

# Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print Culture

1740–1790

Betty A. Schellenberg





## LITERARY COTERIES AND THE MAKING OF MODERN PRINT CULTURE

*Literary Coterie and the Making of Modern Print Culture, 1740–1790* offers the first study of manuscript-producing coterie as an integral element of eighteenth-century Britain's literary culture. As a corrective to literary histories assuming that the dominance of print meant the demise of a vital scribal culture, the book profiles four interrelated and influential coterie, focusing on each group's deployment of traditional scribal practices, on key individuals who served as bridges between networks, and on the esthetic and cultural work performed by the group. *Literary Coterie* also explores points of intersection between coterie and the print trade, whether in the form of individuals who straddled the two cultures; publishing events in which the two media regimes collaborated or came into conflict; literary conventions adapted from manuscript practice to serve the ends of print; or simply poetry hand-copied from magazines. Together, these instances demonstrate how scribal modes shaped modern literary production.

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*Simon Fraser University, Canada*



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## Abbreviations

For the manuscript materials quoted in this book, I have retained original spelling and punctuation wherever possible to convey the flavour of the scribal mode. Cross-outs and insertions, however, are not recorded, and I have expanded the occasional abbreviation that might have been difficult to decipher otherwise. For the most commonly referenced manuscript collections in this study, I have used the following abbreviations:

Add. MS	British Library Additional Manuscript
BLARS	Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service
Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet.	Bodleian Library English Poetry Manuscript
Ms. Bodl.	Bodleian Library Manuscript
Brotherton	Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds
Mo	Montagu Collection, Huntington Library

The print editions of letters and correspondence most frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

<i>Carter Unpublished Letters</i>	<i>Elizabeth Carter, 1717–1806: An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters</i> (2005)
<i>Correspondence of Delany</i>	<i>Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany</i> (1861)
<i>Correspondence of Dodsley</i>	<i>The Correspondence of Robert Dodsley 1733–1764</i> (1988)
<i>Correspondence of Gray</i>	<i>The Correspondence of Thomas Gray</i> (1935)
<i>Correspondence of Richardson</i>	<i>The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson</i> (1804)

<i>Correspondence on Grandison</i>	<i>Correspondence Primarily on Sir Charles Grandison (1750–1754), Vol. 10 of The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson (2015)</i>
<i>Correspondence with Edwards</i>	<i>Correspondence with George Cheyne and Thomas Edwards, Vol. 2 of The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson (2014)</i>
<i>Correspondence with Hill</i>	<i>Correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill Family, Vol. 1 of The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson (2014)</i>
<i>Letters between Carter and Talbot</i>	<i>A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot (1809)</i>
<i>Letters of Johnson</i>	<i>The Letters of Samuel Johnson (1992)</i>
<i>Letters of Montagu</i>	<i>The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with Some Letters of her Correspondence (1809–13)</i>
<i>Letters of Shenstone</i>	<i>The Letters of William Shenstone (1939)</i>
<i>Letters to White</i>	<i>The Letters to Gilbert White of Selborne from ... the Rev. John Mulso (1906)</i>
<i>Memoirs of Carter</i>	<i>Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter (1807)</i>
<i>Posthumous Works of Chapone</i>	<i>The Posthumous Works of Mrs Chapone (1807)</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### *The literary coterie in the eighteenth-century media landscape*

Different versions and styles of media history do make a difference . . . Should we be looking for a sequence of separate “ages” with ruptures, revolutions, or paradigm shifts in between, or should we be seeing more of an evolution? A progress? Different answers to questions like these suggest different intellectual projects, and they have practical ramifications for the ways that media history gets researched and written. (Gitelman, 2006)<sup>1</sup>

This book began with an intent to study networking and innovation within the world of London print professionals of the mid-eighteenth century. In the decades of the 1740s and 1750s, the world of letters functioned through a complex interweaving of traditional patronage and the commercial print trade, nurtured by the geographical and social overlap of London’s public and private worlds of politics, business, and friendship. Within this larger system, professional authors, printers, and booksellers from about 1750 increasingly took on roles as patrons (or patronage brokers) themselves. This mutuality is neatly articulated by Samuel Johnson’s famous statement that he “supported” the performance of bookseller Robert Dodsley’s tragedy *Cleone* “as well as I might; for Doddy is my patron, you know, and I would not desert him.” Even industry outsiders like the salon hostess and author Elizabeth Montagu could observe that in furthering the career of her protégé James Beattie, “our little Dilly” (bookseller Edward Dilly) “has a Soul as great as ye hugest & tallest of Booksellers” – and greater than those of the ministers and bishops who had to date been ineffective in gaining Beattie a royal pension.<sup>2</sup> Beattie was to obtain that pension soon after, but for aspiring writers such as Charlotte Lennox, it was as important to win the support of the printer and novelist Samuel Richardson in order to convince Andrew Millar to publish her breakthrough novel *The Female Quixote* as it was to gain the protection of the powerful Duke and Duchess of Newcastle. Media innovations like the general-interest magazine, the epistolary

novel written “to the moment,” the anthology as modern classic, and the niche market children’s book, developed by Edward Cave, Richardson, Dodsley, and John Newbery, respectively, were rewarded not only with prosperity but also with social recognition.<sup>3</sup>

Yet as I examined the correspondences of figures such as Richardson and Dodsley, I was struck by the fact that for these successful professionals, one of their principal investments of time and social capital, and seemingly one of their sources of greatest pride, was in their active membership in a *literary coterie* – that is, a select group of individuals linked by ties of friendship founded upon, or deepened by, mutual encouragement to original composition; the production and exchange of manuscript materials to celebrate the group and further its members’ interests; and the criticism of one another’s work and of shared reading materials. Somehow, the horizon of literary aspiration for these individuals was different from what I had expected of a system structured entirely according to the norms and values of the medium of print – perhaps, like several of the coterie members discussed in this study, I too had my presuppositions about the narrowly commercial focus of a denizen of the trade. At any rate, the more I looked, the more I saw significant areas of literary production organized as much around scribal coteries as around the printing press. It became clear that one critic’s pronouncement about eighteenth-century British literary culture – “Gone was the intimacy which manuscript seemed to offer. Gone too was the authenticity which manuscript seemed to guarantee” – was an overstatement.<sup>4</sup> Scribal culture, with its appeals of intimacy and authenticity, was not in fact gone; a more accurate description, from the perspective of the mid-eighteenth-century person of letters, would have been that this was a culture in which the media of script and print, with their distinctive practices and priorities, were nevertheless in close conversation, sometimes interdependent, sometimes mutually antagonistic, but between them offering a rich array of options for literary expression, exchange, and preservation. To echo Lisa Gitelman’s terms from the epigraph above, as the media history I was conceptualizing changed, so did my intellectual project, and this in turn had practical ramifications for the book I was researching and writing. My original plan, then, was reconceived as an attempt to immerse myself in a foreign, hybrid media environment – one just familiar enough, at the start of print’s overwhelming dominance of forms of large-scale communication, to be deceptively transparent at first glance, and yet just alien enough to pose puzzles and offer up local variations – in many ways, the



kind of environment with which we have again become acquainted as inhabitants of a swiftly reorganizing media landscape of our own.

*Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print Culture, 1740–1790* offers the first broad examination of the workings of manuscript-exchanging coteries as an integral and influential element of literary culture in eighteenth-century Britain.<sup>5</sup> Such a study is needed to reorient literary history of the mid- to late eighteenth century from a narrow focus on the history of print productions to a more inclusive and accurate history of writing in this era of print trade consolidation and expansion. My book's primary aim is to demonstrate the pervasiveness of social networks actively composing and exchanging letters, poetry, and literary prose pieces; the functions of key individuals as nodes and as bridges within these networks; and the esthetic and social work performed by their production, exchange, and dissemination of materials. While a coterie's first allegiance is internal, the eighteenth-century coterie undeniably existed in conjunction with print, and thus the second overarching goal of this book is to explore points of intersection between coteries and the print trade to demonstrate how scribal modes of literary production shaped the marketing and conventions of print in ways that were not simply nostalgic but in fact associated with modernity. These intermediation points include individuals who served as bridges between these cultures; publishing events in which the two cultures collaborated or came into conflict; and forms (both genres and conventions of presentation) adapted from manuscript practice to serve the ends of the print medium.

### Literary histories and a theory of media succession

In recent decades, influential studies of the history of print and its culture in Britain and the Atlantic world have rightly fine-tuned our account of the centuries-long process whereby this technology penetrated the habits of thought, the understanding and management of knowledge, and even the structures of social life to the point of becoming the dominant medium of communication. For historians of the book and book culture such as Adrian Johns and David McKitterick, this point of print's saturation of British society, if not of all corners of its nascent empire, was the mid- to late eighteenth century. In separate arguments, Johns and McKitterick assert that this moment could not occur until the productions of the press took on the perceived qualities of trustworthiness, permanence, and stability – and therefore, authority – in place of the untrustworthiness and ephemerality associated with print in previous centuries.<sup>6</sup> Johns and

McKitterick agree further in pointing to the self-consciousness of print as an industry – as evidenced by the appearance of a self-reflexive, trade-oriented discourse of the history of printing which was absorbed in the latter decades of the century into progressivist histories of Europe and England – as the mark of a medium come of age. Alvin Kernan's 1987 study of *Printing Technology, Letters, and Samuel Johnson* traced in detail the influence of these changes in the significance and perception of the trade on the emergence of modern models of authorship and reading. While footnoting the “continuing vitality of manuscript culture in the period,” Michael Suarez summarizes “the main story” of the book in eighteenth-century Britain as “the efflorescence of a comprehensive ‘print culture’ . . . a phenomenon that had profound effects on ‘the forging of the nation’ – on politics and commerce, on literature and cultural identity, on education and the dissemination of knowledge, and on the conduct of everyday life.”<sup>7</sup>

Nor have leading historians of scribal culture quarreled, in the main, with these generalizations. Arthur Marotti, Peter Beal, Harold Love, and Margaret Ezell have argued powerfully for the central significance of manuscript systems to the social and literary culture of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, despite earlier generalizations about cultural shifts dating from the arrival of the printing press. Observing that “by denying the significance of script authorship, manuscript circles, and social texts, we have in the name of democracy [associated with print] apparently disenfranchised the participation of the majority of the literate population of the period,” Ezell insists that an “older notion of the text as a dynamic and collaborative process . . . coexisted [with a proprietary view of authorship based in print technology] well into the mid-eighteenth century.”<sup>8</sup> As Ezell's conclusion suggests, however, one implication of these studies is that print has overwhelmingly “arrived” by the middle decades of the eighteenth century, with the ultimate shift in allegiance of the literary author from script to print represented by the high-profile career of Alexander Pope. Love sees manuscript circulation as increasingly devalued from the reign of George I onward, and as “aberrant” from at least 1800, because of an increasing association of print publication with a required standard of quality; “What was kept in manuscript was increasingly what lacked the quality required for print publication.” Beal admits that “people continued to keep commonplace books of various kinds throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” but generalizes that they tend to be less interesting to scholars today than those of an earlier period, “perhaps . . . because they belong less to a flourishing manuscript culture and because most of what they contain is trivial and ephemeral material

copied largely from contemporary printed sources.”<sup>9</sup> Along these lines, accounts of the scribal practices of individual authors such as Frances Burney in the latter decades of the century have implied both that these authors were exceptional in the extent and significance of their manuscript production and that this production was subordinate and preliminary to their production of material for the stage or press. Thus, where it is acknowledged that manuscript production and circulation persisted in its own right in this period, and not merely as a preliminary step toward print publication, the tendency has been to treat such practices as anachronistic, aberrant, or simply not worth attending to.<sup>10</sup>

A few media historians, however, have challenged these attempts to identify a definitive moment of succession, tracing rather the changing meanings of manuscript in coexistence with print. In a provocative essay entitled “In Praise of Manuscripts,” Nicholas Barker has argued that manuscript culture itself did not exist until it became an alternative to participation in print exchange during the sixteenth century; it then took shape as “a new kind of communication, linking writers with readers through a system of diffusion, that all its participants cultivated to serve complex and sometimes conflicting ends.” McKitterick’s study of *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* dedicates its [first chapter](#) to correcting the misunderstandings that have resulted from an artificial separation, in histories of print technology, between script and print. In this spirit, Donald Reiman earlier devoted an entire study to what he designates “modern manuscripts” – those originating in the period of print dominance, between the advent of print in the late fifteenth century and the shift to electronic modes of text transmission in the later twentieth century. Reiman classifies such manuscripts as private, confidential, or public, according to the intention of their author that the audience be restricted to a specific person or persons, to a group sharing values with the author, or to a multiple and unknown audience, respectively.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars have been furthering our understanding of scribal activity in the eighteenth century through the examination of particular cases. Ezell discusses Pope’s early career as an example of a media ecology wherein manuscript and print cultures “existed simultaneously (and . . . competitively and companionably).” Kathryn King’s analysis of Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s “tactical” deployment of the two media systems suggests a historical moment wherein more than one medium might present itself as a viable and effective means of communication, a claim she has elaborated in a 2010 overview of “Scribal and Print Publication” for women writers of the early eighteenth century. Sarah Prescott has similarly argued

that women's literary history up to 1740, at least, should be understood as adhering to a "pluralist" model of complementary manuscript and print cultures. The mixed-gender 1720s urban coterie of Aaron Hill features centrally in Prescott's discussion; its social dynamics and poetic production as discussed by Christine Gerrard in her biography of Hill strongly support the designation of this group as a literary coterie. Similarly, Stephen Karian's book-length study of *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* not only details Swift's increasing and various use of the manuscript medium as a means of preserving and circulating his work but also presents this author's practice as symptomatic of a state of media "interactivity and fluidity," in which "authors, readers, and the texts themselves modulate and adapt to the differing media." The Reiman study referred to above links the latter half of the eighteenth century with the Romantic era's increasing fetishization of the autograph as a manifestation of the growing "cult of the personal" – what others have described as the growing "aura" of the manuscript in the age of print. In her examination of John Trusler's 1769 production of mechanically reproduced "handwritten" sermons for Anglican clergymen, for example, Christina Lupton demonstrates how the aura of sincerity and guaranteed meaning could be exploited by a remediation of print as script in a phenomenon unique to this historical moment.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, script has never disappeared from the picture, despite current alarms about the lost art of handwriting. But the challenge is to historically nuance its cultural contribution, rather than simply to carry forward – or backward – an array of meanings from another era. My discussion of manuscript travel writing in [Chapter 6](#) of this study will illustrate how the "repurposing" of scribal practices and forms, in this case as marking the authority of the gentleman and the poetic genius, carries them forward through the final decades of the century. Primarily, however, this book aims to put the spotlight on an element of eighteenth-century literary culture whose prestige, appeal, and practical function were related to its operation in a medium to which little attention has been paid by literary historians. If it is to contemporary coteries that much of eighteenth-century literary print culture looked for its values, its formal models, and its source material, then an awareness of these groups and the mechanisms of their influence is necessary to an understanding of the history of print publication. Moreover, the close interdependence of several key coteries and the London print trade in the middle decades of the century, in part due to the attitudes and relationships of figures such as Thomas Birch,

Samuel Richardson, and Robert Dodsley, creates a unique intermedial moment that is worthy of closer attention.

Such historical reconsiderations corroborate recent theoretical critiques of a simplistic succession model of media history. Logically speaking, it is problematic to extrapolate from the reality of print's expansion the conclusion that scribal production was a thing of the past. Theorists of media historiography, especially of so-called media shifts, have noted that no medium is pure or static but is rather, in the words of David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, "touched by and in turn touches its neighbors and rivals"; "to comprehend the aesthetics of transition, we must resist notions of media purity." Thorburn and Jenkins posit several modes of interaction: that "established and infant systems may co-exist for an extended period," "older media may develop new functions and find new audiences," "competing media may strengthen or reinforce one another," or "significant hybrid or collaborative forms . . . [may] emerge." In his turn, Charles Acland has lamented the "paucity of research [that] has concentrated on the tenacity of existing technologies or on their related materials and practices that do not magically vanish with the appearance of each successive technology." These scholars are responding to Raymond Williams' foundational definition of the "residual" as that which "has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present."<sup>13</sup> It is as just such a residual medium, formed in the past but functioning as an effective element of the cultural process in the present, that this study considers the medium of the handwritten manuscript. This is not to deny the well-established fact of the ever-expanding demographic, geographical, and conceptual reach of print. Rather, I examine the particular equilibrium in existence between manuscript and print systems in the middle and later decades of the eighteenth century. In fact, I will suggest that even over these few decades, it is a question of multiple and shifting equilibria, as scribally oriented coteries adapt their practice to the increasing availability of print, and as the print trade devises new ways to interact with, and exploit, the possibilities of manuscript production. It is precisely this unique set of circumstances which makes manuscript activity of the eighteenth century, not trivial and uninteresting, *pace* Beal, but rather, an object demanding critical attention.

### The eighteenth-century literary coterie

The extent of active practices of manuscript production and circulation in eighteenth-century Britain has been obscured in part because of our

reliance as literary historians on the print record. However, one need only consider the “hypermediacy” exhibited by so many influential mid-century print publications, offering themselves as a letter to a patron, or a collection of epistles between friends, or a manuscript found “in an old buroe,” for an indication that the norms of sociable manuscript exchange continued to wield some kind of influence not only over its most dedicated adherents but also over the wider reading public.<sup>14</sup> In a sense, the evidence is hiding in plain sight, and we may begin simply by considering such apparently awkward and transparently false devices, not as symptoms of nostalgia or a naive understanding of fictional truth, but rather as gestures toward familiar and authoritative modes of exchange. Moyra Haslett’s 2003 *Pope to Burney, 1714–1779: Scriblerians to Bluestockings* has provided a detailed examination of the wide array of generic forms common to eighteenth-century print, particularly the epistolary novel, the verse epistle, the dialog, and the periodical, which invoke the media of conversation and script. Haslett’s useful study, however, illustrates the limitations of an exclusively print-oriented approach to the evidence of manuscript exchange in the period. As noted at the start of my introduction, while recognizing the characteristic sociability of eighteenth-century print-based authors and their productions, she associates this sociability with an attempt to recuperate a literary culture that was irrevocably “gone.” As a result the social circles she selects for discussion – primarily the Scriblerians and the Bluestockings of her subtitle – are examined in terms of the materials they generated for print, and the book’s focus is on the forms of sociability enacted in printed works and encouraged in their readers: forms of sociability that are imagined or virtual in some way.<sup>15</sup> Believing that “different versions and styles of media history do make a difference,” my study sets out to examine persistent coterie activity in the period, not simply as a source of copy for the printing press – although it certainly was that – or as a compensatory measure, but as a living phenomenon in its own right, evolving and adapting not only to new pressures such as the increasing association of print publication with fame but also to new opportunities like the massive expansion and improvement of postal service in the period.

