

ENGL 3041: Adventures in the Literary Marketplace
Assignment 1.2 Publishing History

Albinia Gwynn's 'first essay'¹ *History of the Honourable Edward Mortimer* was published by subscription in 1785. The title page reads, 'London: Printed for C. Dilly, Poultry; G. Wilkie, St. Paul's Church-Yard, and T. Hookham, Bond-Street M DCC LXX XV'. Charles Dilly operated from 22 Poultry Street, and was a bookseller, publisher, and stationer. George Wilkie worked from 71 St Paul's Churchyard and was a bookseller and publisher, and finally Thomas Hookham worked from Bond-Street and was a bookseller, stationer and librarian/owner of a circulating library, bookbinder, and publisher². Notably, there is a list of booksellers at the end of the list of subscriptions at the top of which Thomas Hookham is listed, which may signal that he ordered the most books for sale in his shop and library. He is also the only bookseller to have the number of copies he ordered next to his name (25 sets), perhaps indicating his importance in the sale and distribution of the work. 'Printed for' may therefore act as an advertisement for Hookham's library and bookshop.

The work is dedicated to the Duchess of Devonshire, a name that is also one of the two hundred and sixty-seven subscriptions to the book. James Raven claims that she was one of the most popular dedicatees of the time and that some dedicatees were not 'asked in advance for their permission'³. The presence of the Duchess and her husband on the list of subscribers suggests that she was asked, and supported the work. Many of the subscriptions are notable citizens, Dukes, Duchesses, Earls,

¹ Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy, ed. *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London: Batsford 1990) p. 470

² *The British Book Trade Index* University of Birmingham <http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk/search.htm> accessed March 2006

³ James Raven, 'Introduction' in *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey* gen. Eds. Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schowering, (Oxford University Press: 2000) Vol. 1 p.56

Countesses, which was a ‘device used...to promote many other commercial publications’⁴ as well as novels.

An advertisement in *St James’ Chronicle* 14th-16th July 1785 reads, ‘Printed by subscription. In Two Volumes, neatly printed in small Octavo, best paper’⁵. This advertisement would have immediately appealed to upper class pretentiousness, as the work was printed in octavo form and on ‘best paper’, meaning it was slightly larger and therefore grander than a work printed in duodecimo form, and contained only quality sheets of paper. Further advertisement in *St James’ Chronicle* 25th-27th August reads ‘Subscriptions received by Mr Cruttwell, Printer, and several Booksellers in Bath; and by Mr Dilly, Poultry; Mr Hookham, Bond-Street; and Mr Wilkie, St Paul’s Church-Yard, London’⁶ which indicates that the booksellers also acted as ‘collecting agents for subscriptions’⁷ for this particular work. Interestingly the dedication in the front of the work was addressed from Bath, which may suggest that Albinia Gwynn was acquainted with the Bath bookseller Mr Cruttwell, as dealing with a local bookseller would certainly have been convenient.

A second edition of this work was printed in Dublin in 1786. The title page of this work reads ‘Printed for Messrs. White, Byrne, Parker, and Cash’. It was printed in two volumes in duodecimo format. According to James Raven,

Many Irish reprints were half the price of the London originals. Cheaper paper was used and the closer printing and sometimes hidden abridgement enabled two- or three- volume works to be issued in a single volume⁸.

⁴ Garside, Raven and Schowerling, vol 1, p.56

⁵ *St James Chronicle* 14-16th July 1785 cited in Garside, Raven, and Schowerling, gen. Eds., Vol. 1 p.357

⁶ *Ibid.* p.357

⁷ Garside, Raven and Schowerling, vol. 1, p. 91

⁸ Garside, Rainer and Schowerling, vol 1, p. 89

Whether Gwynn authorised any changes to this edition or not is difficult to tell, but the second edition of her earlier work *The Rencontre, or Transition of a Moment* was printed by the same people, which leads me to suspect that she had no complaint about their methods, if indeed they made changes to the work. Notably Gwynn had this work published by Lane, the up and coming giant of the London novel trade, who was in direct competition with Hookham, Dilly and Wilkie: ‘In terms of dedicated novel publishing the real rivals...were Hookham and Lane’⁹. *History of the Honourable Edward Mortimer* was published later in the same year as *The Rencontre or Transition of a Moment* (if the dates of reviews and advertisements in *St James’ Chronicle*, *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review* are correct¹⁰), which may indicate that she received more money for this work, or a better deal from Lane’s rival. *Transition of a Moment, or The Rencontre* was not published by subscription, but both works were written anonymously ‘By a Lady’ and so she did not attempt to trade off her name.

‘Most novel editions...ranged between 500 and 700 copies’ due to labour costs ‘of composition and presswork’ that ‘made it unviable to print very small editions while the risks of high capital expenditure and storage made it unwise to print large editions.’¹¹ I think that given the number of subscriptions to the *History of the Honourable Edward Mortimer* it was likely that the first edition was at least around five hundred copies, and the second edition was probably the same.

⁹ Garside, Rainer and Schowerling, vol 1, p.78

¹⁰ According to Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schowerling, gen. Eds. *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey* (Oxford University Press: 2000) Vol. 1 p.357-8, *The Rencontre or Transition of a Moment* was advertised in January 1785 in *St James’ Chronicle*, reviewed in *The Critical Review* November 1784, and in *The Monthly Review* in March 1785. *History of the Honourable Edward Mortimer* was likewise advertised in *St James’ Chronicle* in July 1785 and August 1785, reviewed in *The Critical Review* in October 1785 and in *The Monthly Review* in December 1785. If these dates are correct, it would point to the *History of the Honourable Edward Mortimer* as the later work. However, Gwynn comments in the introduction to *History of the Honourable Edward Mortimer* that the work is a ‘first essay’.

¹¹ Garside, Rainer and Schowerling, vol 1, p.93

Gwynn wrote a preface to the *The Rencontre or Transition of a Moment* which begins by questioning why she is doing so as ‘One always skips over the preface to a novel’¹². Significantly, her ‘Bookseller, gentle reader wants me to write a preface; but to what purpose?’ She clearly did not want to write the preface, although Lane the publisher and bookseller of *The Rencontre or Transition of a Moment* requested it. This leads me to surmise that Lane was to place this book in his circulating library and therefore asked for things that his readers may have looked for. It may also be another reason as to why she switched to his biggest rival for her next book. She goes on to write that she is so ‘exceedingly afraid’ of ‘being ridiculed for’ her ‘ill-success’ that she hides it from her ‘nearest friends’¹³ which may provide a motive for her unwillingness to write this preface as it could have been a clue to her identity for those who knew her very well. For further information on Albinia Gwynn and her preference for remaining anonymous, please see my Author Biography.

¹² Albinia Gwynn, *The rencontre: or, transition of a moment. A novel, in a series of letters. By a lady. In two volumes* Vol.1 Dublin, 1785. 2 vols. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Group.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO> p.2

¹³ *Ibid.* p.4

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