

## An Uncommonly Difficult Business Reviewing Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century London's Subscription Publishing, 1749–1774

Clare Byers

Volume 12, numéro 1, printemps 2021

Figures de lecteurs dans la presse et la correspondance en Europe  
(XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)

Figures of Readers in the Press and Correspondence in Europe (16<sup>th</sup>-  
18<sup>th</sup> century)

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077804ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077804ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Groupe de recherches et d'études sur le livre au Québec

ISSN

1920-602X (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Byers, C. (2021). An Uncommonly Difficult Business: Reviewing Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century London's Subscription Publishing, 1749–1774. *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture*, 12(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1077804ar>

Résumé de l'article

À Londres, au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'édition amorce une transition, d'un système axé sur le patronage vers une entreprise commerciale. Ce changement s'accompagne d'une augmentation du nombre de critiques littéraires. La souscription prend alors le relais du patronage, en permettant aux écrivaines de bénéficier du soutien financier de leur lectorat avant publication. En outre, la souscription présente à leurs yeux l'avantage de contourner le marché commercial. Pour certaines, ce type d'édition prend la forme d'un soutien d'ordre caritatif. Les critiques littéraires établissent un lien entre souscription, écrivaines et actes de bienfaisance, souhaitant éviter de heurter leur lectorat, parmi lequel pouvaient se trouver des souscripteurs. Le présent article s'appuie sur l'analyse rhétorique de 171 tomes numérisés de 11 périodiques de critique littéraire publiés à Londres. Il en ressort que la manière dont les critiques de l'époque associent l'oeuvre des écrivaines et la souscription en vient à créer une perception négative des deux chez un lectorat londonien alors en pleine croissance.



# AN UNCOMMONLY DIFFICULT BUSINESS: Reviewing Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century London's Subscription Publishing, 1749–1774<sup>1</sup>

Clare BYERS

University of North Carolina

ABSTRACT

In eighteenth-century London, publishing began to transition from a patronage system to a commercial business. An increase in literary reviews accompanied the shift. Publishing by subscription emerged as an evolving form of patronage where authors received monetary support from readers before publication. Women authors found subscription publishing welcoming as a means to avoid the commercial marketplace. Some authors used this publishing method in the name of seeking charitable support. Reviewers linked subscription publishing to female authors and acts of charity as reviewers attempted to circumvent the problem of potentially alienating their own readership, who could be subscribers. Through rhetorical analysis of 171 digitized bound volumes of 11 of London's literary review periodicals, this paper argues that reviewers' treatment of women authors and the associated use of subscription publications led to a disparaging perception of both by London's growing reading public.

RÉSUMÉ

À Londres, au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'édition amorce une transition, d'un système axé sur le patronage vers une entreprise commerciale. Ce changement s'accompagne d'une augmentation du nombre de critiques littéraires. La souscription prend alors le relais du patronage, en permettant aux écrivaines de bénéficier du soutien financier de leur lectorat avant publication. En outre, la souscription présente à leurs yeux l'avantage de contourner le marché commercial. Pour certaines, ce type d'édition prend la forme d'un soutien d'ordre caritatif. Les critiques littéraires établissent un lien entre souscription, écrivaines et actes de bienfaisance, souhaitant éviter de heurter leur lectorat, parmi lequel pouvaient se trouver des souscripteurs. Le

présent article s'appuie sur l'analyse rhétorique de 171 tomes numérisés de 11 périodiques de critique littéraire publiés à Londres. Il en ressort que la manière dont les critiques de l'époque associent l'œuvre des écrivaines et la souscription en vient à créer une perception négative des deux chez un lectorat londonien alors en pleine croissance.

### **Keywords**

Subscription publishing, women, London, reviewers, charity

### **Mots-clés**

Souscription, écrivaines, Londres, critiques, charité

Although this piece is entitled to no praise, it is too humble for censure. The writer is probably an object of compassion; as we are led to infer, not only from her style, but from seeing a six-penny pamphlet printed by *subscription*.<sup>2</sup>

The above review of *The Conquest of Corsica*, noted on the title page as “By a Lady,” exemplifies a tension in London’s eighteenth-century publishing scene concerning female authors and subscription publication. A 1774 review for a dictionary similarly captures the effect this tension had on reviewers:

The business of a Reviewer becomes uncommonly difficult when he is obliged to pay a regard not only to the usual irritability of an author, but to his immediate and pecuniary interest. The work before us is to be considered not only in respect of its claim to literary fame, but as a proposal for the benefit of the Author: he must therefore expect that the Public as well as the Reviewers, will attend to it with more than common caution.<sup>3</sup>

The “uncommonly difficult” business of reviewers required supporting only what they perceived as worthy charitable endeavours while not alienating readers who might be investors in other subscription projects, and still providing accurate commentary. Authors requested support from readers so they could publish. In these cases, the readers’ offer of support was often a charitable act. By linking female-authored texts to acts of charity, reviews

devalued subscription publishing as a legitimate practice in the eyes of the reading public.

The first half of the eighteenth century witnessed a flurry of changes in London's publishing scene. By 1720, female authors had firmly established their presence in the literary marketplace.<sup>4</sup> Reviews appeared in London's literary magazines for the first time in 1749, exerting a new influence on the reading public. At the same time, subscription became a common publishing route for female authors, as the practice climbed to its zenith by mid-century. The combination of these three developments in print history contributed to the devaluation of subscription publishing. In its purest form, subscription publication was a business transaction akin to other forms of projecting such as joint-stock companies and maritime insurance.<sup>5</sup> Alexander Pope established subscription publishing as lucrative and author-friendly with his 1715 translation of *Homer*.<sup>6</sup> As use of subscription peaked in the late eighteenth century, however, its reputation was becoming sullied, defined by references to "subscription-hunting" and "catchpenny" scheming, and described as a "polite way of begging."<sup>7</sup> At its peak, subscription publishing never accounted for more than five percent of total publications in London.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the social phenomena surrounding the mechanism are worthy of exploration.<sup>9</sup> James Raven has called subscription publications "sycophantic dedications to aristocratic patrons by ... destitute widows and gentlewomen ... written in the hope of encouraging greater public charity."<sup>10</sup> This connection between subscription publishing and women begs for deeper analysis. Published reviews offer a unique lens through which to examine this relationship.

