

By reappearing in contexts other than their original pamphlets, these works often appear in enough contexts to lose their historical specificity of meaning and to

\(^3\) William Enfield is likely responsible for the title change and like following line changes: line 8 Poems on Several Occasions, “Has been the Channel to a Stream of Tears” becomes “Has been the channel to a flood of tears.” Line 14, “Here craving for a Morsel of their Bread,” becomes “Here, as I crav’d a morsel of their bread,” Similarly, in line 24, “And Tears of Pity could not be represt” becomes “And Tears of Pity would not be represt.”
become popularly understood as “universal” – a central criterion in eighteenth-century literary theory.  

In this movement toward decontextualization and dehistorization, the text, and the anonymous text in particular, is unmoored from its site of origin, which may be the historical-specific empirical writer and conditions of originary publication, and recontextualized among other texts. This recontextualization creates the literariness of the text. Literariness is not a valuation of a given text’s worth or “literary merit,” but rather a description of its position among other literary texts. That is to say, a text may be understood as literary because it is with other literary texts, separate from the social conditions of its production. The anthology is a material instantiation of literariness as it organizes disparate texts into the coherent form of the book. Benedict has argued that the recontextualization and repetition of texts in anthologies is part of the construction of the English canon. I would further suggest that the anthology is part of the perpetuation of a distancing between author and work. By this I mean that the dispersed textuality of the anthology may obscure the origin of the text and author-as-writer and instead allows for the anthology itself to fulfill the “author function.”

“The Beggar’s Petition,” as it appears in multiple volumes with multiple attributions, or no attributions at all, is thus an ideal case study for an analysis of the circulation of an anonymous text and the function of marked, blank, and attributed anonymity within that circulation. The anonymity of the poem is central to its ability to move across multiple genres of anthologies and through multiple readerships. In this movement across anthologies and readerships, attributed and blank anonymity, along

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with the genre of the anthology and presentation of the text, work to shape the intended reception and interpretation of the poem. The wide circulation of “The Beggar’s Petition” with its myriad attributions realizes the multiple ways in which anonymity – attributed and blank – may function in a text.

Between 1776 and 1800, “The Beggar’s Petition” appears in at least sixteen different collections (and likely many more) printed in England and Scotland. Many of these collections went into several editions\(^4\) further multiplying the circulation of the poem. Appearing in elocution manuals, magazines, primers, reading manuals, and poetry collections, this “pathetic” poem, as several collections classified its genre, reached an amazingly wide reading, and listening,\(^5\) public. The likely first print appearance of “The

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\(^4\) *The Speaker*, for example, is in its third edition by 1779 and is reprinted well into the nineteenth century.

\(^5\) “The Beggar’s Petition” circulated widely in print based on the text that appeared in *The Speaker*, and it is likely that it circulated even more widely by oral transmission. Two literary anecdotes speak to the wide transatlantic circulation through its oral performance. In her biography of James Fenimore Cooper, Mary E. Philips describes a young James performing “The Beggar’s Petition” at a school exhibition:

> These “Academy boys” were ambitious; each annual exhibition was crowded to listen to the speeches “of Coriolanus, Iago, Brutus, and Cassius” “raw lads from the village and adjoining farms,” all in the bravery of local militia uniform – blue coats “faced with red, matross swords, and hats of ’76.” On such an occasion James Cooper, became the pride and admiration of Master Cory for his moving recitation of the “Beggar’s Petition” – acting the part of an old man wrapped in a faded cloak and leaning over his staff. (26)

This scene recalls an oral performance in which Cooper does not simply recite “The Beggar’s Petition;” he becomes the petitioning beggar, “acting the part” with costume to match. Tellingly, “The Beggar’s Petition” is set alongside “speeches ‘of Coriolanus, Iago, Brutus, and Cassius,’” each texts frequently reprinted in elocution manuals, to represent its place in a canon of texts for oral performance. Similarly, Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey describes moment of failed oral recitation of “The Beggar’s Petition” to describe the character of Catherine Morland:

> Her mother was three months in teaching her only to repeat the "Beggar's Petition"; and after all, her next sister, Sally, could say it better than she did. Not that Catherine was always stupid -- by no means; she learnt the fable of "The Hare and Many Friends" as quickly as any girl in England. (38)
Beggar’s Petition” is William Enfield’s *The Speaker* (c. 1775). The title page of *The Speaker* announces its purpose is “to facilitate the improvement of youth in reading and speaking,” and “The Beggar’s Petition” appears in the volume without any authorial attribution; it is not attributed to Moss, and it is not attributed to Anonymous.

Enfield is credited with making the changes from “The Beggar” to “The Beggar’s Petition,” and it is the changes at the level of textual representation that are the more significant to the poem in its circulation. Take, for example, the stanza that opens and concludes “The Beggar”:

PITY the Sorrows of a poor old Man!  
Whose trembling Limbs have borne him to your Door,  
Whose Days are dwindled to the shortest Span,  
Oh! give Relief---and Heav’n will bless your Store. (1-4, 41-44)

This stanza represents the address of the poor old man to the petitionee at the door of the home. Here, the dashes in the final line serve as a means of representing a pause in speech. The fourth stanza makes similar use of textual effect to represent emphasis in speech as the beggar narrates his experience begging at a neighboring home:

(Hard is the Fate of the infirm, and poor!)

Here, “The Beggar’s Petition” is set alongside “The Hare and Many Friends” as two opposing canonical texts for oral performance. Catherine’s difficulty in memorizing the piece, as Claire Grogan suggests in a note to this passage, “indicates her refreshingly independent spirit;” while her ready ability to memorize and repeat “The Hare and Many Friends” “foreshadows Catherine’s own predicament” in Northanger Abbey (38). Both examples suggest the degree to which “The Beggar’s Petition” had saturated the cultures as both a print and oral phenomenon by the late eighteenth century and its place within the canon of popular literature.


43 In Scott’s *Stourbridge and its Vacinity*: “Dr. Enfield, whose taste in selecting has generally been applauded gave great offence to Mr. Moss, by introducing material alterations into the poem, and, unfortunately, the changes became permanent” (155-6).
Here craving for a Morsel of their Bread,
A pamper’d Menial forc’d me from the Door,
To seek a Shelter in an humbler Shed. (13-16)

The opening line of the stanza, with its use of parentheses, marks both a contrast with the previous lines, “For Plenty there a Residence has found./And Grandeur a magnificent Abode” (11-12), where they textually mark the meagerness of the beggar and a change in tone of his speech. Likewise, the italicized “Here” emphasizes both the deictic to indicate the beggar’s situation and the emphatic tone that ought to be placed on it. I contend that these textual effects intend to shape the reception of the poem by marking emphasis for private reading or reading aloud. In its representation of the address of the beggar, the poem invites one to imagine and enact its oral performance. The textual presentation of the poem follows on the rhetorical situation of the petitioning beggar by marking how one ought to read and speak its content.

Despite its appearance in The Speaker, a work “undertaken principally with the design of assisting… in acquiring a just and graceful Elocution,”44 “The Beggar’s Petition” makes no such use of textual effects as cues to its interpretation or oral performance. The dashes, italics, and parentheticals that appear throughout “The Beggar” are not in evidence. In place of these markers, “The Beggar’s Petition” uses standard punctuation marks. The final line of the first and last stanzas becomes, for example, “Oh! give relief, and Heaven will bless your store” (4). For a volume whose express purpose in reprinting this and other texts so that they may be spoken aloud, it seems counterintuitive to erase the marks from the source text that guide how it should be read.

Enfield’s “An Essay on Elocution” that begins the volume, however, addresses just this point in discussing the relationship between printed punctuation and pronunciation:

The use of points is to assist the reader in discerning the grammatical construction, not to direct his pronunciation. In reading, it may often be proper to make a pause where the printer had made none. Nay, it is very allowable for the sake of pointing out the sense more strongly, preparing the audience for what is to follow, or enabling the speaker to alter the tone or height of the voice, sometimes to make a very considerable pause, where the grammatical construction requires none at all. (xxi-xxii)

Enfield suggests that the oral performance of printed texts is itself an act of interpretation where one is encouraged to disregard the printed marks upon the page “for the sake of pointing out the sense more strongly.” The oral emphasis is separate from the grammatical construction indicated on the page as intended by either author or printer. Given this insistence on the role of interpretation in oral performance, then, the changes from “The Beggar” are necessary to the project of The Speaker. The textual effects of “The Beggar” offer an interpretation to reading the text that imposes emphasis on the reader; whereas, “The Beggar’s Petition” encourages one to engage with the text and make a choice in emphasis.45

45 Richard Wendorf writes about the mid-century standardization and abandonment of capitalization and italicization in printing practice in “Abandoning the Capital in Eighteenth-Century London” that, “This pervasive leveling [sic] of the text, with its less visually and intellectually mediated form of presentation, in turn placed much more emphasis on the discriminating power of the individual reader. These fundamental changes in printing conventions, in other words, are not only a result (and reflection) of the development of the reading public but also a cause of increased facility and sophistication as reader were faced with a greater uniformity in the presentation of printed texts. Such a revolutionary development did not go unnoticed, of course, and the most vociferous opposition to these changes was voiced – much too late in the century, at it turned out – by Benjamin Franklin. Writing to his son William in 1773, Franklin complained about the reprinting of one of his anonymous pieces, which had been ‘striped of all the capitaling and italicizing, that intimate allusions and marks [sic] the emphasis of written discourses, to bring them as near as possible to those spoken’.” (88) in Reading,
The poem freely circulated without an authorial attribution throughout the various anthologies and brought with it the interpretive freedom for the reader and speaker as articulated by Enfield’s introduction. However, while “The Beggar’s Petition” was popular in elocution manuals from its outset and brought with it interpretive flexibility, it also circulated widely in a more didactic context in *A Father’s Instructions to his Children* (c.1776). Dr. Thomas Percival is the accepted author of *A Father’s Instructions*. An English physician, Percival wrote primarily on medical matters; however, around 1775 he published the first part of what would become the wildly popular *A Father’s Instructions to his Children*46. Published anonymously by J. Johnson, publisher of Enfield’s *The Speaker*, *A Father’s Instructions* includes “The Beggar’s Petition” in its section “Compassion to the Poor.”47 While “The Beggar’s Petition” receives no authorial attribution in *A Father’s Instructions*, it does include a citation at its conclusion: “The Speaker by Dr. Enfield” (44).

The text of “The Beggar’s Petition” in *A Father’s Instructions* is identical to that which was printed in *The Speaker*, and it is very likely, given the shared publisher, that *The Speaker* is the only source of the poem for *A Father’s Instructions*. While the expressed function of “The Beggar’s Petition” in *The Speaker* was to teach elocution of “pathetic pieces,” the function of “The Beggar’s Petition” in *A Father’s Instructions* is

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46 Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

47 Thomas Percival. *A father’s instructions to his children: consisting of tales, fables, and reflections; designed to promote the love of virtue, a taste for ...* (London: J. Johnson, 1776).42.
didactic. "The Author" writes of the volume’s “objects of instruction” in the preface:

The first and leading on is to refine the feelings of the heart, and to inspire
the mind with the love of moral excellence. And surely nothing can
operate more forcibly, than striking pictures of virtue, and the deformity of
vice; which at once convince the judgment, and leave a lasting impression
on the imagination. (13-14)

Whereas Enfield’s “Essay on Elocution” in *The Speaker* focuses on externalization
through oral performance, the preface to *A Father’s Instructions* turns to the inward
effect of the readings in the collection on the mind. With its emphasis on tone and
articulation, the “Essay on Elocution” attends to refining the processes through which one
makes the text external to the self through performance. *A Father’s Instructions*,
however, following eighteenth-century theories of mind, attends to the internal processes
through which one comes to moral judgment from external sources, like the works in the
collection.

The inward turn that “The Beggar’s Petition” takes in *A Father’s Instructions*
from the expectation of oral performance in *The Speaker’s* “The Beggar’s Petition” is
thus suggestive in its citation of “The Speaker by Dr. Enfield” at the end of “The
Beggar’s Petition.” *A Father’s Instructions* borders on pedantic in its use of footnotes
throughout the volume, and so the citation of the source of “The Beggar’s Petition” is not
unexpected. However, *A Father’s Instructions* is the first context in which “The Beggar’s
Petition” receives any sort of citation of source or attribution to the poem. That any
citation appears first in *A Father’s Instructions* is significant to the circulation of “The
Beggar’s Petition” because the poem’s appearance in the volume is a moment of

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48 The preface to the 1776 London edition of *A Father’s Instructions* is signed only “The
Author.”
divergence in the circulation of the poem that holds throughout the period. “The Beggar’s Petition” circulates simultaneously as work intended to be read and performed aloud in elocution manuals like *The Speaker* and as poem to be read to oneself for moral edification as in *A Father’s Instructions*.

I have already argued that in marking anonymity one gestures beyond the text and to a “flesh-and-blood writer,” though he or she may not be the writer of the given text. In oral performance, there is no such need. One can identify and point to the source of the words of the speaker. The question of authorship or anonymity is effectively effaced by the speaker’s embodied performance of the text. The medium is sufficient enough to maintain anonymity as an unremarkable feature of the text. In its circulation, a rough pattern emerges of “The Beggar’s Petition” and its attribution based upon its the intended reading and use. Volumes of poetry and instruction such as *Extracts, Elegant and Instructive* (1791), *The Poetical Epitome* (1792), *The Temple of Apollo* (1796), *The English Reader* (1799), and *The Domestic Instructor* (1800) all make explicit the anonymous status of “The Beggar’s Petition” while volumes like *The Speaker* and other elocution manuals do not.\(^4\)

However, “The Beggar’s Petition” did not circulate anonymously exclusively.\(^5\) *The Orator* (Edinburgh, 1776) attributes “The Beggar’s Petition” to Dr. Percival in whose volume, *A Father’s Instructions*, the poem appears based on the text of *The Speaker*.

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\(^5\) There are at least two letters to *Gentleman’s Magazine* in the period between 1785 and 1795 that attribute “The Beggar’s Petition” to authors other than Thomas Moss.
“The Beggar’s Petition” in *The British Poetical Miscellany* (c.1799) published in London, again attributes a version of the poem, with significant additions by F.J. Guion, to Percival. The attribution of the poem to Percival well after Moss’ 1783 claiming of “The Beggar” in *The Imperfection of Human Enjoyments* and various attributions of “The Beggar’s Petition” to authors other than Percival in *Gentleman’s Magazine* in the 1790s is worth noting; however, the context of the attribution within this volume is further compelling because the attribution appears alongside explicit attributions of Anonymous to works of unknown authorship and adds both an additional author and material changes to the poem.51

In changing the form of the poem, Guion follows the imperative of Percival to

51 The version that appears in *The British Poetical Miscellany* adds a narrative prefatory stanza at the beginning of the poem and two stanzas at the end, one in which the listener of the beggar’s petition responds and the other in which narrates the beggar’s response to the petitionee’s charity. In doing so, the symmetry of the poem is altered such that the opening and closing stanzas are no longer the same. The stanza narrates the occasion of the beggar’s petition, but it only narrates what is already evident in the words of the beggar. We learn of the events that have brought the beggar to his condition later in the poem. Likewise, we learn of the beggar’s attempt to beg for alms at a house of “grandeur” shortly after the appeal for pity of the opening stanza. The narrative piece seems out of place in the context of the poem as it has been previously circulating to this moment. As the poem has circulated, it is a monologue spoken by the beggar. This form lends itself to the already noted oral performance of the poem. The additions by F.J. Guion mark the text and intended for private reading. The addition of the narrative stanza is coupled with two additional stanzas at the end of the poem that transform the poem into a dialogue. The response of the listener is a dramatic change in form. The new stanzas have brought the additional voices of a narrator and listener to the solitary voice of the beggar in previous editions. Further, this edition adds quotation marks and dashes heretofore absent from “The Beggar’s Petition.” As in “The Beggar,” this edition of “The Beggar’s Petition” uses textual effects to mark speech, but it does so not as cues to oral performance but as cues to the individual silent reader. As the editions of “The Beggar’s Petition” in *The Speaker* and *A Father’s Instructions* in the 1770s marked a divergence in the intended circulation and consumption of the poem, the edition in *The British Poetical Miscellany* attempts to resolve this divergence by using the orality inherent in the poem and altering its form to serve the private reader.
make the poem suitable for “reflection and judgment.” It is, of course, Percival to whom the poem is attributed. He has, as the changes suggest, authored the mode of understanding the poem that the changes in form reflect. If this edition of the poem were intended for oral performance, it is unlikely the poem would have received any attribution. Rather, the volume as a whole attributes every poem; those that are anonymous are marked as such. *The British Poetical Miscellany*, like Nichols’ *Select Poems*, understands the works in its collection as outside of a mode of exchange in which attribution to Anonymous would be unnecessary.

In its various attributions and transformations, “The Beggar’s Petition” is an ideal case study for examining the function of marked anonymity within literary texts. The decision whether to attribute the poem rests on the mode of consumption and circulation intended for the work. Where a speaker may occupy an authorial subject position, anonymous is not generally attributed. Where a silent reader is understood as the primary consumer of the poem, the anonymity of the poem is made explicit, or some authorial attribution is given. I argue that to attribute a text to Anonymous is different than attributing a text to a named author or not attributing a text at all. As we have seen throughout the chapter, marking anonymity calls attention to the absence of the author’s name but in doing so also attempts to establish a logic of substitution by pointing to some empirical individual to whom the text may be attributed.

This chapter, in its four sections, has identified the historical shift toward attributed anonymity in literary texts in the texts of Richard Steele and John Nichols, articulated the paradigm by which marked anonymity operates in the exchange of Jean Keyser, Anonymous, and Jonathan Wathen, and then applied this paradigm to “The
Beggar’s Petition” whose popularity, if not canonicity, make it representational of the larger historical movement toward attributed anonymity. Implicit within this argument is that to mark authorship – of any kind – is to shape its circulation and reception. Within each example, Anonymous has served an almost strategic function in its explicitation to guide the circulation and reception of the text to which it is attached. In doing so, attributed anonymity may shape possible uses and interpretations of an anonymous text.

I have further offered the identification and theorization of some of the ways in which anonymity may manifest itself in a text. I have put forth an approach to thinking about the kinds of anonymity available to authors, readers, and editors in the eighteenth century and suggested how the various kinds of anonymity may have affected a text’s circulation and reception. Further, in pointing to the emergence of attribution of literary texts to Anonymous in the late eighteenth century, I have begun to identify and articulate the epistemic shift at work in the period in which anonymity is defamiliarized and the unease with the practice made evident
Chapter 2: Attribution, De-Attribution, and The “Eterne”: Defoe the Novelist, Defoe the Pamphleteer

I. Defoe “The Novelist”

There are two familiar stories about Daniel Defoe and his relation to the novel: 1. the novels of Daniel Defoe are central to the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century\(^2\) and 2. “the novelist” Daniel Defoe is an invention of the nineteenth century.\(^3\) These two stories seem at odds with each other. Each is, however, about attribution: the former is a story of the attribution of genre; the latter is a story of the attribution of authorship. From the beginning, describing the rise of the novel meant placing the novels of Daniel Defoe in a lineage alongside those of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. However, before Defoe could be part of the rise of the novel, his works needed to be recognized as novels, and he needed to be the author of those novels. Although Robinson Crusoe was quickly attributed to Defoe upon its publication, his other popular fictions circulated

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anonymously well after their initial publication.\(^5^4\) This section examines the process of attribution and the institution of the circulating library that enabled the lasting authorial attribution of the anonymously published *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* to Defoe in the late eighteenth century.

We are accustomed to thinking of authorial attribution as an act of bibliographic scholarship that is grounded in evidence either internal or external to the text.\(^5^5\) Rooted in a long history of scholarship of pseudoepigrapha,\(^5^6\) authorial attribution as a practice has involved putting anonymous or pseudonymous texts in relation to each other and a named, biographical author. Attribution, however, also has a social dimension. Even in the absence – or on the basis of the scantiest bit – of textual evidence, we speak of readers “knowing” the identity of an anonymous author. Knowledge of authorship may circulate among readers – as gossip, for example – independent of the text in question and leave no textual trace. External evidence may allow some access to an instance of the

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\(^{54}\) George Chalmers writes, “Robinson Crusoe had scarcely drawn his canoe ashore, when he was attacked by his old enemies, *the savages*. He was assailed first by *The Life and Strange Adventures of Mr. D-- De F--, of London, Hosier, who has lived above Fifty Years by himself in the Kingdoms of North and South Britain.*” Charles Gildon’s anonymous print attack on Defoe and *Robinson Crusoe* serves as external evidence of Defoe’s authorship and the immediate popular acceptance of that attribution. George Chalmers, *The Life of Daniel De Foe* (London: John Stockdale, 1790), 53.

\(^{55}\) Furbank and Owens have detailed the logic and role of internal evidence (relating to style, word choice, ideas, etc.) and external evidence (relating to attributions made by contemporaries, or near contemporaries, of the author) in the attribution of works to Defoe (*Canonisation*, 32-34). See also Harold Love, *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

social dimension of authorial attribution, but it does so by relying on a particular attribution recorded in a text. In the example of our gossiping readers, a diary entry, letter, or transcript of the conversation could serve as such a piece of external evidence which captures an instance of authorial attribution but does not capture its popular acceptance. I suggest moving away from emphasizing a single instance of authorial attribution as evidence for authorship and to the broader contexts in which these attributions may have occurred. Such an approach enables one to account for the popular acceptance of the previously anonymous *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* as novels by Defoe, and, indeed, many works that have been retroactively attributed to an author.

Attribution requires repetition. A single instance of naming the author or genre of a text may not constitute a lasting attribution. However, as it circulates repeatedly bearing this attribution, a stable association may develop between an author and a text or a genre and a text. That is, as a text moves through space and time with the name of an author or genre repeatedly attached to it, the text is more readily known to be by the named author or in the named genre. Circulating a text requires, however, human actors and institutions to move it among readers. D. F. McKenzie has pointed to the disciplinary habit within bibliography that “has obscured the role of human agents” (8), and he has called for a “sociology of texts” that would lead bibliographers and literary historians “to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission and consumption” and to further attend “to the roles of institutions, and their own complex structures” (7).  

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and W. R. Owens, the attribution of the pamphlet and periodical writing associated with Defoe has remained vexed; the novels of Defoe, because of their longstanding anonymity, too, share this problem of attribution. While much scholarly attention has been paid to properly attributing or de-attributing the texts associated with Defoe, less attention has been paid to the process of attribution itself and the context in which these attributions were made. I examine the institution of the Francis and John Noble’s circulating libraries to argue that popular knowledge of Defoe’s authorship of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* is derived from the entirety of the institutional context in which the attributions occurred.

Daniel Defoe became known as the author of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* through the circulating libraries and bookshops of Francis and John Noble. The Nobles were two of the largest and most successful circulating library proprietors, booksellers, and publishers in eighteenth-century London. In the history of Defoe attribution studies, Furbank and Owens have paid particular attention to this institution: “if it be asked indeed how [Defoe] came to be popularly thought of as a novelist – the answer is, through the activities of a rascally publisher named Francis Noble.” The Nobles ran a “three-tier operation” as publishers, booksellers, and circulating library proprietors and became, according to Raven, “the leading producers of novels from the mid-1750s to the mid-1770s.” The Nobles’ enterprise fostered the popular knowledge of Defoe’s authorship by repeatedly circulating the physical texts of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* in their

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commercial libraries, by advertising and cataloging them as Defoe’s novels, and by promoting forms of sociability around the libraries themselves.61

The name “De Foe” became attached to “his novels” as they circulated in the libraries and bookshops and were represented in the catalogs and advertisements of the Nobles in the 1770s and 80s. The Nobles’ libraries enabled the lasting attribution of the previously anonymous *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* by repeatedly circulating them with the name Defoe attached. No single instance of attribution, nor several, established the name “De Foe” as a writer of these novels. They needed to be circulated within an established institution that would serve as a source of both books and ideas about those books; the Nobles’ libraries provided such an institution. Crucially, the Nobles’ libraries played both a virtual role in circulating ideas among otherwise unconnected patrons and an actual role in circulating books from physical locations. Authorial attribution, as it depends on a relationship between the virtual knowledge of authorship and the actual textual evidence of that authorship, could thus be fostered in the circulating library and could establish Defoe as the author of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*. Like the novels themselves, the circulating libraries of the Nobles straddled these two realms as both physical locations for the renting of books and as metaphorical loci of knowledge or, depending on the

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61 While the Nobles were publishers, booksellers, and library proprietors, it must be noted that most of their published novels went to supply other circulating libraries and that the circulating libraries were the most profitable aspect of the Nobles’ business (Raven “The Noble Brothers” 314). Further, due to the prohibitively high cost of novels throughout the period, circulating libraries were the central source of new novels for most readers. See William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 237-244.
Noble first attached Defoe’s name to the title pages of *The History of Mademoiselle de Beleau; Or, The New Roxana, The Fortunate Mistress: Afterwards Countess of Wintselsheim. Published By Mr. Daniel De Foe* (1775) and *The History of Laetitia Atkins, Vulgarly Called Moll Flanders. Published By Mr. Daniel De Foe* (1776), both sold by “F. Noble, in Holborn and T. Lowndes in Fleet-Street.” The Nobles had earlier published *Moll Flanders* in 1741 and *Roxana* in 1742. In their catalogs and on their title pages, Defoe’s name was not present. Though both manifest dramatic changes from the 1724 *Roxana* and 1722 *Moll Flanders* and the earlier Noble editions, they purport to be “from Papers found since his Decease, and greatly altered by himself [Defoe],” and they are prefaced by introductions explaining the alterations, each signed “Daniel Defoe.”

The alterations introduced into both *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* since their first publication are not minor. Indeed, *Roxana* had already been transformed repeatedly after

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62 I am drawing on Michael McKeon’s articulation of the relationship between the virtual and actual in the domain of the public sphere: “The emergent public sphere was understood by contemporaries as a virtual collectivity, a metaphorical place of assembly constituted principally by publication and its readership. But it was also associated (unlike the “public domain”) with actual spaces” (75). For more on the relationship between the virtual and the concrete particularities of the actual see also Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 108-109.

63 A March 7, 1778 Noble advertisement in the *St. James’s Chronicle* lists “The Fortunate Mistress. by Daniel DeFoe” and “Moll Flanders, by Daniel DeFoe” for sale at both John and Francis Noble’s establishments.

64 Here, I am working from James Raven’s excellent list of the Nobles’ publications which is found in “The Noble Brothers and Popular Publishing 1737-89.”
its 1724 publication. Mullan’s introduction to the Oxford World Classics Edition of *Roxana* carefully maps out the revisions throughout the eighteenth century and notes that the anonymous publication of the novel is key to its constant revision. Griffin has further argued that the publication history of *Roxana* allows the scholar to see a text in motion where each edition defies conventional thinking about narrative closure and the generalized text. In the Noble editions, the 1775 *Roxana* ends in a sentimental resolution in which Roxana returns to England and marries Mr. Worthy, while her servant Amy weds his valet. The 1776 *Moll Flanders*, too, undergoes a dramatic revision – the heroine is not a pickpocket or a thief as in the 1722 edition; rather, she is mistaken for one. These revisions to each narrative may have been intended to suit the tastes of the Nobles’ customers and make them ideologically coherent within the more widely-known Defoe works like *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Family Instructor*.