Thus, I aim in this study to illuminate the workings of coterie in a period in which media networks were increasingly complex, far-flung, and commercialized. I will do so by examining several key groups that were highly visible to their contemporaries and that touched many lives through the models of cultivation and the possibility of participation in up-to-the-minute literary culture that they offered. One irony of the general lack of attention paid to this eighteenth-century phenomenon is the fact that this

is the period in which the term “coterie” enters the English lexicon. Bearing with it from France the negative association of an organized cabal, the label “coterie” is first offered in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a 1760s synonym for “club.” Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Montagu are thus right on time and on tone when the former teases Montagu in 1761 about her and Carter being subservient members of the aging, card-playing “Lady Ab:s [Abercorn’s] Tunbridge Cotterie” and the latter writes in mock anger in 1771 from the same fashionable watering-hole to her close friend George, Lord Lyttelton, “PS We are all in a violent rage that your Lordship calls our Sober Society by ye name, the horrid name of *Coterie*.” Yet just a year later in each case, these women invoke the notion more positively, Talbot reporting that she “battled stoutly for the *coterie of Beaux esprits*” (presumably the Montagu circle) against an individual who thought him- or herself too “critically wise” for the group, and Montagu writing about a visiting French marquis who writes elegant verses that “I wish he may spend this winter in London he will certainly be an agreeable addition to our Cotterie.”<sup>16</sup>

Where the term “coterie” is invoked in scholarly discussions of the period’s literary production and authorship, it is employed in effect as a loose synonym for “circle” or “network.” The most regular invocation I have found is in Haslett’s study of literary sociability; although not explicitly defined, coteries in her most specific usage appear to be more or less equivalent to “clubs,” “cabals,” or “special interest groups,” as in the dictionary examples just noted, and at their broadest, represent just one phenomenon of the period’s characteristic “public sphere conversations,” parallel to print trade congers, anthologies, and circulating library user groups.<sup>17</sup> While Haslett’s discussion thus identifies an important and widespread print phenomenon of the time, one that is a starting point of my investigation, I define a literary coterie more precisely as a physically realized entity, a relatively cohesive social group whose membership may undergo shifts over time, but which is held together as a continuous identifiable whole by some combination of kinship, friendship, clientage, and at least occasional geographical proximity. Most importantly, a literary coterie’s cohesiveness is based on, and is maintained to a significant degree by, strong shared literary interests, expressed in the scribal exchange of original compositions, reading materials, and critical views.<sup>18</sup> The specificity of this definition must be underscored. A couple of the individuals central to my study – Samuel Richardson and Elizabeth Montagu – are well known to have been surrounded by extensive networks of readers and fellow-authors,

in Richardson's case, and by cultural leaders, including the most prominent intellectual women of the day, in the case of Montagu's "Bluestocking" assemblies. The coteries I am looking at are more restricted clusters within these large networks; while their boundaries cannot be defined absolutely, there is an intensity and reciprocity of their scribal literary relationships that makes them stand apart from the looser arrangements in which their members are involved. Although I will draw on terms such as "circle," "group," or "network" as stylistic variations of this key term, then, the social formation with which this book is consistently concerned is the literary coterie.

The four coteries whose character and influence are featured in this book, while certainly not the only ones active during this period in Britain (provincial and Scottish literary circles, for example, have begun to invite similar examination<sup>19</sup>), have been selected because of their high visibility in their time and their interconnections with each other, whether synchronous or sequential. These groups are the Yorke–Grey coterie of the 1740s and 1750s, the Highmore–Edwards–Mulso coterie centered around Samuel Richardson in the early 1750s, the coterie surrounding Elizabeth Montagu and George, Lord Lyttelton from about 1758 to 1773, and that formed by William Shenstone of the Leasowes, near Birmingham (at times referred to as the Warwickshire coterie), in the 1740s and 1750s. While each existed for its own purposes and exhibited its own distinctive character, all were engaged in some way with the London-based print trade. This engagement continued beyond the most active life of the coterie into ensuing decades, in some cases characterized by hostility, but most often by cooperation. Either way, these groups influenced what emerged in the eighteenth century as literary culture – writing, reading, and critical discussion of works of imagination. While some of their members have retained a place in literary histories of the time, others virtually disappeared as the groups they were part of faded from view. Chapter 7 of the book explores obscurity even further: it is devoted to a handful of unknown coteries that have left their traces in personal manuscript miscellanies without being fully identifiable either as a collective or in terms of their individual members. A number of figures who played key cross-coterie roles in relation to the four groups featured appear and reappear at multiple points in this study; these are Catherine Talbot, Thomas Edwards, Hester Mulso Chapone, Elizabeth Carter, and George Lyttelton. Another, Samuel Johnson, functions as a kind of counter-coterie force in a number of key instances.



### Media choice and methodology

As already noted, the eighteenth century in Britain was a period of self-consciousness and innovation in the London-based print trade. Accompanying these innovations, Samuel Johnson's periodical writings of the 1750s addressed head-on such concerns as the ephemerality of pamphlet publications and the perceived flood of derivative writing by underqualified hacks that dogged representations of the print trade, arguing that the book, as a repository of a civilization's accumulated knowledge, was the form ideally qualified to respond to these concerns.<sup>20</sup> McKitterick has noted that proof-reading by authors or even by editors hired by booksellers became the norm in response to the demands of knowledgeable readers for accuracy and higher production values, as part of a new "notion of quality control in manufacturing of all kinds."<sup>21</sup> Hence, the stabilization of the print medium's cultural function: with an increased perception of printed materials as fixed and reliable, the potential of print technology for social uses such as permanent information storage and dissemination across geographical and class barriers came into focus.

But the long-established media alternatives of oral communication and scribal culture were also flourishing – the oral as a rapidly urbanizing middling and gentry social stratum organized itself around coffee-house conversation, clubs, and salons, and the scribal as the developing communications networks of a united Britain and its growing commercial empire, taking advantage of improvements in the post and in transportation networks, fostered a sophisticated culture of letter-writing. Eve Tavor Bannet has linked the rapid increase in production of letter-writing manuals in the eighteenth century to the need to organize the empire and to enable an expanding range of social groups to improve their socioeconomic status through the manuscript letter as vehicle. From the perspective of the colonies, Matt Cohen, in his recent work on communications in early New England, replaces a simplistic model of literate settler versus oral native cultures with the synchronous trope of a "networked wilderness," which he conceives of as a "multimedia, continuous topography of communication techniques." Even beyond, Adriana Craciun has traced the inscription of what she calls "site-specific" media such as ice and rocks in the history of Arctic exploration. Susan E. Whyman's *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* makes in some ways the most sweeping and provocative claims for the importance of script in this century, arguing through detailed analysis of the archives of middling-sort and worker family correspondences that the widespread development and practice of

“epistolary literacy” offered these groups a means of maintaining and improving their socioeconomic positions, concomitantly serving as their primary mode of engagement with the literary culture of the day.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of the four coteries comprising the principal part of this study, extensive surviving correspondences offer a rich record of an active culture of literary production, circulation, and criticism, guided by self-consciously articulated values and rules of exchange. When portions of some of these correspondences were published in the early nineteenth century, they tended to be stripped of greetings, messages to be conveyed to other members of the circle, and mentions of poems enclosed or books borrowed – in short, of the day-to-day work involved in keeping a script-based literary coterie functioning. Often focusing on such “noise,” this study is founded on analysis of the manuscript correspondence between members of the Yorke–Grey, Richardson, and Montagu coteries, as well as on nineteenth-century and more recent scholarly editions of Richardson, Bluestocking, Shenstone, and Dodsley correspondence. Supplementing this evidence are findings from archival work on manuscript poetry collections compiled by members of the gentry and middle classes and more large-scale analyses of patterns of reception revealed in newspapers and periodicals of the day. In the latter respect, I have seen myself as working in the spirit of Franco Moretti in his argument for “distant reading,” that is, for the necessity of considering quantitative evidence in the construction of literary history, as a means of “widen[ing] the domain of the literary historian, and enrich[ing] its internal problematic.” While my study of William Shenstone’s afterlife in the magazines has benefitted from such an approach, I have found it necessary nevertheless to examine the findings of broad-based searches individually to determine their meaning.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, I have laid particular emphasis on epistolary evidence of the self-conscious choice to carry out a literary action in one medium – whether print or script – and its forms rather than another, as offering insight into their respective cultural meanings. By seeking out such moments of choice, I am myself choosing an analytical scale much more focused than that of Clifford Siskin and William Warner, who have recently claimed that the essence of the period in Western history often called “the Enlightenment,” coinciding roughly with the time frame of this study, consists in the creation, proliferation, and saturation of mediation in every aspect of human experience; in short, Enlightenment is an event in the history of mediation.<sup>24</sup> While many of Siskin and Warner’s claims are compatible with those of this project, I am interested in the experience of media self-consciousness at the

local and individual level, where an unusual richness of possibility and a new pressure to make one's mark were often the manifestations of the media moment. At the same time, in speaking of choice I do not wish to imply a naively over-simplified model of individualistic trajectories that would in reality have been strongly influenced by an actor's status, kinship relations, education, economic means, religious persuasion, gender, and geographical location. It is simply impossible to understand fully the motivations that led Catherine Talbot to eschew the circulation of her work despite the encouragement of both her scribal and more print-oriented networks – or, conversely, that prompted her more obscure contemporary Thomas Phillibrown to carefully copy two sonnets in imitation of John Donne produced as a poetic contest between his friends Foster Webb and John Hawkins, along with the letter of adjudication by a third member of his circle, Moses Browne. I am also not suggesting that any of these choices is in itself unique or culturally transformative but rather that it offers insight into a rich and transforming media landscape. In this respect, such moments are representative, but they are also constitutive, bringing into focus the principle articulated by Williams with respect to broadcasting – that the familiar forms of media, as social institutions, are not predestined by the technology itself, but rather the effects of “a set of particular social decisions, in particular circumstances, which were then so widely if imperfectly ratified that it is now difficult to see them as decisions rather than as (retrospectively) inevitable results.”<sup>25</sup>

Cohen's notion of a continuous multimedia topography of communication techniques is useful for the time and subject of my study: if participants in England's literary culture of the eighteenth century were neither pilgrims in an alien land nor Native Americans coping with uninvited guests, they were nevertheless feeling their way through a fluid landscape of interpenetrating media offering competing possibilities for inscription. In the case of the Yorke–Grey coterie, for example, print is used in highly controlled and restricted ways, whereas for the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie it offers a means to do good across a wide social sphere. On the other hand, the successful novelist Samuel Richardson invites correspondents to take his novel *Sir Charles Grandison* “off-line,” so to speak, by taking on the voices of individual characters and producing a collaborative continuation. It was the flourishing state of each of these modes of communication in the mid-eighteenth century, I would argue, that created a sense of media choice and a self-consciousness about such choice that we might recognize today as we decide whether a printed book,

a website, a blog, a tweet, a phone call, or a meeting at the local coffee shop is the best mode for our next act of communication.

At stake in the choice of medium is social power or agency. As Cohen puts it for the various communications systems of early New England, these systems “were both occasions for and sites of contest for control over social and economic power because they offered individuals alternative and little-understood ways to gain agency across cultural and linguistic divides.”<sup>26</sup> For women and men of letters in England, there certainly were significant barriers between differing status, gender, and education levels. One of the most revealing discoveries of the research for this book has been the degree to which eighteenth-century coteries, while undoubtedly associated with social prestige, became the means by which middling men and women were enabled to cross class barriers through the personal connections forged by correspondence and literary exchange. In this respect my understanding of the function of mid-eighteenth-century coterie membership differs slightly, but I think significantly, from that of Deborah Heller and Stephen Heller in their recent analysis of what they term, after Georg Simmel, the “crosscutting” quality of the period’s literary networks; while for Heller and Heller the social force of these groups derives from their privileging of chosen friendship above traditional affiliations such as kinship or clientage, it is my view that the cultural power of various literary coteries arises out of some combination of the two that lends a unique character to each.<sup>27</sup> Although it may seem paradoxical, I will argue that a persistent association with social elites enabled the continuing prestige of coterie literary production in eighteenth-century culture generally, and in print specifically, while the tendency of the eighteenth-century coterie to function as a meritocracy was one of its distinctive characteristics.

For women in particular, the pursuit of coterie membership, especially membership in a mixed-gender coterie, could be a conduit to fame or print publication or both, but more fundamentally, it inspired composition and innovation, instilled confidence, and ultimately, created authorial identities with a status and respectability difficult to achieve by an unknown author moving directly into print. Elizabeth Rowe’s somewhat earlier career is an illustrative precursor. Prescott has argued for the importance of a status doubleness in the function of the Longleat and Hertford coteries for Rowe: these at once refigured the patronage–client relationship as “one of friendly intimacy” and “added to the popularity and marketability of her work.”<sup>28</sup> The principle applies to the likes of Thomas Edwards, Elizabeth Carter, Hester Mulso Chapone, and William Shenstone as well. The kind of agency derived from – indeed, actively fostered by – the

eighteenth-century coterie conferred a degree of social and cultural power, whether on an author or a genre or an esthetic. This book, then, will tell a number of stories of how systems of scribal exchange were used to construct and underwrite cultural power and how that power was used, often to enhance print productions.

In analyzing evidence from manuscript correspondences and the apparatus of print – advertisements, paratexts, reviews, periodical essays, and the like – I have benefitted greatly from the work of those literary historians already cited who have established ground rules for talking about the persistence of scribal culture in the centuries immediately following the advent of print technology. Margaret Ezell has modeled how to make the invisible visible, with respect to the scribal modes of women’s writing prior to the mid-eighteenth century and to “social authorship” of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries more generally. In so doing, she has identified some of the conventions of manuscript production and exchange as they appear in such unexpected places as the early career of Alexander Pope and the 1692–94 *Gentleman’s Journal*.<sup>29</sup> Love, in offering an account of the political importance of scribal culture to post-interregnum English history, has argued convincingly for detaching the notion of publication from a particular medium, defining it rather as movement from the private realm of what he calls “creativity” to the public realm of consumption, marked by the moment “at which the initiating agent (who will not necessarily be the author or even acting with the approval of the author) knowingly relinquishes control over the future social use of that text.”<sup>30</sup> Together with Reiman, these writers have stressed that scribal circulation tends to occur within spaces that blur rigid public–private distinctions – in communities whose boundaries are defined by social groupings such as kinship, common beliefs or interests, shared membership in institutions such as the church or the military, or geographical proximity<sup>31</sup> – hence their terminology of “social authorship,” “reserved publication,” or “confidential publication.”<sup>32</sup>

Looking more closely at the values and mechanisms of scribal culture and publication, Love and Ezell have noted a deep-rooted habit of transcription, a relative informality and frankness of style, a “delight in mixture,” and a general unconcern to distinguish between individual authors contributing to a collection or to attribute works accurately.<sup>33</sup> Arthur Marotti, in *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (1995), has discussed in even greater detail the features of scribal authorship and the productions which distinguish it from the developing medium of print – features such as an open-ended, non-individualistic understanding

of the composition process; the socially embedded, or “occasional,” nature of such compositions; a unity created by social context (for example, a place of origin like the Inns of Court) rather than by uniformity of style or skill; and the related prevalence of certain forms, such as answers, imitations, epitaphs, and epigrams, and of potentially offensive subject matter. Paul Trolander and Zeynep Tenger, in *Sociable Criticism in England, 1625–1725*, have turned their attention more specifically to the literary critical practices of coteries, characterized by a communal, “amendment” approach to the refinement of a work, whereby criticism is an expression of social obligations, and literary activity functions internally to “create and build social bonds,” which in turn serve the group as a whole “by establishing its social, political, and cultural prestige.”<sup>34</sup>

This invaluable historical work on the structures and practices of coteries has made it clear that a coterie is more than the sum of its individual parts: it is a set of relations. In this respect, a coterie is a form of network as defined by sociologists; I have also benefitted, therefore, from the contributions of social network analysis in generalizing the structures of networks and in defining terms for their description and study. While I have chosen not to attempt quantitative analyses of any of the groups I will be examining,<sup>35</sup> I will draw on several of these key concepts and terms in the chapters to follow – in particular, the notions of network density and multiplexity of ties between members; of the individual motivations that might influence the relative density or openness of a particular network; of the varying roles played by individuals or “nodes” in a network as a function of their relations with other members; and of the significance of members of networks who serve as “bridges” or “brokers” – individuals such as Thomas Birch and Elizabeth Carter, for example – in the communication of information, manuscript materials, and new ideas across “structural holes” between groups. Bruno Latour’s insistence, in what he calls Actor Network Theory, that the social is continually created and recreated by the very transactions that forge it and that non-human agents are “actors” in such shifting constructions, has influenced my emphasis on the unique and continually reconfiguring characters of different coteries and on the function of places, genres, and tropes, as well as key human actors, in the story I am telling. In general, however, I will be assuming that social conditions external to any particular network – for example, stereotypes about country versus city life, codes invoked in communications between members of different status groups, or the rules known to govern manuscript exchange between members of any coterie – create

a climate of expectation within that network. What becomes interesting in this light is how an individual group might negotiate and refine those expectations, or reject them altogether.<sup>36</sup>

### The plan of the book

This study focuses on the five decades of 1740–90, from the formation of the coterie centered at the estate of Wrest Park upon the marriage of Philip Yorke and Jemima Campbell in 1740, to the transmediation of coterie travel writing into the printed domestic tour guide in the 1780s (with a follow-through beyond 1790 in the case of the afterlife of William Shenstone). Its overall arc is thus roughly chronological, moving from the casual interpenetration of manuscript- and print-based cultures characteristic of the small, London-centered literary world of the 1740s to a more institutionalized, complex, and geographically extensive print system with which various elements of coterie practice coexisted in various states of equilibrium in the latter decades of the century. At first glance, this broad change might suggest that coterie culture moves from a position of superior cultural authority to a state of embattlement and decline. In the final dozen or so years covered by this book, coterie sociability and its practices make cameo appearances in print as reified objects of representation, often functioning paradoxically as ineffectual yet threatening phenomena to be distinguished from the media system of print, as in the case of Frances Burney's play *The Witlings*, composed in 1779, and Boswell's account of the quarrel over Samuel Johnson's "Life of Lyttelton." This sequestering of script, however, belies the intimacy of its ongoing relation to print as its media "other." Thus, we also see representations of the coterie as a rhetorical strategy authorizing some of print's most "upwardly mobile" forms, as in Thomas West's 1778 *A Guide to the Lakes: Dedicated to the Lovers of Landscape Studies, and to All Who have Visited, or Intend to Visit the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire*, with its invocation of a tradition of leisured gentlemen exchanging epistolary travel accounts. And my final chapter will trace the consistent appeal of the literary coterie to relatively obscure compilers of poetry miscellanies from the 1740s right through to the 1790s, even as they increasingly engaged with materials from magazines and anthologies. The narrative I will present, then, is one not of decline but of constantly shifting local equilibria between the coterie and the commercial print trade. I will examine cases of collaboration, mutual exploitation, and the occasional heightened tension, analyzing what these

episodes reveal about eighteenth-century media ecology and the stakes involved in its shifts and adjustments.