Steady critical literary review found London audiences by 1749. The *Monthly Review* was the first publication dedicated solely to book reviews. By 1751, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a popular periodical since its inception in 1731, began devoting sections to literary comment.<sup>11</sup> The *Critical Review* and *Literary Magazine* began publication in the mid-1750s. Although the *Literary Magazine* fizzled out by 1758, the *Critical Review* became the *Monthly Review's* foremost competitor. These two grew to be the most-read and most-quoted review periodicals of the eighteenth century,<sup>12</sup> though the editors of these reviews undertook their respective projects differently. Ralph Griffiths, editor of the *Monthly Review*, was a bookseller who published the periodical

as a business venture, whereas Tobias Smollett founded the *Critical Review* as a “community of the cultural elite.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1767, a reader of one bi-annual volume of the *Monthly Review* would have been able to scan over 600 pages of entries, varying from one-sentence reviews to 20-page excerpts.<sup>14</sup> The reviews were alphabetically indexed at the front of the volume, so if a reader was seeking a particular review, it was easy to locate by author surname. Each volume contained over 400 reviews, with at least one-sixth of the volume dedicated to reviewing foreign titles. The reviews featured works of law and medicine, practical guides and courtesy manuals, as well as numerous political pamphlets and works of literature and poetry. Issues were bound for sale once or twice per annum. This study examined 171 digitized bound volumes of 11 review periodicals, including the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*.<sup>15</sup> Eighty-two percent of reviews of books published by subscription mention subscription publication by name. The tone of these 220 reviews influenced opinion regarding the individual works and ultimately affected perception of the entire practice of subscription publishing.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century the ability of reviewers to sway readers and boost support for publications increased. Editors harnessed power over reader opinion by portraying themselves as representative, and even ideal, members of society.<sup>16</sup> Reviewer authority gained strength through anonymously penned columns and characters meant to represent not only the magazine, but its audience. In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, editorial personas such as “Sylvanus Urban” demonstrated the magazine’s commitment to anonymity, and thereby also its emphasis on the importance of an article’s or review’s inherent persuasiveness rather than the writer’s position in society.<sup>17</sup> Just as their readership secured social rank according to their craft or trade, the authors and editors of a magazine earned their gentlemanly status via their writing craft. The *Gentleman's Magazine* editors aimed their publication at the emerging commercial class by using a plain design and the subtitle “Trader’s Monthly Intelligencer.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the writers and editors of literary magazines sought to fashion themselves as peers among the ranks of their readership, helping to shape the taste of hardworking tradesmen who wished to see themselves as gentlemen. Reading taste and literary investments functioned as part of a gentleman’s style; hence the role of the reviewer could be

commanding, for he could serve as a tastemaker. By the late eighteenth century, reviewers had become true trend setters in the literary world, wielding influence that authors could perceive. In 1778, Frances Burney dedicated her first novel to the editors of the *Monthly* and *Critical* reviews.<sup>19</sup> Though the dedication was likely ironic, it testifies to the reviewers' growing power.

The ability of reviewers to shape opinion often opposed their duty to their readers. Reviewers needed to render an honest opinion to guide readers' literary investments (both of time and money). In the case of subscription projects, reviewers felt an obligation to support worthy causes for investment, for the sake of charity or for literary ventures, often providing a judgment of the author's character because character, especially in the case of women, was considered an essential metric of worthiness. Finally, they needed to ferret out and expose fraudulent publications, a practice sometimes occasioned when authors solicited money before publication and attached investors' names to the project.

Authorship itself gained greater respectability as a profession in the eighteenth century. For women born to gentility or aspiring to it, writing represented one of few respectable employments. Many women writers came from military families or were the daughters of country clergymen.<sup>20</sup> Middle- and upper-class women might have neither a marketable skill such as dressmaking nor the capital required to undertake an apprenticeship, but they were literate.<sup>21</sup> As authors, being able to write prose or poetry served as their skill. Notably, middle-class genteel women, who lacked social connections, were more likely than men to pursue non-traditional publication routes.<sup>22</sup> Whether the work was product of a woman's pen or a posthumous a male author's work published for the benefit of his widow, subscription publication suited women.<sup>23</sup>

This study focuses on reviews of female-authored subscription projects.<sup>24</sup> The number of female authors writing by subscription whose works were reviewed represents a fraction of the total number of reviewed subscription publications. However, the commentary within the reviews stands out discordantly to expose underlying assumptions about women authors, subscription publishing, and charitable acts in eighteenth-century London. An analysis of London's literary magazines (1749–1774) reveals how

reviewers assessed a subscription publication's value.<sup>25</sup> For female authors, reviewers not only considered the literary merit of the project, but also the author's character and worthiness to receive charitable support. Reviewers made note of gender when the author was female. A previous study by Sarah Prescott considered the self-fashioning of women authors, who presented themselves as objects worthy of charity through their domestic meekness.<sup>26</sup> Her study did not account for the role reviewers played in promoting women authors as worthy of charity. This study aims to fill this gap in scholarship.

With regard to femininity as a marketing ploy, reviewers were conscious of the ways in which authors might profit from their image and reputation. Reviewers' manner of critiquing female-authored works fostered the connections among subscription publication, female authorship, and acts of charity within the public imagination. Reviewers commented upon the moral character of female authors and evaluated the worthiness of their subscription project in charitable terms by relating the circumstances of the authors whom they believed deserved support. By mentioning outright that an author was not only a woman but a respectable woman, as well as noting that a publication was done by subscription and stating explicitly whether these women deserved charitable support, reviewers reinforced the links among female authorship, subscription publication, and charity in the minds of readers.

Reviewers and readers alike recognized these connections because female authorship and requests for charitable support often appeared hand in hand. Women could use the medium of print to relate their hardships in autobiographical form, demonstrate their high moral character, and hopefully receive money. Because subscription publication offered a quicker route to receiving money than publication through an established publisher buying the copyright, it was frequently used by authors seeking charity. Each time "subscription publishing" and "charity" appeared together in print, whether in proposals, titles, prefaces, or letters, reviewers and readers made the link between the terms. Many of subscription publications were for the direct benefit of the author.<sup>27</sup> In a few cases, authors published for the benefit of a charity project, but most were for individuals or their families.<sup>28</sup>

Commercializing their life stories was an important strategy for women writers soliciting support for their publication which could begin a writing career or could be a chance to share a single story or simply a chance to make some money akin to requesting charity. Even the title *The True State of the Case of Sarah Rippon, Widow* invited readers to peek at the author's private life in exchange for money. One reviewer described Rippon as a "poor woman ... ruined by a Chancery suit of ten years continuance."<sup>29</sup> The reviewer of the memoirs of the Meanwell sisters played upon the sentiments of readers to advance the authors' charitable cause by referring to the subscription as "an opportunity of doing some good" for two women who "were ruined by the bankruptcy of a near relation."<sup>30</sup> Reviewers emphasized the author's plight in lieu of making literary comment and urged benevolence on the part of reader-subscribers. For authors like Sarah Rippon, the goal of publication was not to begin a career as an author so much as it was to earn money amounting to charitable support by publishing an account of their legal efforts to stave off debt during ongoing litigation. Reviewers and authors told tales of women's courtroom dramas as part of a popular legal genre in eighteenth-century London. The popularity of works like Richardson's *Clarissa* and Defoe's *Moll Flanders* accompanied women's increasingly active participation in commerce, which saw them involved in court battles regarding stock purchases and "entangled in litigation over debts owed to their late husbands" or other family members, as were the Meanwell sisters.<sup>31</sup> The proliferation of personal credit and debt in the growing credit economy affected everyone, including women.

The relationship between women, literature, and money was tied to a grim reality. The rise in subscription publishing paralleled a rise in appeals for more general social assistance in London's multitudinous newspapers.<sup>32</sup> Appeals arrived in the wake of "rising costs of parish relief," a burgeoning population, and English Poor Laws that "made no provision" for those who "were hampered merely by the absence of little working capital."<sup>33</sup> Offering monetary support for the publication of a literary work allowed reader-subscribers the opportunity to publicly display their generosity. In turn, reviewers wrote in praise of the subscribers' kindness. In promoting the work, reviewers performed their own act of charity.