The title pages alone did not announce Defoe’s relationship to *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*. In their advertising, the Nobles became increasingly clear about Defoe’s authorship of the novels following their publication. A December 13, 1776 advertisement in *The Public Advertiser* announces the publication of “The History of Laetitia Atkins, vulgarly called MOLL FLANDERS. Published by Mr. Daniel Defoe… Printed for the Editor, and sold by F. Noble, in Holbourn; and T. Lowndes, in Fleet Street. Where may be had, by the same Author, Roxana; or, The Fortunate Mistress.” Here, Defoe is

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68 These revisions, Furbank and Owens have suggested, “fit the work for a polite circulating-library readership of the 1770s.” (“Defoe and Francis Noble,” 304).
identified as publisher, editor, and, perhaps, author. Defoe’s relationship to the text, some forty-five years after his death, is unclear and, perhaps, deliberately so. The Nobles make the relationship between Defoe and the novels more explicit in an advertisement two years later, in a March 7, 1778 issue of *St. James’s Chronicle*. The advertisement for *Memoirs of Countess of D’Anois* available from both Francis and John Noble also lists: “Modern Seduction, 2 Vols. 6s. bound.” “Fortunate Mistress, by Daniel De Foe, 3s. bound.” and “Moll Flanders, by Daniel De Foe, 3s. bound.” The ambiguity of the relationship between Defoe, *Roxana*, and *Moll Flanders* in the prior advertisement is clarified by the mode of attributing authorship in the 1778 advertisement. Both *The Fortunate Mistress* and *Moll Flanders* are “by Daniel De Foe.”

A final advertisement illustrates how the representation of authorial attribution may be standardized through repetition and suggest a coherent body of work. The November 25, 1785 *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* announces the publication of *The Lady’s Tale; or, the History of Drusilla Northington* by Francis Noble and lists other books that one might purchase. Among the list are: “Amoranda; or, the Reformed Coquet, 2 vols. 6s.”, “Adventures of a Cavalier, 3s.”, “Roxana; or, the Fortunate Mistress, 3s.”, “Moll Flanders; or, Laetitia Atkins, 3s”, and “History of the great Plague, 6s.” with the note, “N.B. The four latter written by Daniel Defoe.” In this advertisement, Defoe’s authorship is attached to texts in the aggregate. Noble has, for perhaps the first time, identified a body of works which may, as a whole, be attributed to Defoe rather than needing individual attributions for each text listed. The mode of attribution in this

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69 The ambiguity in the phrase, “Where may be had, by the same Author, Roxana; or, The Fortunate Mistress” invites speculation that the unknown hand responsible for the reworking of *Roxana* was also responsible for the reworking of *Moll Flanders.*
advertisement suggests a coherence in the Defoe *oeuvre* that was previously absent. The representation of title, *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*, and author, Defoe, has been standardized by articulating a clear relationship between named author and works. This advertisement is thus a moment of crystallization in an ongoing process of variously representing the relationship between the name “De Foe” and the texts to which that name was attributed.

In the catalogs of the Nobles and other libraries and bookshops of the period, there is a similar pattern of dispersed and gradual authorial attribution of Defoe’s, and others’, texts. The anonymity of the earlier Noble editions of *Moll Flanders* (1741) and *Roxana* (1742) would likely not have been notable within the circulating library. Generally speaking, most novels and romances in the eighteenth-century circulating library were anonymous, and they were particularly so in the Nobles’ libraries. The Nobles’ catalogs make clear the limited importance and utility of the authors’ name to their presentation of these texts. For example, John Noble’s, *A New Catalogue of the Large and Valuable Collection of Books, (both English and French)* (c.1761) lists its primarily anonymous texts categorized by size and subject. For the most part, even when their authors are known, texts appear, like “Adventures of Joseph Andrews in 2 vol” with no authorial attribution. When author’s names do appear, they may be placed before the title in the possessive, as in “Cervantes’s Don Quixote,” or after the title as in “Amelia,

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by Mr. Fielding.” In this catalog and others, the author’s name is more likely to appear in
the possessive when the text is accorded an elevated status. Thus, “Cervantes’s Don
Quixote” (41) may be differentiated from “History of Don Quixote, by Motteux” and
“History of Don Quixote, by Jervais” by the possessive use of the name “Cervantes” to
mark an originary source and a regarded author (46). Don Quixote can be owned and
elevated by Cervantes in a way that the “History of Don Quixote” can never be owned by
its translators.

The c.1761 catalog lists both 1741 Noble edition of The Life of Moll Flanders
(48) and the 1742 Noble edition of Roxana, or the Fortunate Mistress (51), but it does
not attribute them to Defoe. Indeed, even after the 1775 and 1776 editions of Roxana and
Moll Flanders were published with Defoe’s name attached to their title pages,
contemporary circulating library catalogs did not always list Roxana or Moll Flanders as
a work by Defoe. Thomas Lowndes, who published the 1775 Roxana along with Francis
Noble, published a catalog for his bookshop in 1778 in which “Roxana, or the Fortunate
Mistress, new,” dated 1775 and “Moll Flanders, new, dated 1776 are listed among
“Miscellanies. TWELVES” where neither bears an attribution.72

A survey of catalogs from booksellers and estate sales similarly reveals a varying
pattern of authorial attribution for the novels consistent with the gradual process of
acceptance that I have outlined.73 For example, Lackington’s Catalogue for 1784 lists

72 T. Lowndes’s catalogue for 1778. Consisting of books collected in different part of
England… and now selling… by T. Lowndes, bookseller ([London]: Thomas Lowndes,
[1778]), 301.
73 I have surveyed thirty booksellers’, library, and estate catalogs from 1777 to 1800 and
found no consistent pattern of attribution. There seem to be equal numbers of 1775
Roxana and 1776 Moll Flanders editions that bear no attribution as those that do.
both the 1724 *Roxana* as “Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress, neat, 2s 3d Ditto 1s 6d 1724” (49) and the 1775 *Roxana* as “History of Madam de Boleau [sic], or Roxana, by DeFoe, new, 1s 6d” (61). The editions are listed separately with an attribution to Defoe only for the later edition. The Lackington catalog, however, is a bit unique in this regard; a 1791 catalog by Thomas and John Egerton, for example, lists “*Roxana*, or the Fortunate Mistress, by Defoe, eleg. 3s 6d 1742” (244). In this catalog, the earlier edition that was not attributed to Defoe picks up the attribution in its catalog listing. It seems here that the catalogers are drawing from a body of social knowledge rather than any attribution on the printed book – a body of social knowledge like that associated with the circulating libraries and bookshops of Francis and John Noble.

More than ten years after the publication of the Noble editions of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*, Francis Noble offered up a list of “NOVELS printed for F. Noble” that appears to be the first extant evidence of the standardized attribution of Defoe’s “novels” as an *oeuvre* in a catalog bound with the third volume of *Daniel De Foe’s Voyage Round the World. By a Course Never Sailed Before*74 (1787) (Figure 1). Also found in the first volume of *Daniel De Foe’s Voyage* is “The Life of the Author, By William Shiels, ESQ.” which Furbank and Owens have identified as a plagiarism from the ‘Life’ by Robert Shiels of 1753 but with updates to include the recent Noble publications by “De Foe” (“Defoe and Francis Noble,” 309). These publications include all the fictional works available for rent or sale from Noble and now bear authorial attributions to “De Foe.”

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74 *Daniel De Foe’s Voyage round the world, by a course never sailed before. To which is prefixed the life of the author, by William Shiells, Esq.* Vol. 3 (London: F. Noble, 1787).
NOVELS Printed for F. NOBLE.

Bubbled Knights, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Belle Grove, or the Fatal Seduction, 2 vol. 6s
Benjamin St. Martin, a Fortunate Foundling, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Cruoe Richard Davis, his Life and Adventures, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Captive, or the History of Mr. Clifford, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Contrast, or History of Miss Weldon, 2 vol. 6s
Conflict, or History of Sophia Fanbrook, 3 vol. ———— 9s
Country Cousins, or Maria and Charlotte, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Clementina, or History of an Italian Lady, 3s
Capricious Father, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Derrick’s Letters from Bath and Tunbridge, 2 vol. ———— 6s
Double Disappointment. A Farce, stitched, 1s
Du Verney on the Organ of the Ear, with cuts, ———— 3s 6d
Dilliret Virtue, or History of Harriot Nelson, 3 vol. ———— 9s
Devil upon Crutches in England — 3s
Dean of Coleraine, a moral History, 3 vol. 9s
Disinterested Marriage, 2 vol. ———— 6s
De Foe’s Adventures of a Cavalier, 3 vol. calf, lettered, ———— 1os 6d
De Foe’s Adventures of Roxana, calf, lettered, ———— 3s 6d
De Foe’s Adventures of Moll Flanders, calf, lettered, ———— 3s 6d.
De Foe’s Adventures of Captain Singleton, calf, lettered, ———— 4s
De Foe’s.

Image 1. Catalog page in volume 3 of Daniel Defoe’s Voyage Round the World (1787)

(ECCO)
The catalog standardization of Defoe’s “novels” by Noble was delayed by over a decade following the attribution of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*. The 1787 list “NOVELS printed for F. Noble” represents a re-imagining of Defoe as an author of novels rather than political pamphleteer\(^7\) and author of *Robinson Crusoe*.\(^\text{76}\) It is a moment, much like the 1785 *Morning Herald* advertisement, where a body of work coheres with Defoe’s name attached. As we have seen, however, such a process is gradual and requires multiple repetitions within the literary marketplace before it coheres into a form recognizable as the Defoe canon. The circulating library, with its publishing, advertising, and lending practices, enabled this necessary steady repetition of author and text. In doing so, the library helped standardize the attributions by repeatedly making available many instances in which an author’s name appears attached to a text, both the physical book and the advertisements and catalogs representing the book.

It is worth pausing briefly to consider the role of eighteenth-century Defoe biography and bibliography in the shaping of the Defoe oeuvre. George Chalmers, Defoe’s first biographer and bibliographer, assembled his “LIST of WRITINGS, which are considered undoubtedly DE FOE’s” in the 1791 edition of *The Life of Daniel De Foe*, which is based on a variety of sources including, as Furbank and Owens note, “cautious


\(^{76}\) The absence of *Robinson Crusoe* from Noble’s publication list is striking; however, *Robinson Crusoe* was one of the few fictional works by Defoe to be entered into the Stationer’s Register (by W. Taylor, August 1719) and thus be afforded copyright protection. Noble did not own the right to publish *Robinson Crusoe*. *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, however, had never been entered into Stationer’s Register and thus were under no formal copyright protection.
attention” to catalogs of booksellers and large libraries (Canonisation, 52). Chalmers’ “LIST” is neither a starting point nor an endpoint in the construction of the Defoe canon; rather, it is one critical point among many that crystallize Defoe’s works and offer attributions of previously anonymous writings. Chalmers offers little evidence for most of his attributions in The Life and it is quite possible that his textual sources of attribution for Roxana and Moll Flanders were the Noble editions or catalogs. However, given the dispersed and social nature of authorial attribution, it is also possible his source was not the Nobles.

I have shown how the Nobles represented the relationship between Defoe, Roxana, and Moll Flanders with increased clarity beginning in 1776 and culminating in the standardization Defoe’s works in the catalog pages of 1787. The Nobles reoriented the relationship between the author and genre of Roxana and Moll Flanders. Through the attribution of authorship to Defoe, Roxana and Moll Flanders were no longer simply novels listed among other circulating library novels. With the addition of the name of the author, these texts became works. They could thus be understood as novels among other Noble novels but also placed within the emerging Defoe oeuvre as articulated in the 1787 catalog listing. This process is aided by the abstraction of the physical text: the individual edition or volume of Roxana or Moll Flanders matters less than the idea of “De Foe’s Adventures of Roxana” or “De Foe’s Adventures of Moll Flanders.”

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77 I draw from Barthes the notion of the text as a “methodological field” rather than a concrete entity that “can be held in the hand.” Where I depart from Barthes is in my insistence that the work, too, must be separated from the concrete entity of the book. The work, I argue, is as much a virtual entity as the text and is itself contingent upon factors like authorial attribution to demarcate itself from the text. See Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text.” in Image, Music, Text, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 157.
Each instance of Defoe’s name attached to Moll Flanders and Roxana – on title pages, in advertisements, and in library catalogs – contributed to the notion of “De Foe’s Adventures of Roxana” or “De Foe’s Adventures of Moll Flanders” apart from any physical edition. Through repetition, author and title became virtual entities because each instance of repetition was also an instance of representation detached from the physical book and content of Roxana or Moll Flanders. Author and title as virtual entities could circulate more widely than the actual Noble editions bearing Defoe’s name and thus become attached to other editions of Roxana and Moll Flanders, propagating the knowledge of Defoe’s authorship. The processes of repetition and virtualization are not, I suggest, incidental to the advertising practices of the Nobles’ circulating libraries as they participate in the larger print marketplace. Rather, these processes are central to the premise of the circulating library.

As a medium for distributing texts, the circulating library is virtual and repetitive, more so than the bookshop.78 The sale of a book entails the acquisition of private property; whereas, the renting of a book involves many people in the common enterprise of sequential possession. The material practice of renting books carries with it the idea that books are interchangeable and exchangeable and thus function in the abstract both as commodities79 and as texts. Though the trade is of the material form of the book, the

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79 Here, I understand the commodity to function in the Marxist sense that once turned into a commodity, the object is valued not for its material and qualitative use value but for the abstract quantity of exchange value it is assigned in circulating on the market. Karl Marx,
discrete book does not matter as much as its ability to be exchanged or stand in for another book; or, in the case of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* other, variant, editions. The idea that Defoe could have works that supersede the individual edition (and have little relationship to the original edition) is fostered in the institution of the circulating library which insists that the material, discrete edition does not matter as much as exchangeability. The system of circulation contributes to the actual, physical, book becoming a virtual entity shared among readers. The ideological assumptions of and about the Nobles’ circulating libraries are drawn from the circulating libraries’ function as a medium that circulates texts.

The Nobles’ libraries were among many in the London literary marketplace whose practice of lending books helped form a reading public centered on the libraries. Keith Manley has suggested that, “although buying books is a commercial activity, lending, at a price, adds new levels of social and economic dynamics, especially since many of the largest circulating libraries became social centres in their own right.”

Manley alerts us to the key structural difference between the selling and lending of books: by its very nature, the circulating library book must pass repeatedly through the hands of many readers, all of whom have in common the institution of the library. Similarly, Raven has written about the forms of sociability fostered by proprietary and


It is the case that in holiday towns, the circulating library tended to be a social center; whereas in London, the circulating library tended to be a literary center. See K. A. Manley, “Booksellers, Peruke-Makers, and Rabbit-Merchants: The Growth of Circulating Libraries in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Libraries and the Book Trade*, ed. Robin Myers (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2000), 30.
commercial libraries that allowed for participation in an imagined literary community.\footnote{Raven writes that such sociability at libraries, particularly in spa towns, was, “fed by texts and London connection, but... supported and encouraged by the institution of the library itself.” (260) James Raven, “Libraries for Sociability: The Advance of the Subscription Library,” in The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, ed. Giles Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 260.}

Barbara Benedict has further reflected on the virtual, or imagined, connection between readers in the circulating library: “Whereas subscription libraries were in a sense owned by the subscribers who appointed officials to run the library, circulating libraries were commercial enterprises run for profit in a world of mobile readers with no necessary connection to one another or to the proprietors of the library.”\footnote{Barbara M. Benedict, “Jane Austen and the Culture of Circulating Libraries: The Construction of Female Literacy,” in Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century 'Women's Fiction' and Social Engagement ed. Paula R. Backscheider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 164.} That is, the books in subscription libraries were available only to the limited set of readers who also were owners and who had some relationship with each other, in contrast to the connection between commercial circulating library readers, which entailed the shared status of being customers of a common enterprise and sharing the collective experience as readers. As Raven has further suggested, “By reading, the reader assumed links with numberless others also reading the text, extending the notion of a participatory culture” (“Libraries,” 258). Charlotte Stewart-Murphy has similarly pointed to the social project of literary commonality embedded within the structure of the circulating library:

The availability of novels and popular anthologies in the circulating libraries was influential in stimulating the growth of a new popular culture. For the first time, the subscribers to the libraries – the well-to-do, the middle-class professionals, working-men, merchants, shopkeepers, domestic servants, and their families, shared a common literary interest and began to develop a similar set of social values. This common culture and lessening of the literary class lines have been considered by some
scholars to have had a significant effect on the social and political unity of the country.\(^{83}\)

The nature of the connection between customers of the circulating library was thus one of a virtual literary public engendered by a shared collection of texts and ideas circulated by the institution of the library.\(^{84}\)

The circulating library further contributes to the understanding of works not as physical books but as ideas because, it was hoped, authorial attribution would lead to greater renting and purchasing of books. Furbank and Owens have suggested that by attaching Defoe’s name to the novels, Francis Noble hoped to increase the circulation of his novels in his circulating library and bookshop.\(^{85}\) Jan Fergus’ study of the records of Midlands booksellers has borne out the similar conclusion that provincial readers, at least, preferred to borrow and buy books with known authors.\(^{86}\) One of the effects of increasing the number of times a given volume is borrowed is that the wear and tear on the volume is also increased. The most-read books were thus the least likely to survive in their material form.\(^{87}\) Their texts, however, were most likely to survive, detached from


\(^{84}\) Paul Kaufman has further suggested that the relationship between the social imaginary and the circulating library was forged from the very outset with the emergence of circulating library practices in the ur-locales of sociability - the London coffee houses and newsrooms. Kaufman writes, “[th]at these two kinds of center stimulated the development of booksellers' rental facilities we can hardly doubt.” *The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1967), 8-9.

\(^{85}\) “Defoe and Francis Noble”: 304


\(^{87}\) Hilda M. Hamlyn has suggested, “Books, in the eighteenth century, were often published 'sewn' or 'half-bound'. Their life, in circulation cannot have been very long... With novels, popular for a short time only, a more expensive and durable binding was unnecessary” (217). “Eighteenth-Century Circulating Libraries,” *Library* 5th series 1
their material form, as works. In effect, attaching the name “De Foe” to these novels ensured the degradation or displacement of the material text but ensured the longevity of the work.88

Charles Lamb meditates on this relationship between the book as material object subject to degradation and its relationship to the work in his *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading* (1822). He draws upon the condition of circulating library books to exemplify his point:

> How beautiful to the genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour… if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old “circulating library” Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs that have turned over the pages with delight! – of the lone sempstress whom they may have cheered (milliner, or hard-working mantua maker) after her long day’s needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

> In some respects, the better a book is, the less it demands from its binding. Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes – Great Nature’s Stereotypes – we see them individually perish with less regret, because we know the copies of them to be “eterne.”89

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88 There are approximately nineteen extant copies of the 1775 *New Roxana* and ten extant copies of the 1776 *The History of Laetitia Atkins Vulgarly Called Moll Flanders* (ESTC). This speaks broadly to the popularity and wide circulation of the texts and the weight given to their attribution to Defoe. However, these texts are not the versions edited and available in modern editions. Even in the case of the preservation of the physical text because of the name attached, they exist only as material variants or continuations of essential and originary works – *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*.

Lamb relishes the material proof of reading: the smell of pages well thumbed and the degradation of binding. The degradation of the book testifies to its circulation and thus, for Lamb, its literary esteem. Interestingly, Lamb transitions from speaking of titles of books to the authors of books. The passage begins by recalling the smell and appearance, “of an old ‘circulating library’ Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield” but moves to authors’s names, “Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes,” to make a case for the less durable binding of works that have become “eterne.”

For Lamb, the name of the author renders a text eternal; that is, the name makes a book a work. Works with the names of “Fielding, Smollett, Sterne” do not need preservation through durable binding or limited circulation; they have passed from the concerns of the text as discrete material object. These books, as Lamb calls them, have moved from material text to work. The material text may, and indeed must, fall away to be become the work. The work is “perpetually self-reproductive.” Its life is in the literary imaginary, not on the bookshelf of the circulating library or the bookseller’s stall. The work is a construction of title and author that may or may not recur to the material form of the text. One edition is interchangeable with the next as long as its author and title remain fairly stable and recognizable.

The degradation of the material text and the emergence of the work require an institution that circulates both the material text and ideas about texts. The circulating library is the medium through which those texts and ideas move. It is a source of kinds
and genres of writing – “the circulating library novel” – not simply physical books. The circulation of physical books through the library facilitates the circulation of ideas that make texts largely interchangeable. Thus, one could rent *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (F. Noble 1741) or *The History of Laetitia Atkins, Vulgarly Called Moll Flanders* (F. Noble 1776) and think of them both as *Moll Flanders* “by Defoe.”

As institutions, the circulating libraries of the Nobles worked powerfully as metaphors for circulation even more so than as physical places for the renting of books. As such, their role in circulating ideas – such as the name of a previously anonymous author – was highlighted in critics’ responses to circulating libraries and their novels. A 1772 print exchange between the Nobles and a critical anonymous reviewer illustrates the manner in which the ideological basis of the institution of the circulating library, its insistence that circulation is not solely the movement of physical objects through time and space, is ultimately taken up and turned against the circulating library proprietors. In the December 1772 issue of *London Magazine*, two new novels published by the Noble brothers were reviewed: *The Way to Lose him; or The History of Miss Wyndham*. By the Author of *The Way to Please him* and *The Way to Please Him*. By the Author of *The Way to Lose him*. The reviews were not positive. Of *The Way to Lose Him*, the anonymous reviewer claims that it was “Written solely for the use of the circulating library, and very

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90 Furbank and Owens write: “as reviewers never wearied of pointing out, there was a quintessentially ‘Noble’ style of novel, manufactured according to a strict formula; and this, presumably, must have implied a team of hired authors to supply them” (“Defoe and Francis Noble,” 308).
popular to debauch all young women who are still undebauched.” The Way to Please Him fared no better: “See the last article. The same character will do for both.”

Francis and John Noble were not pleased. The brothers issued two appeals in the following months attacking London Magazine and the anonymous reviewer and vindicating their novels from charges that they were fit only “to debauch young women.” In the first, they published an appeal to the public and reprinted the letter they had sent to “Mr. Baldwin, the publisher of the Magazine in which the injury had been done.”

Along with charges of scurrility against the anonymous reviewer, the Nobles also reprinted positive reviews of The Way to Lose Him and The Way to Please Him that speak to their stated mission “to publish only such Novels as have for their objects, what their writers ought ever to have in view, amusement, instruction, decency, and morality” (6). The Nobles also reprinted the letter they sent to Baldwin at London Magazine and a brief summation of his response.

Rather than receiving the expected apology, the Nobles, who had cornered the market on anonymous, largely ephemeral novels of romance, found in the January 1773 issue of London Magazine an even more scurrilous attack by the anonymous reviewer on themselves, their novels, and their libraries. In An Appeal, the Nobles reprint this attack and offer ongoing commentary refuting its claims in their footnotes. The reviewer claims that the letter from the Nobles was, “‘replete with those barbarous expressions (b) familiar to men, whose business it is to puzzle heads, and to corrupt hearts (c).’” In note c, the Nobles respond that they do not understand if the reviewer means to refer to their

91 London Magazine, December, 1772, 543.
92 An Appeal to the Public, (By F. and J. Noble, Booksellers) From the aspersions cast on them by the anonymous editor of the London Magazine, ([London]: F. and J. Noble, 1772), 2.
“business” as that of “Booksellers and Publishers; or that of keeping a Circulating Library; or whether all together.” The note continues on to repeat the claim that “our Libraries abound with authors of the first character, in almost every useful art and science; and are, therefore calculated to diffuse knowledge, and improve the mind, instead of corrupting the heart” (11).

The familiar attack on the corrupting nature of the novels of the circulating library continues throughout the anonymous reviewer’s response to the Nobles’ letter, in which the reviewer excuses the Nobles for the “’aspersions’” they, “’have applied to him, because he [the reviewer] believes they are not accustomed to talk otherwise’” (13). The reviewer then claims:

“Scandal is the property of mean and illiberal minds, and the Circulating Library is its palace. (g) But he cannot suppress his [the reviewer’s] inclination to inform them [the Nobles], that an Act of Parliament is soon to be passed, by which Circulating Libraries are to be suppressed, and by which the owners of them are to be declared, like the players, ‘rogues and vagabonds,’ the debauchers of morals, and the pest of society. (h)” (13-14)

The reviewer offers two competing critiques of the circulating library: it is a place of scandal, and it is not a place at all. While the circulating library may be a figural home to scandal, ignorance, and folly, its status as an actual location in the world seems much less clear to this reviewer in his reference to “’an Act of Parliament… by which Circulating Libraries are to be suppressed, and by which the owners of them are to be declared, like the players, ‘rogues and vagabonds’” (14). The reviewer invokes earlier critiques of the stage and likens the Nobles to itinerant performers; they are corrupters of morals who roam throughout the land without a home. Further, like players, the Nobles are the medium for the words and ideas of another. The reviewer’s double critique points to the
abstraction of the Nobles’ circulating libraries where the physical location of the libraries is obscured and their role as medium is made central.

The Nobles seize upon the claim that they are without a place in their response and ask:

Prithee, friend, how is this same Act to make it appear that we are wanderers, have no visible way of living, or settled habitation? See what it is not to consult your Dictionary! Or, perhaps, you thought that, because we keep a Circulating Library, we must necessarily circulate too, and, like our books, perpetually wander about from place to place. (Emphasis in original 14-15)

The Nobles identify in the reviewer’s rhetoric the conflation of the circulating library as place and the circulating library as idea. He has, they claim, likened the brothers to their books that “perpetually wander about from place to place” (15). The idea of circulation that is central to the work of the circulating libraries, and even more, the circulation of ideas that is achieved by the circulation of books, is made to represent the circulating library while disavowing its material conditions. The Nobles, then, wish to offer a corrective by moving away from the notion of the library as a medium that perpetually circulates folly, ignorance and scandal, and insisting instead on the literal place of the libraries “near Middle Row, Holborn, and Saint Martin’s Court, near Leicester Square” and the circulation of books with physical dimensions, like the duodecimo The Way to Please Him.

Though the Nobles protest adamantly against the notion that their libraries could be reduced, like the players, to mere circulation, the rhetoric employed by the reviewer

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93 From the imprint of The Way to Please Him; or the History of Lady Sedley: By the Author of the Way to Lose Him ([London]: F. and J. Noble, 1773).
shares the assumptions they themselves employed in the representations of their libraries. In the frontispieces of their catalogs, they idealize their libraries as figures with little correspondence to physical reality, blurring the boundaries between the actual the virtual. As I will show, these images portray the library a source of enlightenment and privilege them, not for their physicality, but as mediating institutions that put ideas into circulation. Despite the Nobles’ attempt to defend their enterprise by appealing to its physical location, the library gained in significance (whether as an agent of debauchery or enlightenment) in line with the recognition of its virtuality. In this way, the Nobles’ circulating libraries reinforced a powerful set of ideas and conventions about literature that supersede the material texts and the libraries themselves.

The Nobles embraced the notion of the circulating library as a medium for the circulation of ideas and incorporated it in their representations of their libraries. The Yearly and Quarterly Subscriber; or, A new catalogue of a large collection of useful and entertaining books, all of which are lent to be read by F. and J. Noble (c. 1746) features an engraving by Jacob Bonneau that presents itself as a representation of the interior of their circulating library in St. Martin’s Court (Figure 2). Raven writes of this frontispiece, along with others from the period, that they “highlight large book stacks on open shelves. These rare surviving prints of early circulating libraries also reveal the attention given to access and fashion and depict very respectable clientele.”