**Chapter 1** profiles two interpenetrating coteries. One, the Yorke–Grey coterie formed around the newly married Philip Yorke, eldest son of the Lord Chancellor and the future second Earl Hardwicke, and Jemima Campbell, Marchioness Grey, with its geographical center at Wrest, initially seems oriented toward the past, as Whig social elites and their clients exchange occasional poetry, play witty epistolary games, and carry out the work of patronage, influencing public opinion, and finding places or livings. The other, centered round Samuel Richardson, Susanna Highmore, Thomas Edwards, and Hester Mulso in the early 1750s, appears the opposite – fundamentally urban and arising out of the printer Richardson’s publishing success as author of the novel *Clarissa*. Yet my analysis will show not only how each functioned according to the established rules of scribal exchange but also how each group’s distinctive character grew out of its historical situation and broader social context.

Thus, the Yorke–Grey coterie of the 1740s, to its contemporaries, signified the potential of literary culture in several respects: in its precocious, morally serious talent, exemplified above all by its confidential publication *Athenian Letters* and the promise this held out for the nation’s political and literary future; in the central participation of talented women such as the Marchioness Grey and Catherine Talbot; and in the cross-media alliance formed between Philip Yorke and Thomas Birch, who together played an important role in the development of national practices of manuscript preservation and access, especially through the founding of the British Museum. The Richardson coterie, while less prepossessing socially and politically, interfaced with the Yorke–Grey coterie not only in mutual awareness and respect but specifically in the persons of Talbot and Edwards, members of both. These intersections in themselves indicate the social and media fluidity of the 1740s and 1750s, when a self-made printer could aspire to the sociable pleasures of the coterie as he had represented them in his fictions, and the members of an elite coterie could seek out the acquaintance of a novelist whose social contribution through print they wished to endorse. Nevertheless, the inequalities of age and gender at the heart of the Richardson coterie, in particular between the author and the much younger Susanna Highmore and Hester Mulso, appear to have created an imbalance that led to its dissolution in the mid-1750s. The final portion of this chapter will present evidence for the surprising degree of fame achieved by the young poet and epistolary



polemicist Mulso through the cultural influence of this coterie, despite its short life.

My [second chapter](#) traces the progress of Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Robinson Montagu through the 1750s toward the formation of a new, mixed-gender coterie that coalesced around the central figures of Elizabeth Montagu and George, Lord Lyttelton in the late 1750s. Despite the waning of Montagu's connection to the Duchess of Portland's circle and the failure of Carter's attempted promotion of Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* periodical, I suggest that the decade involved for these two women a successful search for a circle combining sociability with influence and intellectual – specifically literary – stimulation. Montagu's program of self-improvement through friendship and Carter's admired and financially rewarding subscription publication of *All the Works of Epictetus* brought them together in 1758, a few years after Montagu had won the admiration of Lyttelton, and two years before her intense connection with William Pulteney, Lord Bath, completed the inner circle. I attend particularly to the two most productive periods of this coterie: the early years of 1758–62 and the later period of 1769–73, terminating in the death of Lyttelton.<sup>37</sup> After reviewing the modes of scribal authorship practiced by this coterie, particularly the familiar letter and occasional poem, this chapter details the group's strategic deployment of print for its own projects as well as those of protégés such as Hester Mulso Chapone. Thus, I return to the literary life of Chapone during her widowhood from 1761, elucidating the fine balance of superior wealth and social status versus moral monitorship that allowed Chapone to thrive under the auspices of this coterie and made Montagu uniquely suitable as patron and instigator of her client's successful move into print authorship. While the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie was highly effective as a platform from which to launch writings into print, Catherine Talbot, despite her close friendship with Carter and her own role as facilitator of print initiatives, kept her distance from this coterie. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Talbot's avoidance of full participation even in coterie literary exchange because of the excess of fame it might engender.

Addressing the interface of print and script media systems in the middle decades of the century from the perspective of the individual rather than the collective, [Chapter 3](#) takes as its starting point a generalized social problem: the felt uselessness of the life of the unmarried, well-educated, genteel woman or man of limited means in the middle of the eighteenth century. While coterie life has with some reason been portrayed as the resort of a social elite content to preserve its cultural prestige through mutual reinforcement and restriction of

access, I show how Edwards, Talbot, Carter, and Chapone articulated strikingly similar existential crises. For such individuals, participation in coterie life could offer access to cultural influence, and hence to a sense of meaningful existence. In Carter's and Chapone's cases, this effect is realized most fully in the story of their print publications under the auspices of the Montagu-Lyttelton coterie. The focus of the chapter, however, is the career of the reclusive poet William Shenstone. Led, like Edwards, through complex circumstances to live a life of rural retirement, Shenstone established not only a literary coterie for the epistolary exchange of poetry but a multimedia artistic practice centered around the Leasowes, the farm he developed into a renowned "*ferme ornée*." A master of paradoxes, Shenstone articulated over time an esthetic of taste that transformed "indolence" and economic restriction into an influential, coterie-based value system of relationality, embodiment, modesty of scale, and simplicity. The paradox further plays itself out in the media history of Shenstone's reputation as coterie poet: while achieving considerable recognition with the circulation of leisured tourists through the Leasowes and with the manuscript circulation of his poems, he ultimately attained a wider and more democratically expansive fame through the assistance of the innovative bookseller Robert Dodsley, who constructed the fourth and fifth volumes of his famous *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* to a significant degree around poetry supplied by Shenstone from his own manuscripts and those of his coterie.

Indeed, the popularity of Shenstone's poetic persona and esthetic values extended for decades after his death in 1763, beginning with the publication by Dodsley of his two-volume *Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.* in 1764, followed by a third volume of letters in 1769. The afterlife of William Shenstone – the multiple editions of his poems and essays, the retailing of anecdotes about his life and descriptions of his garden in popular magazines, the tribute poems and imitations, and the trade in images of him and of the Leasowes which continued well into the nineteenth century – is the subject of [Chapter 4](#). But this afterlife was not an uncontested one. Dodsley's edition of the *Works* can be seen as giving rise to a bifurcated reception history, in fact. On the one hand, literary critical commentary on (or, more accurately, critical dismissal of) Shenstone tended for more than a century to follow the leads of Thomas Gray and above all Samuel Johnson in emphasizing the dissatisfactions and distresses mentioned in Dodsley's biographical preface, painting a condescending picture of a perpetually unhappy yet vainglorious recluse

whose dim reflections of the more artful poetry and showy landscape gardens of his day merited only a footnote in literary history.

A review of the publishing and periodical archives made available through recent database offerings, however, reveals a second, overshadowed reception tradition, in itself double-stranded. In one thread, we find Shenstone the coterie author whose loyal friends, especially Richard Graves, continued in numerous publications issued by the Dodsley firm to articulate their respect for his personal qualities as benevolent mentor as well as for his artistic achievements. These “high” literary productions – topographical and moral poems, thematic novels such as *The Spiritual Quixote*, and memoirs – were paralleled by the penetration of Shenstone and his reputation into all levels of periodical literature throughout the Atlantic world, often through the mediation of the Dodsley edition. That this last “Shenstone” was often not any more accurate to the facts than was Johnson’s gardener pursued by duns is in itself worthy of attention. My reception study of William Shenstone suggests not only the increasing sway of the professional literary critic as an institution of print but also that Shenstone’s modest coterie life as retailed in the magazines managed for many years to resist succumbing completely to that power – because it represented for his contemporaries and immediate successors an ideal to which they could aspire, a life given meaning and pleasure through the application of a democratized notion of taste to that life’s most mundane aspects. In this way, the sociable literary coterie and its values were transmuted into a disembodied, virtual community of “Shenstonians.”

Again from the starting point of competing media-based claims to authority in the latter decades of the century, I begin my [fifth chapter](#) with the fate of Elizabeth Montagu and her circle in the 1770s and into the 1780s, after the death of George Lyttelton and the demise of their intimate coterie. Reviewing the increasingly public representation of Montagu and her women friends as “Bluestockings,” I argue that in acquiescing to a print-based fame that was divorced from the personal connections of coterie networks, Montagu made herself vulnerable to the kinds of attacks on coterie practices and characters that arose in some quarters at this time. A second precondition for such vulnerability was a developing discursive dichotomy between the professional, “masculine” author, on the one hand, and the feminized coterie amateur, on the other – a dichotomy implicitly represented by Johnson and Montagu as the former positioned himself in relation to the latter. With the increasing resistance of Montagu and allies such as Philip Yorke, now Lord Hardwicke, to printed “characters” of individuals who had been major influences in their lives – the first Earl of

Hardwicke, Lord Bath, and George, Lord Lyttelton – the stage was set for a conflict based on opposing media cultures and their respective views of publicity. By situating the quarrel between Johnson and Montagu over the former's 1781 "Life of Lyttelton" in these contexts, I show that this quarrel was not simply the "feeble shrill outcry" of an irrelevant clique against a manly Johnson, as Boswell framed it, but rather a standoff between those who claimed an author's character called for public critical examination along with his works, and those who felt a man's reputation was the property of his personal circle, to be defended honorably and kept out of the hands of profit-hungry booksellers. In this respect, [Chapter 5](#) revisits and recontextualizes the gesture by which Shenstone's friend Richard Graves (encouraged by Montagu) pitted the authority of the coterie member's firsthand experience against the narrow views of the urban print author in his *Recollections of Shenstone*, discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

If [Chapter 5](#) tells a story of differentiation and discord, however, [Chapter 6](#) challenges any generalization of this narrative by exploring an opposing scenario, one of symbiosis and mutual reinforcement that traverses the five decades covered by the preceding chapters. Setting the stage with a discussion of manuscript travel writing as practiced by Philip Yorke, Jemima Grey, Elizabeth Montagu, and George Lyttelton, I trace the development of the genre of the domestic travel narrative through a complex interplay between commercially oriented print, on the one hand, and manuscript accounts produced and circulated by gentlemen of leisure, on the other. Beginning with the 1742 third edition of Daniel Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, this genre in printed form follows an upward trajectory toward increasing respectability through the century, as enterprising editors enlist the cachet of the travelling gentleman to lend authority to their increasingly appreciative accounts of the nation's farthest corners. This appreciation in itself becomes the hallmark of gentlemen of taste such as George Lyttelton and members of his circle, whose descriptions of country homes, cultivated landscapes, and picturesque wild scenes circulate as admired scribal productions. But it is imitated as well in fictionalized accounts of travel embedded in the novels of the likes of Samuel Richardson and Thomas Amory, which in turn stimulate the travels of a broader social range of men (and some women), giving rise to domestic tourism as a widely practiced leisure activity. Manuscript and print texts precede one another in a tangled skein of origin and authorization that demonstrates once again the interdependence of the two media in the literary culture of the period. When the tour of the Lake district, for example, emerges as an institutionalized and lucrative print

phenomenon in the late 1770s and 1780s, it is marketed as a literary tradition in its own right, founded upon a series of texts exchanged by a leisured elite, in a triumphant resurgence of the coterie over the more prosaic commercial pamphlets, guidebooks, and atlases that had in fact underpinned its own travel.

And how was the taste for a “coterie” esthetic, commodified by the print trade in such phenomena as the Dodsley firm’s marketing of Shenstone’s Warwickshire coterie, or the representation of domestic tour guides as authorized by gentlemen travelers, reflected in the practices of eighteenth-century readers? My [final chapter](#) situates itself among those readers, seeking to determine what literary sociability might look like in the traces left by individuals who never sought a place in the literary spotlight. Using manuscript personal miscellanies held in the Brotherton Collection of eighteenth-century commonplace books as well as in the Bodleian library, this chapter seeks to establish a methodology for identifying signs of coterie life in the selection, arrangement, and original composition of poetry found in these books. My sample size is too limited to support anything but cautious generalizations about coterie practices among readers and writers whose goals were presumably modest, beyond the reach of amply documented correspondence networks; nevertheless, a few observations suggest themselves. First, the appeal of the literary coterie is constant (though not universal), whether for aspiring urban professionals of the 1740s or extended families in country towns in the 1780s. As others have noted, the increasing accessibility of printed reference materials seems to have fostered a diminished use of script to create compendia of useful information, in favor of collections designed for personal entertainment and edification – and in the case of coterie activity, as a literary memorial of sociability. Thus, the genre of the occasional poem, whether commemorating a birthday, a ball, or an untimely death, dominates the original poetry found in these collections and can be used to construct a sketch of coterie life as various as those found among more elite practitioners. The compilers of these miscellanies, in keeping with the ever-improving distribution of printed materials in the provinces, seem increasingly to identify themselves as consumers of periodical print; materials are copied wholesale from newspapers and magazines, with their sources carefully attributed. Yet the very existence of the personal miscellany, with its inherent requirement of selection and copying, argues for the active engagement of the periodical and anthology reader. Where that engagement includes the creation of poetry in dialog at once with print and with friends or family members, the transmediating coterie is no less vital than it ever was.

This study will conclude where it began – with the argument that the literary coterie in the midst of the eighteenth century's flowering of print was no single and fixed entity but an evolving and adapting formation based on a value for the production, circulation, and reception of literary writing in the context of social relations. If the media landscape of 1790 no longer offered the intimate interface of 1740, where a young aristocrat and his friends could print a handful of copies of a collaborative work, making it famous while maintaining complete control over access to it, the idea of the coterie continued to capture the attention of both the obscure provincial reader and the savvy London bookseller. It is my aim to bring renewed attention to that idea and its variable practice in eighteenth-century England.

CHAPTER I

*Wrest Park and North End*  
*Two mid-century coteries*

O Master of the heart! Whose magic skill  
The close recesses of the Soul can find,  
Can rouse, becalm, and terrify the mind,  
Now melt with pity, now with anguish thrill;

Thy moral page while virtuous precepts fill,  
Warm from the heart, to mend the Age design'd,  
Wit, strength, truth, decency, are all combin'd  
To lead our Youth to Good, and guard from Ill.

O long enjoy what thou so well hast won,  
The grateful tribute of each honest heart,  
Sincere, nor hackney'd in the ways of men;  
At each distressful stroke their true tears run;  
And Nature, unsophisticate by Art,  
Owns and applauds the labors of thy pen.

(Thomas Edwards, 1749)

O Yorke, whom virtue makes the worthy heir  
Of Hardwicke's titles, and of Kent's estate,  
Blest in a wife, whose beauty, though so rare,  
Is the least grace of all that round her wait,

While other youths, sprung from the good and great,  
In devious paths of pleasure seek their bane,  
Reckless of wisdom's lore, of birth, or state,  
Meanly debauch'd, or insolently vain;

Through virtue's sacred gate to honor's fane  
You and your fair associate ceaseless climb  
With glorious emulation, sure to gain  
A meed, shall last beyond the reign of time:  
From your example long may Britain see,  
Degenerate Britain, what the great should be.

(Thomas Edwards, [c. 1744])

The first of the two sonnets quoted in the epigraph to this chapter is addressed “To the Author of *Clarissa*” and has, since its publication in 1750 with the third edition of that novel, served as testimony to the sociable literary relationship between one author, Thomas Edwards, and another, Samuel Richardson. The second sonnet, from the same pen and equally warm in its praise, similarly celebrates a sociable literary relationship, but one less readily recognizable to the historian of eighteenth-century literature. It is addressed to a young married couple, to Philip Yorke, son of the first Earl of Hardwicke, then Lord Chancellor of England, and his wife Jemima, Marchioness Grey, then aged twenty-four and twenty, respectively. If Richardson’s accomplishment was that he had combined “wit, strength, truth, [and] decency” in his fiction in order “to lead our Youth to Good, and guard from Ill,” Yorke and Grey were those young people; unlike “other youths, sprung from the good and great” who might become “meanly debauch’d, or insolently vain,” they would show “degenerate Britain, what the great should be.”<sup>1</sup>

Philip Yorke and his wife, like Samuel Richardson, centered a literary coterie in the middle decades of the eighteenth century; indeed, the Yorke–Grey coterie prefigured that of Richardson by about a decade. The earlier group, operating primarily by means of scribal circulation and restricted publication, has been largely invisible to literary scholars, while there has been considerable discussion of the various circles surrounding Richardson by virtue of their relation to his novels. Paradoxically, in mid-eighteenth-century England, it was the Yorke–Grey group that possessed the visibility and prestige, providing a model for the sorts of sociable literary ideals Richardson himself sought to enact at the height of his fame. In this [chapter I](#) will first bring the Yorke–Grey coterie into view, profiling its character and influence, and then turn to the short-lived Richardson–Highmore–Edwards–Mulso coterie as a case study of how a denizen of the London print trade might engage in the practices of scribal literary culture. I will conclude by demonstrating the fame attained by the young writer Hester Mulso in the 1750s through these scribal networks.