A literary association that captivated the imagination of readers and reviewers alike formed between debt and a threat to female chastity through



popular novels like Richardson's *Pamela* and Defoe's *Roxana*. The anthropomorphic image of Defoe's "Lady Credit" reinforced suspicions about female inconstancy, corruption and excessive consumption in the expanding market culture.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, commentators created connections in the public imagination between women, debt, and a need for charity. From the 1720s, reviewers contrasted the image of a respectable, moral, yet dependent woman with the image of a woman confidently navigating the world of credit that had been created by Eliza Haywood. Commentators lashed out against Haywood and her heroines as corrupt women. Haywood's novels such as *City Jilt* portrayed female agency through characters, like Glicera, who found revenge against a suitor by cleverly manipulating mortgages, skilfully navigating the financial and legal world of men.<sup>35</sup> By 1785, Haywood's legacy was consigned to her "reformed writing" of mid-century by Clara Reeve in her literary history of romance novels.<sup>36</sup> Reeve concluded her entry on Haywood: "May her first writings be forgotten, and the last survive to do her honor."<sup>37</sup>

What happened between the 1720s and the 1780s to affect Haywood's writing, her legacy, and the state of women's publishing? Subscription publishing offers an interesting case analysis. During the mid-eighteenth century, subscription publishing became more common yet more complicated. Well-connected female authors carefully built successful reputations via networks of supporters in the publishing realm, including other authors and contacts at Court. Betty Schellenberg contrasted the careers of Charlotte Lennox and Sarah Fielding, two commercially successful women writers between the 1740s and the 1760s. Lennox saw subscription from readers "as a completed, one-way business transaction," an investment in her work.<sup>38</sup> Although Lennox collected subscriptions for four books, she never followed through directly on any of the projects.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Sarah Fielding courted patronage in the upper echelons of society with fine editions and binding, and also offered subscription options for cheaper copies to less wealthy readers.<sup>40</sup> Lennox and Fielding represent the most successful among women writers working in the subscription system. Even still, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu "never lost her sense that Fielding was as much an object for charitable patronage as a writer worthy of support on the basis of her accomplishments."<sup>41</sup> As Schellenberg notes, "the relative poverty of both women" reflected a "transitional period for

authors, without support networks beyond those of family and friends, where longevity beyond the capacity to earn was a misfortune.”<sup>42</sup>

Letters to magazine editors in the 1760s suggest that women’s use of subscription publication as a means of soliciting charity had already been acknowledged in the public imagination.<sup>43</sup> A letter from J. Wall appeared in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* requesting support from the editors for a subscription-funded collection of poetry for a young woman in Staffordshire with talent but no education, and with “modesty and disinterestedness” to recommend her.<sup>44</sup> The same magazine published a letter a year earlier from Dresden requesting support for a poetry collection from a woman in Berlin whose “parents forced her to marry a [tailor], who treated her in a very barbarous manner.”<sup>45</sup> If readers saw the opportunity to raise charitable funds for women in distressed circumstances through publishing their work by subscription, reviewers were merely drawing the same conclusions as the wider public.

At its core, subscription publishing evolved into a commercialized form of patronage where readers became patrons through subscription payments, and reviewers patronized via publicity.<sup>46</sup> In a traditional patronage system, a patron invested in an author, artist or musician, and the money was not exclusively for the benefit of the recipient. Instead, the investment in the author’s work was for the benefit of society as a whole. Patrons designated funds for work that they thought would elevate taste, improve methods or offer new information on a subject to the public. In contrast, subscription publishing was for the author alone, at times as a monetary investment in a writing career and at other times as a charitable act. Regardless, of the motivation for subscription publication, reviewers treated women writers differently than men. Reviews of subscription publications that resembled more traditional forms of patronage supported particular art forms, notably poetry and drama. Reviewers devoted many pages to the injustices perpetrated by London’s playhouses against Elizabeth Griffith’s *A Wife in the Right*, a play closed after opening night.<sup>47</sup> Reviewers touted the wisdom and good taste of reader-subscribers, and in one instance, their patriotism. Dorothy Holt’s manual for lacemaking, according to the *Critical Review*, was “calculated for the advantage of the kingdom, and the discouragement of French manufacture.”<sup>48</sup> Patriotism and patronage of the arts were the

subject of these reviews, but in neither case was the author, a woman, mentioned.

While specific art forms needed patronage to elevate public taste, reviewers also encouraged their readers to patronize deserving individuals, usually men. Reviews that assessed the personal merit of working-class writers drew on the traditional language of patronage. For example, reviewers hailed Henry Jones as “a man of extraordinary genius” whose literary support from reader-subscribers “deservedly raised him from the obscurity of a mechanical employment.”<sup>49</sup> Two other favourable reviews recognized personal merit based on the author’s military service—one a ship surgeon’s mate, another a soldier.<sup>50</sup>

This study identified only one patronage-style review commenting on a female-authored work. The *Monthly Review* wrote of Anna Williams: “It seems that there are no circumstances, however oppressive, that can totally restrain the exertions of genius, since neither the narrowness of female education, nor penury, with blindness united, could absolutely efface ... poetical attachment.”<sup>51</sup> Although the review makes no reference to charity, the extensive notation of Williams’s circumstances, describing her pitiable state and difficult life, appears strikingly similar to the language of reviews clearly soliciting charity for the author. To the reviewers’ credit, Williams herself felt obligated to justify her writing publicly. In 1762, Anna Williams proposed her essay collection, and wrote that “when a Writer of my Sex solicits the Regard of the Publick, some Apology seems always to be expected”; her apology stated that the book would be “published for Necessity.”<sup>52</sup> That an accomplished and well-reviewed writer felt obliged to offer an excuse of need says something critical about female writers of the eighteenth century: to be published as an author as well as deemed a virtuous woman, a female writer needed to be an object of charity.

Reviewers connected the value of work that was openly acknowledged as female authored to a woman’s respectability rather than to the power of her poetry or prose. Established authors who possessed societal connections could leverage their literary reputations without revealing their identities even though they still emphasized that they were women. Charlotte Lennox and Sarah Fielding first published their respective works as “A Lady” without name; later works listed their accomplishments, such as “By the

Author of *David Simple*”—referring to Fielding’s most popular work.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Sarah Scott published a history of Gustav I of Sweden without authorial credit but included a dedication to the Queen signed “Mr. Newbery.” The *Critical Review* assumed Newbery to be the author, and as Schellenberg notes, “assumed that history was written by men, for an audience consisting mostly of men.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, Scott’s reputation was disembodied from her person.

When women’s work was connected to their person and they did not possess societal connections, the reviewers made the moral character of the author central to their commentary. Reviewers barely commented upon Elizabeth Harrison’s work, whereas they mentioned Harrison’s “modesty and piety,” and the review stated that the public should praise those who “please and do not corrupt, who ... are applauded by angels and numbered with the just.”<sup>55</sup> Reviewers lauded other women authors as generous, virtuous, pious, moral, and of “matchless merit.”<sup>56</sup> It was not only in reviews of subscription publications by women authors that reviewers avoided comment and emphasized gender. Instead, this same pattern occurred in non-subscription publications as well. For example, the two-line review of *Jemima and Louisa ... by a Lady* simply stated that the work imitated “Mr. Richardson’s writings” and “We shall say no more, as it is a lady’s production.”<sup>57</sup>

Even for established female authors, character bore as much weight in review as literary talent. Mary Masters was one of two female authors of subscription publications whose reputation as a writer the *Monthly Review* acknowledged as an inducement for support, though they also noted “that she is a chaste, moral, and religious ... woman.”<sup>58</sup> Masters’s first published volume, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), was the first women’s poetry published by subscription, and it was a success.<sup>59</sup> Masters, as noted in the review, was also known for contributing articles to the selfsame magazine that published the review. Why would a well-established and successful author require a character assessment in review? To temper the commercial success of Mary Masters so that it would appear socially acceptable, reviewers needed to take pointed notice of her chastity and morality. Review references to the upstanding character of these women likely helped to promote the moral character of their own magazine publications in the process.