Though Raven contends that “for commercial reasons these library trade cards and catalogue engravings of the interiors undoubtedly offered romanticized pictures to subscribers, many of whom lived

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in country parts,” he argues that these images are not entirely fanciful and thus offer a fairly accurate representation of the interiors of these libraries and their means of controlling access and thus readership (186). K. A. Manley, who first brought the Bonneau engraving to scholarly attention, is less convinced, however, that this image is a representation of the interior of the library at all, “since circulating libraries were closed access, and customers had to order their choice of books from the catalogue.”

I wish to set aside the question of access to the libraries in order to focus on the elements of the image that likely did not represent the actual interior of the library and to suggest the image’s ideological function. Raven’s reading of the image has asked us to attend to the foreground of the print; I am interested, however, in the background of the image and its relationship to the catalog in which it appears. While the image may index the interior space of the circulating library, I contend that this frontispiece is a visual representation of the catalog itself.

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95 K. A. Manley, “London Circulating Library Catalogues of the 1740s,” *Library History* 8 (1989): 75. More recently, Manley has argued “that many pictorial representations [of library interiors] are idealized rather than naturalistic and may not tell the truth. They represent another form of advertising, and advertisements have to be taken with a pinch of salt. They convey a message of ‘books’ and ‘readers’, but the two together do not necessarily mean that the two literally came together in a circulating library.” (“Booksellers, Peruke-Makers, and Rabbit-Merchants,” 42-43).
Figure 2. Frontispiece from F. and J. Noble’s The Yearly and Quarterly Subscriber c.

1746 (Bodleian Library)
Near the visual center of the print, but shrouded in shadow, is the text “THE CIRCULATING LIBRARY.” This text appears to be carved into the wall above the built-in bookcase. Similarly, each bookshelf has its subject contents carved into it. The top shelf is labeled, “HISTORY. VOYAGES.” the shelf under it, “NOVELS. ROMANCES.” then, “MATHEMATICKS.” “PHISICK. SURGERY.” and finally, partially obscured by the figures in the foreground, “POETRY PLAYS.” The remaining two shelves are similarly labeled but almost fully obscured. Further, the books are not organized by subject alone, but by size as well. On the very top shelves are what appear to be folio editions, below them quartos, below the quartos, octavos. The 1746 circulating library catalog of the Noble brothers, like most circulating libraries’ and booksellers’ catalogs throughout the eighteenth century, followed an organization of books based on size and subject. A typical catalog began with folio editions and went through octavo editions.\textsuperscript{96} In the c.1746 Bonneau engraving, the books on the shelves in the background follow this mode of organization almost exactly.

The minute details of the organization of the bookcase in the background seem secondary to the composition of the image until we compare it to the text of circulating library catalogs. For once juxtaposed, the organizational logic of the bookcase that appears in the in the image underneath “THE CIRCULATING LIBRARY” is nearly identical to that of the catalog itself. The left hand of the foreground figure appears to rest on what Raven has suggested is the catalog of the circulating library itself (or a similar finding guide), while with his right hand he points to the space before him, perhaps to the

\textsuperscript{96} Unprinted stockbooks seem to follow this convention of organization. For example, an unknown London bookseller's stockbook listing titles through 1730 lists the stock by size and then alphabetically by title so that “Gulliver's Travels 3 vols. 8o 1726 13/6” is listed under “Books in 8o G.” “Booksellers Stockbook to 1730,” (Folger MSADD 923)
shelf labeled “surgery” from which another figure is taking a book. On the basis of these
details I suggest that this frontispiece is an indexical image of self-reference. When we
look more closely at it we see that like his right index finger, the foreground figure’s left
index finger also is pointing—in the first case, to the catalog of the circulating library; in
the second case, to the interior of the circulating library itself, an image of which is
reproduced on the catalog’s frontispiece. The effect is to establish, within the virtual
framework of an image, a correspondence between the actual space of the library and the
virtual space of its catalog. What this suggests is that to read the virtual representation of
the library—that is, its catalog— is to enter the actuality of the library. But the opposite is
also true, since the actual library space contains the bookshelves we see on the
frontispiece of the catalog, whose books are, like the catalog itself, virtual representations
of an actuality that lies beyond them. Outside the frame of the frontispiece, of course,
what I’ve called the “actual library space” is the virtual image of the material space of the
actual library in which a spectator might be standing, confronted simultaneously by that
material space and by a material catalog displayed on a table much like that pictured in
the frontispiece.

A second Bonneau frontispiece from John Noble's c.1761 circulating library
catalog further illustrates the insistence on the virtual nature of the circulating library
(Figure 3). In this engraving, no attempt at mimesis is made in the representation of the
library. Instead, a patron approaches a pedestal of circulating library books with stylized
classical figures pointing at the books whose subject matters they respectively represent
by virtue of their accoutrements: on the top, a lyre (hence poetry); on the bottom, a shaft

97 I am indebted to Michael McKeon for his insightful discussion of my readings of these images.
and shield (hence history and antiquity). At the base of the pedestal is a piece of 
parchment that reads “J. Noble's Circulating Library.” Then, in a near inversion of the 
1746 frontispiece, the books are stacked by size, folios at the bottom, with what appear to 
be quartos at the top. The absence of the structure of the bookshelves necessitates this 
arrangement of books based on size. This engraving takes the non-mimetic representation 
of the library to its logical extreme. Rather than representing a library with an exact 
correspondence between catalog and stacks, the image represents the library as an ideal 
summed up by the Horatian epigram on the engraving to “delight while teaching.”
Figure 3. Frontispiece from J. Noble’s *A New Catalogue* 1761 (The Folger Shakespeare Library)
These frontispieces emphasize the nature of the libraries as a virtual space and medium for the circulation of ideas, as implicated in their role in the actual distribution of physical books. Though more pronounced in the second (1761) frontispiece, each image presents the library as a virtual space with an indication of the actuality of both the catalogs that they preface and the libraries that they (the frontispieces and catalogs) represent. This occurs through the finger of the figure pointing toward the bookcase in the foreground in the 1746 frontispiece and the fingers of the stylized classical figures pointing toward the stack of books in the 1761 frontispiece. It is as if the 1761 frontispiece further abstracts the 1746 representation of the enterprise of the Nobles’ libraries. At each level of abstraction in these images lies an instance of repetition where the viewer is simultaneously asked to think of: the representation of the library, the actual library, the actual catalog, and the uses of both the catalog (as finding aid for books) and the library (as medium for books). This complex figuration of the virtual and actual nature of the libraries is not only a product of the Noble brothers self-representations in their catalogs. Much of the discourse about their circulating libraries in the period, as we have seen, testifies to popular understanding of the libraries as a place not only where books were rented but also as a metaphor for circulation; this metaphor stood for the virtual circulation involved in, not the renting (or buying) of books, but in reading them. The institution of the library was conflated with its role as medium.⁹⁸ The circulating

⁹⁸ There survive in the Cambridge Library two volumes, 29 and 30, of The Entertaining Museum, or, Complete Circulating Library (c.1785). I think, quite rightly, that by the 1780s the popular understanding of the circulating library as a metaphor is powerful enough to give rise to the subtitle of this collection. These volumes are further of interest because they contain The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. That these two volumes are extant with Tristram Shandy in them speaks to the way in which the
library in popular thought became a figure for understanding and thinking about the phenomenon of circulation and its effects.

The notion that an institution could enable the perpetual circulation of ideas is what made the attributions of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* so significant. These attributions were not of a singular instance or bound to single editions. Rather, the attributions occurred within an institution whose very premise was based on the repeated circulation of both books and ideas to a reading public. Defoe the writer of novels may have been, as Pat Rogers has claimed, an invention of the nineteenth century, but the conditions under which the transformation was made possible—the attribution of authorship—crystallized in the world of the late eighteenth-century book trade (4). Because attribution is a process that depends upon its repetition and circulation, its effects are neither immediate nor widespread. Attribution is, rather, a slow transformation that, as instances accrue, gains traction. This process of transformation is such that even by the early nineteenth century, Defoe’s literary production was deemed obscure enough by Romantic essayist Charles Lamb that in a letter to early Defoe biographer Walter Wilson he could claim, “He is quite new ground, and scarce known beyond Crusoe.”

The book-length studies of attribution and the Defoe canon by P.N. Furbank and W.R. Owens have placed in the foreground the problems in attribution posed by any work said to be by Defoe. Though most pronounced in Defoe studies, the issues of anonymity and attribution pervade the publication history of eighteenth-century novels.

Anonymity and attribution, their function and effect, then, must be taken into

circulating library as metaphor produces certain material effects even as it is largely immaterial (ESTC).

consideration in the study of the eighteenth-century novel. What this section has
demonstrated is the very historical contingencies that made possible the lasting
attributions of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* that have so shaped the post-eighteenth-century
reception of the author and his works. In his *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*,
Lamb does not account for how a text or author becomes “eterne,” but he suggests some
intrinsic merit to a text that shines through. It is, however, not the intrinsic factors of a
given text that guarantees its durability and perpetual self-reproductivity. Rather, it is the
extrinsic factors, the conditions in which a text may or may not circulate and with which,
if any, name attached that determine whether a text disappears as passing ephemera or is
preserved, detached from its material form, in the literary imagination.

II. Defoe the Pamphleteer

“Whether he were born on the neighbouring continent, or in this island; in London, or in
the country; was equally uncertain. And whether his name were Foe, or De Foe, was
somewhat doubtful.” George Chalmers, *The Life of Daniel De Foe* (1790)

In his introduction to *Defoe: The Critical Heritage*, Pat Rogers writes of the early
reception of Daniel Defoe’s writing in the early eighteenth century.

Throughout the eighteenth century, only a handful of his enormous range of
books enjoyed any kind of esteem. Apart from *Crusoe*, there were *The Family
Instructor*; the widely popular ghost story, *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal*; in some
quarters, *The Complete English Tradesman*; and the *Tour thro’ Great Britain*,
which reached a ninth edition in 1779. (1)

How strange such a reception must seem to the contemporary, that is, twenty-first century
reader, that Daniel Defoe, accepted author of some of the most canonical novels of the
British eighteenth century – *Roxana, Moll Flanders, Robinson Crusoe* – should be
“chiefly regarded – understandably enough – as a polemicist and party writer” in his lifetime (Rogers 1).

The great novelist Defoe, Rogers has suggested, is an invention of the nineteenth century, and we have seen means through which the process of attribution necessary to Defoe’s transformation into a novelist began in the late eighteenth century. This transformation was complicated and delayed by the original anonymity of Defoe’s writing. The anonymous status of these texts in their original circulation has been obscured by the late nineteenth-century codification of the Defoe canon and biography that produces a teleological critical narrative in which the novels of Defoe represent the perfection of the craft of an “imaginative artist” (Rogers 1) honed by polemic and party writing.

I have detailed the means by which the name Defoe was circulated as a writer of novels in the late eighteenth-century. The impact of this attribution was not minor. Through the circulation and iteration of the name Defoe attached to novels, Defoe became like “Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes” (Lamb 8). The name of the author and the title of the novels were folded in together, author and certain texts abstracted as works, and a hierarchal Defoe canon established. While the novels attributed to Defoe and some key political writings may have achieved that status of “eterne,” much of the writings associated with the Defoe canon have received scholarly attention only insofar as they are “by Defoe” and have some use value in narrating the biographical or artistic development of the man named Defoe.
Two early eighteenth-century texts offer differing views on this relationship between author, text, and “the eterne.” In “The Preface” to *The Storm* (1704), the author meditates on the responsibility of the writer of history and draws a distinction between orality and print:

> The Sermon is a Sound of Words spoken to the Ear, and prepar’d only for present Meditation, and extends no farther than the strength of Memory can convey it; a Book Printed is a Record, remaining in every Man’s Possession, always ready to renew its Acquaintance with his Memory, and always ready to be produc’d as an Authority or Voucher to any Reports he makes out of it, and conveys its Contents for Ages to come, to the Eternity of mortal Time, when the Author is forgotten in his Grave.\(^\text{100}\)

The author, here, suggests that by virtue of print, the content of the book is rendered eternal. Print outlives oral performance for two reasons: it can be circulated more widely than speech, and it can be preserved in a material form instead of dependent on memory. Indeed, the preface suggests that the printed volume may live on independent of human actors entirely. It depends on neither its author nor its readers for its preservation. The survivability of the printed book is, the author suggests, intrinsic to print rather than dependent on extrinsic factors. The accepted author of this preface is, of course, Daniel Defoe, and it would hardly be controversial to suggest that *The Storm* and, in particular, its preface survive not because it was printed but because it was written by Daniel Defoe.

“The Epistle Dedicatory, to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity” in *A Tale of A Tub* (1704-10) offers a decidedly different assessment of survival rates of printed texts. In his address to Prince Posterity, the author raises and answers the question of the fate of most printed texts:

> What is then become of those immense Bales of Paper, which must needs have been employ’d in such Numbers of Books? Can these also be wholly

annihilate, and so of a sudden as I pretend? What shall I say in return of so invidious an Objection? It ill befits the Distance between Your Highness and Me, to send You for ocular Conviction to a Jakes, or an Oven; to the Windows of a Bawdy-house, or to a sordid Lanthorn. Books, like Men their authors, have no more than one Way of coming into the World, but there are ten Thousand to go out of it and return no more.\textsuperscript{101}

Here, print in no way guarantees survival. Rather, the author suggests that print ensures ephemerality; printed texts are merely temporary and fleeting. Though a text may be printed, that in no way ensures that it will survive in its original form or be read. Rather, the book may be disassembled and repurposed. The condition of print text in the wake of the lapse of the Licensing Act and subsequent flood of publication is, according to this author, impermanence. There are simply too many texts for all of them to be preserved. A Tale of a Tub is one of those texts that survived the glut of the print in the early eighteenth century, and it did so, like The Storm despite being anonymous in its original publication. Also like The Storm, A Tale of A Tub has been attributed to a canonical writer of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Swift.

In neither competing account of the survival of printed texts in the early eighteenth century does the author play a large role. For Defoe, the text transcends the author and he or she is forgotten, if noted ever. For Swift, the author very often outlives the text. Yet, the very reason that both The Storm and A Tale of A Tub have become eternal, through anthology and facsimile, is because they have been attributed to named authors and may thus be placed among the works of Defoe and Swift. The consequences and benefits of authorial attribution to these, and other, so-called minor works are not

insignificant. The attribution of authorship to a known author ensures that a work will survive; it may even ensure that a work is subject to study and analysis. However, authorial attribution may also foreclose study and analysis because the attributed work, if it is to be by the named author, must cohere within a larger body of work. In the case of Defoe whose ever-changing body of work refuses to cohere and whose novels, such as *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*, are taken as an endpoint in a writing career, the singularity of a non-novelistic text and its context or topicality may be sacrificed or ignored entirely because of the authorial name retrospectively attached to it.

This section takes as its focus two texts: *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* (1704), unproblematically attributed to Defoe, and *A Vindication of the Press* (1718), subject to much worrying by Defoe scholars over its attribution. Attribution of these pamphlets to Defoe or arguments over attribution replicate a reading practice similar to the structures of press regulation to which these pamphlets respond that seek to attach names to the text. This critical reading practice predicated on the importance of the name is informed, in large part, by the late eighteenth-century creation of Daniel Defoe as novelist by the Nobles and the desire on the part of critics to narrate a story of life and works that takes “De Foe’s” novels as an endpoint. I wish to move away from this narrative and instead ask, what can these pamphlets tell us about how to read anonymity as a strategy for pamphlet authorship in the early eighteenth century given its widespread practice in publication?

Within these pamphlets we have the identification of two possible functions of the author’s name, one that refers to an individual person with partisan politics and the other that refers to the body of works – both of which eclipse the text itself – and the aim of the
pamphlets themselves: a disavowal of those functions in favor of engaging with the content of the text. Within this context, anonymous authorship is a strategy for textual production that asks for a reading of the content of the text. That it should be preferred for political pamphlets is not surprising as this form demands attention to the current political context in order to stake a claim for valuation.

The Defoe canon offers a useful case study in the ways in which the process of attaching names to texts privileges the coherent body of works over the singularity of the text and its context. Privileging the *oeuvre* over the individual text introduces a paradox: if Defoe’s political pamphlets were not attributed to Defoe, they would likely be considered valuable only in the writing of political history, if at all. Because they are attributed to Defoe, however, these pamphlets are read solely (if at all) for their relevance to his biography and artistic development. In other words, we may read attributed texts *because* they have been attributed—for what they have to tell us about their creator—rather than for their literary value.

Though attribution to a known author may lead to an otherwise unknown or unremarkable text being read and studied, *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* is fascinating because its history of attribution rests on its not being read. *An Essay* has remained in the Defoe canon unchallenged since Defoe’s first biographer, George Chalmers, included it in his list of works by “De Foe.” J.R. Moore’s introduction to the facsimile edition constructs a useful and common, it seems, narrative of the text’s attribution:

One striking result of the rarity of the tract has been that it has been almost unknown to biographers of Defoe. It has been assigned to him since 1790, when Chalmers included it, at the end of his expanded *Life of Daniel De Foe*, in ‘A List of Writings, which are considered as undoubtedly De
Foe’s.’ Chalmers’ assignment must have been based on some acquaintance with the overwhelming internal evidence of Defoe’s authorship, but there is no other indication that he had seen the pamphlet. Professor Trent owned a copy, but it was purchased eight years after his chapter on Defoe was published in the Cambridge History of English Literature and four years after the publication of his Daniel Defoe: How to Know Him. Trent’s bibliography for his chapter on Defoe lists the title, but his published writings indicate no personal acquaintance with the tract. In 1830 Wilson wrote: ‘Not having been able to procure the pamphlet, the present writer is unable to state his argument;…’ Lee merely guessed at the contents from the title (which was known from the booksellers’ advertisement). Chadwick, Minto, and most later biographers have made no mention of it. Wright offered only a wild surmise: ‘Daniel is at them in a moment, and with his Essay on the Regulation of the Press mangles their argument like a bull-dog’ - a statement more helpful in understanding the habits of bulldogs than in following Defoe’s line of reasoning.102

Moore’s introduction is striking in the way it works through all of the key Defoe biographers and bibliographers who have never looked at the pamphlet. Chalmers, it seems, attributed An Essay to Defoe based on internal evidence and subsequent biographers and bibliographers accepted that attribution without looking at that evidence. The absurdity of relying on internal evidence for authorial attribution has been well-argued by Furbank and Owens who suggest that attribution has a snowball effect; once one text is let into a canon, it changes the perception of the author and allows for further attributions based upon those changes.103 In the case of An Essay, its content and style have been guessed at based upon its title and attribution to Defoe. However, such guesses at content and style are the only bases for its attribution to Defoe.

Recent scholarship on the emergence of British copyright, most notably that of Jody Greene, has inaugurated the study of this pamphlet. In An Essay, Greene reads the clearest articulation of the rights and responsibilities of authorship that would be codified

in the Act of Anne.\textsuperscript{104} Greene offers a compelling reading of the text but avoids the problem that this essay, which calls for the owning of texts by their authors, circulated anonymously and its attribution to Defoe rests on a long history of its not being read. Indeed, for Greene, \textit{An Essay} must be by Defoe because her argument that the origins of copyright lie in authorial liability relies on the relationship between the biographical incident of Defoe being pilloried for the anonymous \textit{The Shortest Way with Dissenters} and the anonymous \textit{An Essay} which argues that if an author is to be held liable for his work, he should also be able to profit from it through ownership.

As a counterpoint to the unread-until-recently \textit{An Essay on the Regulation of the Press}, \textit{A Vindication of the Press} has been read, re-read, and ultimately rejected from the Defoe canon\textsuperscript{105} because of its anonymous publication and its late addition to the Defoe bibliography. Setting aside the problem of attribution, scholarly discussion of the place of the pamphlet within the Defoe canon, and hence its value as an object of study, reveals much about the critical reading strategies employed when an author is “known.” Otho Clinton Williams’ introduction for the 1951 facsimile edition notes, “\textit{A Vindication of the Press} is one of Defoe’s most characteristic pamphlets and for this reason as well as for its rarity deserves reprinting”.\textsuperscript{106} Here, Williams slots the pamphlet within the canon on the basis of its “characteristic” marks of the individual author. Still further, Williams notes:

\textit{A Vindication of the Press} is chiefly important for the corroboration of our knowledge of Daniel Defoe. It presents nothing that is new, but it gives

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} \textit{The Trouble with Ownership} (Philadelphia: University of Penn Press, 2005), 124.
\item \textsuperscript{106} “Introduction.” \textit{A Vindication of the Press}. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1951), i.
\end{itemize}
further evidence for his pride in authorship, of his rationalization of his actions as a professional journalist and of his belief in the importance of the free press. Many of his characteristic ideas are repeated with his usual consistency in point of view. Although the critical comments in the essay are thoroughly conventional, they offer evidence of contemporary literary judgments and reveal Defoe as a well-informed man of moderation and commonsense…

Williams notes the importance of the text because it “corroborates” what Defoe scholars already know about the individual named Defoe but admits the conventionality of the commentary contained therein. Two strains appear in this argument: one points to Defoe as a “proud” individual author, while the other points to the commonplace nature of the arguments and thus to a larger cultural sentiment that remains unexamined and may undermine the attribution. Paula Backscheider echoes the first strain in Williams’ claim about Defoe as individual author, “A Vindication of the Press (1718) give[s] the reader important insights into how Defoe saw his writing, how the publishing world worked, and how he functioned in it”. Such a reading contributes to Backscheider’s larger discussion of Defoe’s pamphlet writing as a kind of juvenilia.

In arguing against the attribution of A Vindication to Defoe, Furbank and Owens take the unextraordinary critique as proof of its authorship by someone other than Defoe:

What is characteristic of this pamphlet is that it does not seem to have any particular target in view, and for the most part the ideas it contains – on the benefits of a free press, on the harmfulness of much contemporary criticism and on the qualities of good writing - are commonplace platitudes.

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108 Backscheider claims of the pamphlets, “They are … important apprentice pieces for Defoe’s novels, and familiarity with them allows us to see the developing artist and the full range of his technical craftsmanship” (46).
In both identifying its characteristic and conventional elements, the reading of the content of *A Vindication* ceases at the moment when attribution or de-attribution can be established. None of these critics attend to what it might mean for the authorship they so seek for the text to be at once characteristic of an individual author and conventional within a period. For Williams, Furbank, and Owens, their critical interest is not in explicating the meaning, content, or context of these pamphlets. Rather, they wish attribute an author and provide evidence for that attribution so that others may engage critically with them.

Donald Foster has noted the “critical impasse” anonymous or contested authorship poses to the critical process. Yet, in the cases of *An Essay* and *A Vindication* we repeatedly see the cessation of critical reading following authorial attribution. Attribution does not enable further critical engagement, but rather critical disengagement. What is of critical interest is not what the pamphlets argue, but who did or did not write the argument. Even Greene, who offers one of the few analyses of the pamphlet, relies on the attribution of *An Essay* to Defoe for the weight of her argument. Her argument could not work if *An Essay* was not by Defoe. An analysis of both *An Essay* and *A Vindication* reveal that the pamphlets articulate the very problem that naming the author of a text very often precludes the reading of a text. The named author, these pamphlets claim, stands directly in the way of the reading and engaging with the content of texts.

*An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* was written in response to a bill on licensing the press, introduced into the House of Commons on December 15, 1703, that sought to restrain discussion of political decisions in the press (Moore viii). *An Essay*

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rejects licensing because of its arbitrariness and, perhaps more importantly, its ability to be easily corrupted by “Frauds, Briberies, and all the ill practices possible” (An Essay 9). Most emphatically, the text worries the current state of politics and fears the control of the press by one party who would appoint a licenser:

Then suppose this or that Licenser, a Party-Man, that is, One put in, and upheld by a Party; suppose him of any Party, which you please, and a Man of the Opposite Kidney brings him a Book, he views the Character of the Man, O, says he, I know the Author, he is a damn’d Whig, or a rank Jacobite, I’ll License none of his Writings; here is Bribery on one Hand, partiality to Parties on the other; but get a Man of his own Kidney to own the very same Book, and as he refus’d it without opening it before, he is as easie to pass it now, not for the Good or Ill in the Book, but on both Hands for the Character of the Author. (11)

Here, we are presented with a very different function of the author’s name than Greene’s assertion that the author’s name is attached to the text so that the author can be held liable for its contents. Under partisan politics, the author is not meant to answer for his or her text, but rather his or her “Character” (11). The text in this view is irrelevant; rather, it is the political allegiances, “damn’d Whig or… rank Jacobite,” of the author that determine authorial liability. The complaint of the text, here, is that writings will not be evaluated on content but on the name of the author and his or her personal allegiances. The name of the author, then, is not a function within discourse; it is instead the name of an actual person within a political discourse.

The text’s worry about partisan control of the press is further articulated in its insistence of the neutrality of the press:

But ‘tis pity the Press should come into Party-strife: This is like Two Parties going to war, and one depriving the other of all their Powder and Shot. Ammunition stands always Neuter, or rather Jack a both Sides, every body has it, and then they get the Victory who have most Courage to use it, and Conduct to manage it. (17)
The “Neuter” nature of the press that is pressed into partisan service further works to highlight the importance of *An Essay* as a text that was circulated anonymously. Like the press itself, *An Essay*, in order for it to be effective, must be politically neutral. The name of the author, as the text demonstrates earlier, taints the text with the “Character” of the author.

Given this reading, it is hard to reconcile the turn in the last four pages toward the pamphlet’s call for “a Law be made to make the last Seller the Author, unless the Name of Author, Printer, or Bookseller, be affix’d to the Book, then no Book can be published, but there will be some body found to answer for it. Whoever puts a false Name, to forfeit… &c.” (22). Here, the function of anonymous publication seems to be erased in a regulatory impulse. However, if anonymous publication is not read in terms of liability but readability and political efficacy, the argument coheres. The “chain of liability,” as Greene calls it, cannot be activated until a text has been read and offended someone within this scenario. In arguing against pre-press censorship, the pamphlet allows for a proliferation of texts that may be read and, if prosecution is to happen, must be read. In this manner, *An Essay* responds to the threat of pre-press censorship by posing both anonymous (in its publication) and named authorship (in its argument) as modes that ensure that texts can be read.

*A Vindication of the Press* is even more emphatic in its attention to the effects of the author’s name on readership. The text first bemoans the effect of named authorship impeding reading due to authorial reputation:

> In respect to Writings in general, there is an unaccountable Caprice in abundance of Persons, to Condemn or Commend a Performance meerly by a Name. The Names of some Writers will effectually recommend, without making an Examination into the Merit of the Work; and the Names of
other Persons, equally qualified for Writing, and perhaps of greater Learning than the Former, shall be sufficient to Damn it; and all this is owning either to some lucky Accident of writing apposite to the Humour of the Town, (wherein an agreeable Season and a proper Subject are chiefly to be regarded) or to Prejudice, but most commonly the Former. (20-1)

Here, the name of the author is noted as a sufficient impediment to critical engagement with the content of a text. If the author’s name is not already of repute or not of “the Humour of the Town,” the text is condemned without ever being read. The author’s name functions in this passage along the narrative Foucault draws for us. The name does not refer to an individual person but rather to a group of texts bearing his or her name that informs their place in cultural valuation.