### The Yorke–Grey coterie, 1740–66

The brightest coterie constellation on the cultural horizon of the 1740s was centered upon the newlyweds Philip Yorke and Jemima, Marchioness Grey, heirs to two of Britain’s wealthiest and most prominent Whig families. As the eldest son of Chancellor Hardwicke, Yorke held the lucrative sinecure of Teller of the Exchequer, in 1741 was elected Member of Parliament for Reigate, in 1754 was created Lord Royston,



and in 1764 inherited his father's title and became high steward of Cambridge University. While at St. Bene't's or Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, Philip and his brother Charles, both intelligent young men with strong literary interests, gathered around themselves a number of "wits" with shared interests. But it was in 1740, when at the age of twenty Yorke left Cambridge to marry the seventeen-year-old Jemima Campbell, that this cluster of friends gained a social and geographical center and became a recognizable coterie. Campbell was the granddaughter and principal heir of Henry Grey, the Duke of Kent, who at the end of his life arranged both for her marriage and for her to become by royal decree the Marchioness Grey. Informally educated, she was nevertheless, as the remains of her youthful correspondence indicate, witty, inquiring, and widely read in the classics (in translation), French literature (including romances), history, and theology.<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Kent's principal seat had been the Bedfordshire estate of Wrest Park. Although Joyce Godber notes in her biography of Grey that the Marchioness inherited Wrest encumbered with debts and that the couple did not immediately reside there,<sup>3</sup> from 1743 the estate with its great house, library, and garden walks was the principal focal point of sociable literary life for their combined circles (Figure 1.1).

This was an alliance not only of powerful families and fortunes but of two bookish individuals who had already formed active, homosocial literary connections in their adolescence. For Yorke, these connections were developed through family, including older men who had received patronage appointments from his father, and friendships from Hackney School and Cambridge. At the time of his marriage, the inner members of this circle were his brother Charles ("the Licensor"); John Lawry, a Cambridge friend; Samuel Salter, the Yorke brothers' tutor at Cambridge; and above all, Daniel Wray, from 1745 Philip's deputy teller of the exchequer, but initially a man of antiquarian and literary pursuits based at Cambridge who had attracted the patronage of the first earl. Wray, referred to by one of the group as "the delight of every Man among us," clearly was fundamental in generating both "mirth" and composition in the group. The Hardwicke correspondence in the British Library is full of his schemes, from Lawry reporting that "the incomparable Bearer of these Tablets [i.e. Wray] who is all things to all Men . . . has set your humble Servant during his leisure here . . . at Rochester upon cultivating Hebrew Roots," to Yorke recounting proposals to "[throw] out one Number of a Grubstreet Literary Journal" and to erect a Mithraic altar in the gardens at Wrest.<sup>4</sup> For Grey, the women of her family were even more key to her intellectual

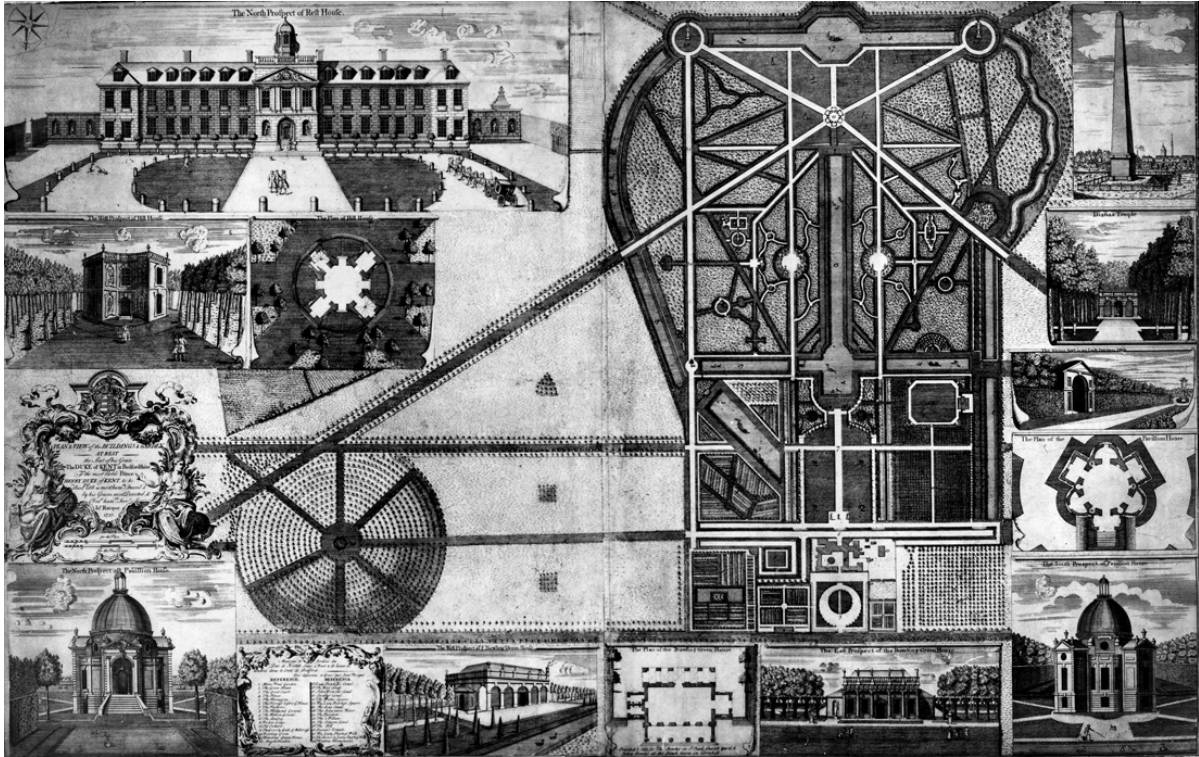


Figure 1.1 John Roque's *Plan of Wrest Park*, 1735, illustrates features of Wrest Park as it appeared when Jemima, Marchioness Grey, inherited it. Thomas Edwards refers to this plan in his letter to Philip Yorke dated August 10, 1745, quoted below.

development – before marriage, her core group consisted of Lady Mary Grey, the aunt three years her elder with whom she had been brought up, and Catherine Talbot, whose guardian Thomas Secker, as Bishop of Oxford and rector of St. James, Picadilly, had informally overseen care of Jemima and Mary when they resided in London as adolescents. With Grey's marriage, Philip's sister Elizabeth Yorke (later Lady Anson) became part of this inner circle, as did, to a lesser extent, his younger sister Margaret. The coterie was shortly also to gain two key new members: Thomas Birch, a London-based historian, biographer, and clergyman who had already been serving Lord Hardwicke in various capacities, and Thomas Edwards, a legally trained country gentleman and longtime friend of Wray who had recently settled on a modest farm at Turrick in Buckinghamshire.<sup>5</sup> Along with Catherine Talbot, both feature importantly in the story of this circle and its influence.

The Yorke–Grey coterie was thus traditional in many respects in its social foundations – its basis in kinship and friendship relations, its mix of elites and clients of more modest status, and its coalescence around a geographical center, Wrest, where Philip and Jemima entertained guests constantly through the months of May to September. The importance of Wrest to Jemima Grey, and by extension to the coterie which she and her husband anchored there, is captured in her letter to Lady Mary Grey, written in the spring of 1743 upon reoccupying her childhood home as its mistress:

My Attachment to this Place is by no means lessen'd by above Three Years Absence, for so long I must call it, since the Time I have seen it between has been but as a Stranger, & have [*sic*] convey'd a lively Pleasure indeed but a very mix'd & short One. – But it is now again my Home. It is not only returning to the Country & a Country-Life (which I love everywhere) but in the only Place I am fond enough of to make those Words peculiarly charming, to the only Place that can heighten my Enjoyment of my Friends, & to that Place where I hope soon to see you.

In a letter written from Wrest almost a decade later, Talbot similarly captures this combination of natural, social, and literary pleasures associated with the place, describing it as “an enchanted Castle” of “absolute unquestioned liberty. The most delightful groves to wander in all day, and a library that will carry one as far as ever one chuses to travel in an evening.”<sup>6</sup>

Literary life at Wrest is also recognizable as that of a traditional coterie: correspondence between those at Wrest and distant friends records daily

communal reading, critical discussion of contemporary publications or genres such as satire, and a veritable outpouring of occasional poems, imitations, and parodies – of Horatian odes, Miltonic sonnets, Italian comedy, Young’s “Night Thoughts,” Crébillon “novels,” and so on – stimulated by the shared reading and generally in response to relations between members of the group, or to current political and literary affairs. Visiting Wrest in May and June of 1745, Talbot kept a journal which offers a valuable glimpse into this way of life: on the evening of her arrival, for example, the assembled group is occupied in reading “Humorous Manuscripts of theirs full of Wit & Entertainment”; on the third day, knowing she will be called to account for her time, she records “Writ two Sonnettos (abusive) in five Minutes & produced as my Evenings Work. At the instigation of A. [Angelina, her coterie name for Grey] writ a third before Supper,” in answer to one addressed to her by Charles Yorke; on day five, she copies figures out of Raphael’s Bible while Angelina reads Locke aloud.<sup>7</sup> As chief “patron” of the group, Yorke, often aided or instigated by Wray, set tasks and proposed literary projects to other members.<sup>8</sup>

Also typical of a coterie ethos was the restricted access to the literary activity and productions of Wrest – called “Vacuna” by its initiates, after an ancient Sabine goddess associated with rural life. The correspondence records both the efforts of outsiders to gain glimpses of circulating materials and the enthusiasm and gratitude of those who were invited to Wrest and shown its literary compositions. When at last invited there in 1743, after envious comments to his good friend Wray about the pleasures of that select society, Edwards finds himself unable to accept for a number of practical reasons but chiefly out of diffidence; two years later, having become a member of the Wrest circle at last, Edwards writes in a letter of thanks to Yorke:

I make You many mental visits, as Sir Mars in the Toast fights mental battles, for I have the plan of Wrest (Rocque’s I mean, not that after Mr Wright) hanging by my bedside, there I frequently morning and evening pace over the gardens and cast a look at the Library, recollecting the pleasant hours I have spent in the most agreeable company whom I cannot describe better than in your Horace’s words *Animæ quales neque candidiores* etc.

Writing to Wray of the desire of Richard Owen Cambridge, another mutual friend and wit, to be included in the “Wrestiana,” a compilation of coterie manuscripts kept at Wrest, Edwards says, “I do not wonder at

Cambridge's ambition to get into the Wrestiana, it is a *Templum Honoris*, and a Niche there of equal value with an Olympic Crown."<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, several features unique to the Yorke–Grey coterie contributed to its profile and appeal to individuals such as Edwards. One of these was the combination of youth, privilege, and talent at its core, creating a sense of promise on the cusp of a bright political, social, and cultural future and thereby making association with it highly desirable. Yorke and Grey seem to have been unusually mature for such a young couple. Talbot's 1745 *Wrest* journal records with admiration the good order and hospitality of the household: Yorke leads family prayers at eleven every evening, and Talbot's entry for June 9 notes of the mistress of the house, "how great is your [Grey's] Merit & yet how quiet & silent. While she regulates every thing one always finds her disengaged & easy, as if she had nothing to do or think of." In Edwards' perspective, "the Conversation, and the way of spending their time are what one seldom meets with among the Great; their regular hours, and temperate meals, may set an example to most private families."<sup>10</sup> Even accounting for a certain element of flattery and deference in letters to Yorke, correspondents demonstrate an expectation that he will become a leader in the world of letters, perhaps a great author himself. John Lawry in 1740, for example, speculating that Yorke may have changed printers, parallels him to the most prominent writers of the century to date: "very likely to encourage a young beginner [Mr. Harris] you have procur'd that Gentleman a Patent that He & no one else for such a term of years shall print the Philosophers only. thus Addison & Steele encouragd Tonson, & Pope was in some measure the making of Bernard Lintot."<sup>11</sup> Yorke and his brother Charles, assisted by Wray, apparently felt this cultural responsibility; while no doubt indulging their own predilections, they encouraged and supported the creative and critical projects of others. Thus, they were sought out by both older men and young contemporaries such as Conyers Middleton, William Warburton, George Lyttelton,<sup>12</sup> Isaac Hawkins Browne, Richard Owen Cambridge, and Soame Jenyns, often to serve as dedicatees, support subscription publications, and lobby for antiquarian causes; while Yorke occasionally declined for reasons of political sensitivity, and while he asked on at least one occasion that a pseudonym be used on a subscription list, the correspondence record, again, indicates that such requests must have come with some frequency and were treated graciously. An overriding interest of both brothers was the preservation of the manuscript materials that were the repository of Britain's history; their personal efforts and their support of the many antiquarians who were collecting, transcribing, and

epitomizing such materials played a role in the founding and early years of the British Museum, as I will elaborate below, and in the great flowering of history-writing in the eighteenth century.

A second distinguishing feature of this group was its mixed gender. Thomas Edwards, for example, found remarkable the centrality of Jemima and her female friends to the literary as well as the sociable life of Wrest, reporting after his first visits there: “The Library is the general rendezvous both for the Ladies and Gentlemen at their leisure hours; hither the Ladies bring their work, and here if there is no company, they drink Tea”; ever the enthusiast for the place, he later writes to Wray, “I am indeed surprised at the Lady [Grey], so superior not only to her own Sex but to most of ours. I entirely agree with You that that Alliance is one of the greatest happinesses of that happy House; I envy every body in proportion to their acquaintance with it, and regret nothing in my own circumstances so much as that they allow me no more of it.”<sup>13</sup> Among the inner circle, Talbot in particular commands the respect of a literary equal, as indicated by her nickname of “Sappho,” by her role as the only female contributor to the *Athenian Letters*, discussed below, by Charles’s game of matching sonnets with her, and by group *jeux d’esprit* such as the mock-heroic romance captured in [Figure 1.2](#), taken from a facsimile copy of the “Wrestiana.” Another of these, a mock-epic titled *The Borlaciad*, ends with Talbot as heroine rewarded by academic honors at Oxford and by “a Long Line of . . . Posterity” that includes “Generals, Wits, Deans of Ch[rist] Ch[urch], Poetesses, Bishops, Royal Mistresses, Emperors, & Pope Joans.”<sup>14</sup> While earlier feminocentric coteries such as that of Longleat, centered on the Duchess of Hertford (later Somerset) and nurturing writers such as Elizabeth Singer Rowe, were renowned in their own way, this meeting of literary cultures that were often quite strictly divided along gender lines was noteworthy and flavored the coterie’s productions, particularly in its first decade.

Finally, the feature of this coterie that perhaps most reflects its moment in the history of letters, and indeed its importance for this study, is its articulation with the London print trade. While key members of the group, such as Talbot, were extremely ambivalent about allowing their work to enter the print medium, the coterie as a collective made selective and self-conscious use of print, for everything from anonymous letters to the public, to forged Elizabethan newspapers, to its own in-house productions, to editions of diplomatic papers. It thus represents the kind of adaptive intermediality that is characteristic of mid-eighteenth-century manuscript cultures as well as of the authors, presses, and booksellers on the print side

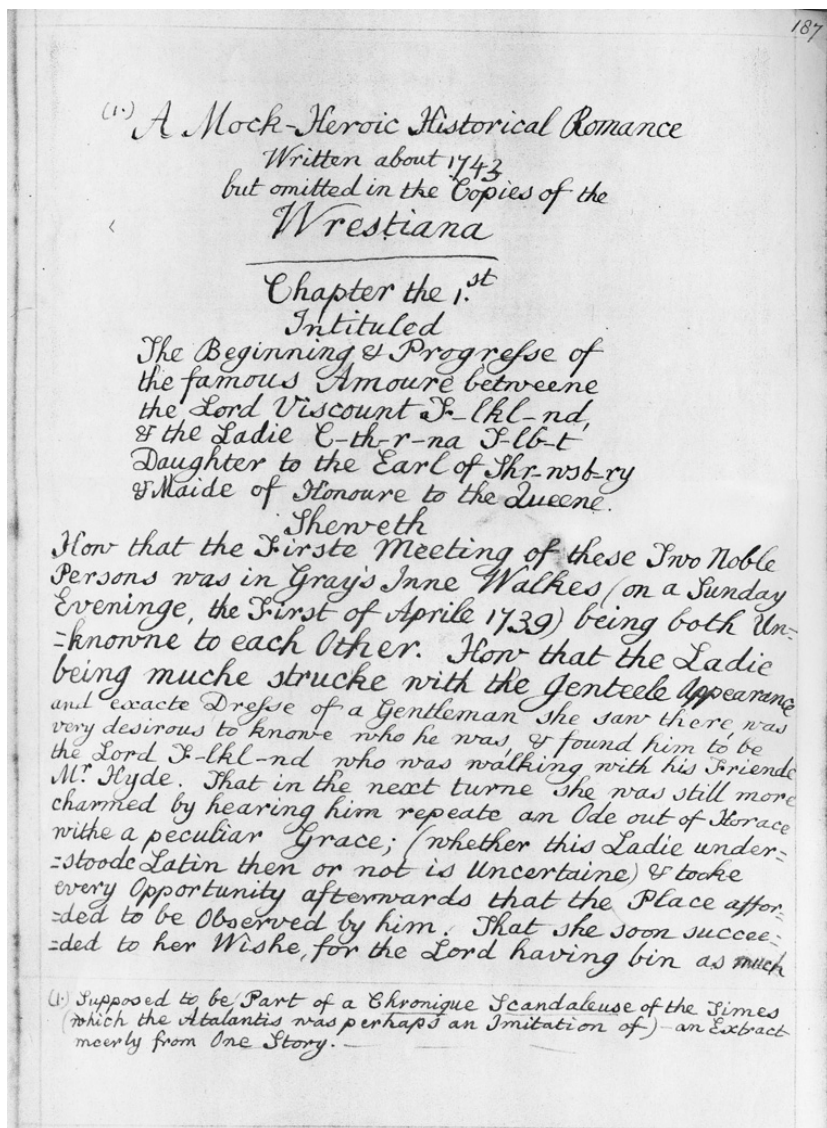


Figure 1.2 *Wrestiana*, “A Mock-Heroic Historical Romance,” p. 187 (facsimile reproduction), featuring “the Ladie C-th-r-na T-lb-t.”

of the exchange. Key to this integration was Thomas Birch, whose status as an oddity of sorts in the Yorke–Grey circle made him a bridge between the two worlds; as the language of network theory would put it, Birch brokered

information across the “structural hole” that divided the values and assumptions of his *Wrest* friends from those of the London print trade.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, some of his exchanges with Yorke are nothing more or less than exercises in translation. Other individuals, however, served similar bridging functions: Catherine Talbot’s connection, along with those of Edwards and Birch, with the Richardson coterie will be discussed later in this chapter. Before examining the Birch–Yorke relationship and then turning to the Richardson coterie, however, I will use a collective production – the *Athenian Letters* – to demonstrate the fame and influence that could be achieved by a coterie publication and to initiate a fuller discussion of the distinctive coterie features I have been enumerating.