Reviewers often connected author gender to circumstance, as in the cases of Masters and Harrison. They also employed this technique to justify a lack of comment on literary quality in their reviews. If the author appealed to reviewers' mercy in their proposal or preface due to a "female education," or if they "modestly" acknowledged their lack of education, reviewers reported such circumstances as reasons to not offer criticism.<sup>60</sup> For example, in the case of Mary Latter's *Miscellaneous Works*, the review stated, "the sex and circumstances of the Author, must naturally exempt her works from the severity of criticism ... we hope she has had a good subscription."<sup>61</sup> The reviewer likely viewed this action as charitable. This "natural" exemption mentioned in reviews of women's work reflects an implicit bias among reviewers.

Reviewers revealed their implicit bias against female-authored subscription works through subtle yet pointed statements. Reviews of women's publications specifically addressed the absence of literary commentary with phrases such as: "we shall take no ... notice of it" or "[this excerpt] may enable our readers to form a judgment of this lady's poetical abilities."<sup>62</sup> Instead, these reviews spoke to the author's need for charitable support, their distressed circumstances, or their lack of education.

When reviewers offered no literary comment, they likewise made no statement about withholding commentary. Reviews of professional publications such as legal treatises, medical manuals, and architectural plans functioned as notifications, emphasizing, for instance, a need for high-quality engravings.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, male-authored poetry or fiction published by subscription received clear literary commentary. For example, *Love at First Sight* (1772) was judged "a tolerable story, delivered in the usual familiar epistolary stile; but bearing all the marks of haste and inattention."<sup>64</sup> When the reviews were negative, reviewers made an effort to soothe the feelings of any reader-subscribers. In the case of William Woty's poetry, reviewers owned their mistake: "for our parts, we acknowledge, that we encouraged him ... from the hopes of a more valuable [work]."<sup>65</sup> Even when their reviews were decidedly negative, reviewers pointed out flaws of male-authored works to their readers in clear literary commentary.

Reviewers regarded themselves as guardians of the public against outright money-grabbing attempts and potential fraud. In the growing credit economy, fears about female greed, corruption, and changeability became reinforced in literature and the literary marketplace. Defoe's "Lady Credit" served as a totem and touchstone in the eighteenth century. Not only were reviewers suspicious of women authors, but subscription itself as a practice was subjected to careful scrutiny. In novels themselves, Richard Savage's hero in *An Author to be Lett* (1729) declared, "I printed Proposals for a Subscription to my Works, received Money, and gave Receipts without any Intention of delivering the Book."<sup>66</sup> Savage was hardly alone. Similar references appeared in Henry Fielding's *The Author's Farce* (1730) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742).<sup>67</sup> Most noteworthy perhaps is Ephraim Chambers's entry in his 1728 *Cyclopaedia* about subscriptions, which states: "their Frequency has render'd them liable to some Abuses, which begin to discredit them." As Thomas Lockwood succinctly stated, they were seen as amounting to "a respectable kind of scam."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, reviewers took it upon themselves to ferret out and report potential scheming, and in some cases, to denounce the authors to their readers.

One reviewer of *Amana: A Dramatic Poem* by Elizabeth Griffith acclaimed the work's "several very valuable pages in this performance we mean—The numerous and respectable list of subscribers prefixed to it," while criticizing the author as having "a fine lady's disease, the vapours."<sup>69</sup> To the reviewer, the work's only value was the subscriber list, and the book was published because of the author's good connections rather than her writing skill, monetary need, or high moral character. Miss Smythies' *The Brothers* earned a similar assessment, when the *Critical Review* noted its imitation of *Clarissa* and congratulated Smythies on "her ample subscription, wishing that she may proceed with her pen, and prosper, and every year lay the public under the like contribution."<sup>70</sup> Through subtle but barbed comments, reviewers brought the commercial nature of authorship to the attention of their readers as though it was their duty to expose a mischievous plot.

The case of Anne Wall's subscription publication is useful to consider as an example of the ways in which reviewers were attuned to fraud. The author composed *The Life of Lamenther* as an "account of the many misfortunes she underwent, occasioned by the ill Treatment of an unnatural Father."<sup>71</sup> The *Monthly Review* made no direct implications about the veracity of this

account, though the reviewer drew attention to the assumed name “Lament-her” and observed that she was a “miserable object.” The *Gentleman’s Magazine*, on the other hand, stated skepticism outright: “there is too much reason to induce us to believe it to be a true history.”<sup>72</sup> Since the eighteenth century, scholars have puzzled over the phrase “too much reason” in this review, but the general consensus is that the work was a novel rather than an autobiography.<sup>73</sup> Reviewers criticized Wall’s work because she presented herself as relating a factual account of her troubles in order to solicit charity, but Wall fabricated or at least embellished her tale. The reviewers might have wished both to praise readers’ generosity and to caution against further investments in what they perceived to be a dishonest woman’s publication.

In assessing a collection of poetry by Anne Poyntz, the *Monthly Review* questioned whether she was, indeed, a woman, given the “indelicacies with which it abounds,” adding that “*What Miss P. is* we have not learnt; but, from the *free* turn and spirit of her writings, it may not be difficult to guess.”<sup>74</sup> The reviewer’s criticism did not concern the quality—indeed they acknowledged Poyntz to be “a wit and a poet too”—but rather her unladylike manner, which he considered socially unacceptable. The *Monthly Review* said the same of the “Miss Minifies of Fairwater, if there are such names.”<sup>75</sup> Women were held to different standards than men. The cases of Poyntz and the Minifies sisters illustrate the implicit bias among reviewers and the reading public about the nature of women’s writing and what it ought to be.

When the *Critical Review* published a 1764 review for the Minifies’ *History of Lady Frances and Lady Caroline*, London was in the midst of a shift in perception from novels being for a stereotypical “young, ignorant, and idle” audience to becoming a “staple commodity.”<sup>76</sup> By the time the Minifies published their final volume of *Lady Frances and Lady Caroline*, the *Critical Review* had begun to profile the Minifies’ audience. In her chapter “Harmless Mediocrity,” Schellenberg suggests that the Minifies became adept at branding their work for a target market “with positive markers of female sex, youth, and country residence, which could be attached to each new product as a guarantee of safe amusement.”<sup>77</sup> As evidence of authors branding for their readers, Schellenberg cites numerous reviews. What

Schellenberg does not point out is the reviewers' strong hand in creating this "brand" and consequent reader perception.