In *A Vindication*, however, we have the emergence of another function of the author’s name that echoes *An Essay’s* earlier discussion of the problem of partisanship and the press:

The Question first ask’d [by the “lower Order of Criticks”] is, whether an Author is a Whig or Tory; if he be a Whig, or that Party which is in Power, his Praise is resounded, he’s presently cried up for an excellent Writer; if not, he’s mark’d as a Scoundrel, a perpetual Gloom hangs over his Head; if he was Master of the sublime Thoughts of Addison, the easy flowing Thoughts of Pope, the fine Humour of Garth, the beautiful Language of Rowe, the Perfection of Prior, the Dialogue of Congreve, and the Pastoral of Phillips, he must nevertheless submit to a mean Character, if not expect the Reputation of an Illiterate. (18-19)

Again, the unnamed author’s name refers to an actual person with political allegiances and again such allegiances prevent reading of the text as an aesthetic object. Here, we also see the function of the authorial name as a means of organizing texts. Each named author, Addison, Pope, Rowe, etc., is not named in order to refer to the individual; rather, each name stands in for the texts in which the formal elements the pamphlet wishes to praise are found. Even as the text uses the authors’ names as a kind of shorthand, it
presents its own desire to move beyond the name and to the aesthetic object that is the
text with its “fine Thoughts… flowing Thoughts… [and] the beautiful Language…” The
text is clearly interested in names, but as with An Essay, the anonymous publication of A
Vindication thematizes its own interest in the problem of the authorial name.

The critical engagement with these pamphlets amply demonstrates the power of
retrospective attribution and the durability of an authorial name to profoundly shape and
limit the readings of a text. The original anonymity of both An Essay and A Vindication is
taken merely, if at all, as an afterthought or obstacle to the critic who wishes to place, or
displace, the texts within the larger Defoe oeuvre. This is not the case, of course, with all
texts published anonymously whose authors are then discovered. However, certain genres
and forms are more vulnerable to this cessation because they cannot be understood within
the framework of the rise of the dominant literary forms, like the novel, of the single
authored work unless attributed to, as Backscheider does, “literary apprenticeship” (46).

One such vulnerable form is the political pamphlet. Responding, in some cases
immediately, to contemporary political events and meant to be ephemeral, it is no
surprise that these texts have limited contemporary readership and literary value. They
do, however, present the need and utility of a critical strategy that is not arranged around
a single author but one that can contend with the cultural-historical language world in
which they operated and the notion of authorship they put forth. The anonymity of these
pamphlets, and indeed any anonymous text, cannot be taken as an afterthought or an
obstacle. Rather, their anonymity is central to the work they do as texts. The refusal to
read the anonymity of these pamphlets is a refusal to read these texts as discrete
historically-situated documents and rather subsume them within the “eterne” of the great novelist Defoe in which their specificity, and thus meaning, is lost.

In this chapter we have seen the centrality of authorial attribution to the formation of canons and its effect on the individual works contained therein. The ease of attributing *An Essay* and the difficulty of attributing *A Vindication* demonstrate an endpoint to the steady and historically-contingent process of attributing *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*. The novels had to have been attributed to Defoe before the pamphlets because they gave meaning and value to these otherwise ephemeral political writings. As the individual editions of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* fall away once attributed to Defoe, the specificity and content of the pamphlets fall away. Further, we have seen how the anonymity of *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders* went unmarked for more than fifty years, while *An Essay* and *A Vindication* immediately called attention to their anonymity by thematizing its utility in their arguments. Such a difference speaks to the importance of attending to generic differences in the study of anonymity. Though purportedly written by the same author, Defoe, these four texts are each anonymous for very different reasons and their anonymity is attended to, or not, by readers because of differences in generic expectations, audience, and context.

In their competing visions of the condition of print, neither Defoe nor Swift give much consideration to the importance of the author. However, it would seem that the Swiftian vision is closest to how texts survive and circulate. Books are merely bales of paper that very often come to an unfortunate end. Those lucky books and tracts to which an author’s name may be attached may fair a bit better, but their material condition, and often content, are obscured by the inclusion of the text in a body of works.
In demonstrating the workings of attribution, de-attribution, and their effect on canon construction, it may be inferred that I reject the notion of “the works” of an author. I remain skeptical of the explanatory power allowed to a body of works, but I do not reject its utility outright in critical investigation. Indeed, this chapter depends on the association between Defoe and the four texts considered. The œuvre, like the works from which it is composed, is a historically-contingent, and highly malleable, construct. Central to the construct is the attribution of authorship. The name of the author is required to group and give meaning to a body of works. Subsequently, that body of works must internally cohere such that works deemed uncharacteristic are: 1. changed to meet the perceived ideology of the author, as in Roxana and Moll Flanders or 2. de-attributed and thus kicked out of the canon, as in A Vindication of the Press. I argue the necessity of teasing out the various “lives” of the texts themselves apart from the life and craft of the author and bringing anonymity, which would seem to push against the grouping of texts around a single author, to the fore in our understanding of the cultural work done by these texts. Once the absence of an author’s name is focused upon and accepted as absence, one can see the presence of so many other contextual and content-based factors that contribute to a text’s meaning.
Have not we already transferr’d the Merit of the Composer to the Performer? Have we not gone farther still, and suppos’d the Merit of the personated Character to adhere to the real?

\[\text{The Case of Authors (1758)}^{111}\]

Why and when is anonymity noteworthy? Did the London theatergoers of the 1726-27 season notice that fully sixty percent of the new plays and theatrical entertainments presented before them were (and remain) anonymous?\(^{112}\) There is little evidence to suggest that they did. There is, however, a wealth of evidence that suggests authorial anonymity was not only widespread, but the default mode of authorship in the theater of the early eighteenth century. The epigraph with which I begin this chapter further offers some answer to this question. If it is the case, as the epigraph from \textit{The Case of Authors} conjectures, that eighteenth-century audiences had “already transferr’d the Merit of the Composer to the Performer,” it is unlikely that authorial anonymity would have been notable to many in those audiences. While the printed text of a play may allow for the visibility of a single source for the words on the page, the performed piece enacts a transfer of authorship, which disperses the authority of the drama among its performers. It is the difference in medium, I argue, between the performed and printed text that makes authorial anonymity, which was typical of performance, notable in print.

\(^{111}\) \textit{The Case of Authors by Profession or Trade, Stated. With regard to Booksellers, the Stage, and the Public. No Matter by Whom} (London: printed for R. Griffiths, 1758), 45.

\(^{112}\) William J. Burling’s \textit{A Checklist of New Plays and Entertainments on the London Stage, 1700-1737} shows that of the thirty new plays and entertainments presented that season, twenty were anonymous and remain so.
Scholarship by Robert Hume, and more recently David Brewer, has considered the knotty question of “what” and “when” Restoration and eighteenth-century audiences knew about dramatic authors.\textsuperscript{113} This research attends to what audiences could have thought and known about the authorship, not the anonymity, of the theatrical entertainments – including plays, operas, and pantomimes – presented before them. If the majority of audiences in the theater did not take note of the absence of authorial attribution, dramatic catalogers of the Restoration and eighteenth century certainly did by systematically cataloging anonymous plays as anonymous throughout the Restoration and eighteenth century. Beginning with Gerard Langbaine’s \textit{A New Catalogue of English Plays} in 1688, known more widely by its pirated title of \textit{Momus Triumphans}, catalogers of plays and writers of the lives of dramatic poets regularly set aside anonymous plays as separate and distinct from plays whose authors were known or attributed. These writers clearly thought it notable that there was a large body of plays for which no author could be named, and they deemed it necessary to create separate sections for anonymous plays in their catalogs. Yet, save for Giles Jacob’s \textit{An Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our most Considerable English Poets} (1720), there seems to be no attempt at such systematic cataloging of other anonymous literary forms.

Robert Hume has argued that there is a “double tradition” of authorship and attribution in performed and printed drama, wherein the status accorded the author differs between the performance and the play text:

After 1660 a large majority of printed plays did appear with the author's (or adaptor's) name on the title page, and growing interest in both biography and accurate attribution is easy to document in the works of Langbaine and Gildon in the 1680s and 1690s. The fact remains that there is a "double tradition" here, and so far as playhouse practice goes the scripts were titles much more than they were "works" by literary authors. The tradition of play-as-title was very slow to die, and not just in playbills. A majority of publishers' advertisements for plays in seventeenth-century quartos give titles but not names. (46-7)

More recent scholarship by David Brewer contests the utility of the double tradition to our understanding of theatrical attribution. He suggests that diaries and marginalia of the period provide evidence of interest in theatrical authorship even before the plays were printed. The lack of authorial attribution, he argues, was part of a game played with audiences to reward those “in the know” and encourage them to seek out the printed plays to confirm or deny their attribution (3). Rather than opposing the play text to performance, Brewer wishes to understand them as operating within a “theatrical field” where the concerns of authorship bleed between performance and play text (5). Brewer’s quantitative work on Restoration drama and attribution patterns reveals that nearly eighty percent of plays were attributed to an author upon publication. This research builds on the work of Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser in the period between 1512 and 1660 in which they have found similar rates of attribution in the publication of plays. I do not doubt that some audience members did care and did know about the authorship of the plays presented before them. A larger percentage may not have; we simply cannot know for certain. Furthermore, it stands to reason that Restoration audiences – who typically saw only a single performance in an evening – might have been more invested in the question

of authorship than early eighteenth-century theatergoers who might see three or more
different performances on the stage in a single night.

Brewer, Hume, and others, such as Paulina Kewes, suggest that the status of the
dramatic author, and indeed the “birth of the author” more generally, may be inferred by
the prevalence of authorial attribution in either theatrical performance or play text. It
seems correct that where authorship is attributed, be it on the page or in the theater, one
may thus infer the relative status of dramatic authorship. In other words, if authorship
mattered, it follows that authors would be named, or at least guessed at. Jeffrey Masten,
in his work on collaborative authorship in seventeenth-century drama, offers a differing
account of the emergence of the author. He argues that it is not the presence of the
author’s name that marks the emergence of the author; rather, the “author’s emergence is
marked by the notice of its absence.” Masten suggests that noting the absence of the
author’s name signals an interest in named authors and suggests the status accorded to
them. Like Masten, I wish to reframe the question of authorial attribution in drama from
one of concern about authors to one of concern about anonymity.

Allardyce Nicoll long ago offered a general assessment of the place of the
dramatic author in the early eighteenth century:

> It has been said again and again, by those who have more or less
tentatively touched upon this period of our drama, that the eighteenth
century was an age, not of the author, but of the actor; and this statement,
as a general proposition, may be regarded as fundamentally true.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Jeffrey Masten, “Beaumont and/or Fletcher: Collaboration and the Interpretation of
Renaissance Drama,” in The Construction of authorship : textual appropriation in law and
¹¹⁶ Allardyce Nicoll, A History of English Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University
More recently, Hume has reminded us of this fact in his study of Shakespeare’s status in the early eighteenth century:

Inhabitants of English departments tend to think of authors and texts. We must try to remember, however, that Hart, Betterton, Wilks, Booth, Quinn, and later Garrick dominated the world at issue here. This was an actors’ theater in which many members of the core audience went again and again to see the same small group of favorite performers in an ever-rotating series of showcase roles. (emphasis in original; 45-6)

Like Nicoll, Hume apprehends a natural opposition between author/text and actor/performance. He is quite right to note the tendency for literary scholars to view the play text through the lens of a relationship between reader and writer and he offers an invaluable corrective. However, the mode of categorical thought that privileges author/text over actor/performance is the same one that informs the very distinction between text and performance that Hume so crucially makes. In other words, we can only think of the primacy of the relationship between author and text once we have separated text from performance.

Unlike Nicoll and Hume, Kewes has argued that, “[d]ramatists, no longer semi-anonymous scriptwriters or mere suppliers of live entertainment, as their early seventeenth-century predecessors had been, were increasingly thought of as individuals who carried their own identity and authority, and from whom the printed artifact originated.”117 Kewes, here, privileges the print text as evidence for the increase in status accorded authors in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Scriptwriters were those who wrote for performance and were “semi-anonymous,” but the new dramatic author was one who printed one’s work. For Kewes, it is thus through print that status

may be accorded to authorship. Though seemingly contradictory, the insights of Nicoll, Hume, and Kewes appear fundamentally correct. We have, on the one hand, a largely anonymous performance tradition that privileges the actor over the author and, on the other, an emergent print tradition that may announce authorship and reward it financially.

We take the double tradition to explain the differences in patterns of attribution between staged performance and printed text and to oppose the default anonymity of the theater to the tendency toward attributed authorship in printed plays. Insofar as the double tradition explains the difference in attribution, it does so by creating that difference. The double tradition of staged and printed drama is not a natural or self-evident phenomenon. Rather, it is a way of thinking about drama that is first brought forth in print, then imported into the theatrical mode and naturalized. In this understanding of drama, print and performance are mutually reinforcing and defining. That anonymity can be posed against authorship and made to signify a lack of interest in authorship is a product of (1) understanding the empirical gap between printed words on the page and the performance of bodies on the stage, and (2) privileging print where that absence of the name can be made most evident. This gap is first articulated in Langbaine’s cataloging in the late seventeenth century and becomes the dominant, though not exclusive, mode of cataloging plays throughout the eighteenth century. The distance between stage/page and actor/author becomes a trope repeated throughout the theatrical writings of the early eighteenth century and taken as a truism in scholarship then and now. The argument is not whether or not theater-going audiences of the early eighteenth century noticed the anonymity or authors of the pieces they saw on the stage or purchased in print, but rather

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118 The Mears catalogs, for example, maintained the title, then author, format throughout the 1720s and eventually dropped the authors’ names entirely.
how they might have come to take note of authorial anonymity. Anonymity comes into being as a concern for the theater, both printed and performed, only once a distinction between print and performance can be made.

I. Lives of Poets and Catalogs of Plays

For Edward Phillips, the goal of writing history was the preservation of the names of great men. *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), he claims, is an attempt to collect and preserve the names of only a select group – the poets – in one volume:

Registers who have been studious to keep alive the memories of Famous Men, of whom it is at least some satisfaction to understand that there was once such Men or Writings in being. However since their works having by what ever casualty perisht, their Names, though thus recorded, yet as being dispere'd in several Authors, and some of those not of the most conspicuous note, are scarce known to the generality, even of the Learned themselves, and since the latter Ages the memories of many whose works have been once made public, and in general esteem, have nevertheless through tract of time, and the succession of new Generations, fallen to decay and dwindled to almost nothing; I judged it a Work in some sort not unconducing to a public benefit, and to many not ungratefull, to muster up together in a body, though under their several Classes, as many of those that have impoy'd their fancies or inventions in all the several Arts and Sciences, as I could either collect out of the several Authors that have mention'd them in part, or by any other ways could come to the knowledge of, but finding this too various and manifold a task to be manag'd at once, I pitcht upon on Faculty first, which, not more by chance than inclination, falls out to be that of the Poets, a Science certainly of all others the most notable and exalted... (xii)

*Theatrum Poetarum* is explicit that it is not encyclopedic in its cataloging of authors; rather, Phillips has opted to focus on preserving those with the “Faculty” of poetry. *Theatrum Poetarum* is divided by both the era and gender of the poets. Male and female poets, in separate sections, are classed as either ancient or modern. Each section is organized alphabetically by the author’s first name. Following the name of the author is a brief biographical note and, if available, the titles of works by said author. For example,
for Dryden we get a biographical sketch and list of major plays; while the entry for Fletcher emphasizes his association with Ben Johnson and Shakespeare and provides an encomium to his “courtly elegance and gentile familiarity of style” but which makes no mention his plays (108-9).

Phillips’ *Theatrum Poetarum* differs from previous attempts to catalog authors and works, like Kirkman’s *An Exact and perfect Catalogue of al the Plaies that were ever printed; together with all the Authors names; and what are Comedies, Histories, Interludes, Masks, Pastorals, Tragedies* (1656), because it organized the catalog by author’s name, not by title of work. In doing so, Phillips introduced the problem of what to do about anonymous poems and plays. Kirkman had previously not differentiated anonymous plays from attributed plays. They were cataloged together and arranged by title. Recognizing this problem and, ever aware of the limitations of his register, Phillips addresses the absence of anonymous poems and plays in his preface:

…sorry I am I cannot pay a due respect to Mr. Anonymus, but he is the Author of so many Books that to make but a Catalogue of them would require a Volume sufficient of itself, others there are who vouchsafe but the first two letters of their Names, and these, it is to be supposed, desire to be known only to some Friends, that understand the Interpretation of those letters, or some cunning Men in the Art of Divination. (n.p.)

Phillips argues that anonymous texts are so many in number that they would require a volume unto themselves. What he does not acknowledge, though it should be clear from the stated purpose of the volume, is that it is not the texts themselves that are of interest; rather, the poets behind those works are the true objects of attention and analysis. “Mr. Anonymus” affords no such object. The organization and execution of the catalog speak to the primacy of the named author. Indeed, the only way in which Phillips can account for anonymity is by referring to the phenomenon with the personated “Mr. Anonymus.”
Following on the efforts of Kirkman and Phillips, Gerard Langbaine offered *A New Catalogue of English Plays* (1685) as a corrective to the less-than-perfect cataloging schemas of his predecessors. In his preface, Langbaine outlines the problems of previous efforts in three areas: they are out of print, they list plays that were not printed, and they are not methodical. Langbaine’s innovations in *A New Catalogue* correct these errors by cataloging only printed plays and by demonstrating an unprecedented interest in the status of attribution of a play text through a new, methodical layout arranged by named, supposed, or anonymous authors. Though the catalog itself may not have been a bestseller, these two innovations in cataloging transcended *A New Catalogue* and the subsequent iterations of the *Lives and Characters of the Dramatick Poets* to become the dominant mode of understanding the dramatic past and present by asserting a primary difference between printed and unprinted plays.

Unprinted plays were of little interest to Langbaine because he “designed this Catalogue for their use, who may have the same relish of the Drama with my self; and may possibly be desirous, either to make a Collection, or at least have the curiosity to know in general, what has been Publish't in our Language, as likewise to receive some remarks on the Writings of particular Men” (i-ii). The play as print object is Langbaine’s primary interest; he writes first for those interested in what has been “Publish’t” and secondly for those wishing “to receive some remarks on the Writing of particular Men.” Langbaine inverts the work done by *Theatrum Poetarum* by privileging the play, specifically the printed play, over the author. In examining Langbaine’s interest in

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119 Hume argues that, "After 1680 an interested party could buy one of Langbaine's catalogues, but such people were probably a small percentage of the London audience: none of Langbaine's books appears to have been a bestseller" (“Before the Bard” 44).
originality and what she deems a proto-intellectual property, Kewes, too, notices

Langbaine’s emphasis on, and privileging of, the printed text:

Langbaine welcomes the new possibilities attendant on the expansion of print and intends to take full advantage of them by exploring the affinities between plays and their sources. In this sense, his strictly textual approach might be said to privilege drama as literature rather than performance.\(^{120}\)

Though she acknowledges he may have privileged it, Kewes still underestimates Langbaine’s emphasis on the printed text. In order for a play to be included in *A New Catalogue*, it had to be printed. Langbaine is not interested in cataloging performance; he is interested in cataloging plays as material objects that may be collected, and he asserts the primacy of print, apart from performance, in accounting for drama. Such a sharp distinction between print and performance was available to Langbaine due to the increase in the private reading of plays during the Interregnum. With the theaters closed, a market for printed plays emerged.\(^{121}\) Writing in the 1680s, Langbaine was able to articulate clearly the differences between the printed text and performance because they had been made so stark in the period before. By privileging printed texts he is able to develop an approach that emphasizes bibliographic method and attends to anonymous plays as distinct from attributed plays.

Though *A New Catalogue* is organized by authors surname and is the first, according to Kewes, to do so, its interest is in the completeness and precision of bibliography, not in biography. Such regard for bibliographic precision over an interest in the author’s biography is evident in Langbaine’s discussion of the Kirkman catalog. In

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explaining the Kirkman catalog, Langbaine makes clear the problems introduced when there is no clear method at work:

The first Catalogue that was printed of any worth, was that collected by Kirkman, a London Bookseller, whose chief dealing was in Plays; which was published in 1671, at the end of Nicomede, a Tragi-comedy, Translated from the French of Monsier Corneille. This Catalogue was printed Alphabetically, as to the Names of the Plays, but promiscuously as to those of the Authors, (Shakspeare, Fletcher, Johnson, and some others of the most voluminous Authors excepted) each Authors Name being placed over against each Play that he writ, and still repeated with every several Play, till a new Author came on. About Nine years after, the Publisher of this Catalogue, Reprinted Kirkman's with emendations, but in the same Form. Notwithstanding the Anonimous Plays, one would think easily distinguishable by the want of an Author's Name before them; yet have both these charitable kind Gentlemen found Fathers for them, by ranking each under the Authors Name that preceeded them in the former Catalogues.... (iii)

The problem inherent in the previous method of organization was not that it obscured the author and privileged the title of the play, but that its layout, which included anonymous plays alongside attributed plays, encouraged errors of attribution. The emended Kirkman catalog introduced such errors so that formerly anonymous plays had “Fathers” found for them in the adjacent authors.

Langbaine’s catalog demonstrates unprecedented interest in the status of attribution of a play text. This was a solution to the problems of attribution introduced into later Kirkman catalogs. A New Catalogue is organized into three major divisions: “Known or Supposed Authours,” “Supposed Authours,” and “Unknown Authours.” “Known or Supposed Authours” refers to those plays whose authors’ names are printed on the title page or those that may be solidly attributed to a named author. “Supposed Authours” comprises those plays whose authorship is attributed only with initials. “Unknown Authours” refers to anonymous plays. Each division within the catalog attests
to the certainty with which a play may be attributed to a named author. The various levels of certainty are based, first, on the attribution of authorship on the text itself. Thus, the greatest degree of certainty is placed upon print texts that declare their authorship on the page; supposed authors declare only their initials on the page; anonymous plays make no declaration on the page, and cannot be reliably and retrospectively attributed. For Langbaine and those who followed, differentiating the printed play from the performed play, both made visible and necessitated an attention to anonymity.

Throughout the eighteenth century, there were various attempts to catalog English drama, many of which drew upon Langbaine’s method of listing printed plays and organizing plays by the author’s name with anonymous plays set aside. Giles Jacob’s *The poetical register: or, the lives and characters of the English dramatick poets. With an account of their writings* (2 vols. 1719-1720) follows the model put forth in Langbaine’s *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* wherein Langbaine elaborates on *A New Catalogue* by providing a biographical and critical gloss on the life of each author. Langbaine maintains the structure of *A New Catalogue*, organizing *Lives and Characters* by author’s surname, listing possible sources, and including a listing of anonymous plays. Jacob, with an appreciative nod to Langbaine in his preface, updates this model by omitting the ancient poets and including those plays printed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Like Langbaine, Jacob’s interest is in the printed plays, and he frequently notes those plays that were never acted in his listings. Jacob condenses Langbaine’s organizational method by doing away with the categories of “known or supposed authors,” “supposed authors,” and “unknown authors.” Instead, he divides his first volume into three sections. The first two are based loosely on a difference between
older English dramatic poets and contemporary, what he calls “Modern,” dramatic poets. The final section is for “Plays Written By Anonymous Authors.” This section lists 211 plays organized alphabetically by title. Where available, Jacob provides the source of the play’s plot material, its publication information, and, sometimes, its date of first performance. Most of the information provided in the listings, save for the source of plot material, would have been readily available on the title pages of the printed play texts or in catalog listings from booksellers.

Jacob’s condensed Langbaine model is picked up again in *The British Theatre* attributed William Rufus Chetwood (Dublin 1750, London 1752). Like Jacob’s earlier volume, *The British Theatre* acknowledges its debt to its predecessors in the preface but also notes the errors “both omissive and commissive” in the efforts of both Langbaine and Jacob (A2). *The British Theatre* promises the accounts of more dramatic poets and plays and takes more interest in the stage by prefixing a history of the English stage to the volume. The organization of the catalog follows from this historical interest and the authors and plays are organized chronologically. Thus, the volume begins with authors from the 16th century in the “Dramatic Authors in the 15th [sic] Century” section (1) and anonymous plays are grouped behind them in “Plays Wrote by Anonymous Authors in the 15th [sic] Century” (21).

*The British Theatre* has three different sections for anonymous plays from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. It lists 69 anonymous sixteenth-century plays, 122 anonymous plays from the Restoration to the end of the seventeenth century, and 77 anonymous eighteenth-century plays. Like Langbaine, *The British Theatre* also includes designation of genre, if available, for each play listed. The table below offers a
breakdown of anonymous and attributed eighteenth-century plays by genre listed in *The British Theatre*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of Anonymous 18th-c Pieces listed in <em>The British Theatre</em></th>
<th>Number of 18th-c Pieces attributed to authors in <em>The British Theatre</em></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Anonymous Pieces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farce</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballad Opera</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Anonymous and attributed eighteenth-century drama by genre.

This table suggests the publishing and cataloging strategies underlying *The British Theatre* and works like it. The major published genres of drama all figure into the listing of anonymous plays, but those genres that tended to go unpublished – pantomime, burlesque, and entertainments – are all absent despite, as we will see, being predominantly anonymous. *The British Theatre* purports to be both a history of the English stage and a catalog of the lives and plays of the dramatic poets, but it is a selective history and catalog that draws on printed works in order to reconstruct its understanding of theater history and anonymous authorship.
Arriving near the end of the period, *The Playhouse Pocket Companion* (1779) offers yet another variant on the Langbaine cataloging method. It promises on its title page “a Method entirely new, Whereby the AUTHOR of any DRAMATIC PERFORMANCE, and the TIME of its APPEARANCE, may be readily discovered on Inspection.” Upon inspection, *The Playhouse Pocket Companion* does not offer an entirely new method. Rather, it organizes itself by author’s surname and lists that author’s plays and date. It differs from the chronological approach offered by *The British Theatre*, but it looks remarkably similar to Langbaine’s *A New Catalogue* published nearly a century earlier. And, like the catalogs of Langbaine and his successors, *The Pocket Companion* includes a “Catalogue of Anonymous Pieces.” The anonymous pieces are organized alphabetically by title, regardless of chronology, with genre, where available, noted. *A Playhouse Pocket Companion* is heavily indebted to *The British Theatre* for its lists to 1750. It appears that many of the listings of eighteenth-century anonymous pieces were borrowed entirely from *The British Theatre* and carried over any errors or variants in the earlier catalog.

*The Playhouse Pocket Companion*, however, adds its own content throughout the volume. Like its predecessors, it lists published drama almost exclusively, likely drawing from booksellers’ catalogs, and specifies those plays that were printed but never acted. In total, *The Playhouse Pocket Companion* lists 47 anonymous sixteenth-century plays, 203 anonymous seventeenth-century plays, and 148 anonymous eighteenth-century plays. As with *The British Theatre*, I have divided the anonymous and attributed eighteenth-century pieces listed by genre.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of Anonymous 18th-c Pieces listed in <em>The Playhouse Pocket Companion</em></th>
<th>Number of 18th-c Pieces attributed to authors listed in <em>The Playhouse Pocket Companion</em></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Anonymous Pieces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farce</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballad Opera</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Anonymous and attributed eighteenth-century pieces listed by genre in *The Playhouse Pocket Companion*.