### The *Athenian Letters* and the influence of the Yorke–Grey coterie

The most noted production of the Yorke–Grey coterie came to fruition in the early 1740s with the private printing of twelve copies of the four-volume *Athenian Letters, or, the Epistolary Correspondence of an Agent of the King of Persia, Residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian War*, published in 1741 (three volumes) and 1743 (a final volume).<sup>16</sup> A collection of epistles purportedly written by one individual, Cleander, the work represents carefully researched customs, attitudes, and mores in the form of diplomatic dispatches. A collaboration of the Yorke brothers, Wray, Lawry, Salter, Talbot, and seven others, the *Athenian Letters* were conceived at Cambridge but the final compendium reflects the group formed in the early 1740s. The collection was loosely planned and vetted by a “Committee”<sup>17</sup> (probably the Yorke brothers and Wray), with Thomas Birch serving as London editor preparing the manuscript for the press. Especially notable are the four letters composed by Talbot as the only female contributor and one by Birch, who quickly gained the respect and appreciation of the collaborators and was led to offer a piece of his own.<sup>18</sup>

A candid and insightful outline of three functions of the project is provided retrospectively by Lawry, who, regretting its completion, writes in 1743:

Before the book of the *Athenian Letters* was closed, I believe every body was sensible of two principal good effects that flowed naturally from the undertaking first that it rendered Men ingenious who had it in them to be so, and kept their Wits in Motion. And Secondly that it kept up a correspondence between Friends. Perhaps I may go further and affirm that it gave to some Men a certain degree of importance, Who at other times are absolutely



Nothing. fit only to attend to Polyp's, to speculate upon a Flea, or seek out congenial object in the cockle kind, but not to be honoured with any Notices from those Sublime Geniuses queis Mens diviniior, atqe. os. magna Sonaturum<sup>19</sup>

The collaborative generation of “wit,” the solidification of social bonds, and the prestige factor of membership in an exclusive circle – all are attractions of the coterie in a sociable literary culture. Conspicuously absent from the list of pleasures named by the various contributor-recipients as they acknowledge their copies is the simple fact of appearing in print, an omission that underscores the function of this “publication” as entirely an extension of the coterie for its own benefit.<sup>20</sup>

If the creation of the *Athenian Letters* typifies the practices of scribal culture, the intrigue surrounding the work's very existence demonstrates both the contemporary interest in this coterie and the determination of its members to maintain control over its productions. The project's printer was James Bettenham, a seasoned London veteran whom Yorke used frequently for his projects; as Birch assures Yorke, Bettenham's “Fidelity justly intitles him to be Printer-General to the whole Class of anonymous, pseudonymous, & esoterical Writers.”<sup>21</sup> Despite Birch's assurances that the printing was being carried on with the utmost secrecy, he clearly underestimated the strictness of the code in this case, probably from his awareness of how often the coterie writer's injunction against circulation was more of a modesty trope than a command to be obeyed absolutely. Thus, when he reports to Yorke on September 2, 1742, that William Warburton, a close associate of Charles, has got wind of the publication, “therefore desire[ing] [Yorke's] Leave to present him with a copy of them, under ye usual Restrictions,” consternation ensues, and Yorke responds with a lengthy articulation of the dilemma of restricted circulation in an age of print:

I freely confess to you, I am not a little vexed, that a Scheme, wch was only intended for the Amusement of a very few Friends, who from being conversant in the same Authors, were tempted to take a share in it, & from an intimate acquaintance with each other, were disposed to fall into the same turn of speculation & writing, sd thus by degrees, & almost imperceptibly, circulate wider & wider, & at last have very little wanting of a public Performance, but the form of an Advertisement in the Papers. The worst is, that the Books wch are printed, reduce one to a sad dilemma, either of disobliging Those, who have heard of the work, & think from their being known to us, that they have a claim to desire a Copy; or else by indulging them, to draw on fresh demands, & add to the Number both of Readers &

Publishers. I have found by Experience, that the *Usual* Restrictions are of no sort of avail; such is the natural desire of telling a secret, or such the more laudable, tho not less inconvenient eagerness of Friends to do you a credit, as they think, by trespassing upon the Modesty of young Authors; & breaking thro' prohibitions, wch they question the reality of.

Charles Yorke adds a corroborating postscript to the letter confirming that “Warburton is on no acct to be intrusted with a printed Copy,” both because of his own “friendly impetuosity” and because of “our own situation & circumstances in general.” The upshot of this close call was an order from the Yorke brothers that the three or four copies remaining after the contributors had each received theirs should be “committed to Vulcan”;<sup>22</sup> when Birch proved reluctant to feed the fire himself, they asked him to return the remainder to them for disposal.

About six months earlier, Catherine Talbot had been under similar pressure to show the manuscript originals of the third volume of the *Athenian Letters* to the Bishop of Derry, whom she had “suffer’d . . . to peep into” an earlier volume. The Bishop played coy about the source of his information, pleaded with her to assign names to the individual pieces, and suggested that to see the documents “transcribe[d] . . . in [her] own hand,” “before the Press hath made them like the Laws of the Medes & Persians, irrevocable & never to be changed” would offer a special *frisson* of pleasure.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the brothers ensured that even the manuscript originals were destroyed. The effectiveness of this restricted access in creating desire for the text is demonstrated for decades to come, as letter-writers comment on the privilege of having been shown the *Athenian Letters* at Wrest or by one of the original contributors. Edwards, asking Wray in 1743 for an account of his most recent visit to Wrest, concludes with reference to the recently published work, “I thank you for the very great entertainment I have had from the Letters, and have taken the care You desired of them in case of any accident. I envy You the situation You are in with respect to those Gentlemen, but at the same time am very thankful for the share I have in their acquaintance through your means.” For Mary Capell, daughter of the third Earl of Essex, and with her sister Charlotte a member of the Marchioness Grey’s circle of friends, reading the copy Birch has lent her is like reading a *roman à clef*: “I cannot help mentioning the *Athenian Letters*, which amuse us more than I can express: I don’t know whether any particular Person is meant by Thucydides, in the Picture of him, (or rather of his Mind, & way of thinking,) in Vol. Ye. it. Page 196. I have given it in my own mind, to the Late Ld Lonsdale.”

Talbot shared them with her friends the Berkeleys in the long 1753 Oxfordshire summer when they became intimates.<sup>24</sup> In the early 1780s, these references shift to requests or grateful thanks for gift copies of a work long heard about, as Yorke, now Lord Hardwicke, distributes a second edition of one hundred copies to British aristocrats, scholars, and European contacts.<sup>25</sup> The *Letters* were published again in 1798 with maps and engravings and in several further turn-of-the-century English and French editions.

Since so few individuals actually read the *Athenian Letters* in the eighteenth century, it may seem odd to speak of the collection as influential. A common theme across the decades of commentary, however, is that it represents an ideal of civic engagement, one that ought to serve as a model in the current degenerate times of political dissension. This kind of language is prefigured in the Edwards sonnet to Yorke and Grey that stands as second epigraph to the chapter. The Duke of Northumberland writes in 1782 “lament[ing] that more attention was not paid to the very judicious and prudent advice contained in them, which in all probability would have prevented the distressed situation to which this Country is unfortunately reduced,” while Sir Grey Cooper

presents his best respects & thanks to Lord Hardwicke for his very obliging present of the Athenian Letters: He is happy that he has at present leisure to read with attention a work which made part of the plan of the Education of persons so distinguished in the world, & which seems to him to be better calculated to give a comprehensive & a lasting knowledge of any great era of History, than can be acquired by reading, or meditation merely. He will recommend the Athenian letters to his Sons when their understanding & their advancement in Learning will enable them to relish such compositions; They were indeed written in better times than the present: Letters passing between two or more of the ablest & best informed men on the History of their own times wou'd not exhibit a pleasing representation to those who remember a former period.<sup>26</sup>

In this sense the *Athenian Letters* might be described as contributing to the same spirit as the Roman tragedies and the calls to disinterested public service that characterized the middle decades of the century, strained as they were globally by war with France and the American colonies and nationally by continual changes of ministry and mass discontents. Such nostalgia was undoubtedly tinged by regret over a lost Whig ascendancy, as the Hardwicke family's political power faded with the accession of George III in 1760 and the death of the first earl in 1764. Nevertheless, the elegiac orientation toward an idealized past that operates in two senses here –

regret for a very distant Greek civilization and for the more recent past of a youthful coterie of promising young elites – might be fuelled even more effectively by an absent text than by a readily accessible one.

The Yorke–Grey coterie exerted a more definite, if indirect, influence on the development of one phenomenon generally associated with a sophisticated print culture: the notion of an indigenous literary history and the related idea of the critical edition. Thomas Edwards, for example, has been credited with influencing the revival of the English sonnet, but sonnets in imitation of Milton were being circulated regularly by the circle as early as 1742, and Edwards’ own first Spenserian sonnet seems to have been composed in 1744. Many of Edwards’ compositions were addressed to, amended by, and commented on by members of this group.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, the inspiration of Wrest gave rise to some of Edwards’ most original sonnets, such as that addressed by the beech-roots of Turrick to the elm-roots of Wrest after he had spent a fortnight at the estate directing the construction of a forest dwelling made out of the latter in the summer of 1749. When Edwards innovates in another direction, turning the form to satirical purposes in his critique of Warburton and other renegade editors,<sup>28</sup> Yorke appears to have continued to set Edwards these sorts of tasks, along with those of garden design and critical commentary.<sup>29</sup> It was Edwards’ sonnets that were published in Robert Dodsley’s influential *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1748), but this occurred through the mediation of Wray. The set of thirteen sonnets printed there opens with the poem addressed to Yorke that serves as the second epigraph to this chapter; other Edwards poems in Dodsley’s *Collection* and in the later editions of his *Canons of Criticism* similarly honored other members of the coterie. Indeed, for Edwards, his collection of sonnets was to serve as a lasting memorial to “the friendship of worthy Men,” which “will be an honor to my memory”; he writes to Lawry in 1751, “Believe me I have often regretted that this acquisition [of Lawry’s friendship] came so late; and envy my Friend Wray for nothing so much as having had the start of me so long in the acquaintance of that ingenious sett of Gentlemen who were the Authors of the Athenian Letters.”<sup>30</sup>

The circle’s close connection with William Warburton, through Charles Yorke’s enthusiastic promotion of him, made the process of that bellicose critic’s career the subject of much discussion, with early tolerance of his personal failings giving way, perhaps under the influence of Edwards’ critical views, to a more fixed stance against his editorial methods. At any rate, stimulated by the Warburton controversies and by his discussions with the coterie at Wrest, Edwards published in print in 1748 a manifesto

of modern critical principles, originally titled *A Supplement to Mr. Warburton's Edition of Shakespeare*, which became, by its much-expanded third edition in 1750, *The Canons of Criticism*.<sup>31</sup> The group's collective interest in the editing of major English poets – specifically, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton – also led to the active search for a suitable editor of Spenser and to the involvement of Birch (after Edwards had declined) as editor of the bookseller Brindley's edition.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, Philip Yorke's antiquarian tastes drew him to devote a great deal of attention to executing the vision of his father and others in the formation of the British Museum. As chairperson of the House of Commons committee that made the foundation of the institution possible through a 1753 Act of Parliament, Yorke led the effort to recommend to the House the purchase of the Hans Sloane collections recently bequeathed to the nation as well as the Harley manuscripts, to be combined into one national repository together with the Cotton library. One of the first elected trustees, working in close conjunction with Birch and stimulated by his brother Charles (also an avid collector and antiquarian), Yorke corresponded actively through the remainder of his life with agents overseas, librarians and fellows of university colleges, secretaries and executors of peers, and often those peers themselves to determine the location and contents of manuscript holdings and libraries. His role in relation to the Museum as it worked to collect and catalog manuscripts blended seamlessly with the pursuits of the amateur historian: in a 1759 letter, Thomas Gray describes a summer period of study in a British Museum reading room almost abandoned by the learned except for Dr. Stukeley, two Prussians, “& a Man, who writes for Ld Royston,” presumably as a copyist of manuscripts.<sup>33</sup> In 1757, Yorke published an edition of the correspondence of Sir Dudley Carleton, a leading diplomat of the early Stuart monarchs, and in 1778 he produced an edition of *Miscellaneous State Papers from 1501 to 1726* (which Elizabeth Montagu, incidentally, struggled valiantly to read through).

While members of the Yorke family, and even Talbot, teased the three men about their devotion to “old papers,”<sup>34</sup> there is no doubt that it fostered an attitude of valuing the material traces of Britain's past that contributed to the collection, preservation, cataloging, and use of such materials. Historians of the Museum have highlighted the reality of limited access to the library's precious deposits in the early decades, despite their ostensibly belonging to “the people,” and there are certainly records in the Hardwicke correspondence of applications to Yorke, as a trustee, for permission to look at various collections.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear from such exchanges that individuals with a scholarly claim were admitted and these attitudes, which were of their time, were accompanied by diligent efforts to gather and preserve what was at risk of being lost through sales of country house papers and mere neglect or ignorance. Chapter 5 will return to Yorke's efforts, as the elderly Lord Hardwicke, to preserve and manage access to the world of the coterie from more personal motives, but in these early decades the energetic efforts of members of the Yorke–Grey coterie were devoted to preserving the British historical record as a national good.

### Philip Yorke and Thomas Birch: friendship as intermediation

As already noted, the young Philip Yorke and Thomas Birch, if acquainted before the latter became what Lawry calls “overseer of the Press” for the *Athenian Letters*, were not initially friends in a sociable sense. Fifteen years Yorke's senior and a product of Clerkenwell in the City, Birch seems to have been brought into the project simply as a client of the senior Lord Hardwicke who could serve as on-the-spot agent to ensure that the second volume of the *Letters* was more correctly printed than the first had been. But he entered with great enthusiasm into the spirit of the *Letters*, and writing from London to Yorke on October 6, 1741, Lawry describes a growing bond that is breaking down the social and geographical barriers (represented vividly by the butchers' stalls of Hockley Hole) that stand between a university man and this City-bred scholar: “I find too much pleasure & improvement from his conversation to lose any opportunity of conferring with him; Neither did *Hockley in the Hole* discourage me from investigating his house, when I knew no better way of passing from mine to his and I daresay he will do me the justice to witness that I have not been an unfrequent Visitor.”<sup>36</sup> In the course of several months in the autumn of 1741, the relationship between Birch and Yorke blossoms quickly: the former responds gratefully to the latter's appreciation of his editorial labors and “with the utmost Diffidence” submits a Socratic dialogue of his own out of an “ambition to show myself among you in an higher character than that of a mere Editor”; is told by Yorke that his correspondence offers “a relaxing of the mind in the most ingenuous way, communicating the fruits of one's studies, & speculations & repairing the loss of a Friends good Company in the most effectual manner”; makes his first visit to Yorke and the Marchioness and describes those days as the “most agreeable of my whole Life”; and expresses his gratitude for “a Friendship, which I feel the influence of in the kind Opinion entertain'd of me by others, whose

Esteem is the highest Sanction to any Character, & which I shall always consider as the Ornament as well as the Happiness of my Life.”<sup>37</sup>

While there is no doubt that the “friendship” offered by Yorke and so gratefully accepted by Birch is of the eighteenth-century kind, bringing with it expectations of social and material advantage to Birch in exchange for services rendered, this does not preclude there being an affective dimension to this relationship, one that is based on mutual intellectual interests and the attractiveness for the constitutionally reserved Yorke of Birch’s loquacious and energetic character. In addition to his own editing of historical documents, Yorke’s unflagging encouragement of Birch’s parallel labors is encapsulated in a 1748 letter to Birch which he signs “Yrs affectionately”:

I earnestly recommend it to You not to give over the Investigation of original Papers as You seem to have done of late; that laudable Ardor for old Sacks, bad Hands, & dusty Bundles wants to be rekindled; Let me raise ye dying flame before It quite expires, Non solum in tanta pericula mittam; Is application necessary I will second it; Is Money wanting I will advance it, Is the Labor of the Eyes demanded, I will at least share with You ye glorious Toil. I think this not ill worked up, & if It does not set You to work, I shall say, good Writing is lost upon You.

Yorke’s note appended to one of the final letters from his friend is poignant: “N.B. July the 6th 1766/ When I left Wrest last Year I little Thought my Correspondence with my valuable Friend Dr. Birch of 20 Years standing almost uninterrupted should have had so fatal a Period as was put to it in January 1766 by a fall from his Horse – quem semper acertum semper honoratum &c. H.”<sup>38</sup>

Of particular value to an investigation of the interaction between scribal and print media cultures in the period is the way in which this friendship “translates” the print trade. Birch, as indicated by Lawry’s description of the route required for a visit to him, was somewhat of a foreigner, inhabiting an unfamiliar socioeconomic space for the more socially elevated members of the circle. Typical is Edwards’ astonishment in 1747 that Birch has just completed a lengthy rural sojourn: “Nothing I suppose but the Company at Wrest could have detained him so long in the Country; Three weeks – and with out even Mr Williams’s Coffeehouse too, must be as bad to him as three yards of uneven ground to Sir John Falstaff”; on another occasion, Yorke tries to entice him to visit with the promise that “if you insist upon it, the old smoaking Room shall be fitted up as a Coffee house & ye Neighbours summoned in.”<sup>39</sup> Yorke’s attitudes toward the

business of print, in turn, are initially derivative and uninformed; taking his cue from Pope's *Dunciad*, he assumes that the booksellers are rapacious enslavers of a scholar like Birch: "Booksellers are Booksellers; that is to say, People, who care not what Trouble others have, provided the profit is theirs." When Yorke implies that only a lack of proper initiative on Birch's part prevents him from negotiating better remuneration from Andrew Millar, Birch displays a rare flash of resentment:

You may judge of the Bargain, which I have made with Millar, & what better Terms I could expect from other Booksellers, from this short Estimate of the Expence, that the printing of the Sheets will amount to 98£, the paper to 81£, the binding of 500 Copies of the Volumes, in quarto, at 4s. a Book 100£ & advertisements & other incidental Charges to 10£, that is, 289£ in the whole. The Sale of which, computed at 18.s a Book, the highest price to the Booksellers, tho' sold to Gentlemen at a Guinea, will raise 450£, from which 289£, the Expence, being deducted, the Profit to be divided between the Author & Bookseller will be 161£, out of which the latter cannot be expected to allow 100 Guineas for the Copy, & at the same time run the risque of the whole.<sup>40</sup>

This account of mid-century print economics is only one of a number of occasions where Birch articulates the interdependence between a man of letters, immersed in historical scholarship, and the everyday work of the trade.