The analysis of reviews in particular suggests an additional if not entirely separate area of influence: the one that exists between reviewer and audience. The case of the Minifies is convincing of the influence readers bore on reviewers. The *Critical Review* desisted from questioning the authorship or criticizing the Minifies' work. By the late 1750's, reviewers merely quoted passages that were "almost always extremely pathetic scenes of wronged young women on their deathbeds" that they knew would be enticing to readers of sentimental novels.<sup>78</sup> In the latter half of the eighteenth century, reviewers recognized that their readers enjoyed sentimental novels. To maintain readers' interest in their magazines, reviewers stopped commenting on the quality of work in sentimental novels, implicitly acknowledging a niche popular market for this emerging genre separate from the wider literary field.

Readers not only possessed the power to influence reviewers' comment on novels over time, but as subscribers to particular works, women protected the authors from severe criticism. Reviewers declined to comment on men's work where their list of reader-subscribers was predominantly female. *Fables and Tales for Ladies* received a terrible review, where the author was not only called a bad poet with no taste, but the review further noted:

We find [it] was done by subscription, there being a list of subscribers' names, mostly female, prefixed to the book.—But we will forbear to reflect on them, as it is not improbable that generosity and charity were their only motives for contributing.<sup>79</sup>

It was only because of the assumed benevolence of female subscribers that reviewers spared this author from harsher criticism.

Reviewers similarly avoided criticizing many posthumous publications, particularly if they were written by a female author or would affect the widow of a male writer. Some women, like Sarah Rippon, published to alleviate poverty related to widowhood, while other widows were forced to return to work.<sup>80</sup> Review of posthumous publications often referenced widows as the beneficiaries of subscription proceeds. Reverend Thomas Buckridge's sermons "were never intended for publication" but were



printed by subscription “for the benefit of the Author’s widow.”<sup>81</sup> Many publications were as easy to deal with as Buckridge’s, but for authors with an established reputation, their literary legacy concerned and complicated the work of reviewers. Jeremiah Seed’s family needed financial support, and so it was actually out of concern for Seed’s legacy that reviewers observed that since Seed wrote some of the published sermons at age 22, not all of the work was of the same quality.<sup>82</sup>

For female-authored posthumous works, the death of the author likewise added to the challenges facing their critical reception. The posthumous treatment of Catharine Cockburn illustrates the multifold issues of women in review. The *Gentleman’s Magazine* praised Cockburn’s contributions to the magazine throughout her career, but “on seeing the subscription to the late Mrs C-----n’s Works” offered the following verse:

Behold the suffrage of the great  
For *Mira* in her grave,  
Whom matchless merit, when alive,  
Could scarce from pen’ry save.<sup>83</sup>

The verse makes reference to her work, but also alludes to Cockburn’s character and circumstances. Cockburn was a writer and philosopher known for her dramatic exploration of women’s lack of social and legal control.<sup>84</sup> When she died, the lessons of her dramas were reflected in her treatment by reviewers. She died a poor widow, and the reviews of her collected works discussed her circumstances more than her literary merit. The *Monthly Review* acknowledged “her abilities as a writer” but commented on her “peculiar circumstances ... advanced age ... ill state of health ... [and] the uneasy situation of her fortune.”<sup>85</sup> Although the review is positive and speaks to the deep themes of the work, the reviewer states that the works “will not have full justice done them” if Cockburn’s circumstances are not recounted, thereby reinforcing the persistent and pervasive power of the female author’s public image.<sup>86</sup>

Reviewers felt compelled to take notice of Cockburn’s upstanding moral character and her need for financial support to defray the scandal of her commercial success. As with the case of Mary Masters, Cockburn was an established author with a lauded body of work. As Linda Colley writes in her work on Elizabeth Marsh, “the women most likely to strike out and commit their travel writings to print remained, however, those not born to regard themselves securely as ladies”; as examples she mentions military

widows, chaplains' wives, and other women who were educated but neither wealthy nor titled.<sup>87</sup> What Colley says of travel writing might be extended to women's writing in general. The mutually reinforcing connections associating subscription publishing with charity resulting from this relationship meant that in the long term, reviewers and female authors alike contributed to the poor reputation of subscription publishing as a practice. Reviewers sometimes took these connections one step further by assuming an implied charitable cause though the author never mentions a need, particularly in the case of work of low quality published by subscription.

For titles that made no explicit reference to author circumstance in their pages, reviewers implicitly connected the nature of subscription publication and the author's gender to a need for charitable support, thereby encouraging their readers' contributions without needing to comment on the work's literary merit. The *Conquest of Corsica*, mentioned at the outset of this essay, was judged *Critical Review* as "incapable of exciting any other passion than that of pity for the author, who is probably involved in distressful circumstances."<sup>88</sup> Reviewers said of other women's subscription publications that the book was likely "published by subscription to relieve the distresses of the two ladies mentioned in the title page" or the work "seem[ed] to have been merely a charitable one, for the benefit of the writer, a woman."<sup>89</sup> Without commenting on the quality of work, reviewers treated women's subscription publications as a kind of extra-literary practice, seeing it as outside of literary merit, thereby affecting the reputation of subscription as a practice. Reviewers further praised reader contributions to these women's subscription publications as a charitable act. From prefaces in books, subscription proposals, letters in magazines, and reviews, the interaction of reviewers and readers played a role in diminishing the reputation of subscription publication from an innovative authorial publishing apparatus to polite begging or catchpenny schemes.

Subscription publication continued into the nineteenth century. Its character became increasingly regulated with clearer terms of contractual fulfillment, a phenomenon outside the scope of this article in need of more study. Women were further integrated into the commercial marketplace, although studies suggest that even popular authors like Jane Austen and Frances Burney relied on men for their business transactions.<sup>90</sup> The use of publication as a means of soliciting charity continued for English authors.

Their methods of soliciting charity became more organized as the publishers' commercial apparatus solidified. What emerged was known as the Royal Literary Fund.<sup>91</sup> Women's ability to sway public sentiment was dependent on descriptions of their circumstances and their respectability to affect public sentiment and justify their work as worthy, suggesting the lasting effects of reviewer influence for women authors especially when undertaking a subscription publication.

By the end of the eighteenth century, it was clear that reviewers had failed at their "uncommonly difficult task." In attempting to balance author and reader interests, reviewers devalued subscription publication in the eyes of readers, including the young Frances Burney. Burney described subscription as "unpleasant and unpalatable"—before the need for quick cash made her turn to this very same unpalatable publishing method.<sup>92</sup> Though Burney's work falls outside the timeline of this study, she would have been a young reader in the 1760s and 1770s. Recall that Burney's first novel was dedicated to the *Critical* and *Monthly* reviews' editors. Exposure to reviewer commentaries likely influenced her perception of publishing practices. At first, as a young author, Burney sold the copyright for her first two novels, *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782). Both were popular, well reviewed, and built an excellent reputation for Burney as a writer.<sup>93</sup> Burney published her third novel, *Camilla*, by subscription, though she feared that using subscription would associate her hard-won authorial reputation with charity.<sup>94</sup> Though her popularity alone would sell the new work, Burney justified the use of subscription to her readers by noting her new "wifely and motherly duties."<sup>95</sup> *Camilla* became the most successful subscription publication since Pope's *Iliad*.<sup>96</sup> Whereas *Evelina* and *Cecilia* received praise from reviewers, *Camilla* was disparaged as too similar to the previous two novels.<sup>97</sup> Comments in the *Critical* and *Monthly* reviews made no mention of the subscription, so no definitive causal link can be drawn as with the other examples presented. Yet it is worth considering that Burney's dissatisfaction with the reviews for the work might have dissuaded her, and she never published by subscription again.

history and print culture. She earned a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Naval Academy, an MA in Library Science from UNC–Chapel Hill, an MA in Early Modern History from King's College London and an MLitt in Book History from the University of St. Andrews. Her dissertation focuses on book reviews for works of natural history about New France in the French and British empires.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks are owed for this project. I am grateful to Anne Goldgar for her expert guidance in the initial research and writing process. Thanks to Thomas Lockwood for directing me to the collections at the Bodleian Library, and thanks to the kind librarians and library staff for their assistance. Thank you to Kathleen DuVal, Susan Pennybacker, Julia Rudolph, and Jay Smith for your close reading and excellent advice.