The late-century *Playhouse Pocket Companion* nearly doubles the listings of anonymous eighteenth-century pieces from the 77 listed in mid-century *The British Theatre*. Like its predecessor, however, the relative number of anonymous plays divided by genre remains similar. Anonymous farces vastly outnumber anonymous tragedies and comedies. We can also see the changing tastes in preferred genre over time by comparing *The British Theatre* to *The Playhouse Pocket Companion*. Listings of anonymous operas more than triple from the earlier to the later catalog, coinciding with an increased demand encouraged by the Hanoverians’ taste for, and patronage of, opera. Finally, as in *The British Theatre*, and those that came before it, the genres represented in the list of anonymous pieces are those genres that are printed. Despite the additions *The Playhouse*
*Pocket Companion* makes, along with its claim to a new method, it still asserts that the way to know the theater is through its printed texts.

Claims about the importance of the Langbaine’s cataloging practices, which emphasized print as the primary means of making authorship and anonymity visible to both catalogers and the public, are incomplete without some evidence of how readers used these catalogs, if at all. Scholars have noted the widespread practice throughout the Restoration and eighteenth century of readers attributing authorship on title pages and correcting or supplying authors’ names to catalog listings. These catalogs both supplied attributions to curious readers and were themselves subject to attribution and correction. Much rarer, however, was the reader or bookseller who attributed anonymity to a text.

There is, however, the copy of *Love and Revenge; Or, The Vintner Outwitted* held by the British Library (Image 1). On its title page, below the appellation of its stage performance, “As Acted at the New Theatre in the Hay-Market,” where an author’s name would typically be printed, someone has written “Anonymous.” Still further, following the publication information, in the same hand there appears the date “1729.” *Love and Revenge* premiered November 12, 1729 and was performed a total of ten times in the 1729-30 season. Its publication was advertised in *The Daily Post* on that same day (Burling 131). Dating the ballad opera would not have been difficult. Despite the absence of the date on the title page, both *The British Theatre* and *Playhouse Pocket Companion* list the date as 1729. This is likely due to Chetwood’s role in the production of *The

British Theatre and his knowledge as the prompter of the Drury Lane theater. Attributing authorship would, however, prove more difficult. Indeed, many current bibliographies and indexes, including Eighteenth Century Collections Online, wrongly attribute the authorship of Love and Revenge to Christopher Bullock. That this reader sought out and found both a date and an explicit attribution to Anonymous suggests that he or she consulted a catalog to learn of its authorship and publication date. The British Theatre and Pocket Playhouse Companion taught readers to think of this play as “by Anonymous,” in the same way that current catalogs (wrongly) teach us to think of this play as by Bullock. This reader of Love and Revenge followed the practice of attributing authorship in his or her own hand common to the period and perhaps did so after consulting one of the catalogs described in this section.
LOVE and REVENGE;

OR, THE

VINTNER Outwitted:

AN

OPERA;

As Acted at the

NEW THEATRE

IN THE

HAY-MARKET.

Anonymous

LONDON:

Printed for J. Clark under the Royal Exchange in Cornhill; T. Worrall at the Judge's Head near the Temple-Exchange Coffee-House in Fleet-street; J. Jackson near St. James's House; and Sold by J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane. 1729

(Price One Shilling)
In this section I have argued that the visibility and intelligibility of anonymous plays within the theatrical realm is dependent upon an understanding of the difference between performance and printed text, which was first articulated in the work of Langbaine. We have seen that though catalogers may draw from performance history in their cataloging practices, their main point of reference remains the printed text. The emphasis on the printed drama made possible, for the first time, a separation of anonymity from named authorship. As these catalogs and registers taught their readers about named authors and attribution, they also taught them how to think about and name those play texts without authorial attribution. In short, they made remarkable in print what was utterly standard in performance. In what follows, I will demonstrate just how standard anonymous authorship was in the theater of the early eighteenth century and yet how, when anonymity or authorship is acknowledged, it is done by invoking the primary distinction between print and performance.

II. Trends in Performance

Scholars of Restoration drama are by now familiar with the oft-cited March 4, 1698/99 letter to Elizabeth Steward in which John Dryden remarks:

This Day was playd a reviv’d Comedy of Mr. Congreve’s calld the Double Dealer, which was never very takeing; in the play bill was printed, - Written by Mr Congreve… the printing an Authours name, in a Play bill, is a new manner of proceeding, at least in England.123

Authorial attribution on playbills was, to Dryden, an innovation in the late seventeenth century, but it was an innovation that did not catch on. Playbills and newspaper advertisements only rarely attributed authorship. However, plays in the repertory by authors of note may have received an authorial attribution, as in the August 15, 1702 advertisement for *Bartholomew Fair* in the *Daily Courant*:

For the Benefit of Mrs. Lucas
At the THEATRE-ROYAL in Drury-Lane, on Tuesday next, being the 18th Instant, will be Presented that celebrated Comedy call'd, *Bartholomew Fair*; Written by the Famous Ben. Jonson. With several Extraordinary Entertainments, as will be express'd in the Bills. (p. 2 col.2)

More often throughout the period from 1700-1737, the primary period of interest in this chapter, authorial attribution was absent, even in cases where the play was in print with the author attributed. An example is this September 18, 1702 advertisement for *Emperor of the Moon*:

At the desire of the some Persons of Quality,
This present Friday being the 18th of September, at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, will be presented a Comedy, call'd The Emperor of the Moon; wherein Mr. Penkethman acts the part of Harlequin without a Masque, for the Entertainment of an African Prince lately arrived here, being Nephew to the King of Bauday of that Country. With several Entertainments of Singing and Dancing, and the last new Epilogue never spoken but once by Mr. Penkethman. (P.2 Col. 1)

We learn from this advertisement that Mr. Penkethman will act the part of harlequin, notably without a mask, and that he will also deliver an epilogue rarely spoken. We also learn that this is a command performance for “the Entertainment of an African Prince

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124 Robert Hume has shown that "[a]s of 1710 only about one play in twelve was advertised with its author's name attached" (“Before the Bard” 55).
lately arrived here.” Yet the advertisement does not mention “Mrs. A Behn,” author of the play printed in 1687.

If one is to argue that familiarity with the printed text negated the need to attribute authorship to *Emperor of the Moon* in theatrical advertising, how, then, can one explain the attribution of *Bartholomew Fair* to “the Famous Ben. Jonson” which was printed for Robert Allot in 1631 and included in the 1641 *VWorke of Beniamin Ionson*? There seems to be no causal relationship between an absence or presence of authorial attribution in advertisements and attribution in printed play texts. Rather, attribution happened when an author’s status, “the Famous Ben. Jonson,” caused his or her name to be readily known. In other words, advertisements did not attribute authorship because an author was unknown or unprinted; theatrical advertisements attributed authorship because an author was already known through reputation. The typical practice was not to attribute authorship in playbills and advertisements.

Unlike playbills, printed play texts almost always attributed authorship. Curious theatergoers could indeed seek out the printed text to learn who an author was, and they would not have to wait long between first performance and first publication. In the early eighteenth century, the lapse in time between first performance and first publication of a play shrank to merely days, and, in some cases, occurred simultaneously. During the

125 The absence of harlequin’s mask for this performance may be notable here because of the presence of the nephew of the African prince. Traditionally, harlequin’s mask was black and scholars of pantomime have puzzled over its meaning and potential to signify racial difference in eighteenth-century England. The correspondence of the absence of the harlequin mask and the presence of the (presumably black) African royal in the audience suggests of some racialized notion of the harlequin mask, but it is hardly conclusive.

Restoration, the period in time between performance and publication decreased from six months in the 1660s to about a month by the 1690s (Kenny 313). This decrease in the lapse in time between first performance and first publication may suggest a lessening in the distinction between the performed play and the printed play as they could be experienced nearly simultaneously as representations of each other. I would like to suggest, however, that the shortened time between first performance and first publication actually magnified the difference. One could almost immediately place the printed text alongside its performance, if one thought to do so, and understand them as fundamentally different forms. Such a difference would be obvious when the printed text did not represent all that was performed, nor could it capture the various performances that may have occurred in an evening. Printed play texts bore a relationship to performed pieces, but they were not, and could not be, understood as identical to the performances.

As the time between performance and publication decreased, the number of theatrical productions increased. The sheer volume of play and entertainment production contributed to theatrical writing that was less likely to be authored like a conventional play or considered particularly worthy of literary value (various critics label these productions “unliterary” or “semi-literary”). Nicoll has characterized the period as rife with unliterary and anonymous writers who nonetheless seem to have pushed the form in new directions:

In the early eighteenth century we are startled at the number of one-play writers… There are twice as many individual dramatists in the one period as in the other, and more than four times the number of anonymous plays. Undoubtedly many of these unliterary authors aided at once in destroying the brilliance of the comedy of manners, and in introducing new motives and new themes destined to provide the basis for the modern stage. (8)
The increase in anonymous plays that Nicoll notes is astonishing. Yet, it is unclear if he has excluded anonymously performed and printed plays that have been retrospectively attributed to an author, and thus the increase in the number of anonymous plays could be much larger. It is also unclear if his estimate of four times as many anonymous plays refers only to plays or to other theatrical entertainments presented upon the stage. What we can say is this: anonymous plays and entertainments of various sorts were far less likely to appear in print in the period between 1700-1737. Further, theatrical pieces aside from what one would typically consider a play were more likely to be anonymous in the period between 1700 and 1750. Such unprinted anonymous pieces might include a pantomime, a burlesque, or a droll. These pieces could be classed more broadly as entertainments, which have an author yet seem to be unscripted, extemporal physical performances. What I offer in the following pages is a breakdown of the numbers and genres of anonymous plays and entertainments presented upon the stage between 1700-50 based upon Nicoll’s handlist of anonymous plays in *A History of English Drama* volume two (Table 3). Additionally, in the appendix, I offer a breakdown of new anonymous plays and entertainments performed in the period between 1700 and 1737 based on William Burling’s *Checklist of New Plays and Entertainments on the London Stage, 1700-1737*. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>1700-1750 Anonymous</th>
<th>1700-1750 Attributed</th>
<th>Total, 1700-1750</th>
<th>% Anonymous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy (including tragic-comedy)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic Opera</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera (includes comic opera)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farce</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballad Opera</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masque</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantomime</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drolls</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Breakdown of anonymous and attributed pieces by genre based on Nicoll’s Handlist of Plays in Vol. II of *A History of English Drama*.

The preceding table illustrates only very general trends in anonymity in the theater of the eighteenth century. I have maintained Nicoll’s attribution of genre, which is largely drawn from the self-ascription of genre in the titles of the pieces. Nicoll does note when the pieces attributed to authors listed are retrospective attributions. The works included in his handlist by unknown authors were truly without authorial attribution at
the time of its compilation. This means, however, that those pieces that were retroactively attributed do not appear in the listing of anonymous pieces despite their initial anonymous status in publication or performance; rather, they are listed in the section with named authors. Thus, the number of anonymous pieces in a given period could be much larger than depicted in the table. Even with these limitations, the quantification of the number of anonymous pieces classified by genre in the period offers insight into the kinds of dramatic pieces that were more likely to be anonymous. Further, such quantification – when considered alongside similar tables from *The British Theatre* and *Playhouse Pocket Companion* – demonstrates the selective cataloging of works based on a bias for printed texts of plays, rather than actual performances in the eighteenth century.

In the eighteenth-century catalogs of anonymous pieces, only *The Playhouse Pocket Companion* lists any entertainments (five); none list pantomimes, yet these genres are the most prevalent kinds of anonymous pieces throughout the period.

The three genres represented the most in the table of anonymous pieces between 1700 and 1750 are pantomime, entertainments, and burlesque. The vogue for pantomime hit its height in the 1720s and 1730s; this accounts for the larger representation of the genre in the table of anonymous pieces between 1700 and 1750. Pantomime and entertainment were genres that would not be the main presentation of an evening. Rather, a pantomime or an entertainment would be one part of a larger evening of performance that would feature a main piece, typically a play or opera, and then several afterpieces. For instance, a Saturday performance at Drury Lane on August 22, 1702 was advertised in *The Daily Courant* and offered a particularly robust program of play, entertainments, epilogues, and pantomime:
At the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, this present Saturday the 22nd of August, will be performed, A Comedy Call'd the Jovial Crew; Or; The Merry Beggars, and the famous Mr. Clench of Barnet will perform an Organ with 3 Voices, the double Cutrell, the Flute, and the Bells with the Mouth; the Huntsman, the Hounds, and the Pack of Dogs. With vaulting on the Horse. A dance between two French-Men and two French-Women, and other Dances. And Monseur Srene and another Person lately arrived in England, will perform a Night Scene by a Harlequin and a Scaramouch, after the Italian manner. And M. Pinkethman will speak his last new Vacation Epilogue, being the last time of Acting till after Bartholomew-Fair. (P.2 Col.2)

This evening at the theater featured one play, a comedy, alongside six other entertainments. While there is some interest in naming the performers who will appear, there is no attribution of authorship of any of the pieces for this evening. What matters is who and what will be on the stage, rather than who wrote the works presented on that stage. Given the sheer number of performances in an evening, it is unlikely that the audience noted the absence or the presence of an author’s name; rather, it was the embodied presence of the performers that demanded attention.

The genres that were primarily anonymous in the periods between 1700-1750 were those that emphasized the embodied nature of performance over its linguistic component. Some pieces were entertainments such as an unscripted musical performance, like Mr. Clench’s organ with three voices or a dance. Others, like pantomimes, were scripted scenarios with spoken parts, directed action, and song that emphasized the physical movements of the actors over the spoken language of the scenario. John O’Brien, following Susan Stewart’s notion of “crimes of writing,” has suggested the following of pantomime: “to specify the particular order of threat that pantomime posed [to writing], we might rather think of it as a 'crime against writing,' an action that
undercut the theater’s desire to define itself as a space of language.”

O’Brien attends to the physicality of pantomime and its emphasis on movement and spectacle as components of a practice that is less about language as a “transparent medium, but as a physical force” (62). In pantomime, and other pieces that similarly emphasized the bodies and movements of the performers, such as farce and some comedy, the origin of the language was in the performer, not an author.

This state of affairs did not go unnoticed during the period. In one of the most enduring and popular plays of the period, Henry Fielding ruthlessly satirized the preference for pantomime and other “hurlo-thrumbo” entertainments in *The Author’s Farce and the Pleasures of the Town* (1730). *The Author’s Farce* debuted in April of 1730 and was published the next day by J. Roberts (Kenny 314). The 1730 London edition does not name Fielding as its author. Rather, in Scriblerian style, it is attributed on its title page to Scriblerus Secundus. *The Author’s Farce* is a composite play that narrates the struggle of aspiring author Luckless to have his work published at a moment when wit and turn of phrase in writing for the stage are eclipsed by the spectacles of nonsense. Luckless is deep in debt to his landlady, but he loves her daughter. He is surrounded by hack writers whose writing is purchased by the bookseller Bookweight, while his writing is not. In a moment of inspiration, Luckless writes and has performed *The Pleasures of the Town*, a “Puppet-show… to be perform’d by living Figures” which works as a play-within-a-play in *The Author’s Farce*.

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128 Scriblerus Secundus, *The Author’s Farce; and the Pleasures of the Town As Acted at the Theatre in the Hay-Market* (London: J. Roberts, 1730). All references are to this edition.
Early in *The Author's Farce*, Luckless’ friend, Witmore, cautions Luckless on his incurable habit of “scribling” (8). Witmore advises:

S’deth! in an Age of Learning and true Politeness, where a Man might succeed by his Merit, it wou’d be an Encouragement. – But now, when Party and Prejudice carry all before them, when Learning is decried, Wit not understood, when the Theatres are Puppet-Shows, and the Comedians Ballad-Singers. When Fools lead the Town, wou’d a Man think to thrive by his Wit? – If you must write, write Nonsense, write Opera’s, write Entertainments, write *Hurlo-thrumbo’s* – Set up an Oratory and preach Nonsense; and you may meet with encouragement enough. (8)

Witmore sets his remarks within the context of the ascendancy of the Hanoverian regime and Walpole Parliament, which brought with them party strife and, as the Augustans felt, debased culture.

The solution Witmore proposes is to simply give in to the taste of the moment and write nonsense. To write such pieces would be, as Luckless and Witmore both realize, to make a farce out of authorship. The writing of such pieces would indeed be writing, yet it would not be authored in the way that Luckless imagines his rejected play to be. Rather, this writing would contribute to a form of performance where language, meaning, and the author would be displaced by spectacle. As J. Paul Hunter has observed, "For the major Augustans, distrust of rope-dancing, juggling, and dumb show derived from theological concern about the displacement of the Word and the triumph of a world of art where no direct line existed between subject and object, between God and man.”¹²⁹ This was at once a philosophico-religious concern, as Hunter suggests, that the very ways of understanding and representing the world were being turned upside down, and it was also

a practical concern, for Luckless (and Fielding), that one could not earn one’s living as an author if there was no market for (good) writing.

Despite the caution of Witmore, Luckless still attempts to sell his play to the bookseller Bookweight. Bookweight first asks if the play has been accepted for performance. Luckless says that it has not, but inquires what he could be paid for its publication if it were to be performed. Bookweight defers by saying that he could not give a value without reading the play himself because:

Bookweight: a Play which will do for them [the players], will not always do for us [the booksellers]. – There are your Acting Plays, and your Reading Plays.

Witmore: I do not understand that Distinction.

Bookweight: Why, Sir, your Acting Play is entirely supported by the Merit of the Actor, without any Regard to the Author at all: - In this Case, it signifies very little whether there be any Sense in it or no. Now your Reading play is of a different Stamp, and must have Wit and Meaning in it – These latter I call your Substantive, as being able to support themselves. The former are your Adjective, as what require the Buffoonry and Gestures of an Actor to be joined to them, to shew their Signification. (10)

In describing the difference between acting plays and reading plays, Bookweight articulates what seems to be a variation of the “double tradition” described by Hume: performed plays don’t need authors; printed plays do need authors. Bookweight opposes the necessity of performance and performers in acting plays to the necessity of authors in reading plays. Acting plays derive their meaning from performance, from the “Buffoonry and Gestures of an Actor,” while the reading plays have wit and meaning derived from an author.

What is tacit in Bookweight’s distinction between acting and reading plays is the crucial role played by publication. He is, after all, in the business of publishing plays. The necessary prerequisite for a distinction between acting and reading plays is the
fundamental difference between a performed piece and a printed piece. As with
Langbaine and his successors, Bookweight links authorship to the printed text that may
be read and not to the performance, which is seen. Authors are not necessary for those
acting plays which, as Albert Rivero has suggested, refer not only to those plays
deemed not worthy of literary esteem, but also to the broader category of popular
theatrical entertainments like pantomime, farce, and opera. The anonymity of these kinds
of theatrical pieces bears out Bookweight’s claim: acting plays did not need authors; if
they were named at one time, their names were not preserved. Moreover, Bookweight
suggests – and historical evidence demonstrates – that these pieces were by default
anonymous and unlikely to be noted as such.

Failing to find a publisher for his writing, Luckless finally concedes and writes
the kind of piece Witmore suggested. The Pleasures of the Town combines all the
elements of opera, oratory, nonsense, puppet-shows, and Hurlo-thrumbo’s into one nearly
incoherent piece presented as a play within The Author’s Farce. Though The Pleasures of
the Town utilizes the genres it satirizes, it differs in one key way. Rather than removing
the author entirely from the performance, Luckless casts himself as the Master of the
Show. In this role, he acts both as author of the piece, acknowledging it as his own and
explaining his motivation, and acts as a performer within the piece, introducing various
acts.

Anthony Hassall has pointed to Luckless’ role in the Author’s Farce as one play
among many in which Fielding makes use of what he calls “the authorial dimension,”

130 Albert Rivero, “Fielding's Artistic Accommodations in The Author's Farce (1730),”
“the overt presence of the author or supposed author” within a work. Hassal, like C.J. Rawson and Hunter, views this presence as unusual within drama and suggests that it anticipates the much-noted authorial presence or intrusion within Fielding’s novels. However, Rivero suggests, I think quite correctly, that the authorial intrusion within *The Pleasures of the Town* is no intrusion at all; rather, it is a key part of the dramatic form of the play-within-a-play (28). Luckless is, after all, an actor playing an author playing an actor. His presence “as author” is already mediated by the dramatic action of the framing *Author’s Farce*.

Rivero has suggested that Fielding strikes a balance between the “acting play” and the “reading play” in the combination of *The Author’s Farce* with *The Pleasures of the Town* through the distancing mechanisms of double satire and the authorial presence. This balance is key to the work of the play so that it could not be taken as an endorsement of the theatrical and literary culture it satirizes (23). *The Author’s Farce and the Pleasures of the Town*, however, maintains no such distinction. The play combines elements from those genres considered “acting plays,” but in emphasizing the authorship of those elements by Luckless, it collapses the distinction between the anonymous and unliterary entertainments and the authored and literary framing comedy. *The Pleasures of the Town* emphatically demonstrates, against the theatrical norm, that the meaning of the piece resides in the author, not in the action. Thus, the often-confusing conclusion to *The

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Author’s Farce, which Frances Kavenik has called a nightmare dénouement, in which it is unclear whether the revelation of Luckless’ royal lineage is part of the frame play or part of The Pleasures of the Town, deliberately blurs the boundaries between the frames to suggest coherence and authorial intent in the play amid the incoherent pieces that comprise it. With Luckless revealed as heir to the Bantamite throne, he will be an author and king; he serves as a counterpoint to the central action of The Pleasures of the Town, where the goddess Nonsense searches for a mate to share her throne.

While Fielding tried to assert the role of the author in performance, the Licensing Act of 1737, thought largely to be a response to Fielding’s satire of the Walpole ministry in The Historical Register for the Year 1736 and Eurydice Hiss’d, codified in law the operative and structuring distinction between performed and printed drama. The first two clauses of the Licensing Act pertain to the “more effectual punishing [of] such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagabonds,” including those “players of interludes” without “legal settlement” (267). The third clause for the pre-performance licensing of plays is what effectively halted the production and performance of new plays:

III. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that from and after the said twenty-fourth day of June, one thousand, seven hundred and thirty seven, no person shall for hire, gain or reward, act perform, represent, or cause to be acted, performed or represented any new interlude, tragedy, comedy, opera, play, farce, or other entertainment of the stage, or any part of parts therein; or any new act, scene or other part added to any old interlude, tragedy, comedy, opera, play, farce or other entertainment of the stage, or any new prologue or epilogue, unless a true copy thereof be sent to the Lord Chamberlain of the King’s household for the time being, fourteen days at least before the acting, representing or performing thereof, together with an account of the playhouse or other place where the


134 Statutes at large, vol. 5, ed. J. Raithby (London: Eyre & Strahan, 1811), 266-8
same shall be and the time when the same is intended to be first acted, represented or performed, signed by the master or manager, or one of the masters or managers of such playhouse or place, or company of actors therein. (267)

The third clause of the Licensing Act outlines the necessary steps required for a performance to be licensed. A company must send a “true copy” to the Lord Chamberlain for his approval with the proposed place of performance and the signature of the manager. Nowhere in the Licensing Act is the need for an author mentioned. There is no requirement for an authorial attribution on the script. Rather, because the Act is focused on preventing unlawful performance, it focuses on those pieces of information key to the staging of a piece. The Licensing Act made a clear distinction between performance and print publication. Indeed, many plays that were not licensed for performance went on to be printed.

Scholars are fond of citing authorial liability as an underlying motivation for anonymity, but with the Licensing Act, there was no authorial liability. The author was unimportant. Penalties and prohibitions were lodged against the manager or master of a company. Therefore, the suggestion that the acknowledgement of anonymity in the theatrical realm by the theatergoing public or catalogers of drama was born from the prohibition of the Licensing Act is unfounded. Such interest in anonymity, as I have shown earlier in the chapter, predates the Licensing Act. The contribution of the Licensing Act to the public interest in anonymous drama, if there is one, was to further

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disassociate performance from print publication. Just as the closing of the theaters during the Interregnum popularized the reading of plays and made available a distinction between printed play text and performance that would be so crucial to Langbaine, the Licensing Act, in its sole interest in performance and silence on publication, enabled the publishing of theatrical pieces that could have no predecessor in performance and further separated the realms of the theater and printing.

Nearly two decades after the Licensing Act of 1737 had reduced the production of new theatrical pieces and increased the reliance on pre-1737 repertory plays, dramatic authorship was in a sorry state. *The Case of Authors By Profession or Trade Stated*, published anonymously in 1758\(^{136}\) and published again in 1762 with an attribution to James Ralph, playwright and contributor to Fielding’s *The Champion*, bemoans the status of the profession of writing. Authors, he claims, are not paid their due worth. This is especially egregious on the stage. Nearly thirty years earlier, *The Author’s Farce* had taken aim at the debased stage and championed the downtrodden Luckless; *The Case of Authors* takes aim at what it sees as the dominant forms of writing: writing for booksellers, writing for the stage, and writing for political faction, and it advocates for authorial compensation based on artistic accomplishment.

Ralph echoes those complaints about writing for the stage voiced before the Licensing Act, but they take on new urgency when the Licensing Act reduced the number of patent theaters to two and, in effect, “reserved power in the hand of actor-managers

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\(^{136}\) *The case of authors by profession or trade, stated. With regard to booksellers, the stage, and the public. No matter by whom* (London: printed for R. Griffiths, 1758). All references are to this edition.
like Garrick“¹³⁷ to select and refuse new play scripts at their whim. Of this control, *The Case of Authors* asserts:

> Whereas on the Stage, Exhibition stands in the Place of Composition: The Manager, whether Player or Harlequin, must be the sole Pivot on which the whole Machine is both to move and rest: There is no draw-back on the Profit of the Night in *old* Plays: and any Access of Reputation to a dead author carries no impertinent Claims and invidious Distinctions along with it. (25)

Ralph argues that the author is a mere journeyman supplying a script that may or may not be bought. Central to the entire operation of the theater, instead, is the manager who ensures that “Exhibition stands in the Place of Composition.” Those genres that were in ascendance – pantomime, opera, farce – at the time of *The Author’s Farce* have been, by the time of *The Case of Authors*, established as the dominant modes in theater and accompany “*old* Plays” which need neither a license for performance nor payment to an author.

> Older plays bear another significant advantage over newer offerings: by the fact of a play’s survival in the repertory, the good reputation of the author, if known, is assured. With reputation comes a greater chance of financial security in a production.

Thus, we recall the 1702 advertisement for *Bartholomew Fair*, “Written by the Famous Ben. Jonson.” By taking the unusual step of announcing the authorship of *Bartholomew Fair*, the advertisement traded on the reputation of Jonson and his writing. Ralph is careful to discuss “access” of reputation, which suggests the reputation of dramatists in general, and dead dramatists in particular, is not necessarily accessible to the general public.

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audience. “Access” further suggests that reputation is like a disease. Newer authors could be said to suffer from it, while older authors benefit from it while remaining immune to its ill effects. Authorial reputation, of course, relies upon the name of the author to index the individual and his or her writing. Here, Ralph tacitly acknowledges the way in which authorial anonymity, even of older plays whose authors are “known,” permeates the endeavor of the theater and holds managers and/or performers at its center.