While Chapter 5 of this study will reveal that Yorke in his later years felt considerable suspicion of the commercial press and its readers, he used the print medium (by means of intermediaries) throughout his life, not only to make his own historical work available for restricted distribution, as already discussed, but also to write anonymous letters to newspapers or magazines on political issues, and even to print privately a series of authentic-appearing mock newspapers on the events of the Elizabethan battle against the Spanish Armada, which for a time convinced scholars of their authenticity as the first English newspapers.<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that as the youthful contributors to the *Athenian Letters* became more settled in provincial locations, the eyes of this coterie increasingly turned to London, not only as the place where the admirable literary creations of contemporary authors such as Isaac Hawkins Browne and Hester Mulso, or the scandalous ones of Jonathan Swift and John Wilkes, were to be heard read aloud or seen in manuscript, but also as the primary source of news about print events like the publication of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*.<sup>42</sup> Increasingly when at Wrest Yorke laments his lack of news from the country to compensate for that which issues from the city. In exchange, as Dustin Griffin has noted in



a recent treatment of Birch's career as "author by profession," Birch had, by the end of his career, "established remarkable ties with the cultural and political establishment of 1760s England," a situation certainly in part due to the Hardwicke connection and one that compares more than favorably with that of Samuel Johnson, just four years his junior, at the same period. David Philip Miller has noted more generally that "through their influence in the Royal and Antiquarian Societies and as Trustees of the British Museum, through their powers of Church and legal patronage there was scarcely an office or position in the learned world over which the Hardwicks and their circle did not exercise influence" in the 1750s and early 1760s.<sup>43</sup>

Ultimately, however, the political shifts already noted and a lack of his father's ambitious self-assertion, compensated for by an over-riding concern for the family reputation – "our situation & circumstances in general," as Charles put it when ordering the burning of the printed copies of *Athenian Letters* – seem to have prevented Philip Yorke from engaging as fully in the new media interface as he might have done if only his personal tastes had been considered. As a result, the influence he initially promised in the eyes of those early observers (and to which Horace Walpole alerted Horace Mann in 1757)<sup>44</sup> was arguably never realized. When in later life he admits that in refusing a long-ago dedication request made by Conyers Middleton he acquiesced to the wishes of his father on a point with which he was not in agreement, we sense an acknowledgment that he might have liked to play a more active role in the literary life of his day.<sup>45</sup> Birch at one point regrets that the occasional and political nature of much of the Yorke–Grey coterie's writings made it impossible to publish them: "It is an Instance of prodigious Self-denial, that Authors, who are capable of writing with such Vivacity & Elegance, should fall upon such Subjects, as oblige them to suppress their performances, & deny themselves that Reputation, which might be rais'd in a *Miscellany* or a *Magazine*."<sup>46</sup> Facetiousness aside, Yorke's place in the literary world ultimately remained at one remove from the action, and for all his encouragement of the activities of others, the promise of the Yorke–Grey coterie as a group had dissipated by the 1760s.

Viewed from the perspective of its greatest activity in the 1740s and early 1750s, however, there is no denying the prestige and the energy this coterie infused into the literary scene. One conduit of this energy, as already noted, was the Philip Yorke–Thomas Birch axis, a conjunction greater than the sum of its parts. Another of the circle's most surprising legacies,

the one I will turn to next, is the model it provided for the coterie formed by the printer-novelist Samuel Richardson in the early 1750s.

### The Richardson coterie, 1749–55

The above discussion of the Yorke–Grey coterie has demonstrated the close relationship at mid-century between manuscript-exchanging circles and the London print trade, especially regarding poetry production and circulation, the developing discourse of literary criticism, and the valuing of old manuscripts as historical documents. The mid-century novel, however, might appear to want nothing more than to flaunt its printed materiality, ostentatiously staging the discarding and destruction of the manuscript as its ephemeral and precarious precursor: Sarah Fielding’s 1760 *History of Ophelia*, which she claims, as “the Author of *David Simple*,” to have found carelessly abandoned in “an old Buroe” purchased at second hand, and Henry Mackenzie’s 1771 *Man of Feeling*, where the ineffectiveness of the hapless hero is reflected in the fact that his story is recorded in a manuscript gradually being destroyed as gun wadding, come to mind.<sup>47</sup> But in some of the most socially ambitious novels of the period – Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* in particular – acts of manuscript production are placed at the center of the reader’s attention, as when Clarissa’s legacy is gathered together by Lovelace’s friend Jack Belford to form the book we read. Janine Barchas has discussed this novel’s foregrounding of the “materiality of book-making” through devices such as the insertion of a musical score on an engraved folding plate. But in this instance *Clarissa* also claims for its print manifestation a genteel source in the privileged world of coterie exchange, reinforcing the musical score’s associations with “an educated, almost aristocratic, milieu”;<sup>48</sup> the unprinted Elizabeth Carter poem that provides the lyrics for Clarissa’s composition is described by the heroine herself as “that charming ODE TO WISDOM, which does honour to our sex, as it was written by one of it.” Thus, not only does the fictional Clarissa Harlowe, in Barchas’s words, “engage the discourse of music” in a manner that aligns her with “Bluestocking philosophy,” but her author’s costly “reproduction” of the score highlights (or in Richardson’s words, “do[es] intentional honour to”) an actual group of women and their practices of manuscript exchange.<sup>49</sup>

Discussion of Samuel Richardson’s own central involvement in the manuscript-based practices of a coterie involves three adjustments of perspective. First, although Richardson was undoubtedly an innovator of the book, using his dual position as printer-author to experiment with the

incorporation of typographical markings, character lists, tables of contents, and indices into his fiction,<sup>50</sup> I will focus here on how the form and texture of his novels is of a piece with his desire to replicate coterie life in his own practice. Indeed, the novelist's belief that he had developed "a new Species of Writing" stemmed in large part from his ability to draw on the effects of immediacy, intimacy, and affect created by manuscript exchange within a select circle of correspondents.<sup>51</sup> Second, despite critics' generalized references to his "circle" of correspondents and visitors, it is actually more precise to say that Richardson participated in multiple circles (albeit overlapping) with various orientations to the culture of letters. One of these circles was primarily focused on print literary production and included authors such as Samuel Johnson, Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Fielding, Jane Collier, and later Frances and Thomas Sheridan. Another was largely professional, though it extended to the family members of colleagues; this included Edward Cave, the Millars, Parliamentary Speaker Arthur Onslow, Edward Young, Philip Skelton, and Benjamin Kennicott. A third contingent centered around response to the novels and discussion of how the social issues they raised could be applied to contemporary conduct – here the range of individuals is broad, ranging from the highly engaged and influential Lady Bradshaigh to Mary Delany, Anne Donnellan, Aaron Hill and his daughters, Sophia Wescomb, Sarah Chapone, Frances Grainger, Mary Watts and Colley Cibber. This chapter, however, draws a distinction between the generality of these readers and those whose cultivation enabled the printer-novelist's participation in the privileged world of the literary coterie.

And finally, although in one respect Richardson in his late career can be seen as taking an increasingly "modern," print-oriented approach to his audience, sending typeset pamphlets to anonymous readers who objected to his handling of elements of the plot of *Sir Charles Grandison*, this model of unidirectional communication parallels a move toward the development of an active literary coterie of his own. Richardson's cultivation of relationships with his readers, on the other hand, has tended to be seen as feminized and anachronistic when held against the active masculinization and professionalization of authorship in the middle decades of the century by writers such as Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson.<sup>52</sup> Such a dichotomy, as I indicated in this book's introduction, does not reflect the reality of a mid-century literary culture that felt the very real gravitational pull of the intimate coterie as a model for the nurture of imaginative writing. Re-examining Richardson's participation in literary circles with an alertness to the coexisting media cultures of the 1740s and 1750s can enrich

and nuance our understanding of his choices as about something more complex than a simple gender dichotomy or a stance for or against the inevitable historical trajectory of authorship.

Granting the prestigious status of contemporary manuscript-exchanging circles such as the one centered at Wrest Park, even a London printer with multiple connections among leading members of the book trade and a growing authorial stature might well have measured cultural capital in terms of membership in one or more of them. Indeed, Richardson had a connection of some sort with numerous members of the Yorke–Grey coterie and undoubtedly understood its collective significance. In December 1748, Philip Yorke writes a note of thanks to the author for a gift copy of *Clarissa*, and in September 1750, Thomas Birch reports to Yorke that Richardson is at work on “the Subject, which you heard him mention at your own house, of the virtuous & generous Gentleman [i.e. the future Sir Charles Grandison].”<sup>53</sup> But the relationship can only have been peripheral; some combination of extensive learning, sharp verbal wit, and high status could have made him at ease in such a group, but Richardson possessed none of these. More likely, his contacts with the coterie were mediated through Birch, Wray, Edwards, and Talbot. Birch, that alert denizen of the London print world, continues in the above-quoted letter to mention that Richardson “has desir’d me to give him an Hour or two’s Attention in the reading of his plan.” Richardson’s correspondence with Edwards makes several references to encounters with Wray. Edwards, already a member of the Yorke circle, seems to have discovered *Clarissa* through his good friend the Parliamentary Speaker Arthur Onslow, also a friend of the author; in late 1748, he thanks Richardson for his gift of the last three volumes of the novel, saying he has been envying “our good Friend the Speaker the privilege of seeing it sheet by sheet as it came from the press.” Meanwhile, Edwards has begun discussing *Clarissa* with members of the Yorke circle, describing Richardson’s emotional power to Wray as “next to Shakespear” and as having “more of that Magical Power which Horace speaks of than I ever met with,” and pleased with Yorke’s high opinion of the conclusion because “I look upon this work as a Criterion of sensibility.”<sup>54</sup> But over time, Richardson’s fullest access to this circle would be through his friendship and collaboration with Catherine Talbot during the period of his composition of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Richardson consulted extensively with her regarding the creation and representation of his high-life characters for the novel, while a note of early 1750 from her to Richardson passes on messages of thanks from “the Family so obligingly entrusted with

[additional portions of *Clarissa*]” as well as from Jemima Grey’s young step-aunt Lady Sophia Egerton.<sup>55</sup>

If Richardson would not have dreamed of membership in the Yorke–Grey coterie, its visibility to him, as to others “in the know” in England’s cultural center, established an ideal of literary achievement in the context of sociable exchange to which he seems to have aspired. Thus, he actively facilitated the construction of such a coterie, which coalesced in the late 1740s as he was preparing the expanded and elegant third edition of *Clarissa* and remained active to at least 1755, through the period of the composition and publication of *Sir Charles Grandison* – in other words, during the heyday of his print-based authorial success. The formation of the group was enabled, first, by Richardson’s introduction to Edwards. As an enthusiastic admirer, Edwards presented Richardson in 1749 with a sonnet in praise of *Clarissa*; Richardson reciprocated with a print of himself.<sup>56</sup> According to John Dussinger, editor of the Richardson–Edwards correspondence, at about this time Richardson also introduced Edwards to Susanna Highmore, leading to an exchange of sonnets between Edwards and the twenty-five-year-old Highmore, daughter of the painter Joseph.<sup>57</sup>

A recognizable coterie can be said to have formed over the next year, as Edwards sent his earlier sonnet attacking Warburton along with a printed copy of his 1750 edition of *The Canons of Criticism* and as Richardson introduced the fifty-year-old Edwards to the twenty-year-old Hester Mulso (later Chapone), daughter of “a gentleman farmer,” and therefore, like Highmore, born “into the upper reaches of the middle-class.”<sup>58</sup> For Mulso, already the author of poems such as “Ode to Peace written during the Rebellion in 1745,” her introduction into this group, possibly through the mediation of Highmore or of Mary Prescott, her elder brother Thomas’s fiancée, marked the start of her “public” life. Others who were drawn regularly into these literary exchanges included Isabella Sutton, a Miss Farrar, Sally and John Chapone (children of Sarah Kirkham Chapone, whom Richardson accurately described as “a great Championess for her sex”), Elizabeth Carter, John Duncombe (son of William, who in turn was a link between the Highmores, Carter and her father, and Richardson), and Mulso’s brothers John and Edward. Catherine Talbot was simultaneously expanding her relationships with members of this coterie, writing to Carter in late 1750, “Pray who and what is Miss Mulso? She writes very well, and corresponds with you and Mr. Richardson. I honour her, and want to know more about her.”<sup>59</sup> Ongoing references to Mulso in the Carter–Talbot correspondence



Figure 1.3 Susanna Highmore, “Richardson reading the MS History of Sir Cha. Grandison at North End,” c. 1753. Pictured from left to right are Richardson, Thomas Mulso, Edward Mulso, Hester Mulso, Susanna Highmore, Sarah Prescott, and John Duncombe.

indicate regular contact during the early 1750s, and Talbot in turn appears as a subject of discussion between Richardson and both Edwards and Carter.

This brief description has illustrated a fundamental characteristic of the eighteenth-century coterie: its basis in multiplex social ties of kinship, friendship, and even courtship. Susannah Highmore’s sketch of some of the most frequently gathered members of this group listening to Richardson read from his manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison* captures the self-conscious of its existence as a collective entity (Figure 1.3). The sketch also locates the coterie geographically – the scene is set in the grotto of the author’s rented suburban home of North End, to which he retreated regularly from his business premises and City home of Salisbury Court and which was the center of his family and social life from 1738 until

the summer of 1754, when his family relocated to Parson's Green. Young friends of Richardson stayed there for long periods of time, as they might have done at a country house, and his correspondence constantly shows him urging far-flung contacts to avail themselves of the place as a base for London visits. Edwards accepted the invitation on several occasions. The symbolic importance of North End for the coterie is perhaps best illustrated by the efforts of Richardson and Mulso to convince Carter to visit, culminating in what she seems to have seen as almost a plot whereby Talbot promises on Carter's behalf, in May of 1753, that she will make an overnight visit, "put[ing her] in action," Carter complains, as "the puppet who moves by wires and strings."<sup>60</sup>

Of all the clusters of guests who passed through North End, the Edwards–Highmore–Mulso group is also the only one that also fits the coterie criterion in its practice of social authorship, that is, the exchange of poetry and other literary texts, to solidify relations between members of the group while providing mutual entertainment and improvement. The core group I have identified was built upon regular circulation of poetry, especially in the sonnet and ode forms, encouragement of one another's literary achievements, writing on set themes, and discussion of other writers' work. Its interactions were carried out both in person, primarily at North End, and through correspondence. Thus, Paul Trolander and Zeynep Tenger's characterization of sociable literary criticism in the late seventeenth century applies to the literary activity of this group as well: it was "sanctioned" by personal relationships, operated "by a set of rules that govern[ed] the social activity of the poetic . . . text," and functioned as much to "create and build social bonds among individuals who bolstered one another's social and political standing" as to produce finished literary products for wide consumption.<sup>61</sup> While by virtue of its social position the political and economic aims of this mid-eighteenth-century group were more indirect than those of the Katherine Philips' circle upon which Trolander and Tenger's argument is based, or than those of the patronage-wielding Yorke–Grey coterie, it certainly functioned to encourage, improve, circulate, and heighten the reputation of the group's writings.

The construction of the coterie can be seen in action early in the Richardson–Highmore–Edwards–Mulso relationship in a letter of Richardson to Edwards dated March 19, 1751, wherein Richardson encloses Hester Mulso's "Ode, Occasion'ed by Reading Sonnets in the Style & Manner of Spenser, written by Tho. Edwards Esq." He writes, "You will, I know, excuse me for transcribing one Verse in the following Piece. You will be pleased with it, when you are told it is

a Lady's, on reading your Sonnets already in Print, and seeing that [the sonnet] you have honoured me with. It is Miss Mulso's." Richardson uses his pre-existing relationships with both Edwards and Mulso to forge a connection between them in the form of one writer's praise of the other, flattering Edwards with this expression of admiration by a lady. At the same time, he lays claim to his own position in the group by explaining that what kindled Mulso's poetic inspiration was the inspiration he had himself incited in Edwards when the latter composed his homage to the author of *Clarissa*. And the "Verse," or line, of Mulso's poem which Edwards must excuse him for transcribing is that wherein the speaker praises Edwards most "When Richardson's loved Name adorns thy Song," underscoring once again the novelist's original role in the poetic productions of his friends.<sup>62</sup>

Edwards replies two weeks later with appreciation and a sonnet in response: "Your Linnet twitters most enchantingly, I am exceedingly obliged to her for her music, and have endeavored to chirp to her again as well as I can in the inclosed Sonnet which I beg You to present to her from me if You think it worth her acceptance." Richardson is invited to play the role of intermediary and judge who will determine if Edwards' sonnet is worthy of circulation. Edwards continues, "There is, and I doubt not but that You have felt it, there is something more deliciously charming in the approbation of the Ladies than in that of a whole University of He-Critics; and if I can deserve their applause let the sour Pedants rail as much as they please." While Edwards is most obviously drawing a gendered contrast here, the context of his print-based quarrels with the "sour Pedant" Warburton reminds us that this is as much about repudiating the sorts of controversy fostered by an improperly regulated print regime of literary criticism. By comparison, this coterie setting offers a more exacting, while less noisy, critical standard: he goes on to quote the poet Joseph Thurston, "For *theirs*, the clame to each instructive tongue/And *theirs* the great Monopoly of Song."<sup>63</sup>

Edwards' enclosed reply to Mulso addresses her in the persona she established in the originating poem, thereby establishing a sense of insider exchange:

Sweet Linnet, who from off the laurel spray,  
That hangs o'er Spenser's ever-sacred Tomb,  
Pour'st out such Notes, as strike the woodlark dumb,  
And vie with Philomel's enchanting lay,  
How shall my verse thy melody repay?