<sup>2</sup> Review of *The Conquest of Corsica*, *Monthly Review* 33 (1772): 255.

<sup>3</sup> Review of J. Walker, *A General Idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language*, *Monthly Review* 50 (1774): 248.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 112.

<sup>5</sup> One female-authored French translation was a professional subscription publication. Review of Madam de \*\*, *Les Transmigrations d'Hermès*, *Monthly Review* 40 (1760): 165; Sarah Clapp, "The Beginnings of Subscription Publication," *Modern Philology* 29 (1931): 199–200; Pat Rogers, "The Writer and Society," in *The Context of English Literature: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Pat Rogers (London: Holmes & Meier, 1978), 37. Authors began to realize that their work was more valuable than a one-time fee of sale at the same time that licensing laws were changing so they began to embrace non-traditional publishing methods, including subscription. See Ian Gadd, "The Stationers' Company in England before 1710," in *Research Handbook on the History of Copyright Law*, ed. Isabella Alexander and H. Tomás Gómez-Arostegui (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), 92–93; James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 202–3.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Staves, "Pope's Refinement," *Eighteenth Century* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 145–63.

<sup>7</sup> "Letter," *Town and Country Magazine* 1 (1769): 178; Review of *Bavin of Bays*, *Critical Review* 16 (1763): 285; "Letter," *Town and Country Magazine* 3 (1771): 464.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Lockwood, "Subscription-Hunters and Their Prey," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 34, no. 1 (2001): 122.

<sup>9</sup> Reviews of subscription publications have not received systematic treatment in previous studies. For holistic studies of the subscription publishing, see: Lockwood, "Subscription-Hunters," 124–29; Hugh Reid, *The Nature and Uses of Eighteenth-Century Book Subscription Lists* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2010), 39–42; W.A. Speck, "Politicians, Peers

---

and Publication by Subscription 1700–50,” in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 49–51. For author case studies, see: D.R. Bellhouse, E.M. Renouf, R. Raut, and M.A. Bauer, “De Moivre’s Knowledge Community: An Analysis of the Subscription List to the *Miscellanea Analytica*,” *Notes & Records of the Royal Society* 63 (2009): 137–38; Emily O’Flaherty, “Patrons, Peers and Subscribers: The Publication of Mary Barber’s Poems on Several Occasions (1734)” (PhD diss., NUI Galway, 2013), 7–12. For Alexander Pope and subscription publishing, see Maynard Mack’s biography and work on his subscriber lists by Pat Rogers and Matthew Hodgart as cited in Reid, *Nature and Uses*, 39–42.

<sup>10</sup> Raven, *Business of Books*, 275.

<sup>11</sup> According to this study, the first London book review appeared in a 1733 *Gentleman’s Magazine*, but these were not regularly featured in the magazine until 1751.

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller account of the beginning of literary review, see: Frank Donoghue, *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 21; Antonia Forster, *Index to Book Reviews in England, 1749–1774*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Donoghue, *Fame Machine*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> For content analysis, see: *Monthly Review* 36 (1767).

<sup>15</sup> Magazines considered include the *Monthly Review*, *Critical Review*, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, *Literary Magazine*, *British Magazine*, *Universal Catalogue*, *Universal Museum*, *London Magazine*, *Annual Register*, *Town and Country Magazine*, and *Political Register*. An additional five periodicals that Forster recorded as reviewing subscription publications that fall within the timeline of this study (only one in each periodical) but are not available digitally and thus fell outside the scope of this study are *Commerce Monthly Review*, *Distress Monthly Review*, *Mirror Monthly Review*, *Candid Review*, and *Critical Memoirs*.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters 1680–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 98, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Gillian Williamson, *British Masculinity in the “Gentleman’s Magazine,” 1731 to 1815* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 16–17, 70–79. As further evidence of similar developments in eighteenth-century continental Europe, see Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 98–103. In the wider British context, Scottish reviews varied. The *Edinburgh Review*, from 1755, focused on Scottish identity, whereas *The Scots Magazine*, from the 1770s, reprinted reviews from the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*; see: Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 34. Readers in British America accessed transatlantic publications such as *The Edinburgh Review* as well as the *North American Review* to read about the latest publications; see: Susan M. Stabile, “Female Curiosities: The Transatlantic Female Commonplace Book,” in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 240, note 25.

<sup>18</sup> Williamson, *British Masculinity*, 42.

---

<sup>19</sup> Donoghue, *Fame Machine*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 62.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 79–80.

<sup>22</sup> Prescott, *Women, Authorship*, 112, 116, 118. Unlike men, women had to be wary of commercial publication that resembled trade or seeking personal patronage that could imply scandalous sexual liaisons. Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 109.

<sup>23</sup> A widow or female beneficiary was mentioned in all but 3 of the 13 reviews of posthumously published works by male authors.

<sup>24</sup> This analysis could also be performed focusing on provincial-authored or posthumously published material. These topics are discussed in the course of this paper, but a full assessment is outside the scope of this project.

<sup>25</sup> The periodization of the project (1733–1774) relates to the beginning of literary magazine book reviewing and the changes in law regarding authorial rights to their work. To locate reviews, titles from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)* and *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* were cross-referenced with a comprehensive index to locate reviews available; see: Forster, *Index to Book Reviews*, 3–13. A text search for “subscription” in each magazine volume available digitally via *HathiTrust* yielded additional results.

<sup>26</sup> Prescott, *Women, Authorship*, 126–27.

<sup>27</sup> Scott Hess, *Authoring the Self: Self-Representation, Authorship, and the Print Market in British Poetry from Pope through Wordsworth* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 57–58. In the context of the wider British Empire, local and national communities supported authors’ projects among themselves. In Scotland, authors and readers used subscription to “transform Scottish national identity through print” (Sher, *Enlightenment*, 61). Reviewers lauded a publication in Wales for support from the author’s countrymen; see Review of *Poems by Mr. Fenton*, *Monthly Review* 50 (1774): 408. In the American colonies, the earliest effort at subscription publication was William Bradford’s Bible in Philadelphia in 1688 and the first completed book project was Samuel Willard’s *A Compleat Body of Divinity* from Boston in 1726; see Michael Winship, “Subscription,” *Early American Studies* 16, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 778.