The lack of proper acknowledgement of the author, Ralph claims, is so bad that he notes, “I am ready to make my best Acknowledgements to a Harlequin, who has Continence enough to look upon an Author in the Green-room, of what Consideration soever, without laughing in his Face” (42). In this imagined backstage confrontation between author and harlequin, Ralph places the two competing figures – one representing the literary stage organized around authorship and language and the other representing the unliterary stage organized around performance and embodiment – against each other, and it is clear that the harlequin comes out triumphant. Still later in The Case, Ralph recasts this same confrontation in terms of the mind/body problem:

In short; Tho’ we talk of Soul and Body, we have but one Object; because the Soul is no Object at all – Hence Cooks, Taylors, Jewellers, Pimps, Flatterers, &c. &c. are always in request – Lawyers, Physicians, and Divines but when they are wanted – And Authors, or Dealers in Helps to improve and delight the understanding, never. (46)

Here, authorship is cast on the side of the soul, for its products are immaterial. The body, however, is aligned with material arts and with the production of goods: cooking, tailoring, prostitution, etc. We may also add to that list of materially-based professions acting or performing. As with the earlier imagined exchange between a harlequin and an author, what is privileged is the material, the body, over the immaterial, language.
Where the goods of authorship are made material, however, is in print publication. It turns immaterial language into the material object of the book. Publication may make visible both the attribution of authorship and its absence. The necessary precondition for that visibility is the distinction between a performed piece and a published piece. When “the Merit of the Composer” has been transferred “to the Performer,” the presence or absence of an author’s name is unlikely to be noticed, or, at the very least, it seems that authors in the period perceived that no one noticed (Case 45). Once a dramatic piece can be understood as distinct and removed from the theatrical milieu through print it raises concern and interest in authorial attribution. This “double tradition” of attention to anonymity is not, however, a natural outcome of the division between publication and performance. It needed to be articulated and schematized in the form that writers such as Langbaine put forth. Such cataloging practices taught readers to notice and to think about both the authorship and the anonymity of the published plays they encountered.

We cannot know for certain what theater audiences in the early eighteenth century knew about the authorship or anonymity of the pieces presented before them. From the publication of plays, registers, and catalogs, however, we can begin to gather what may have concerned readers in the period. Overwhelmingly, the plays, operas, pantomimes, and entertainments presented on stage were anonymous. At every level, from legal restriction to advertising practices, named authorship was of little interest to theatrical representation. Likewise, anonymity was of little consequence, for how could a default practice call attention to itself? In order to make these paired concerns visible, we must
view them retrospectively through the printed text – an act that trades the harlequin and his bat for the author’s name on a title page.

Appendix:

Anonymous Plays and Entertainments as Percentage of Total New Plays and Entertainments 1700-1737.

Note: Kewes offers a similar analysis in her appendix to Authorship and Appropriation also based on Burling’s Checklist. Her numbers, however, are lower than mine because she excludes pantomime and Italian opera. Because my interest is in a view of the entirety of theatrical representation during this period, I have chosen not to exclude these genres. As I have suggested earlier, these percentages are based on those plays that have not been retrospectively attributed to an author. If we were to examine just evidence of performance, and not the published pieces, it is likely that these percentages would be much higher. Likewise, if we were to take a selection of pieces, both published and not, that were anonymous during the period before being attributed to an author, these percentages would be higher still.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th># of Anonymous Plays and Entertainments</th>
<th># of Plays and Entertainments Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Anonymous Plays and Entertainments</th>
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Chapter 4: Unremarkable and Remarkable Anonymity: The Novel of the Late Eighteenth Century

In the previous chapters I have shown how readers and audiences may have variously come to notice and acknowledge the anonymity of poems, plays, and novels and how editors and publishers have played a crucial role in this process of calling attention to the anonymity of a given text. In this final chapter, I turn to the late eighteenth-century novel. I take up two virtually unknown anonymous novels, ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him (1773) and The Generous Guardian (1767). Both novels were published by circulating library proprietors - John and Francis Noble (‘Twas Wrong) and T. Vernor and J. Chater (The Generous Guardian) and were meant for consumption by voracious circulating library readers.

As we have seen in my second chapter, the circulating library was characterized by its trade in anonymous novels. In his analysis of the holdings of Clay’s circulating library, Edward Jacobs finds, “circulating-library publishers were 5.7 times more likely to publish works by anonymous authors, 1.8 times more likely to publish works by female authors, and .7 times less likely to publish works by men.” While Jacobs is tentative about the conclusions that may be extrapolated about gender and authorship from Clay’s holdings, he is confident to assert that, “proportionally speaking, circulating-library publishers dominated the production of anonymous fiction.” Similarly, James Raven has found more broadly that the English novel of the mid-to-late eighteenth century was most often characterized by its anonymous authorship. Through his masterful

bibliographic work, Raven demonstrates that “over 80 percent of all new novel titles published between 1750 and 1790 were published anonymously.” What Raven and Jacobs suggest is that 1. the new novel of the late eighteenth century was by default anonymous and 2. circulating libraries “dominated” the production of these anonymous novels. Given this context of publication, ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and The Generous Guardian seem wholly unremarkable in their anonymity. It is precisely this nature of the novels that best qualifies them for my analysis. They are representative novels that may be understood to stand for the new novel, broadly conceived, in the late eighteenth century. They are not works that, like Tom Jones, supercede their material conditions and enter into, as Charles Lamb calls it, “the Eterne.” Rather, they are entirely about their status as medium and their role as mass cultural commodities within the literary marketplace.

Terry Lovell has suggested of the novel-as-commodity that, “[t]he middle class [of the late eighteenth century] supplied novel-readers … rather than novel-purchasers, and this not merely because they were commodities which were for consumption not possession.” Lovell connects the voracious consumption of novels through possession, rather than ownership, with their status as commodity and with the low cultural status of the novel, which would threaten the cultural aspirations of the middle class if found on their bookshelves. Jacobs similarly articulates the relationship between commodity-status and cultural-status when trying to account for the high number of anonymous novels

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published by circulating library proprietors. He argues that the anonymity of the circulating library novel is a result of these publishers being shut out of the novel publishing game through the “consolidation of a publishing dynasty” by the Walpole ministry that sought to financially support publishers who could further circulate Walpole’s ideological message (611-12). Thus, these circulating library publishers, in Jacobs’ account, turned to authors with little or no cultural capital whose names would only detract from the work. What Jacobs misses is that the novel was already a form typified by its anonymity where there was likely very little expectation of attributed authorship.

As William St Clair notes of the movement in the early nineteenth century toward larger payments for manuscripts of novels, “[b]ut if writers of novels were receiving larger financial rewards [in the nineteenth century], they were still more like piece workers than independent ‘authors’, and most novels of the period were still published, as had been a custom in the eighteenth century, without the author even being named.”

“Custom” is key here because it suggests to us the expectations of both publishers and readers that novels would not typically bear the name of their authors. Jacobs’ assumption that named authorship was the norm undermines his startling and suggestive quantitative work that points us to the norms of authorial attribution in the publication of circulating library novels in the late eighteenth century and signals how anonymity typified the form.

This typified anonymity finds its way into both ‘Twas Wrong and The Generous Guardian thematically because they feature anonymous letters as a part of their plot structure. The letters in The Generous Guardian and ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him

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emphasize distance over connection\textsuperscript{143} and rely on the epistemological uncertainty allowed by that distance. It is the unknowability of the origin of the message that serves both its narrative and formal functions. The characters do not know, and cannot know, who the authors of the letters are. Crucially, the characters do not seem interested in the authorship of the letters. Contrary to what may be intuitive, in the receipt of the letter, the medium, quite literally, is taken to be an adequate origin for the message. These novels in particular, and the novel more broadly, I argue, is less the heavily-authored text like \textit{Tom Jones} and more the Hurlo-Thrumbo entertainments so thoroughly mocked in \textit{The Author’s Farce and the Pleasures of the Town}. Like these theatrical performances, wherein neither the authorship nor the anonymity of the piece likely mattered to audiences but the fact of its performance did, interest in many of the novels of the late eighteenth century was largely an interest in their “novelty;” that is, the fact of their being novels.

This fact of being novels among other novels is not simply manifest in the conventionality of plot and subject matter or the norms of anonymity within circulating library fare. Discussions of the books themselves suggest the physical aspects of the circulating library novel as a certain kind of book, with certain kinds of physical characteristics. Consider a moment from Jane Austen’s \textit{Northanger Abbey}, itself a novel keenly aware of the typicality found in the novel of the late eighteenth century. As part of Catherine Morland’s ongoing education by the Tilneys, Catherine wanders above Bath

\textsuperscript{143} Janet Gurkin Altman suggests in her study of the epistolary novel, “Given the letter’s function as a connector between two distant points, as a bridge between sender and receiver, the epistolary author can choose to emphasize either the distance or the bridge” (13). Janet Gurkin Altman, \textit{Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form}, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 1982).
with them taking in the scenery and learning how to view it as one "accustomed to
drawing." 144 The conversation then shifts to politics which produces a subsequent pause
during which Catherine characteristically begins to talk of a new novel, "something very
shocking," which has just come out in London (126). Eleanor Tilney misunderstands
Catherine and thinks that she is still talking about politics. Henry Tilney interjects to clarify:

"My dear Eleanor, the riot is only in your own brain. The confusion there
is scandalous. Miss Morland had been talking of nothing more dreadful
than a new publication which is shortly to come out, in three duodecimo
volumes, two hundred and seventy-six pages in each, with a frontispiece
to the first, of two tombstones and a lantern – do you understand? …"  (127)

Henry Tilney’s description serves to reorient Eleanor to the imaginative world of the
gothic novel, of which Catherine speaks, rather than the actual horrors of riots in London,
but he does so by attending not to the general features of gothic narrative, but to the
physical description of the books themselves, as if he were a bibliographer. Henry speaks
not of a particular novel, despite the apparent precision of his description; rather, he
speaks of a certain kind of novel, notably a circulating library novel, whose content may
be known, or at least suggested, by the physical description of the book. This interaction
between genre and physical form points to the novel, not solely as a genre or form, but
also as a medium. It is an “intervening substance” that both conveys the text and
constitutes the text (OED). This medial nature of the novel, then, alerts us to the ways in
which authorship generally, and named authorship in particular, was not central, and
perhaps not even peripheral, to the novel of the late eighteenth century. That is, the means

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of identifying or categorizing a novel “as a novel” may have little to do with the presence or absence of a named author as originator of the content of the novel. Rather, its “novelty” may arise from the interplay between the typical generic features and the typical physical form of the book to form a coherent medial form recognizable to Tilney, and many eighteenth-century critics, as the novel.

Taken in this way, anonymity seems to function differently in the novel of the later eighteenth century than it may have in the earlier part of the period. The claim to historicity by the novel of the early eighteenth century is intimately tied to its anonymity or, to a lesser extent, its pseudonymity by disavowing the particularities that would be signaled by a named author in favor of the purported documentary nature of the form. Indeed, nearly every canonical piece of imaginative eighteenth-century literature was, at least in its initial publication, published either without an author’s name or with a pseudonym. Famously, *Gulliver’s Travels* appeared under a pseudonym, though it was known at least in literary circles to be written by Jonathan Swift, and *Tristram Shandy*, too, was offered to the public with no indication that Laurence Sterne was its author.

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145 McKeon argues that part of claiming the historicity of one’s narrative is disowning one’s hand in its creation. Anonymity, then, may be one such strategy of an author’s disowning his or her text (*Origins the English Novel* 120-123).

146 Part of the fiction of *Gulliver’s Travels* is the prefatory note by Lemuel Gulliver’s cousin, Richard Sympson, in which he describes how the text came into his hands and how he communicated it to the publisher. John Mullan offers a compelling narration of the lengths to which Swift went to disguise his authorship and the literary circle who were in on the secret in *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature*. (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 9-14.

147 Pat Rogers tells us of *Tristram Shandy*, “the author's supposed anonymity survived until his signature appeared at the end of the dedication incorporated into volume five (1762), three years after the first installment came out.” Pat Rogers, “Nameless Names: Pope, Curll, and the Uses of Anonymity,” *New Literary History* 33.2 (2002): 234. Of course, Sterne’s hand in *Tristram Shandy* was not a secret, as the communication
Even *Pamela* in its early editions appeared as an edited collection of “a Series of Familiar Letters From A Beautiful Damsel To her Parents.”¹⁴⁸ Robert Griffin has further suggested the uncertainty faced by eighteenth-century readers confronted with an anonymous text may be part of the construction of novelistic fiction whereby the reader must decide if the text is a true account or a work of fiction.¹⁴⁹

By the late eighteenth century, this claim to historicity or documentary truth is, for the most part, abandoned; as such, anonymity (and to a lesser extent pseudonymity) ceases to contribute to the notion of the novel as a possible work of truth. The proposition by Griffin, then, that an eighteenth-century reader of an anonymous novelistic text may have to decide whether a work was truth or fiction may not entirely hold in every instance. In the case of these anonymous circulating library novels, their novelty within the print market served to disavow any claim to truthfulness that their anonymity might suggest. That is, the possibility of historical or documentary truth was evacuated from these novels in favor of their accepted (and expected) fictionality. Anonymity, in turn, undergoes a transformation within the novel whereby it is no longer anonymous and impersonal because of its purported relationship to historical or documentary fact, but it is anonymous and impersonal because of its relationship to the print marketplace. In the process of producing the novel as an interchangeable and exchangeable commodity, part of what drops out, or, more precisely, was never present, is the labor and origin of the text which is made manifest in the name of the author. The possession of copyright by

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publishers, rather than authors, is one instance of the way in which this is codified in the practices of ownership within the culture. As St Clair suggests of the Romantic period:

… the main driving force towards the anonymisation of fiction was probably the ongoing attempt by the publishers and circulating libraries to impose greater similarity, regularity, and predictability, on the nature and habit of novel-reading, in other words to turn novels into uniform and mutually substitutable commodities, and the renting and reading of them into a regular habit. (175)

What I question here is St Clair’s use of the term “anonymisation” because it presumes, like Jacobs, that there is some norm of signed authorship against which these practices turn away. Fiction does not become more anonymous over the course of the period; rather, the primary function of anonymity within the literature may shift from a being part of its claim to truth to part of its role within the larger market. The unremarkable anonymity of the anonymous letters in ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and The Generous Guardian, then, is symptomatic of the very situation of the anonymous novel within the market, where the origin in the labor of the writer or author is not simply absent, its absence is not even noted.

Against these two unremarkably anonymous novels, I offer a reading of a third anonymous circulating library novel – Evelina, or A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World (1778). Evelina is an outlier in this narrative. Though published anonymously, the prefatory materials attend, almost obsessively, to the novel’s anonymity. Further, the biography of Frances Burney widely attests to the lengths to which she went to conceal her authorship and the concomitant concern with being revealed the novel’s author. Evelina, unlike ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and The Generous Guardian, has indeed passed into “the Eterne” despite similar humble origins. It is this obsessive attention to the anonymity of the novel and naming within the novel, I argue, that may begin to
account for the difference in reception and longevity. In short, the effect of calling attention to the anonymity of *Evelina*, rather than doom it to the life of an ephemeral mass-commodity entertainment, served instead to begin the process of elevating it above the standard (tacitly) anonymous fare of the circulating library, despite Burney’s claims otherwise, and into the realm of the literary. *Evelina* introduces a third term to this narrative about anonymity and the novel, it is not a claim to historicity, though it is vestigial in the pose of the author “as Editor” in the preface, nor is it a claim to the impersonality of the commodity within the market, though that too is present in her prefatory address to the critics. Instead, *Evelina* calls attention to its anonymity as a means of investing the novel with the question of origin, which pervades both the prefatory materials and the narrative, and positioning it within a literary history represented by “such names as Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett…”  

I begin the chapter with a discussion of ‘*Twas Wrong to Marry Him* and *The Generous Guardian* and their use of the figure of the anonymous letter within the narratives to demonstrate the rather strange, if we are to assume anonymity always commands attention, manner in which anonymity is referred to explicitly and yet never puzzled over or questioned entirely. I then turn to *Evelina* which, despite its similarities to the other novels in terms of circumstances of publication, offers a radically different understanding of anonymity as that which must be attended to and wondered at; that is, *Evelina* takes anonymity to function in a literary work as we, the post-Romantic reader,  

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would imagine it to function, as a puzzle to be solved, rather than a characteristically tacit feature of the novel.

I. Unremarkable Anonymity: ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him; or, The History of Lady Dursley (1773) and The Generous Guardian: Or, The History of Horatio Saville, Esq; and Miss Louisa C**** (1768)

‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him (Image 1) was not met with critical praise upon its publication in 1773. I will quote three contemporary reviews in their entirety to capture a bit of the sentiment. From the Monthly Review, the novel received this rather clever review:

‘Twas Wrong to write it, would have been a title as suitable to the merits of this Novel, as that which it bears is to the moral of the story. The work contains many things which will disgust the sensible and delicate mind, and yet it will afford very little to interest or entertain those Readers who are less difficult to please.¹⁵¹

By The Town and Country Magazine, it was regarded as, “[a]nother cargo of connubial sentiments; being a dissuasive against a lady's giving her hand in marriage to a lover, who has attempted to debauch her.”¹⁵² And The London Magazine offered the briefest, but perhaps most cutting, review: “[t]hese volumes exhibit to us incidents without probability, beings without character, and sentiment without sense.”¹⁵³

These reviews represent three differing perspectives on the novel, each of which serve, still, to damn it. In the first, The Monthly Review attempts to engage with the novel as possibly a morally instructive narrative and finds it wanting. The Town and Country Magazine seeks no morally redeeming value in the novel; the review instead regards the

novel in its utter typicality within the print marketplace. It is, “[a]nother cargo” indistinct from other novels of its type, and which may be summed up by a brief gloss of its major plot points. *The London Magazine*, whose exchange with the Noble brothers was considered in chapter two, reads the novel as utterly vapid and failing to meet any of the criteria of a (good) novel on the level of plot, character, or affective realism. ‘Twas *Wrong to Marry Him*, according to these reviews, was a failure.
'Twas Wrong to Marry Him;

or, the

History of

Lady Dursley.

Vol. I.

London:

Printed for F. and J. Noble, at their respective
Circulating Libraries, near Middle Row, Holborn;
and Saint Martin's Court, near Leicester Square.

MDCCCLXXIII.
That the novel would be universally panned, I argue, was not unexpected; rather this reception was wholly anticipated by the Nobles who bound in their *Appeal to the Public (by F. and J. Noble, Booksellers) From the Aspersions Cast on them By the Anonymous Editor of the London Magazine* into the second volume of ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him. By doing so, Francis and John Noble built in (or bound in) an immediate response to any negative review the novel may receive, while also offering a model of response to critics for the reader whose opinion of the novel may differ from those of any of the reviews.

The inclusion of their *Appeal to the Public* at the end of ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him further demonstrates a keen awareness by the Nobles of the status of their novels. These novels were popularly understood not as literary productions among other literary productions; they were, to borrow a phrase from *The Town and Country Magazine* review, “[a]nother cargo” among other circulating library novels. Far from originary works of literary merit, these reviews argue that they were commodities, meant for consumption and eventual disposal once they were out of fashion or their condition too physically degraded to remain in circulation. The presence of the Noble/London Magazine exchange serves to identify ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him as a certain kind of novel (a circulating library novel) with a limited reading public and limited literary aspirations.

It is within this context that the anonymous ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him appeared. It was an anonymous novel among many anonymous novels, and its anonymity, as we have seen in these reviews, was not even worth mentioning; it was simply typical of this kind of novel. This typicality, this unremarkability, in the anonymity of the novel carries
over into the novel’s use of the (explicitly) anonymous letter as a plot device. We would expect an anonymous letter to give pause to its recipient; we would expect the letter without its writer’s name to raise the question “who wrote this?” The anonymous letter in ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him raises no such question.

Unlike the eighteenth-century reviews, I will spend some time summarizing the narrative because, despite its seeming simplicity, the novel draws together many plots and many characters in its exploration of the marriage plot gone awry. While I have emphasized the status of ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him as a “mere commodity” or “entertainment,” I do not understand these terms to operate in opposition to literary value or quality in my own critical assessment of the novel. ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him follows on the premises of many of the sentimental novels of the period. It can be characterized by an initially disorienting relationship to setting and place wherein the novel jumps from physical location to physical location with only minimal narration to orient the reader. What are emphasized, instead, are the relationships between characters and their ongoing rearrangement over the course of the two volumes of the novel.

‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him154 details the poor choice of a husband and its consequences for its main character, Charlotte Selby. Selby is a young woman who has just come to London having inherited a fortune of fifteen thousand pounds who is characterized by “a virtuous but also of a tender disposition” (I.14). She and her best friend, Olivia Thornton, make their initial appearance in society at Marybone. There, the pair makes the acquaintance of the rakish Sir James Dursley, an attractive Baronet. Selby

154 ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him; or The History of Lady Dursley, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: F. and J. Noble, 1773). All references are to the first and second volumes of this edition.
is initially very taken by Dursley; Dursley is very taken by her person (and fortune) and after an initial interview in which Selby is virtuous, yet passive, he is:

Encouraged by her passive behaviour, he very naturally fancied that he might proceed to greater freedoms, whenever he discovered a proper opening for them. - The woman who does not repel the first attack, certainly gives encouragement to her lover to renew it; and a second attempt will still be more dangerous. (I.15)

This moment is one among many in the first volume where we see Dursley as a “pretender to merit” who will seek to seduce Miss Selby but will not consent to marry her (II.219).

The primary barrier to the seduction of Selby is Olivia Thornton. Thornton serves as a consistent interlocutor and moral model for Selby. Virtuous, though poor (and made more so by the death of her father), Thornton’s presence ensures that Selby will not choose poorly. The novel then follows the two women as they move from city to country and back again as Selby tries to get over her attachment to Dursley. As I have suggested, however, place seems to make very little difference to the narrative as each shift in setting merely allows for the reorganization of the characters. Selby and Thornton attract two new suitors along the way: Burleigh, the ever-reforming friend of Dursley, and Fawley, the model character of male morality in the novel.

Burleigh begins to take note of Thornton and, despite her initial bemusement, she returns his attention. Thornton is, however, of no fortune and Burleigh is only of a dissipated estate. Burleigh still proposes to her, but she does not consent out of a concern for Burleigh’s financial well-being. Following parallel narrative tracks, both Thornton and Burleigh wed older, wealthier spouses. Thornton marries the kindly Mr. Fielding, and Burleigh marries the young widow, Mrs. Murphy.
With Thornton married off to Mr. Fielding, Selby is left without an adviser and confidante. Into this void steps Fawley who wishes to wed Selby, but settles on being her intimate friend and trusted adviser. Even with the presence of Fawley, Selby still feels the need for a trusted female friend because “Men always encroach” (I.153). To fill this need, Laetitia Monkley, the young daughter of a friend, comes to live with Selby. Rather than solve Selby’s problems, Laetitia only creates more problems. She is immediately attracted to the wealthy Fawley and attempts to drive a wedge between Fawley and Charlotte. Laetitia does so by suggesting to Fawley how miserable Charlotte is without Dursley.

Laetitia thus precipitates the ill-fated marriage between Selby and Dursley by facilitating his reintroduction into Selby’s life. Spurred on by Laetitia, Fawley, out of sheer concern for Charlotte, tries to convince her to reconsider Dursley, assuming she can get him on her terms; that is, marriage. Charlotte thus “discovers that Mr. Fawley did not look upon her re-admission of Sir James as an indiscretion”(I.176). Here, we have a failure in the externalized conscience, which was first embodied by Olivia Thornton and then Fawley. Fawley’s judgment is trusted completely and by authorizing (or appearing to authorize) Charlotte’s choice, she is free to choose Dursley (I.178).

Charlotte weds Dursley and the regret expressed by the title of the novel, ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, is realized in the second volume of the novel. Laetitia remains in the newly-formed Dursley household and little by little is seduced by Sir James until she becomes his mistress. The affair continues on until it is quite obvious to Charlotte who attempts, with no success, to have Laetitia sent back to her mother. One night, the trio
goes to Ranelagh where Laetitia meets a new potential suitor: the West Indian, Mr. Norton.

Similar to Dursley, Norton wishes to seduce Laetitia without marrying her; however, he is unsuccessful and begins to court her. Dursley is incensed by the presence of a new rival for his mistress and, after Norton calls for Laetitia at the Dursley residence, he “take[s] another method, an infallible method – to make his rival decamp, and yet preserve the Lady [Laetitia] for his own use” (II.143). This “infallible method” is a letter:

Sitting down immediately, he wrote an anonymous letter to Mr. Norton. In that letter he told him that Laetitia had been for some time his mistress; that he was not yet tired of her; but that he might have her as often as he pleased, when he was weary of his connection with her. This letter he dispatched by a porter to his rival the next day. (II.143)

This passage is explicit that the letter Dursley writes is without his name – it is anonymous. Dursley sabotages the potential marriage between Laetitia and Norton and does it without exposing himself or his name.

One might expect the arrival of such an anonymous letter to provoke some curiosity or displeasure on the part of Norton. Yet, it does not. Instead:

Norton was not in the least displeased with the contents, as they prevented him from giving up his liberty to a woman who was, he now believed, unworthy of an alliance with him. – “What a fortunate piece of paper is this,” said he, running over it again: “had it not arrived so seasonably, I should have most certainly have married her.” (II.144)

What is striking in this passage is Norton’s reference to the letter as “a fortunate piece of paper.” There is no attention at all to its anonymity, nor to its potential writer; instead, the letter is referred to in a metonymic fashion as “a fortunate piece of paper.” This metonym, I argue, points us to Norton’s attention to the medium as standing in for, or
sufficient enough, to stand in for the author or writer of the letter such that the question of anonymity or authorship is not even posed.

The notion of the letter as a depersonalized and anonymous medium runs counter to much of the scholarship of the letter and epistolarity in the period. Habermas writes, for example:

It is no accident that the eighteenth century became the century of the letter: through letter writing the individual unfolded himself in his subjectivity. In the initial stages of modern postal service—chiefly as a carrier of news reports—the letter soon came to serve scholarly communication and familial courtesy… In the age of sentimentality letters were containers for the “outpourings of the heart” more than for “cold reports” which, if they get mentioned at all, required an excuse.

The anonymous letter from Dursley to Norton clearly falls closer to the category of “cold reports” than “outpourings of the heart” and that may begin to account for lack of interest in the authorial status of the letter. Yet, even in the case of the letter reporting impersonal news, which Dursley’s letter is not, the letter may be understood as a communication between two (or more) individuals where some trace of “the individual” is unfolded.

Norton’s remark that the letter is “a fortunate piece of paper” effaces the possibility of a relationship between the letter and an individual outside of, or originating, the letter, whose name may or may not be present on it.

The anonymous letter is a crucial plot point in ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him as it sets in motion a series of events that leads to the deaths of both Dursley and Laetitia and happy resolutions for Charlotte and Olivia. With the possibility of marriage to Norton out

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of the question, Laetitia turns to Dursley and asks him to keep her for five hundred pounds a year. Dursley, though interested in keeping her his mistress, is unwilling to have her at that price. Laetitia then turns to Lord Bostock as a potential keeper. As before, Dursley is intensely jealous of this new rival and conspires to abduct Laetitia from a masquerade ball where she is to meet Bostock. He does so by wearing an identical costume to the one worn by Bostock. Though Dursley succeeds in abducting Laetitia, he is fatally wounded in the ensuing confrontation with Bostock, who flees to Dover. Following Dursley’s death, Laetitia is (finally) sent home to her mother where she dies six weeks later after a miscarriage. Charlotte, freed from her horrid husband, happily marries Fawley, after the customary year of mourning. Olivia, whose kindly, but elderly husband has also died, marries the much longed-for Burleigh. The pair, happily married, is thus left in a happy state in this expedient sentimental conclusion.