In subsequent letters between Edwards and Richardson, considerable space is devoted to gestures reinforcing the bonds of the circle: greetings are accompanied by affirmations of mutual affection between “the sweet Linnet,” “Miss Highmore,” and “dear Mr. Edwards” and by promises to show “charming” letters from the one to the other. Suffering through a long winter in the country, Edwards revives the life of the coterie in February of 1753 with a challenge that once again pits it against professional authorship: “Has Miss Mulso written any more Odes? Or Miss Highmore any more Sonnets? Or are they contented to shew that they can excell if they would, and to leave the idle work to Scriblers by Profession? What news have you from Deal [Carter’s home]?” Richardson replies by enclosing Mulso’s “Ode to [Robin],” written on a recent trip to Canterbury and annotated by “a certain admirable Lady,” Catherine Talbot.<sup>64</sup>

Richardson also plays the coterie correspondent’s role of suggesting topics for Edwards’ muse, proposing that he write a poem on Susanna Highmore’s scorching herself with her curling iron, as a specific warning to her for having “often set the Hearts of young Fellows on Fire,” and as a general “Warning to her Sex” against “playing with Fire.” While Edwards initially declines this opportunity, as “a subject too serious for verse,” the spirit of occasional composition embedded in social relations is captured in his refusal nonetheless: “But a Poet would not suppose the conflagration to have proceeded from the heat of the Irons, but from the Love-verses which she used on that occasion; and which, as Mrs. Mincing says, make the curls *so pure and so crisp*, that they are often put to that use; and the blaze happening on the left side, he would imagine to be extinguished by the prevalent force of the cold about her heart. But if she has spoiled her hair, it is no jesting matter.” This same letter encloses another sonnet to Mulso, one that “my gratitude has forced from me” at the honor she has done him in her earlier offering. The sonnet invites Mulso, just as Edwards’ more rustic muse has praised *Clarissa*, to produce the higher strains that will encourage Richardson to proceed with the creation of his hero Grandison. Edwards and Richardson agreed in encouraging a woman’s correspondence and writing within “the Circle of her Acquaintance,” whose “Love or Admiration, perhaps Envy, will induce them to spread her Fame” beyond their immediate circle.<sup>65</sup> In keeping with this view, the novelist encouraged Mulso’s important letters on filial piety, written early in their relationship (1750–51), as well as challenging her, it seems, to

produce her subsequent “Matrimonial Creed” in 1751 as a defense of her view of marriage.

At the same time, Richardson demonstrates his knowledge of the rules of coterie exchange when he reports that Highmore has written an “Ode to Content,” of which “She can only authorize a Copy to be given”; in this manner, the boundaries of the coterie could serve to protect its members from unwanted public exposure. John Duncombe, Highmore’s suitor and author in 1754 of *The Femiinad*, a poem celebrating the unpublished poetry of Highmore, Mulso, and Farrar, along with the print achievements of Carter, Catharine Cockburn, Elizabeth Rowe, and Mary Leapor, shows his own initiation in coterie practice when he sends Richardson an elusive poem the latter has been hoping to gain permission to see – Miss Farrar’s “Ode to Cynthia” – accompanied with the words “Inclosed is the desired Ode. You know the Conditions; tho’ to you and Mr. Edwards ‘tis needless to prescribe *any*.” Richardson forwards the poem with the explanation: “These were, not to give out Copies, or allow Copies to be taken.” On occasion, loyalty to the group supersedes even the demands of print controversies, as when Edwards chooses to remove a dig at Warburton from the preface to his 1753 *Trial of the Letter Y* in deference to Miss Sutton (whose baronet father had been the first patron of Warburton), as “a Lady who does me too much honor for me to venture her displeasure.”<sup>66</sup> A posthumous expression of the cohesion at the heart of this coterie is inscribed on the cover of Richardson’s carefully preserved collection of his correspondence with Edwards, in the form of a proviso that it may be seen only by certain of Edwards’ family members and friends, to be returned to his own family, “with whom it must ever be private; – No Extracts to be taken from it or Letters Copied.” On that short list is Hester Mulso – surely a significant choice of this young female friend for a correspondence considered too revealing to be shared by more than six people.<sup>67</sup>

Elizabeth Carter’s role in this coterie demands special mention. Her initial contact with Richardson came through the mediation of Highmore after Talbot had informed her of the novelist’s unauthorized use of her “Ode to Wisdom.” Carter cultivated literary friendships with Mulso and Highmore individually, just as she had with Talbot earlier, rather than proceeding through Richardson as we have seen others do. Although she is frequently referenced in correspondence between other members of the group, Richardson’s epistolary exchange with Carter does not begin until June 1753, after the reluctant visit to North End mentioned above. While the letters do not involve poetic or prose enclosures, Richardson throws out the gambits typical of coterie correspondence. In one of the

more successful of these exchanges, the two writers share their childhood dreams of magic rings or caps that would render them invisible. On the other hand, when Richardson plays the game of shared secrecy by making coded references to their mutual friend Talbot – saying “I must not name her,” calling her “your *Sister Mind*,” “a certain Lady,” “your *Sister Excellence*,” or even “—,” and claiming that “The Lady I must not name, is the Queen of all the Ladies I venerate,” Carter responds rather testily, “if you will not write her name, why should I? I do not know that I should write it more prettily than you.” This resistance to coterie conventions is in keeping with Carter’s apparent wariness of being drawn too tightly into Richardson’s orbit, discussed below. Nevertheless, maintaining the seriousness with which he has taken the coterie injunction of protecting reputations, when Richardson subsequently prepared this correspondence for potential publication, he played with various disguises for the names – thus “Carlington,” “Carlingford,” and “Carteret” for Carter, with Talbot finally named as “Miss Tankerville.”<sup>68</sup>

This account of the Richardson–Highmore–Edwards–Mulso coterie reveals a group of individuals who were relatively equal in their status as genteel, but of the lower gentry or upper middle-class, well-educated, and tied together by multiple relations of “friendship,” by literary projects such as *Clarissa*, Samuel Johnson’s *The Rambler*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, and by shared moral and intellectual interests in questions emanating from these works, such as matters of female autonomy and social responsibility. Catherine Talbot’s very real, yet somewhat peripheral, position in the group can be related to the fact that she was at once superior in status and connections, yet very supportive of the coterie’s literary and social aims, and geographically proximate through her residence at the Deanery of St. Paul’s during this period (see [Chapter 2](#)).<sup>69</sup> The importance of social nuance is also suggested by this group’s remaining distinct from the more professional authors’ circle gathered around Richardson at this time which, as already noted, included Sarah Fielding, the Collier sisters, Samuel Johnson, and Charlotte Lennox. Beyond shared status and interests, the coterie was characterized by the powerful centrality of Richardson, whom Hester’s brother John describes as “infinitely dear to those who know Him, and studiously sought after by those who do not. Rare Avis in Terris.”<sup>70</sup> As we have seen, bringing the group’s members together, either physically at his country house of North End or through epistolary exchange, he worked tirelessly to facilitate the bonds of literary sociability between them.

### The decline of a coterie

Nevertheless, this active, productive, and by some measures well-balanced coterie eventually dissolved, seemingly when mutual criticism became too fundamental. In the summer of 1754, coinciding with the Richardsons' move from North End to Parson's Green, Susanna Highmore wrote a sonnet chiding Edwards for limiting himself to that form; Richardson insisted on showing it to its addressee, provoking from Edwards a lengthy defense of his propensity. Just a few weeks later, John Duncombe in turn sent Richardson a similar sonnet, rather peremptorily writing that "If you approve the design of the following sonnet you may, if you please, communicate it to your friend. Whether the author approves it or not, it speaks my real thoughts (in which I am far from being singular)." Richardson responds tactfully that "Your sonnet, dear Sir, well as I like it, will not be communicated to Mr. Edwards by me, for reasons I will read to you the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you." One can conclude that Richardson saw the junior members of the coterie becoming a little too rebellious and intervened not only by blocking the channels of exchange but also by taking the communications of the coterie "offline," so to speak – that is, out of the medium of script altogether. Although Edwards originally thanked Highmore for her poem, "which does me so much honor that I cannot find in my heart [to] repent my doing that which occasioned it," it seems the damage had been done. The following January, Edwards writes to Richardson, "I must own I have written no Sonnets since I saw You, nor indeed have I had any impulse that way; Whether the vein is exhausted, or whether it is checked by that frost which You know happened last summer, I cannot tell; but I believe I have done with Poetry." By 1755, his conveyed greetings are most often to Richardson's family and to the more passive Sophia Wescomb, rather than to Mulso or Highmore, and Richardson writes to Mary Delany's sister Anne Dewes, "I believe Miss M., Miss P., and that more than agreeable set of friends, and we, love one another as well as ever . . . but we meet not near so often as we used to do."<sup>71</sup>

Richardson goes on in this letter to speculate that "the pen and ink seems to have furnished the cement of our more intimate friendship; and that being over with me, as to writing any more for the public, the occasion of the endearment ceases." With this theory he acknowledges the centrality of his stature as novelist to the group's structure, but he also more inadvertently suggests the broader significance of "pen and ink" – that is, of both epistolary and poetic production – to the vitality of the coterie. In addition

to the subversive use of pen and ink to challenge Edwards as writer, outlined above, there are indications of how Hester Mulso's place in the group might ultimately have become an uneasy one. A brief quotation from her preamble to the "Matrimonial Creed" mentioned above suggests some of the tensions at work. Mulso begins with the statement: "Being told one evening that I could not be quite a good girl, whilst I retained some particular notions concerning the behaviour of husbands and wives; being told that I was intoxicated with false sentiments of dignity; that I was proud, rebellious, a little spitfire, &c. I thought it behoved me to examine my own mind on these particulars."<sup>72</sup> Although Richardson may not have been the only conversational accuser here, the passage hints at the constraint an asymmetry of age and gender could place on the ability of the group members to grow intellectually and express disagreement, and by extension, on the sustainability of the group. Similarly, the stance Mulso seems to feel is required in her earlier debate with Richardson on filial obedience in relation to the choice of a marriage partner suggests the inevitable limitations of her position. Thomas Keymer's detailed discussion of this exchange as "bring[ing] to bear citations from an array of moralists, jurists and political theorists, from Hall and Allestree on Richardson's side, by way of Grotius and Pufendorf, to Algernon Sidney and Locke on her own" makes clear the challenging intellectual plane at which Mulso was operating.<sup>73</sup> While demonstrating in the letters her learning, capacity for close reasoning, and critical faculty, she begins the series with the formulation that she is "expos[ing]" her "opinions" to Richardson, "in order to have them rectified" by him; insists throughout that while she is working towards the end of "bring[ing] [her] reason to give its free assent to [his] opinion," she is nevertheless impeded by a tendency to be "very slow in apprehending truths"; and concludes with the assertion, "I wish to think with you on all subjects."<sup>74</sup> Despite the fact that Carter, Duncombe, and Mulso's brother John privately assured Mulso of having got the better in the exchange,<sup>75</sup> it is clear that significant rhetorical skill is being invested in maintaining the fine balance between debate on equal intellectual terms and the requirements of respectful submission to a male elder who has revealed, in Keymer's apt phrase, his "instinctive authoritarianism and his fear of insurrection."<sup>76</sup>

It must be underscored that differences of age and gender were not impediments to the formation and successful functioning of the coterie for a time. Susan Staves has noted the importance of clergy connections to intellectually ambitious Bluestocking women;<sup>77</sup> Mulso herself, as a very young woman, clearly found the literary mentorship and encouragement

of older men valuable. Thus, her brother's correspondence reports Hester's "conquests," in January 1750, of the Dean of Peterborough and "old Dr. Robinson," with the latter of whom "there passes . . . such a pretty war of wit, as deserves printing as much as Jo: Miller, & Durfey's Pills to purge Melancholy." If Richardson was originally "infinitely dear" to his young admirers, who viewed "all that Mr R – says" as "oracular," his praise of Mulso's poems as those of "a charming child" (according to John Mulso's report of his reponse to her 1751 "Ode, written during a violent Storm at Midnight") may have worn thin as Mulso approached her mid-twenties.<sup>78</sup> Richardson, in turn, accustomed to his position as mentor and conduit at the center of the coterie, may well have felt the pang suspected by Johnson, who later wrote with reference to his own relationship with Hester Thrale: "You make verses, and they are read in publick, and I know nothing about them. This very crime, I think, broke the link of amity between Richardson and Miss Mulso, after a tenderness and confidence of many years."<sup>79</sup> This is not to imply that Richardson's respect for his "dear Miss Mulso" was not sincere – after all, it was she, Highmore, Carter, and Lady Bradshaigh who were urged to submit letters in the voices of *Grandison's* principal characters to initiate a continuation of the novel.<sup>80</sup> But the relations upon which this network had been constructed inevitably changed to the point where it could no longer function as a literary coterie.

### The importance of the Richardson coterie

Despite this coterie's relatively short time of flourishing, its interpenetration with other literary circles and with the print publishing trade – in other words, its influence – is instructive. Not only did it stimulate, during its existence, the production of a body of poetry by Edwards, Mulso, and others, as well as Mulso's epistolary writings on filial obedience, but these works circulated widely in both script and print. Edwards' sonnets in praise of Richardson soon made their way into the paratexts of editions of the latter's novels, and later in the decade into the sixth edition of the *Canons*; his treatise on orthography was also strongly encouraged by Richardson and the group. But Edwards entered the coterie as an already well-connected writer with an established reputation in manuscript-exchanging circles, as we have seen. More remarkable is the fame achieved by Hester Mulso through the connections opened up by the Richardson-centered coterie of which she became a part.

The efficiency of this coterie in circulating materials through the multiple links between its members is demonstrated when Carter offers in 1752

to send Talbot “a copy of Miss Mulso’s verses,” only to learn that Talbot has already been shown them by Richardson.<sup>81</sup> But Mulso’s poems can also be seen moving as a valuable commodity along the channels of manuscript exchange beyond this network cluster in the early 1750s. In a particularly striking example, a letter from Thomas Birch to Mary Capell, daughter of the third Earl of Essex, and at this point, together with her sister Charlotte, a member of Lady Grey’s social circle, thanks her for “some of the most agreeable Days of my Life, which I ow’d lately to your Conversation,” and in exchange offers her copies of three manuscripts whose access is highly restricted:

The Draught of the Report of the Committee of Lords concerning your Great Grandfather’s Death will not, I presume, be unacceptable to your Ladyships, as it never was in print, nor the Report itself ever made to the House of Peers. Mrs. Heathcot’s<sup>82</sup> Verses to Lady Grey are accompanied by a very fine Ode, which I mention’d to your Ladyships, of Miss Mulsoe, address’d to Mr. Edwards on Occasion of some of his Sonnets in the Style & Manner of Spenser, particularly one to Mr. Richardson, prefix’d to the last Edition of his *Clarissa*. It was communicated to me under the Restriction, of not multiplying Copies: But I cannot deny it the Honour of a place in Lady Mary’s Quarto, which consigns such pieces to Immortality.

Capell replies that “Miss Mulsoe’s Ode, & that of Mrs. Heathcote, we were much pleased with, & I have copied them into the *Sacred Book*; As also The Report of the Comittee, & the Letter to Coll: Southby.”<sup>83</sup> And the ode is, indeed, immortalized in Capell’s personal miscellany of poetry, which forms part of the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds – although the author is to date unidentified in the catalog of the volume’s contents.<sup>84</sup> The version of the ode in Capell’s book closely matches two separate copies of the poem found in Thomas Birch’s own commonplace collection; it differs, however, in several words or phrases, as well as accidentals, from an undated copy found in Elizabeth Montagu’s papers,<sup>85</sup> which in turn differs from the version first printed in Chapone’s 1775 *Miscellanies*. In other words, the evidence points to extensive circulation of Mulso’s poetic works, and thereby, a significant degree of fame achieved without use of print. Where Mulso did cross into the medium of print, it was by extension of the coterie world she inhabited: she was the author of the letters that composed *Rambler* No. 10, dated April 21, 1750, at a time when Richardson, Talbot, Highmore, and Carter were all actively promoting the periodical (see Chapter 2), and Johnson quoted a stanza from her unpublished poem “To Stella,” originally addressed to Highmore, to illustrate the term “quatrain” in his 1755 *Dictionary of the*

*English Language*. Mulso's epistolary debate with Richardson about filial obedience may have moved in even more elevated circles: it is discussed in Mary Delany's correspondence, Mulso's brother John reports that "Several great men as the Bp of London [Thomas Sherlock], the Speaker [Arthur Onslow] &c" have seen it, to her "great Honor," and Richardson hints that it influenced the 1754 Hardwicke Marriage Act.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, it is possible to conclude that, even if the intellectual stimulation and opportunity offered by the Richardson–Highmore–Edwards–Mulso coterie were ultimately limited by inequalities of age and gender, the group was highly effective in creating fame because its members were extensively networked with influential literary circles as well as with the London print trade. And this benefit continued even with the dissolution of the initial configuration: strong lateral ties were established within the Richardson coterie – between Carter and each of Highmore, Mulso, the Duncombes, Talbot, and Sutton, for example,<sup>87</sup> and it was these lateral ties that emerged ultimately as the more lasting relationships. Thus, one of the greatest long-term benefits to Mulso of her first coterie experience must have been its stimulation of her relationship with Elizabeth Carter, ten years her senior. Meeting Carter in Canterbury through their mutual friend "Mr. Duncombe" (probably Duncombe Senior)<sup>88</sup> provided Mulso with exactly what she later recommended in her 1773 *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*: a woman about ten years older than herself, who might serve as a mentor and friend.<sup>89</sup> In addition to sending Carter various poetic compositions for the latter's commentary, Mulso engages in a much franker critical debate with Carter on the merits of various forms of fiction, from romances to Richardson's novels, than she attempts with the famous elder novelist – in fact, she is a stout advocate of the latter in preference to the former, resisting Carter's apparent predilection for the adventurous escape of old romances, and thereby developing her critical skills in a more egalitarian relationship.