<sup>28</sup> Reviewers took particular note of works published for the benefit of charitable organizations. For example, *The Military Medley* by Thomas Simes was “for the benefit of a most humane and important charity, established by the Hibernian society, for the maintaining, educating, and apprenticing the orphans and children of soldiers only” for which the author collected two hundred pounds. Review of Thomas Simes, *The Military Medley*, *Monthly Review* 37 (1767): 392.

<sup>29</sup> Review of *The True State of the Case of Sarah Rippon, Widow*, *Critical Review* 1 (1756): 572.

<sup>30</sup> Review of *Memoirs of Harriet and Charlotte Meanwell*, *Critical Review* 4 (1757): 95.

<sup>31</sup> Julia Rudolph, “Property and Possession,” in *A Cultural History of Law in the Age of Enlightenment* Vol. 4, ed. Rebecca Probert and John Snape (New York: Bloomsbury

---

Academic, 2019), 114; Julia Rudolph, “Crediting Women,” *Droit & Philosophie* 11 (2019): 66–68.

<sup>32</sup> Donna T. Andrew, “‘To the Charitable and Humane’: Appeals for Assistance in the Eighteenth-Century London Press, in *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform, From the 1690s to 1850*, ed. Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998), 87–90.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 97, 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 76–77.

<sup>35</sup> Rudolph, “Property and Possession,” 123–24.

<sup>36</sup> Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174–75.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>39</sup> Turner, *Living by the Pen*, 110; Schellenberg, *Women Writers*, 111.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>43</sup> These letters were sometimes authentic but sometimes the invention of editors.

<sup>44</sup> J. Wall, “Letter,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 32 (1762): 84.

<sup>45</sup> “Letter from Dresden,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 31 (1761): 593. An excerpt from the same letter appears in *Annual Register* 4 (1761), 187.

<sup>46</sup> Rogers, “The Writer and Society,” 37.

<sup>47</sup> Review of Elizabeth Griffith, *A Wife in the Right*, *Critical Review* 34 (1772): 58; Review of Elizabeth Griffith, *A Wife in the Right*, *Universal Catalogue* (1772): 877; see also: Review of Hugh Kelly, *A Word to the Wise*, *Monthly Review* 43 (1770): 150.

<sup>48</sup> Review of *An Address Humbly Offered to the Ladies of Great-Britain, Relating to the Most Valuable Part of Ornamental Manufacture in Their Dress*, *Critical Review* 5 (1758): 75.

<sup>49</sup> Review of Henry Jones, *The Earl of Essex: A Tragedy*, *Monthly Review* 8 (1753): 225.

<sup>50</sup> Review of William Vernon, *Poems on Several Occasions*, *Monthly Review* 19 (1758): 407.

<sup>51</sup> Review of Anna Williams, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, *Monthly Review* 34 (1766): 355.

---

<sup>52</sup> Bod., J. Pros. 165a, Anna Williams, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription Essays in Verse and Prose* (London, 1762).

<sup>53</sup> Schellenberg, *Women Writers*, 99.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>55</sup> Review of Elizabeth Harrison, *Miscellanies on Moral and Religious Subjects*, *Literary Magazine* 1 (1756): 282.

<sup>56</sup> Review of Mary Leapor, *Poems on Several Occasions*, *Monthly Review* 2 (1749): 15; Review of *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn*, *Gentleman's Magazine* 21 (1751): 190; Review of *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn*, *Gentleman's Magazine* 22 (1752): 233.

<sup>57</sup> Review of *Jemima and Louisa*, *Monthly Review* 21 (1759): 82.

<sup>58</sup> Review of Mary Masters, *Familiar Letters and Poems on Several Occasions*, *Monthly Review* 13 (1755): 155. Emphasis transcribed as in original where small capitals appear.

<sup>59</sup> Prescott, *Women, Authorship*, 126.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Lister, *The Miscellaneous Works, In Prose and Verse, of Mrs. Mary Lister, of Reading, Berks. In Three Parts* (Reading, 1759), 1; Review of *Miscellaneous Works, In Prose and Verse, of Mrs. Mary Lister, of Reading, Berks*, *Monthly Review* 21 (1759): 82; Edward Stephens, *Poems on Various Subjects* (London, 1759), 2; Review of Edward Stephens, *Poems on Various Subjects*, *Monthly Review* 22 (1760): 342.

<sup>61</sup> Review of *Miscellaneous works ... Mary Lister*, 82.

<sup>62</sup> Review of *Amelia; or the Distressed Wife*, *Monthly Review* 5 (1751): 72–73; Review of C.R. Harris, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, *Critical Review* 28 (1770): 378–79.

<sup>63</sup> Review of John Blair, *Chronology and History of the World*, *Monthly Review* 11 (1754): 384; Review of William Strahan, *A Description of the Passage of Anaeas*, *Monthly Review* 9 (1754): 11.

<sup>64</sup> Review of *Love at First Sight or the History of Miss Caroline Stanhope*, *Monthly Review* 48 (1773): 155.

<sup>65</sup> Review of William Woty, *Blossoms of Helicon*, *Monthly Review* 28 (1763): 151.

<sup>66</sup> Lockwood, “Subscription-Hunters,” 124.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–24.

<sup>69</sup> Review of Elizabeth Griffith, *Amana: A Dramatic Poem*, *Critical Review* 19 (1765): 235.

<sup>70</sup> Review of Miss Smythies, *The Brothers*, *Critical Review* 7 (1759): 79.



---

<sup>71</sup> Review of *Life of Lamenther*, *Monthly Review* 46 (1772): 77. See also: Review of *Life of Lamenther*, *London Magazine* 40 (1771): 611.

<sup>72</sup> Review of *Life of Lamenther*, *Gentleman's Magazine* 42 (1772): 84.

<sup>73</sup> For a larger discussion of *The Life of Lamenther*, see: Robert Folkenflik, “Written by Herself: British Women’s Autobiography in the Eighteenth Century,” in *A History of English Autobiography*, ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 121; Folkenflik states: “Recent bibliographers list it as a novel,” but the question of autobiography versus novel perplexed readers throughout the eighteenth century.

<sup>74</sup> Review of Anne B. Poyntz, *Collection of Letters, Odes, &c.*, *Monthly Review* 40 (1769): 157.

<sup>75</sup> Review of *The Histories of Lady Frances S —, and Lady Caroline S —*, *Monthly Review* 31 (1764): 74. According to the research of Q.D. Leavis and Frank Donoghue, male writers would present themselves as women in order to escape potentially harsh reviews; see: Donoghue, *The Fame Machine*, 161; Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932), 120.

<sup>76</sup> Schellenberg, *Women Writers*, 121. The *Monthly Review* listed the Minifies’ 1769 *The Cottage* as a “staple commodity.” See Schellenberg, *Women Writers*, 128.

<sup>77</sup> Schellenberg, *Women Writers*, 132.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 132, 139.

<sup>79</sup> Review of *Fables and Tales for the Ladies*, *Monthly Review* 4 (1750): 16.

<sup>80</sup> Tanya Evans, “Unfortunate Objects”: *Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 31.

<sup>81</sup> Review of Thomas Buckridge, *Sermons*, *Monthly Review* 36 (1767): 411.

<sup>82</sup> Review of *Posthumous Works of Jeremiah Seed*, *Monthly Review* 2 (1750): 424.