Though my brief summary of the plot of ‘Twas Wrong to Marry may suggest its lack of literary merit or its lack of interesting content to the scholar, I do not mean to suggest either. My choice of this novel, like my choice of The Generous Guardian is somewhat arbitrary. They are both anonymous novels, published by circulating library proprietors, which feature anonymous letters in their plots. The arbitrariness of this choice underlines one of my arguments in the chapter – that there is an utter typicality of the novels published by the circulating library proprietors that serves to render them as commodities more than “works” – thus, one could likely choose any pairing of anonymous novels and yield similar readings about their engagement, or lack thereof, with their own anonymity. This, of course, does not mean the individual novels are not deserving of critical attention, quite the opposite. If it is the case that there is a typicality
of the novel at the level of form or content exhibited by these novels, which I believe there is, an enquiry into what that typicality is and how it may function within the history of the rise of the English novel in the eighteenth century would be invaluable. That, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter, whose focus is the anonymity of, and within, the novel of the late eighteenth century.

I turn now to *The Generous Guardian* published in 1767 for T. Vernor and J. Chater “at their Circulating Library, on Ludgate Hill.” Like ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, it identifies no author on its title page, and it remains anonymous to this day. *The Generous Guardian* also bears another significant similarity to ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him: the fact of its origins in, and availability at, the circulating library is made explicit on the title page (Image 2). As I have suggested throughout this chapter, the importance of the novel within the context of the circulating library cannot be underestimated. This context works to characterize the mode of being of the novel more than an author’s name ever could.

Though published by lesser-known circulating proprietors (the Nobles on the other hand were one of the largest library proprietors and novel publishers in the period), *The Generous Guardian* was still reviewed in both *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review*. Neither review was positive.

From *The Monthly Review*:¹⁵⁸

> We have read as far as p. 30. in the first of these volumes, and frankly own we could go no farther through such unnatural and romantic, yet dull and

¹⁵⁷ *The Generous Guardian: Or, The History of Horatio Saville, Esq; and Miss Louisa C*****, vol. 1, 2 vols. ([London]: T. Vernor and J. Chater, 1767). All references are to volumes one and two of this edition.

heavy writing: surely the Author maliciously intended to try whether it were possible to tire the patience of a Reviewer!

From *The Critical Review*:159

This novel is a wretched imitation of Fielding's Tom Jones, but without its originality or humour. Towards the end, the author loses sight of his original, and becomes intolerably bad. He sends one of his heroes to the East, and another, who is supposed to be a very old man, to the West Indies, and brings them back again with as much ease and as little ceremony as if they had moved from the dining-room into the drawing-room.

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THE

GENEROUS GUARDIAN:

OR, THE

HISTORY

OF

HORATIO SAVILLE, Esq;

AND

MISS LOUISA C****

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

LONDON:

Printed for T. VERNOR and J. CHATER, at their
Circulating Library, on Ludgate-Hill.

MDCCCLXVII.

Image 2. Title page to the first volume of The Generous Guardian (1767) ECCO
Like ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, The Generous Guardian was universally disliked by critics. The review from The Monthly Review notes the novel’s romantic tendencies and its dullness, which is so great that the reviewer could not finish it. The review, rather unfairly, dismisses the novel before its ambitions can be fully articulated. The Critical Review gives The Generous Guardian a chance and manages to make it through the first and second volumes. The review very rightly identifies how the novel draws from Tom Jones and, I would argue, Joseph Andrews for its narrative. Where the review suggests “the author loses sight of his original” by sending his characters abroad, there is a tension between the initial claim that originality matters by suggesting that the novel is a “wretched imitation” of Fielding and that by imitating Fielding more closely the author may have avoided some of the unrealistic elements of the narrative.

The novel is very explicit in its debt to Fielding and the manner in which the “historical-romance” plot advances is absolutely modeled on Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. However, what is interesting about the novel is the manner in which The Generous Guardian tries to balance the mode of romantic fiction inherited from Fielding with the mode of didactic fiction inherited from Richardson. The preface begins with the author's clear sense of its place in the world:

Novels are of late become so cheap in the literary world, that little, in general, is to be expected from them; and even such geniuses as are capable of highly finishing them, seldom bestow the time or pains necessary upon them, as deeming neither the fame nor advantage they are likely to gain, sufficient to recompense them for their trouble. (A2)

Like the inclusion of An Appeal to the Public in ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, this opening statement in the preface anticipates the critical reception for the novel and models a means of response for the reader. Here, the text itself is linked with the market
and the quality, or the perceived lack thereof, of the novel as a “cheap” commodity. The preface anticipates a negative critical response but hope that readers will exercise their own judgment. Unlike An Appeal, however, the preface to The Generous Guardian attempts to theorize the work its narrative does and position it within literary history. The preface continues on to suggest how the two principle characters “bear a resemblance to some late celebrated writer [i.e. Fielding] in the novel way.” The author then identifies him or herself, by convention, as “the editor” and promises that the novel offers “the knowledge of mankind and of ourselves” (A3).

At the outset of the narrative, we learn how Horatio, the protagonist of the novel, despite gentlemanly origins has been brought up in relative poverty. His father had been a gentleman of small fortune who had invested poorly; he then borrowed money from an errant Earl who foreclosed on his family estate. This Earl did so entirely out of spite for the kindness and generosity Horatio’s father had once shown a farmer on the Earl’s estate. Adding to the Saville family’s sorrows, Horatio’s mother died from a cold a month after his birth. The now poor, but noble, Saville takes up the education of Horatio himself and, following Lockean principles of education, works to instill virtue and knowledge in his son. Saville, too, unfortunately falls ill and dies. Acasto, “the generous guardian” takes Horatio in as his ward. Acasto also already has a ward, Bransley, who serves as a foil to the honest and virtuous Horatio. While Horatio cannot lie, Bransley from his very introduction, is noted for his ability to dissemble (I.16).

The tensions between Bransley and Horatio are made obvious from the outset, but Bransley is able to artfully conceal his animosity toward his rival. One night, while walking alone in the woods, Horatio spies an “apparition” “arrayed in white, the native
garb of innocence…” (I.29). Upon seeing Horatio, this vision of beauty flees deeper into the woods and Horatio is left alone. We learn that just from this one sighting, Horatio is smitten by this woman who will turn out to be Louisa, the daughter of Acasto.

With the introduction of Louisa, the rivalry heightens between Bransley and Horatio, for now they both have an object to whom they are attracted and for whom they are in competition. Horatio will, unfortunately, lose this competition initially because he is characterized as one “who knew the world as yet by books alone” (I.44). As such, Horatio's ability to read people is very, very limited, and he makes the mistake of trusting Bransley. He is, as Catherine Morland will appear later in the period, a good reader of books, but a very poor reader of people.

Louisa and Horatio get closer to each other when one day he saves her from drowning. As a result, they begin to meet covertly at the house of a tenant farmer. This, however, proves to be a fatal mistake because when the farmer's daughter is found to be pregnant, Horatio is the prime suspect who is named by the daughter under duress. Bransley, too, weighs in to provide false evidence about Horatio's involvement with the farmer's daughter. Horatio is saved from utter disgrace by the untimely death of Sally, the farmer's daughter. Horatio's reputation, however, is deeply sullied by the accusation while Bransley is viewed as the virtuous foil to the debauched Saville. (I.68). Despite the strong prejudice against Horatio on the part of Acasto, he is able to partially redeem himself with Acasto by saving him from murderous thieves one night.

With this partial redemption, Horatio and Louisa are able to continue their (innocent) meetings until Louisa is confined to her room on the advice of her cruel aunts Miss Lovian and Lady Marsham, who forbid her connection to Horatio. Louisa and
Horatio are then only able to exchange messages via Mariamne, her maid. Mariamne is Horatio’s “…only medium of conveyance by which to converse in black and white with Louisa...” (I.111). This moment articulates a doubling of the nature of the medium in the novel. We have both Mariamne as the medium; she is literally the means by which Louisa and Horatio may correspond, and Mariamne as the medium for the medium, the “converse in black and white” which she carries between Horatio and Louisa. This redoubling of the medium will be key in the second volume of novel in which the anonymous letter plot is explored.

Horatio, though still mistrusted by Acasto and forbidden to see Louisa, continues to live with Acasto until the fateful day when he walks in on Bransley and Mrs. Marsham in bed. To avoid being caught, the couple accuses Horatio of attempting to rape Marsham. This results in Horatio being turned out of Acasto's house. Acasto does send him a 20 pound note which, of course in his haste, Horatio forgets. At an inn along the way to London, Horatio re-meets his loyal servant, James, who was dismissed from Acasto’s because of his involvement in facilitating communication between Horatio and Louisa. James decides to accompany Horatio on his journey to London.

Once in London, Horatio falls in with a coffeehouse crew and all the culture dangerous for a young, innocent, man to meet with in London. Among these men is Smythe who promises to help Horatio get a commission with the help of Lord L--- who turns out to be working with the old enemy of Horatio’s father and who plans to ruin Horatio as he ruined his father. While in London we begin to see a decline in Horatio. When he hears nothing from Louisa, he assumes that she has:

...at last submitted, and sacrificed him to Bransley, whom he found to be his rival: the thoughts of her now wore off by degrees, and he grew less
careful of his conduct every day: his expences increased with his gaities, and he was hardly to be known for the same person, as when under the protection of the good Acasto, so much has a few months residence in London, and a change of company, altered him. (I.160)

Horatio, thus, follows something like *The Rake’s Progress* now that he no longer has hopes of Louisa’s affections, he loses both his memory of her and the morals that had been taught him by his father and reinforced by his guardian, Acasto. Fortunately, Horatio is saved from utter dissolution when he re-meets his old friend Captain Belmont in the park one day. Horatio learns that Louisa has fallen ill from her melancholy at his departure and has been removed to a neighboring seat. Belmont, then, narrates his adventures with his beloved Miss Leonora Sydenham, whom he was forbidden from courting, but whom, *alá* Clarissa, he has abducted and taken to London.

Re-awakened to his sensibilities by the news of Louisa’s illness, Horatio returns to his lodgings one day “… where he found a letter left with his servant, written in a female character; the contents of which, on opening it, he found were as follows”:

‘Sir,
I think it my duty, though unknown to you, to inform you of something which nearly concerns your welfare, and has a more especial regard to your connections with a set of people who will ruin you; but it is not safe for me to set down any more here at present; only meet me near Rosamond's Pond tomorrow evening at nine.
I am, Sir,
Your Friend,
And Well-wisher,
M.P.’ (I.204-205)

This mysterious letter, though signed “M.P.” is referred to by the chapter heading as “An anonymous Letter; and its Consequences” (I.204). That this letter is signed with initials but referred to as anonymous is telling. It is not necessarily “wanting a name,” but it is
lacking an identifiable name. Curiously, upon reading the letter, Horatio does not attempt
to decipher the initials “M.P.” to attribute it to a writer. Instead, he:

…read this epistle, and examined it, several times over, but could not
recollect the hand; he was partly suspicious indeed that indeed that some
trick was intended to be put upon him, but resolved however to be at the
place. He passed the night restless with anxious thoughts, and appeared to
himself as one who on a dark evening is verging continually [sic] towards a
precipice. (I.205-206)

Horatio treats the letter as if it was without any signature of its writer and instead focuses
on the hand in which it is written. Though he attends to the letter in far greater detail than
Norton in ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, they both deal with the uncertainty of the letter’s
origin in similar ways; that is, by focusing on its materiality as a means of producing an
origin for it. Norton stops short of attributing the letter; it is sufficient for him to regard it
as a “lucky piece of paper” without any attention to its source in an actual writer. Horatio
is, however, a bit more persistent and tries to identify its writer from the handwriting. The
motivation toward attribution of the letter, here, is drawn not from the desire to know
who the writer is, but to know whether or not this letter is a trick. The figure of the
writer, then, represents not an actual person from whom the letter originates and to whom
Horatio wishes to have some access; rather, the figure of the writer serves as a means of
distinguishing an actual warning from a feigned warning.

The anonymous letter plot is not immediately resolved, nor is it ever entirely
resolved. The narrative instead turns at this supposed cliff-hanger moment to Louisa and
her illness due to her belief that Horatio is dead. We also learn through this section that is
was Bransley who impregnated Sally Stokes and who compelled her to name Horatio the
father. Bransley, still the favorite of Acasto, asks for Louisa's hand in marriage. Louisa
refuses and is sent off to her tyrannical aunt Lovian. At Lovian's, Louisa falls even more
ill and Acasto comes to see her. He is deeply moved by her condition and tells her Horatio is not dead. The first volume ends with no movement regarding the anonymous letter but with things looking up for Louisa’s health with the news that Horatio still lives.

The second volume begins with a chapter on the relationship of the novel to instruction and imitation. Here, the narrative voice is thinking about the relationship between the writer and reader, and the narrator at once tries to justify both the flaws of the characters within *The Generous Guardian* alongside the moments of seeming moralizing “...lest it should be suggested that our story contained no moral at all” (II.5). This seems to be a moment where the historical-romance of Fielding’s prose fiction is trying to be reconciled with the didactic function of Richardson’s prose fiction. The narrator imagines an empowered and discerning reader who can appreciate realistic characters with apparent moral failings without being drawn to imitate them. This chapter is one moment, among many, in the novel in which the narrative voice interpolates contemporary debates about “the new realistic novel” into the novel itself, thereby both participating in the discussion about the contemporary novel and demonstrating its own reflexivity, amid digression, about its status as a novel.

The second chapter of volume two finally brings us back to Horatio and his planned meeting with the writer of the anonymous letter. This moment, it turns out, gets Horatio, and the reader, no closer to the writer of the letter, nor does it seem to matter:

Our hero, obedient to the summons, went to the place of appointment, where, after having waited a long time, he at last perceived a man walking up and down at some distance, of whom he demanded whether he had sent a letter to him or not? He answered No; but looking very attentively on him, “Is not your name Saville, Sir, said he.” – “It is, at your service.” “Then I have this to tell you, that though I sent you neither letter nor

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message, yet I believe I know the person who did: For many reasons, I can say but little to you, only this, Lord L--- is a base man, and seeks your ruin.” “Impossible,” said Horatio; “can he seek my ruin, who is at this very instant using all his interest to serve me; but explain, - ” “I have neither time nor commission so to do, replied the stranger; but I repeat it again, beware of Lord L--- and Smythe. Perhaps if you slight this admonition now, you may hereafter wish you had followed it; but forewarn'd, fore-arm'd, I leave you.” Thus speaking, he walked off hastily, and left Mr. Saville musing on this extraordinary adventure. He could not help thinking he had somewhere seen the man's face who parted from him, and at length recollecting he was a favourite servant of Bransley’s thought he had founded the depth of the riddle, and this it was only a plot to create a quarrel between him and his Lordship, whom he deemed his best friend. (II.11-12)

This exchange is marked by uncertainty on both sides. Horatio asks of the unknown man if he sent the letter. The man responds that he did not but that he “believe[s]” he knows the person who did. It is uncertain if the unknown man, signaled by his “belief” that he knows who wrote the letter, is actually connected at all to the letter. He is not the writer, nor the sender, nor, it seems, even privy to whom that person or persons may be. Nonetheless, the unknown man delivers a message of warning – twice – to Horatio about his involvement with Lord L--- and Smythe before taking his leave.

What is the relationship between the anonymous letter and this unknown man? It is unclear. The anonymous letter invites Horatio to “…meet me near Rosamond's Pond tomorrow evening at nine” (I.205). The “me” of the anonymous letter we can assume is the writer of the anonymous letter with whom Horatio will meet; however, upon arriving at the intended place at the intended time, the writer, the “me” of the letter, is not there. Instead, Horatio meets an unknown man who is neither the writer nor a messenger from the writer. Yet, he still delivers a message of warning as if he were the writer or a messenger from the writer.
Faced with this mysterious and uncertain exchange, Horatio, rather curiously, takes the unknown man to be an adequate substitute for the anonymous letter and writer, despite the man’s avowed ignorance of the letter’s origin. Horatio is able to place the man’s face and recognizes that he was a servant of Bransley’s. Horatio imagines, then, this man to be a medium through which Bransley is transmitting a false message to disrupt the burgeoning relationship between Horatio, Smythe, and Lord L---.

Horatio, “…therefore went home exulting in his own penetration, and smiling to think he had defeated the malice of his enemies without giving himself the trouble a second time to examine the letter, which was written in a female hand” (II.13). In taking the medium for the origin, against the stated evidence, Horatio misattributes the letter. This moment is another, like the discussion of Mariamne as the “…only medium of conveyance by which to converse in black and white with Louisa…” where there is a doubling of the medium (I.111). The unknown man is taken to be a medium for the medium of the letter, but this is a false doubling. Attending to the original medium, the letter, would reveal to Horatio that it was “written in a female hand” and thus could likely not be the work of either Bransley or his male servant. Horatio, of course, only takes the immediate medium (the unknown man) to be adequate for the origin of the message. In this regard, the unknown man is akin to “the lucky piece of paper” of Norton in ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him. Confronted with an anonymous letter, the actual origin cannot, and does not, matter to the recipient when the medium can be taken as adequate.

It must be noted that Horatio seems far more interested in finding some sort of origin or truth to the anonymous letter than Norton. That is, until Horatio is “…exulting in his own penetration” and happy that he has (wrongly) taken the medium for the origin.
The narrative, however, is entirely uninterested in the authorship of the letter and its effect on the trajectory of the plot. After its initial introduction, the plot shifts back to Louisa and her illness. Then, the volume ends. As a circulating library novel, the likelihood that one would read the second volume immediately following the first is very low. Thus, the reader is left neither with a cliffhanger ending about the authorship of the letter at the end of volume one, nor with an immediate resolution of the authorship at the beginning of volume two. Instead, upon return to the letter plot in the second chapter of the second volume, the reader is left with only the dramatic irony that Horatio has misattributed the letter. The narrative, then, drops the letter and its mystery, never to mention it until after the narrative has reached its conclusion. Horatio’s misattribution does not prove to be a fatal mistake; it does not matter at all.

The remainder of novel follows Horatio through a series of misadventures, including him twice being challenged to a duel and setting off for India. The novel then turns back to Louisa. She is healed from her affliction; however, Acasto reports of Horatio’s misadventures while in London - Horatio’s supposed seduction of Belmont's mistress and Lord L---’s wife - as a means of having Louisa consider Bransley for her husband. Louisa still refuses Bransley. Against this plot, Acasto is unexpectedly called to the West Indies on business. Thus, Louisa is left in the same house with the despicable Bransley without her father to protect her. Bransley, of course, works to intrude on her and press her to marry him. He hopes to “bend [her] to [his] will” (II.126). Bransley, then, tries a ploy from Pamela and hides in Louisa's closet and when she comes into the room, he seizes her. Fortunately, Wander happens to be riding near the estate and hears Louisa's cries and keeps her from ravishment. Louisa faints and awakes in a nearby inn
where Wander informs her that he will take her to London with him to stay with Mrs. Goodwill, “a worthy, though distant relation of hers” (II.133).

Horatio returns to England, though not without the loss of his ship, as does Acasto, and they re-meet at an inn. They make haste to return to Acasto's estate, but the carriage is overturned outside a gentleman's house, and who should be staying there but Louisa. All three then make way to Acasto's estate, but Acasto gave the deed over to Bransley before he left for the West Indies in case he should not return, and Bransley has taken total possession of the estate. Acasto, therefore, must sue Bransley for his estate. Fortunately, Bransley one day takes a hard fall from his horse and is near death. On his deathbed Bransley apologizes and reforms. All is not entirely solved, however, as one of Bransley's friends, Allison, wounds Horatio with a pistol. Horatio's “youth and powerful nature,” however, succeeds in helping to heal him and he makes a full recovery. (II.191) Horatio and Louisa wed and Horatio's paternal estate that had fallen to Lord L--- is restored to him by a relative of L---'s who had inherited it upon L---'s death (II.197).

The novel, thus, resolves in a fashion consistent with its romantic or sentimental aims. Horatio and Louisa wed, the wicked Bransley dies, and Horatio’s paternal estate is returned to him. The authorship of the anonymous letter is, however, only revealed as an afterthought to the novel once the narrative is drawn to a close. With nearly every narrative strand wrapped up, the narrator proceeds with an account of what happened to the various characters mentioned throughout the volumes. We finally learn about the anonymous letter that had been set aside:

And here it may not be amiss to notice to the reader, that Miss Denison was the very person who sent the warning letter to Mr. Saville, by a discarded servant of Bransley's, who, having received some ill usage from his master, was become his bitterest enemy. This man, after the decease of
the Lady, confessed the whole affair, as he still lived in Sir George's family. (II.200-201)

Miss Denison is madly in love with Horatio throughout the novel, but because of his attachment to Louisa, he does not return her affection. Denison dies a virtuous, lovelorn maiden. It is she, the novel finally tells us, who wrote the anonymous letter in the first volume. However, by the time her authorship is revealed, it no longer matters. The letter ceases to be a plot point after the second chapter of volume two. Further, it is telling that though this note purports to reveal the authorship of the letter, and it does so, its focus is more on the “discarded servant of Bransley’s” rather than the letter’s writer and her motivation. Here, as with the episode itself, even when we are presented with the real author, it does not seem to matter; rather, it is her medium, the servant, who is once again the emphasis.

Both ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and The Generous Guardian present anonymity, at the levels of both publication and content, as a phenomenon that is entirely unremarkable. At the level of publication, neither novel draws attention to its anonymity. Both novels were anonymous novels among other anonymous novels; their anonymity was unexceptional. At the level of content, each novel treats the anonymity of the letter, which would one expect to demand attention to its anonymity and authorship, with indifference. In ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him, the anonymous letter is reduced to its material bases; in The Generous Guardian, the anonymous letter does raise the attention of its protagonist, Horatio, but it is an attention that is thwarted by delay in the narrative such that the question of its authorship is only answered once it can have no impact on the plot itself. Where publication and content align in these novels, then, is by attending to the medium, be it the letter or the novel itself, rather than anonymity or the, sometimes,
attendant question of authorship. The alignment of publication and content gestures at the place of these novels within the market itself where, as commodities, their origin and use-value are effaced and inscribed into a system of exchange-value. This exchange-value is at once both their value in the monetary system, where they can be rented or bought in exchange for money, and their value in the system of the circulating library, where they can be repeatedly exchanged for other books and are thus rendered interchangeable.

_Evelina_, despite its shared circumstances of publication, defies the typical conventions of the anonymous novel in the circulating library by demanding attention be drawn to its anonymity. This, I argue, is in tension with Burney’s stated desire to remain anonymous. _Evelina’s_ anonymity has been generally taken to be motivated by modesty on the part of its female author and said to be representative of the risk to reputation that a woman writing a novel could incur. However, read within the context of its publication, _Evelina’s_ anonymity seems far less remarkable; it is only the attention that the novel itself draws to its anonymity that renders it remarkable and thus resituates it not as a matter of typicality in the novel’s publication context but as a matter of authorial modesty within the social context.

**II. Remarkable Anonymity: Evelina, or, A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World (1778)**

_Evelina_ is a novel profoundly interested in names and naming. Such interested is noted by the amount of critical attention that has been paid to the role of the anonymity and naming in _Evelina_. Julia Epstein notes, for example, “[n]ames in a Burney novel both bestow and withhold identity; they are absolute signs for the slipperiness of female selfhood and the conflicted play of female dependence and autonomy in a culture that
infantilized its women.” Epstein draws a connection between multiplicity of names Evelina possesses and seeks in the novel with her desire to “subvert social oppression” (111). Evelina’s made up patronym, “Anville,” is, for Epstein, exemplary of the slipperiness of the name and its relationship to female selfhood. Evelina is truly a “Belmont,” and much of the thrust of the novel is her attempt to reclaim her father and his last name. Yet, by claiming the name Belmont, Evelina is also placing herself in a position of dependence upon her biological father. Once Evelina has claimed the Belmont name and her place in that lineage, she “seeks to replace those original blood ties, the instant they are legalized, with ties of her own choice and determination” by marrying Orville and taking his name (113).

Amy Pawl follows a similar line of inquiry and connects the anonymity of Evelina with its interest in Evelina’s quest for the “name she is forbidden to claim”:

The terms in which Burney introduces her heroine indicate one of the author’s central preoccupations: the nature of the naming process itself - what it means to name or be named. Names, as Burney perceives them, are powerful and dangerous things. One reason that names are powerful is that they imply possession.

Names, Pawl argues, carry with them the implication of ownership. For Evelina to take the name Belmont would imply paternal possession, in the same way that her taking of the name Orville late in the novel implies possession by her husband. For Burney, attaching her name to Evelina would imply her possession or ownership of the novel and thus open her up to criticism or scandal. For Pawl, “the issue of naming is closely tied to Burney’s conception of authorship” which is a process of naming characters and by

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attaching one’s own name, owning the text (284). The anonymity of the novel, then, is a means for Burney to “experiment with disowning her creation” and avoiding possible censure (298).

Jennifer Wagner further takes up the relationship between the anonymity of the novel and Evelina’s own play with her name and desire, at times, for social obscurity:

Far from “owning” or acknowledging her authorial identity, Burney does everything possible to obscure that identity: “Without name, without recommendation, and unknown alike to success and disgrace, to whom can I so properly apply for patronage, as to those who publicly profess themselves inspectors of all literary performances?” Like Evelina herself, Burney seeks admission into a society to which she must expose herself, but she is capable of doing so only while “happily wrapped up in a mantle of impenetrable obscurity.”

Wagner conflates social obscurity – Evelina’s status as an unknown within society – with anonymity – the absence of an authorial name – in order to draw a continuity between the publication history of the novel and its content. For Wagner, Evelina’s anonymity, or more precisely her interest in obscurity, is a strategy of resistance through which Evelina is able to shield herself in a veil of privacy within the world of society. So too, the authorial anonymity of the novel “… was a way of protecting one’s reputation – and one’s privacy” (107).

Samuel Choi usefully questions the narrative Epstein, Pawl, Wagner, and others all articulate about anonymity being a “kind of concealment” that reflects Burney’s, stated, concern with reputation (Wagner 102). He instead points to “…the ways in which

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she [Burney] consciously draws attention to her anonymity and her active deferral of authority in the formal features of *Evelina*:

> Each of the book’s abundant introductory apparatuses – the title page, the epigraph, the dedication, the letter ‘To the Authors of the Monthly and Critical Reviews,’ and the preface – seems designed to play with the reader’s expectation of finding an author – each acting like a drumroll, each calling out “Oh author of my being!” But in each case Burney refuses to reveal her name. (259)

Here, Choi imagines anonymity not to be a tool to retain modesty, but as an active game played by Burney to thwart critics and readers alike. Through anonymity, Choi writes, “Burney creates a space for herself, her name, and her work by manipulating the conventions of the literary world from her own position as an unknown and unrecognized outsider” (259). Choi is quite right in noting that *Evelina* repeatedly draws attention to its anonymity in a manner that, as we have seen throughout the chapter, is atypical. It is clear how Choi’s argument builds upon prior feminist scholarship that has sought to understand the relationship between Evelina’s first entrance into society and Burney’s first entrance into literary society and to articulate the means by which both Evelina and Burney assert their agency.

Unsurprisingly, much of the critical tradition surrounding *Evelina* has understood the novel and its author in their singularity; that is, as a case of a female novelist publishing her first novel, about a young woman, anonymously in a world hostile to both women and women authors. Read in this way, the anonymity of *Evelina* seems like an immensely personal choice and the evidence from Burney’s letters and journals support

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these claims about Burney’s modesty. In her journal for June 23rd, 1778, for example, Burney writes upon getting her father’s approval of the novel:

I had written my little Book simply for my amusement; I printed it, by the means first of my Brother, Charles, next of my cousin, Edward Burney, merely for a frolic, to see how a production of my own would figure in that Author like form...  