<sup>83</sup> Review of Catharine Trotter, *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn*, *Gentleman's Magazine* 21 (1751): 190; “On seeing the Subscription to the late Mrs. C-----n’s Works,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 22 (1752): 233. Mira and the reference to suffrage are likely allusions to Cockburn’s well-known character Miranda, from *Love at a Loss, or The Most Votes Carries It* (1701).

<sup>84</sup> Laura Linker, “Catharine Trotter and the Humane Libertine,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 50, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 589.

<sup>85</sup> Review of Catharine Trotter, *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn*, *Monthly Review* 5 (1751): 115.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 136–37.

---

<sup>88</sup> The *Monthly Review* article appears reprinted and cited in *Universal Catalogue* (1772): 219. Review of *Conquest of Corsica*, *Critical Review* 33 (1772): 255.

<sup>89</sup> Review of *Memoirs of Harriet and Charlotte Meanwell*, *Critical Review* 4 (1757): 95; Review of *Amelia; or the distressed wife*, *Monthly Review* 5 (1751): 73.

<sup>90</sup> Jan Fergus and J. Luke Wood, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1991), 5.

<sup>91</sup> For an example of a female author seeking assistance from the Royal Literary Fund, see Heidi Hansson, "Selina Bunbury, Religion, and the Woman Writer," *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume IV: The Irish Book in English, 1800–1891*, ed. James H. Murphy (Oxford, 2011), 326.

<sup>92</sup> Emma E. Pink, "Frances Burney's *Camilla*: 'To Print My Grand Work ... by Subscription,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 1 (2006): 57.

<sup>93</sup> Schellenberg, *Women Writers*, 145.

<sup>94</sup> Pink, "Frances Burney's *Camilla*," 57.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>96</sup> Burney gathered over 1,000 subscribers and earned over £2,000 from subscription sales and copyright. For details, see: Pink, "Frances Burney's *Camilla*," 60.

<sup>97</sup> William Bryan Gates, "An Unpublished Burney Letter," *ELH* 5, no. 4 (1938): 302; [doi:10.2307/2871609](https://doi.org/10.2307/2871609).

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Bodleian Library, J. Pros. 165a, Anna Williams, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription Essays in Verse and Prose*. London, 1762.

Mary Latter, *The Miscellaneous Works, In Prose and Verse, of Mrs. Mary Latter, of Reading, Berks. In Three Parts*. Reading, 1759.

Edward Stephens, *Poems on Various Subjects*. London, 1759.

*Annual Register*, vols. 1–17. London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1758–1776.

*British Magazine*, vols. 1–7. London: Tobias Smollett, 1760–1767.

*The Critical Review*, vols. 1–38. London: Tobias Smollett, 1756–1774.

---

*The Gentleman's Magazine*, vols. 1–44. London: Edward Cave, F. Jeffries, etc., 1731–1774.

*The Literary Magazine*, vols. 1–3. London: J. Richardson, J. Wilkie, 1756–1758.

*London Magazine*, vols. 29–43. London: R. Baldwin, 1767–1774.

*Monthly Review*, vols. 1–51. London: R. Griffiths, 1749–1774.

*Political Register*, vols. 1–11. London: John Almon, 1767–1772.

*Town and Country Magazine*, vols. 1–6. London: A. Hamilton, 1769–1774.

*Universal Catalogue*, vol. 1. London: J. Bell, 1772–1773.

*Universal Museum*, vols. 1–8, London: S. Bladon and J. Coote, 1768–1774.

## Secondary Sources

Andrew, Donna T. “‘To the Charitable and Humane’: Appeals for Assistance in the Eighteenth-Century London Press.” In *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform, from the 1690s to 1850*, edited by Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes, 87–107. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Bellhouse, D.R., E.M. Renouf, R. Raut, and M.A. Bauer. “De Moivre's Knowledge Community: An Analysis of the Subscription List to the *Miscellanea Analytica*.” *Notes & Records of the Royal Society* 63 (2009): 137–62. [doi:10.1098/rsnr.2008.0017](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsnr.2008.0017).

Clapp, Sarah. “The Beginnings of Subscription Publication.” *Modern Philology* 29 (1931): 199–224. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/433632>.

Colley, Linda. *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2007.

Donoghue, Frank. *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Evans, Tanya. “‘Unfortunate Objects’: Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London.” New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Fergus, Jan, and J. Luke Wood, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1991.

Folkenflik, Robert. “‘Written by Herself’: British Women's Autobiography in the Eighteenth Century.” In *A History of English Autobiography*, edited by Adam Smyth, 119–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

---

Forster, Antonia. *Index to Book Reviews in England, 1749–1774*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1990.

Gadd, Ian. “The Stationers’ Company in England before 1710.” In *Research Handbook on the History of Copyright Law*, edited by Isabella Alexander and H. Tomás Gómez-Arostegui, 81–95. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016.

Gates, William Bryan. “An Unpublished Burney Letter.” *ELH* 5, no. 4 (1938): 302–04. doi:10.2307/2871609.

Goldgar, Anne. *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters 1680–1750*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Hansson, Heidi. “Selina Bunbury, Religion, and the Woman Writer.” *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume IV: The Irish Book in English, 1800–1891*, edited by James H. Murphy, 322–30. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Hess, Scott. *Authoring the Self: Self-Representation, Authorship, and the Print Market in British Poetry from Pope through Wordsworth*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Linker, Laura. “Catharine Trotter and the Humane Libertine.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 50, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 583–99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40927926>.

Lockwood, Thomas. “Subscription-Hunters and Their Prey.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 34.1 (2001): 121–35.

O’Flaherty, Emily. “Patrons, Peers and Subscribers: The Publication of Mary Barber’s Poems on Several Occasions (1734).” PhD diss., NUI Galway, 2013. <http://hdl.handle.net/10379/4274>.

Pink, Emma E. “Frances Burney’s *Camilla*: “To Print My Grand Work ... by Subscription.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 1 (2006): 51–68.

Prescott, Sarah. *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690–1740*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

Raven, James. *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450–1850*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Reid, Hugh. *The Nature and Uses of Eighteenth-Century Book Subscription Lists*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.

Rogers, Pat. *The Context of English Literature: The Eighteenth Century*. London: Holmes & Meier, 1978.

Rudolph, Julia. “Crediting Women.” *Droit & Philosophie* 11 (2019): 63–78.

---

———. “Property and Possession.” In *A Cultural History of Law in the Age of Enlightenment* Vol. 4, edited by Rebecca Probert and John Snape, 107–125. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Schellenberg, Betty A. *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Sher, Richard B. *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Speck, W.A. “Politicians, Peers and Publication by Subscription 1700–50.” In *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, edited by Isabel Rivers, 47–68. Leicester: Leicester University, 1982.

Stabile, Susan M. “Female Curiosities: The Transatlantic Female Commonplace Book.” In *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, edited by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly, 217–44. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008.

Staves, Susan. “Pope’s Refinement.” *Eighteenth Century* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 145–63.

Turner, Cheryl. *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Williamson, Gillian. *British Masculinity in the “Gentleman’s Magazine,” 1731 to 1815*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.

Winship, Michael. “Subscription.” *Early American Studies* 16, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 777–82. [doi: 10.1353/eam.2018.0048](https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2018.0048).