Here, Burney represents \textit{Evelina} as a private exercise in novel writing “for fun.” This entry alludes also to the lengths to which Burney went to disguise her authorship; she employed her brother, then her cousin, to deliver it to the publisher Thomas Lowndes. Famously, Burney even changed her hand when writing the manuscript so that publishers, who knew her to be the amanuensis for Charles Burney, would not recognize her hand and attribute authorship of the novel to her. When her father, who did not know Burney had written it, learns of her authorship and approves of it, Burney is delighted and relieved.

Though published in the impersonal realm of the literary marketplace, \textit{Evelina} is represented here, and throughout the criticism, as an extension or version of Burney herself, not an impersonal fiction of which she is the author. However, such an approach neglects the context in which \textit{Evelina} was published – the circulating library of Thomas Lowndes – in favor of the biography and characteristic modesty of its author. As we have seen throughout this chapter, anonymity was hardly a rarity within the circulating library. Indeed, it was typical of novels published by and for the circulating libraries. That \textit{Evelina} was anonymous in its 1778 publication was not remarkable; it was to be expected in the same way that the anonymity of ‘\textit{Twas Wrong to Marry Him} and \textit{The Generous}

\footnote{Fanny Burney, \textit{The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney: The Streatham years, part 1, 1778-1779} (Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 32.}
*Guardian* was to be expected. The critical approaches that fold the biography of Burney in with the publication history of *Evelina* understand attributed authorship to be typical of novel publication and *Evelina’s* anonymity to be exceptional. This simply does not reflect the history of the novel in the late eighteenth century in general, or the history of the novel within the circulating library in particular.

What is remarkable about *Evelina’s* anonymity is the lengths to which the novel draws attention to its anonymity. Unlike ‘*Twas Wrong to Marry Him* and *The Generous Guardian*, where the anonymity of the novel is largely a tacit affair which is reflected in the novels’ treatment of anonymous letters, *Evelina’s* prefatory materials repeatedly, and almost obsessively, draw attention, as Choi has suggested, to the absence of its author’s name. Moreover, as much of the recent criticism has suggested, naming is a central concern of the narrative itself. Such attention to anonymity, against the norms of the circulating library novel, seems to be in tension with Burney’s stated claims to limited ambition and modesty. If it is the case that Burney wished the novel to pass without its author’s name, why then draw so much attention to its absence?

This claim for limited ambition and modesty is evident in a December 1, 1778 letter to Catherine Coussmaker in which Burney writes, “Little, indeed, did I imagine, when I parted with Evelina, what Honours were in reserve for her! I thought that her only admirers wd be among school girls, & destined her to no nobler habitation than a Circulating Library” (180-181). Burney, however, did not, in fact, destine *Evelina* “…to no nobler habitation than a Circulating Library.” She sent off the manuscript of the half-completed novel first, not to Lowndes its eventual publisher, but to Robert Dodsley who was an up-market publisher and not a circulating library proprietor, “[b]ut Mr. Dodsley
declined looking at anything anonymous; and the young group… next fixed upon Mr. Lowndes, a bookseller in the city.”\textsuperscript{166} Betty Schellenberg has noted Burney’s “disingenuous… denying [of] ambition…” in her letters and journals and this letter certainly seems to be one of those moments.\textsuperscript{167}

George Justice has written about Burney’s attempted dealing with Dodsley that:

The more prestigious publisher Robert Dodsley had refused to consider the manuscript of the novel for publication because the author refused to reveal her identity: anonymity, especially in relation to the transaction of business prior to publication, was the preserve of the mighty, even the titled.\textsuperscript{168}

Justice, here, thinks through the presumption, on Burney’s part, of anonymity as it is connected with the status of the author; however, what he does not seem to consider is anonymity as it relates to the status of the publisher. For Dodsley to publish, or consider publishing, an anonymous novel, particularly one which, as Justice notes, resembled circulating library fare, would be to lower the status of his own brand of publications (149). Through the transformation in the utility of anonymity in the novel – from enabling the assertion of its historicity to asserting its status as commodity – anonymity may no longer be the province of the modest and titled; nor was it ever exclusively. Rather, anonymity is reinforced as a tacit feature of the novel in its role as a mass-market entertainment. Dodsley would be keenly aware of this fact of the literary marketplace, and so his rejection of \textit{Evelina} need not be entirely about the perceived pretensions of

\textsuperscript{166} Fanny Burney, \textit{Diary and letters of Madame d'Arblay} (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1842), 9.


Burney’s anonymity but instead his own interest in preserving the status of his name and catalog.

_Evelina_ retains its ambitions, evidenced by Burney first offering the manuscript to Dodsley, even when the novel finds a “habitation” in Lowndes’ “Circulating Library,” and I argue that it does so by repeatedly calling attention to its anonymity and thematizing the search for origin as central to the plot of the novel (Burney _Early_ 181). _Evelina’s_ anonymity is not about deferral of authorship, or bashfulness, or modesty, or disownment. However, Frances Burney’s anonymity may well have been. _Evelina’s_ anonymity is a statement of radical possession through the pose of dispossession in a publishing context in which anonymity was something unremarkable, to be ignored or forgotten. As Catherine Gallagher reminds us, “… to publish a novel, especially one for the circulating libraries, in the late 1770s was to embrace all that was most impermanent and insubstantial about the literary marketplace; it was not to court immortality but to solicit a big audience of little people for a short time.”¹⁶⁹ By demanding attention be paid to _Evelina’s_ anonymity, however, the effect of the prefatory materials is to “court immortality” against the typically ephemeral nature of the circulating libraries’ other anonymous novels.

This is not to argue that the biographical person, Frances Burney, did not have very personal reasons for wishing not to attach her name to the novel. Nor is it to deny the difficult position of writing women in the late eighteenth century that may have

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encouraged anonymous authorship.\textsuperscript{170} The persona that is present in the prefatory materials of the novel is, however, not necessarily the same as the biographical person, Burney.\textsuperscript{171} Burney crafts this anonymous persona precisely because it may guard against the mode of criticism that conflates author with person, which the prefatory materials anticipate and which much contemporary (20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st}-century) criticism continues to do.

Such a strategic positioning of an anonymous persona suggests a very sophisticated understanding of the way in which the publishing world worked in the late eighteenth century. Both Gallagher and Margaret Anne Doody have noted that Burney was embedded in, and knowledgeable about, the literary culture of the period. Doody, for example, notes of the dedication “To the Authors of the Monthly and Critical Reviews”:

Frances Burney knew some of these reviewers personally (particularly Samuel Crisp, who wrote for the Critical Review). She knew also of her father's ceaseless efforts to cultivate the reviewers, and to ensure that his own works were reviewed by sympathetic and flattering friends. As she worked as her father’s secretary and copyist, she had good reason to know

\textsuperscript{170} I follow Catherine Gallagher’s notion that women are “representatives of the condition of the author in the eighteenth century” rather than belonging to a separate tradition; as such, we may imagine some particularly gendered motivations for anonymous authorship on the part of the biographical person, but the effect or function of anonymity within the text in the literary marketplace itself may not be all that different for male or female authors (xv).

\textsuperscript{171} Here, I draw from Michael Warner’s discussion of Mr. Spectator from *The Spectator* as a “prosthetic person,” a term which he adopts from Lauren Berlant’s work (see “National Brands/National Body: *Imitation of Life*” in the same volume), to understand the relationship between the anonymous persona created in the prefatory materials to *Evelina* and the biographical figure of Burney, whom I argue have very different (claimed) motivations and ambitions. Of Mr. Spectator Warner writes, “The ambiguous relation between Spectator and Writer, Steele says, liberates him. The Spectator is for Steele a prosthetic person, to borrow a term from Lauren Berlant – prosthetic in the sense that it does not reduce to or express the given body. By making him no longer self-identical, it allows him the negativity of debate-not a pure negativity, not simply reason or criticism, but an identification with a disembodied public subject that he can imagine parallel to his private person.” (237-8) “The Mass Public and The Mass Subject,” in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 234-255.
what kind of secret activity goes into constructing the reception of a book.  

Doody shows here just how much Burney was privy to the various processes and competing interests involved in publishing and promoting one’s work. In going to extraordinary lengths to ensure she could not be identified with *Evelina*, as Doody notes, Burney may have forgone the interpersonal aspects of these processes, but they manifest in the construction of the anonymous authorial persona who seeks in the prefatory materials to differentiate *Evelina* from the other fourteen anonymous novels published in 1778 and the anonymous stock of Lowndes’ catalog by demanding the absence of the author’s name be noticed.

This attention to the novel’s anonymity begins with the dedicatory poem to the first volume “To ____ _____” (51). The poem is dedicated, if we know that Frances Burney is the author of *Evelina*, to Burney’s father Charles Burney. The text presents it as a keyed dedication that foregrounds the absence of the name of its dedicatee. By foregrounding this absence, the poem further implies that the unnamed Burney, by the absence of his name, is the anonymous “author of [the author of *Evelina’s*] being!” (51). Here, we have not only the anonymous author of the poem and the novel in which it appears, but the very possibility of the poem’s and novel’s existence predicated upon another anonymous author – her father.

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173 In 1778, the year of *Evelina’s* publication, fourteen out of the sixteen new novels published that year were anonymous (James Raven, “Historical Introduction,” *The English Novel*, 46).
The doubling of anonymity evident in the opening stanza of the poem continues in its fourth stanza when the poem admits its author’s “Incapacity” to trace the “num’rous virtues” of its subject.

But since my niggard stars that gift refuse,
Concealment is the only boon I claim;
Obscure be still the unsuccessful Muse,
Who cannot raise, but would not sink, your fame. (52)

Operating in this stanza is both the poet’s understanding of her “concealment” of both herself and her subject and her ability to further “obscure” herself. The anonymity of both subject and author is absolutely necessary to the project of this poem because if one were named, the other could easily also be named. The effect of this doubling of anonymity, however, is to focus attention precisely on the doubly missing names. By reflecting on the multiple absences of names in both the title and content, the poem’s use of anonymity, the stated purpose of which in the poem is to “obscure” or “conceal,” ceases to do so and instead poses anonymity like the blanks in the title, “To _______ ______,” as something to have its absent names filled in.

The dedicatory letter “To the Authors of the Monthly and Critical Reviews” likewise, does similar work to call attention to the anonymity of its author. In asking for the patronage of the critics, the author writes, “Without name, without recommendation, and unknown alike to success and disgrace, to whom can I so properly apply for patronage, as to those who publicly profess themselves as Inspectors of all literary performances?” (52). The line “without name” plays with the double notion of obscurity offered in the dedicatory poem whereby its author is without name insofar as she is an unknown to the world of literature (a somewhat dubious claim for Burney) and the literal fact of the dedication and the novel being offered anonymously. As Doody has suggested,
there is a bit of ironic mockery in this dedication as Burney was, in fact, known to many of the critics at the Monthly and Critical Reviews (6). This moment in its ironic doubling demonstrates the emergence of an anonymous authorial persona in the text who is not the same as the biographical person known to the critics as Frances Burney and whose ambitions for the novel Evelina may be very different from those stated in the letters and journals of Burney.

The dedicatory letter seeks to appeal to the critics for their protection of the novel it prefaces. In doing so, it positions the novel among other literary texts through the interpolation of lines from The Merchant of Venice and Pope’s Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (53). This appeal does not locate the novel and its author in the realm of interpersonal exchange with the actual critics of the reviews, in the same way that quoting Shakespeare and Pope does not imply a personal relationship between those authors and Burney. Rather, it positions the novel and its anonymous authorial persona in a relationship with the contemporary literary world, represented by the anonymous critics to whom it appeals, and the English literary tradition, represented by Pope and Shakespeare, neither of whom are named. The signature at the end of the epistle, “*** ****”, further signals, then, not a place for the name of an actual biographical person, because none could conceivably fit there,174 but the place of the unnamed authorial persona, the “editor” as she names herself in the preface, who exists only in her relationship to Evelina and Evelina’s relationship to the broader literary market of the late 1770s.

This epistle is thus marked by its impersonality because it understands, deeply, the broader literary context into which Evelina appears and wishes to stake a claim to its

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174 The first edition in 1778 signs the letter “*** ****”, and it is unclear if the space between the third and fourth asterisk is intended or an artifact of the typesetting.
import and quality despite its origins and resemblance to other anonymous novels bearing the name of their heroines in their titles. The Preface continues this work of differentiation by placing the novel within a paternal literary lineage. It begins by remarking, much like the preface of *The Generous Guardian*, on the “inferior rank” of the “humble Novelist” within the “republic of letters” (54). The figure of the “republic of letters” reiterates the premise of the epistle to the critics that the entrance of the novel into the world is not, like Evelina’s entrance into society, the actuality of its biographical writer stepping forth into the world. Rather, the novel’s entrance is into the virtuality of the “republic” which is shaped and informed by all the material practices of publishing by human actors, but it is not identical to it. Instead, the novel and the novelist – as persona, not biographical individual – enter into a series of relations with the reviews, other novelists, and other novels.

Like the work of the dedication, the preface seeks to manipulate those relations in an attempt to shape the novel’s reception. Having noted the low status of the novel, the preface resituates *Evelina* not among the (perceived) low circulating library novels but among the emergent and respectable prose fiction tradition:

*Yet, while in the annals of those few of our predecessors, to whom this species of writing [i.e. the novel] is indebted from being saved from contempt, and rescued from depravity, we can trace such names as Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, no man need blush at starting from the same post, though many, nay, most men, may sigh at finding themselves distanced.* (54-55)

This tradition is marked by “names,” not the titles of works. This literary tradition of authors named stands in direct contrast to the situation of *Evelina*’s own anonymous publication and novels like it. “*Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett*” are all authors of novels, though the generic appellation is loosely applied in
some cases, whose names are known and have been preserved unlike the bulk of new novels in the later eighteenth century. Thus, to invoke the name of the author within this context is to invoke the entirety of their *oeuvre* of imaginative prose fiction. This is similar to the process we have seen in the re-making of Defoe into a novelist through the practices of attribution in the Noble libraries.

There is, then, a clear difficulty for an anonymous novelist to stake a claim within a tradition represented by named authors. The preface, like the rest of the prefatory materials, takes on this problem by making explicit the anonymity of the novel:

The following letters are presented to the public – for such, by novel writers, novel readers will be called, - with a very singular mixture of timidity and confidence, resulting from the peculiar situation of the editor; who, though trembling for their success from a consciousness of their imperfections, yet fears not being involved in their disgrace, while happily wrapped up in a mantle of impenetrable obscurity. (55)

By once again pointing to the anonymous status of the novel as “impenetrable obscurity” in this passage, the preface envisions the audience for the novel as “the public.” This notion of the public, is, however, immediately qualified as “a public” of novel readers, rather than the entirety of the public sphere, or even the vastness of “the republic of letters” (54). Here, the preface indicates a clear sense of *Evelina’s* place within the larger literary landscape in which it will appear both by locating it within a reading public, who would typically not expect an attributed novel, and within the novelistic genre in which the author is posed as the editor of letters, rather than the author of them.

This passage is further striking in its understanding of *Evelina’s* entrance into the world as marked by “a very singular mixture of timidity and confidence, resulting from the peculiar situation of the editor.” This “very singular mixture of timidity and confidence” speaks to the creation of the anonymous persona, “the editor,” that I have
argued previously creates a gap between the biographical person Burney with her “timidity” and the anonymous narrator with her “confidence” about the novel. “[T]he peculiar situation of the editor” further alerts us to the underlying context from which Burney published the novel. That is, she is publishing as one who is deeply connected to the literary marketplace and yet due, perhaps, to “timidity” elects to “wrap… up in a mantle of impenetrable obscurity” and publish anonymously.

By drawing attention to the Evelina’s anonymity, by making it remarkable, “the editor” is able to position the novel in a lineage with the named authors invoked in the previous paragraph. Evelina understands itself not as a commodity whose authorial labor is made absent through its anonymity, nor as “history” whose anonymity would bolster its truth claim. Rather, in understanding itself as an explicitly anonymous fictional prose narrative and creating an authorial persona apart from its biographical author, Evelina appears like other anonymous circulating library novels but acts, or more precisely reads, like a novel within the emergent prose narrative tradition of Richardson, Fielding, et al.

I wish to conclude my discussion of Evelina by offering a brief reading of a scene from the novel to suggest how the broader analysis of anonymous publication may inform close readings. The entirety of the plot of Evelina’s work to reclaim her father’s name, Belmont, would of course fit well in the argument I have made. Similarly, the plotline involving Willoughby’s forgery of a letter from Lord Orville and the unease it provokes would speak to the difference I have drawn between how ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and The Generous Guardian treat anonymity and attribution and how Evelina treats them. I would, however, like to consider one of the most enigmatic scenes of the
novel – the introduction of the foppishly-dressed monkey by Captain Mirvan in the third volume.175

From Lovel’s introduction, the gruff Captain Mirvan is deeply amused by his affectation and dress. In the final scene of the novel Mirvan plays one of his characteristic, bordering on sadistic, practical jokes by having his servants bring “into the room a monkey! full dressed, and extragantly á-la-mode!” where Lovel, and all the novel’s main characters, are gathered (430). The joke, as Mirvan sees it, is that this monkey could be mistaken for a relation of Lovel, “so like [him], [Mirvan] could have sworn he had been [Lovel’s] twin-brother” (430).

The set-up for the joke is Lovel expressing that he would love to meet someone so like him because, as he states, “I have no notion of what sort of person I am, and I have a prodigious curiosity to know” (430). The monkey, then, is meant to serve as a mirror or foil to show Lovel who he is. For Mirvan, Lovel’s affectation makes him like a monkey who can only “ape” fashion and sentiment and thus has “no notion of what sort of person” he is. The monkey is, however, not a passive reflection of Lovel’s foppery. Lovel vents his frustration at this scene of embarrassment by striking the monkey. In response the monkey, “sprung instantly upon him, and clinging round his neck, fastened his teeth to one of his ears” (432).

The relationship between foppish Lovel and foppish monkey in this scene, I argue, alludes to the situation of Evelina’s anonymous publication in 1778. Lovel, the unreflective fop, represents the contemporary novel whose anonymity is wholly tacit and whose existence is predicated on being ephemeral and á-la-mode. The monkey, then,

175 I am grateful to Josh Gang for his suggestion that I look at this much-neglected moment in the novel.
represents the persona of “the editor” created in the prefatory materials to *Evelina*. Like this persona, the monkey is an objectified actor. That is, the monkey is an object employed by Mirvan for the purposes of the joke, but the monkey is also an actor who exceeds his function of merely mirroring Lovel’s affectation by biting his ear. Though the monkey is used by Mirvan, he is not Mirvan; nor do the actions of the monkey necessary coincide with the motivation for the introduction of the monkey into the room. Indeed, the monkey reacts to Lovel’s blow, rather than consciously deciding to attack him. We may think of this distinction between conscious decision and reaction as a means of piecing out the difference between Burney’s claimed modesty in the letters and journals and the effect of the prefatory materials within the “republic of letters.”

What is startling given my suggestion that we read this scene as an allusion to the situation of publication is how Mirvan and Mrs. Selwyn react to Lovel’s outrage at the wound he has suffered. Mirvan says, “‘it is but a slit of the ear; it only looks as if you had been in the pillory,’” and Selwyn continues, “‘and who knows but it may acquire you the credit of being an anti-ministerial writer?’” (433). The monkey’s initial purpose is to reflect the folly of Lovel; because of the monkey’s bite, Lovel is mockingly re-imagined like “an anti-ministerial writer.” Mirvan and Selwyn’s lines evoke Defoe pilloried for his anonymous *Shortest Way with Dissenters*, among other pamphleteers whose anonymity was not sufficient to keep them from the pillory.

A pamphlet is not a novel, and the anonymity of an “anti-ministerial” pamphlet draws attention to itself in a way that novels typically did not. By allusion, the monkey’s attack serves to draw attention to anonymity in publication in scene that has very little to do with the print marketplace. The monkey serves to reflect Lovel’s folly by making
strange or explicit his mode of being in the world. Taken as figures for the typical late eighteenth-century novel (Lovel) and Evelina’s authorial persona (the monkey), this interaction suggests how Evelina, though it appears like other novels, actually works to differentiate itself from these novels by calling attention to its anonymity and, by extension, the anonymity of those other novels.

My reading departs from the typical homology drawn between Burney and Evelina wherein Evelina’s timid entrance into the world is taken to be similar to, if not the same as, Burney’s timid “entrance” into the world as the author of Evelina. As I have argued, such readings may not be tenable if we begin to question the claims made by Burney in her letters and journals and put them alongside the history and context of Evelina’s publication. Instead, I think the strangeness of the monkey scene in Evelina, as it serves to close out much of the narrative of the novel, offers a better model of representing Burney’s relationship to the novel as worked through in the novel. Evelina is at once utterly typical of its moment and utterly atypical of its moment; it is strange. This strangeness arises from its insistence in making remarkable what was unremarkable in other novels of the period, its anonymity.

Evelina does not allow or imagine the medium of the novel to stand in place of, or draw attention from, the anonymity or authorship of the text. Instead, the text creates a persona who is neither reducible to Frances Burney, nor to the medium of the novel itself. ‘Twas Wrong to Marry Him and The Generous Guardian on the other hand, do not stand out; they understand how the medium works within its context and are content to have their anonymity be a tacit feature of the novels. These novels, thus, do not imagine anonymity represented within the novel itself to be a means of calling attention to the
anonymity of the novel. These texts position themselves as novels among other novels on the shelves and in the catalogs of the circulating libraries that rented them. *Evelina* positions itself, not among the other novels of Lowndes’ catalog, but among the much larger and prestigious literary tradition from which it emerges. It does so, crucially, by demanding that the reader acknowledge the absence of its author’s name. This acknowledgment of anonymity as the absence of the author’s name marks the novel as being in a state of transition from its mass-entertainment origins to its rarified status as literary. In doing so, it begins to answer why we read *Evelina* and not other circulating library novels that appear like *Evelina*. 
Conclusion: The Rise of Anonymous, Literary Valuation, and the Difficulty of Counting Nothing

Throughout this dissertation I have shown how anonymity variously came to be acknowledged, if it was at all, in a range of eighteenth-century texts. That a text was anonymous, that it had no (named) author, I argue was not readily apparent to readers and audiences of the eighteenth century. Unless anonymity is announced, in the form of an attribution to Anonymous as in my first chapter or obsessively attended to in prefatory materials as in my last chapter, anonymity is nowhere in or on a text. It represents the absence of positive knowledge. My dissertation attends to how a positive knowledge of anonymity was produced over the course of the long eighteenth century. That is, how anonymity transformed from a tacit absence to an affirmation or a sign of that absence. In short, I chart the rise of Anonymous (and anonymous) in the literary culture of the eighteenth century.

The rise of anonymity is also its decline. The moment that anonymity is understood to be the affirmation of the absence of an author’s name, it is generally, although not always, either the beginning of a text’s march toward authorial attribution or its consignment to ephemera. In either case, anonymity is made to once again disappear. Anonymity is effaced by authorial attribution; if the original anonymous publication of a text is known at all, it is through footnote or anecdote. Anonymity is similarly obscured when those texts not attributed to named authors are not read or taught. A version of literary history is produced which presents the rise of literature and its study to be characterized by named authors, not anonymous texts.
Reoccurring in my history and analysis has been the relationship of anonymity to literary valuation. The Foucauldian formulation of the relationship between anonymity and literary value has been the dominant mode of understanding this relationship.

At the same time, however, “literary” discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author’s name; every text of poetry or fiction was obliged to state its author and the date, place, and circumstance of its writing. The meaning and value attributed to the text depended on this information. If by accident or design a text was presented anonymously, every effort was made to locate its author. Literary anonymity was of interest only as a puzzle to be solved as, in our day, literary works are totally dominated by the sovereignty of the author. (1482-83)

In Foucault’s narrative, we move from a period in history where anonymity is unproblematic to one where anonymity is a “puzzle to be solved.” For Foucault, literary value and meaning rests with named authors once anonymity has been articulated as a problem, rather than the typical state of a text. What I have argued, however, is that the process of articulating the, heretofore tacit, anonymity of a literary text is to stake a claim for its literary valuation. As with Evelina, by drawing attention to the anonymity of a novel amid a sea of other anonymous novels, the novel was able to differentiate and elevate itself and then, perhaps, pose its anonymity as a problem to be solved. I suggest that this is a transitional period between the stark binary that Foucault draws between the anonymous past and the attributed present.

Foucault, of course, following this moment in “What is an Author?” notes that “[u]ndoubtedly, these remarks are far too categorical” and much of the work of my study has gone into expanding and nuancing such “categorical” narratives (1483). One of the central pieces of my methodology has been the quantitative analysis of patterns of authorial attribution and publication history. These analyses begin to reveal how typical anonymity was in the publications of the period. The sheer typicality of anonymous
publication counters the orthodoxy of the claim that the eighteenth century was the age of named authors. My quantitative analyses, and others’, are, however, hampered by one central problem – the difficulty of finding and counting nothing.

My approach in this dissertation would have been nearly impossible without the explosive growth and acceptance of full text searchable databases of facsimiles of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts. However, searching for the absence of an authorial attribution is hampered by cataloging structures that 1. make it impossible for one to search for “nothing” in the author field and 2. retroactively attribute anonymous texts to named authors. As a result, though we have some sense of the number of anonymous novels and plays in the period thanks to the near-heroic work of scholars like James Raven and Allardyce Nicoll, we have no sense of the absolute number of anonymous texts of all genres and forms published between 1660 and 1790. My study has argued for the typicality of anonymity in many literary forms over the course of the period, and my evidence suggests that this is correct. How this typicality compares across the entirety of text published in Britain in the eighteenth century, we simply cannot say.

New modes of searching and data mining that forgo the categories and searchable fields of databases like Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, which are invariably shaped by expectations of attributed authorship shared by nineteenth-century librarian A.E. Whittaker who was discussed in the introduction, may be able to get the scholar closer to a sense of the sheer number of anonymous publications in the period. I have begun to imagine what such an undertaking would entail. One could begin to get a count by taking the corpus of eighteenth-century texts that have been digitized and running the corpus through topic-modeling software that has been taught to “read” and identify title
pages. Given the relative standardization of title pages in the period, one would be able to fairly accurately differentiate title pages from other pages in a text. Having identified the title pages, it would then be possible to identify those texts, which do not name an author and possibly categorize these texts based on genre or type. Such a project would, however, require a team of computer scientists paired with a team of eighteenth-century scholars with access to the corpus of Eighteenth-Century Collections Online as text and powerful computer equipment.

This research project would be an attempt to conquer the “nowhere” of my dissertation title. It would be an attempt to empirically study absence. As I have argued throughout my dissertation, the absence of the author’s name was everywhere in the eighteenth century, yet it was not an absence that was necessarily noticed. Scholars have typically failed to take notice of this fact because of the rush to fill that absence with an author’s name. I suggest that engaging with that absence may help us to better understand the “lives” of the literary texts we study and teach on a daily basis. Far from being a lack, the absence of an author’s name may well be productive and open up readings and research that move us beyond the orthodoxy imparted by the history of named authorship or the equally orthodox “text” unmoored from its author and historical specificity.
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