Even these strong centrifugal impulses will have reinforced for members of the Richardson coterie a commitment to the practices of sociable or scribal literary culture as a means of initiating, circulating, revising, and disseminating literary productions. Far from leaving its members with the sense that such social connections were stifling to literary activity, this coterie experience encouraged them to seek out and develop similar ties, but on more sustainable terms. This is where Carter, as a peripheral member of the Richardson coterie, became crucial by virtue of her tendency to be marginally attached to multiple circles. Network theorist Mark Granovetter has noted that it is the marginal member of a group, one who



is least likely to have multiplex ties to its center, who is for that same reason most likely to have links with other groups, and thereby to serve as the conduit of the exchange of ideas and materials between them.<sup>90</sup> Carter's stance as a somewhat recalcitrant outlier on the margins of Richardson's circle may have something to do with her long-term influence on Mulso, if not on Talbot: both of the latter scolded Carter about her distaste for Richardson's prolixity and her wariness of his views on women,<sup>91</sup> but when Richardson seems to have become unsuitable as the literary center through whom Mulso functioned as a writer, Carter helped her locate a new, more functional literary center in Elizabeth Montagu, as I will demonstrate in [Chapter 2](#).

Taken as part of an interconnected network of scribal production in the 1740s and 1750s, the Yorke–Grey and Richardson–Highmore–Edwards–Mulso coteries remind us that such nodes of literary activity extended across gender, status, occupational, and geographical lines. While the roles played by participants and the types of writing and response in which they engaged followed established coterie protocols, each coterie nevertheless displayed distinct patterns according to its functions and cultural positioning. More broadly, the dynamics of these two coteries illustrate the nature of the interface between mid-eighteenth-century manuscript and print media, as print and its modes are alternately resisted and serve as the impetus and inspiration for much of the groups' epistolary intercourse. In the case of Richardson, not only does this coterie demonstrate the ongoing health of manuscript culture, but the enabling role played by Richardson offers a new perspective on his career. This author who so thoroughly exploited the potential of print – as a trade, as an esthetic medium, and as a means of communicating with his widespread readership – saw his creation of an active literary coterie as a worthy investment and an activity to take pride in, perhaps even as the ultimate measure of his literary success. With respect to the Yorkes, the implications of attending to their circle are perhaps even greater, suggesting that we have been overlooking a significant constellation of influence in mid-eighteenth-century literary culture. Above all, these two case studies suggest that, rather than existing as isolated pockets of resistance to the dominant march of media history, these centers of manuscript activity served as interconnected subcultures in a larger phenomenon of sociable writing and reception well recognized by their contemporaries.

*Formation, fame, and patronage*  
*The Montagu–Lyttelton coterie*

To Mrs. —.

Where are those Hours, on rosy Pinions borne,  
 Which brought to ev'ry guiltless Wish Success?  
 When Pleasure gladden'd each returning Morn,  
 And ev'ry Ev'ning clos'd in Calms of Peace.

How smil'd each Object, when by Friendship led,  
 Thro' flow'ry Paths we wander'd unconfin'd:  
 Enjoy'd each airy Hill, or solemn Shade,  
 And left the bustling empty World behind.

With philosophic, social Sense survey'd  
 The Noon-day Sky in brighter Colours shone:  
 And softer o'er the dewy Landscape play'd  
 The peaceful Radiance of the silent Moon.

Those Hours are vanish'd with the changing Year,  
 And dark *December* clouds the Summer Scene:  
 Perhaps, alas! For ever vanish'd here,  
 No more to bless distinguish'd Life again.

Yet not like those by thoughtless Folly drown'd,  
 In blank Oblivion's sullen, stagnant Deep,  
 Where, never more to pass their fated bound,  
 The Ruins of neglected Being sleep.

But lasting Traces mark the happier Hours,  
 Which active Zeal in Life's great Task employs:  
 Which Science from the Waste of Time secures,  
 Or various fancy gratefully enjoys.

O still be ours to each Improvement giv'n,  
 Which Friendship doubly to the Heart endears:  
 Those Hours, when banish'd hence, shall fly to Heav'n,  
 And claim the Promise of eternal Years.

(Elizabeth Carter, 1762)<sup>1</sup>

In my discussion of Hester Mulso's coterie fame in [Chapter 1](#), I suggested that the penetration of this fame into the print medium could not occur until Mulso, as Mrs. Chapone, became part of a more egalitarian coterie – that of Elizabeth Montagu. This transition, however, did not occur until the 1760s, leading directly to Chapone's widely disseminated print publications of the 1770s – a process I will trace to its completion in [Chapter 3](#). At the time of Mulso's initial coterie fame, Montagu's circle did not yet exist, let alone showing any sign of the cultural influence it achieved in the subsequent decades. At the start of the 1750s, the Yorke circle and those of the elderly Duchess of Somerset at Percy Lodge, whom Catherine Talbot visited at this time, and of Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, the Duchess of Portland at Bulstrode,<sup>2</sup> seem to have been the strongest centers of gravity for persons of letters who were members of the elite and gentry. Like members of the Yorke circle who also came into Richardson's orbit, friends of the Duchess of Portland overlapped with the North End coterie discussed in [Chapter 1](#). In particular, Mary Granville Pendarves (after 1743 Mrs. Delany, wife of the Irish clergyman Patrick Delany) and Anne Donnellan, two of the Duchess's closest connections, were Richardson's visitors and correspondents during the period of *Sir Charles Grandison's* composition. As a young woman, Elizabeth Robinson, later Montagu, had been an intimate friend and companion of the Duchess, who was five years her senior, but after Elizabeth's marriage in 1742 the relationship cooled. Thus, the correspondence with the Duchess of Portland falls off significantly in this decade, replaced by letters to and from Montagu's husband Edward, her cousin Gilbert West, and through him, George Lyttelton. And it was not through Bulstrode adherents and their connections to Richardson that Montagu encountered Carter but through the print manifestation of the latter's connection to Talbot – her translation of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.

The aim of this chapter is to trace the coalescence and emergence into cultural prominence in the latter half of the 1750s of a literary coterie centered on Elizabeth Montagu. While this coterie formed part of the extended network that has become commonly known as “the Bluestockings,” the term can be slippery in its reference, initially being used loosely to refer to small, mixed-gender conversational evenings, then expanding to indicate the larger assemblies of “beaux esprits” hosted by Montagu, Frances Boscawen, Hester Chapone, and others – but particularly Elizabeth Vesey, in her “Blue room” in Clarges Street. The gendering of the label in the late 1770s and beyond has had a backward-reaching influence as well, so that its use is as likely to invoke the dozen or more

intellectual women of the mid- to late eighteenth century who represent two generations of remarkable accomplishments in the arts, but who are connected in a much looser network than that of the small circle I explore here.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will thus use “the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie” to designate the intimate network of Elizabeth Montagu between about 1758 and 1773, beginning soon after the death of Gilbert West with the growing friendship of Montagu and George Lyttelton (Sir George from 1751, 1st Baron Frankley from 1756), and ending with the latter’s death. I will focus chronologically on the movements of Carter and Montagu toward the formation of the group; its first, intensely productive period which saw both manuscript *jeux d’esprits* and the publication of Lyttelton’s 1759 *Dialogues of the Dead*, to which Montagu contributed three dialogs, and Carter’s 1762 *Poems on Several Occasions*; and a second period of productivity with Montagu’s 1769 *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* and Lyttelton’s history of Henry II (1767–71). Throughout, my interest is in the characteristics and conditions that produced its range of literary expression and engagement as a coterie balanced between the interpenetrating scribal and print-based media systems of the time. I will then look at the literary projects initiated by the group, with a special focus on its role in the career of Hester Mulso Chapone.

I will also discuss, by contrast, the complicated position of Catherine Talbot who, despite her widely recognized literary talent, her friendships with Carter and Montagu, and her central role in furthering Carter’s fame, never became fully engaged with the newly formed Montagu–Lyttelton circle. If Talbot’s situation is thus a foil, setting in relief the contextual and motivational dynamics involved in the formation of a coterie, Samuel Johnson’s career path in the 1750s plays a shadow role in this chapter in that his articulation of the terms of reference for professional authorship came to the fore as Talbot, Carter, and other members of Richardson’s circle attempted to patronize *The Rambler*. This encounter between the values and practices of the print author in juxtaposition to those of the manuscript-exchanging coterie can be seen as prefiguring the terms of the ultimate rupture between Johnson and adherents to coterie values – particularly Montagu and then-Lord Hardwicke, Philip Yorke – in the 1780s (see [Chapter 5](#)). In its ensemble, this chapter traces from the perspective of media choice the formation of one branch of the group that has become known to literary history as the Bluestocking circle, while demonstrating the ways in which individuals might adopt an approach to media modes and practices that served their unique ends.

The core members of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie were linked by intense friendships, as the number and contents of letters exchanged by Montagu with Lyttelton, Carter, and William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, attest. But while Montagu also maintained an active correspondence during this period with her husband, her sister Sarah Scott, and other women friends such as Boscawen and Vesey, the network ties of the Montagu–Lyttelton group stand out as being founded to a significant degree on mutual encouragement and admiration of literary talents – Montagu’s epistolary skills, Lyttelton’s writings in poetry and prose, both past and in progress, Carter’s learned and morally improving *Epictetus* and poems, and even Bath’s witty conversation and occasional epistolary flourishes – which crossed lines of gender, economic status, and, to an extent, political affiliation. This network was dense, with direct social ties between each of Montagu, Bath, and Carter, who would often see each other multiple times in a day when in London, and spent periods of time together at Tunbridge Wells; Lyttelton, by virtue of his extensive family circle, his building and landscaping projects at Hagley, and the pressing concerns of his young children in these years, was often based at his Hagley estate and connected to the group primarily through correspondence with Montagu, when they were not both in residence in their Hill Street homes in London.<sup>4</sup> (The doctor Messenger Monsey and the philosopher and naturalist Benjamin Stillingfleet were directly connected with this coterie, but there is a clear difference in the continuity and closeness of the ties. Elizabeth Vesey, after 1761, became an increasingly important connection for Montagu, Lyttelton, and Carter; while she played an important role in the coterie’s adoption of Ossianic tastes and practices, her primary interests and talents seem to have been social and conversational, rather than literary.) Two portraits known to link members of the group in this period – one of Carter, painted by Katherine Read and owned by Montagu (Figure 2.1), and another of Montagu, by Allan Ramsay and possibly for presentation to Bath, who took an active interest in its production – convey in their openness and informality the sense of mutual trust, intellectual engagement, and lively intimacy between members of the group; a third, informal portrait of Lyttelton, tentatively dated 1756, likely arises out of a similarly sociable context (Figure 2.2).<sup>5</sup>

Like the Yorke–Grey and Richardson coteries discussed in Chapter 1, the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie used scribal production and circulation to seal its group identity; its epistolary exchanges also record critical discussion of events in the world of letters (both transnational and local), the initiation and development of its print publishing projects, the patronage



Figure 2.1 Katherine Read, *Elizabeth Carter*, c. 1765.

of other writers, and, not incidentally, the hope of influencing the national political sphere through all of these activities.<sup>6</sup> The particular character of this group, not only in relation to such print-oriented professionals as Samuel Johnson, but also within the larger “Bluestocking” phenomenon, throws into relief how mid-century individuals might fashion a balance between media modes and practices that served their unique purposes. Thus, the Montagu–Lyttelton circle took advantage of the interpenetrating scribal and print-based media systems of the 1750s and 1760s to pursue

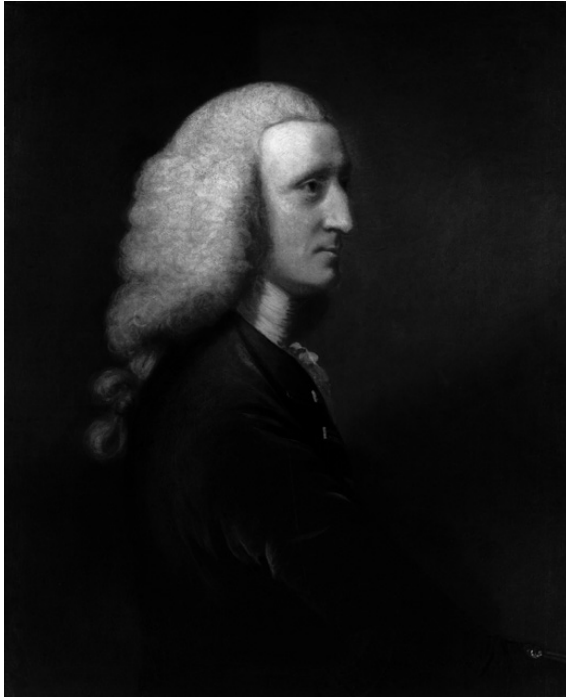


Figure 2.2 Artist unknown, *George Lyttelton, 1st Baron Lyttelton*, c. 1756.

its goals of self-improvement, of increasing the fame of the deserving, and of directing contemporary society, particularly literary culture, toward the ends of individual moral and intellectual improvement and collective British advancement.

### Elizabeth Carter becomes a coterie author: criticism, patronage, and Johnson's *The Rambler*

I have already suggested, in [Chapter 1](#), Elizabeth Carter's reluctance to be drawn into the tight orbit of Samuel Richardson in the early 1750s. As noted, the relationship had begun badly when Richardson broke the rule of respecting a scribal author's wishes regarding publicity, inserting the anonymous "Ode to Wisdom," as "by a lady," into his *Clarissa*. The transgression illustrates the common fate of a manuscript poem once copies circulated beyond the author's control; as Richardson

explained, it had been impossible to seek permission because his inquiries could not identify the author. It was Talbot who informed Carter of the print appearance of her poem, with which she was obviously familiar through scribal channels, and the mediator in the case was Susanna Highmore. Richardson went on to ask Highmore in 1750 to seek permission from Carter to print the ode in its entirety in the third edition of his novel. Carter replies, “When you write to Mr. Richardson I beg you will be so good to make my Compliments to him. the ode is intirely at his Service.”<sup>7</sup>

It was in this scribal context that Carter developed her sense of the potential of the epistolary form. In a detailed and nuanced discussion of Carter’s career that in many respects parallels and elaborates my overview here, Melanie Bigold has shown how Carter self-consciously pursued a hybrid model of patronage and collaboration based on scribal practices, on the one hand, and a selective use of print to intellectually and morally exemplary ends, on the other, concluding that “adherence to manuscript exchange and exemplarity was not, in artistic, intellectual, or moral terms, a constraining mode of practice” for Carter. While Bigold emphasizes a lifelong pattern of cultivating contacts with persons of letters, I will show here specifically how Carter developed coterie relationships in the 1740s with Talbot, Highmore, and Mulso especially, leading to the establishment of her position as a central member of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie. Already a well-published and applauded print author by the end of the 1730s, through her work for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and her translations of French and Italian treatises, she was slower to exploit the possibilities of the literary coterie. Her earliest letters, chiefly to close female friends in Kent or to Edward Cave in London, are brief and functional, alternating between the gossipy chat required to maintain the bonds of a close-knit Deal community (updates on the expectations of dress in London and apologies that Crousaz, whom Carter had translated, “is too metaphysical for you”) in the one case, and the necessary business of carrying on relations in the London world of letters in the other (requests that recent publications be shipped to her, messages for fellow writers, the search for “a red short Cloak” left behind somewhere).<sup>8</sup> Through the 1740s and early 1750s, however, her correspondence with Talbot, first, and then Highmore and Mulso drew out her developing critical voice and encouraged a sense of her potential for cultural influence as an acknowledged and accomplished woman of letters.

The Talbot–Carter correspondence interweaves exploration of moral questions related to the practice of everyday life with discussion of a very



wide range of reading, from Akenside to Young in English alongside French, Italian, and classical authors on philosophy, education, and literature. Carter and Highmore carried on their own literary exchange from at least 1748, when the former writes to thank her friend “for the charming [odes] you were so good to send me.” Highmore’s letters to Carter accomplish other coterie functions: they propose subjects of critical discussion and/or translation (such as the works of Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Fielding, Metastasio, Boileau, and Horace) and they publicize the upcoming subscription edition of Mary Leapor’s poems, organized by Isaac Hawkins Brown and Richardson. In the latter case, Carter politely declines to write a “vouching” poem for the volume, protesting, “Indeed Dear Miss Highmore you pay me much too great a Compliment in supposing me capable of writing upon any Subject that is proposed to me” and insisting that “her [Leapor’s] memory will be celebrated by so many others who are capable of doing it a much greater Honour”; she does, however, ask Highmore to send her the subscription proposal, implying that she will promote the project among her acquaintance.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Mulso, as shown in [Chapter 1](#) and elaborated below, Carter served as a valuable older female friend, but presumably also gained the stimulation of engaging with a sharp wit and the confidence of standing in the position of an authority figure. Thus, through her association with members of Richardson’s coterie, Carter found new opportunities for sociable literary criticism and patronage, key activities she would be involved in as a member of Montagu’s circle.

One significant opportunity for these female correspondents to put their cultural resources into action was the patronage of Samuel Johnson’s periodical *The Rambler*. While working on his *Dictionary* project, Johnson published the periodical anonymously; it appeared twice weekly, beginning in March of 1750, for a total of 208 issues. *The Rambler* did not sell as well as hoped in its periodical format, ceasing publication after two years, but it was almost immediately reissued in a six-volume collected edition and remained popular throughout the century. In its collected form, demand for *The Rambler* was immediate, steady, and widespread; there were nine London “editions” by the time of Johnson’s death in 1784. Paul Korshin suggests that we have here the deliberate construction of a classic – that the goal from the start was to “create a following and, through publication in a collected version, widen an author’s reputation.” The Rambler persona himself articulates in his earliest essays a desire to circumvent “the difficulty of the first address on any new occasion” in preference for “the honours to be paid him, when envy is extinct, and

faction forgotten, and those, whom partiality now suffers to obscure him, shall have given way to other triflers of as short duration as themselves." For this reason he will seek the favorable regard of "Time," who "passes his sentence at leisure."<sup>10</sup>

As Johnson's references to "faction" and "partiality" hint, this choice of orientation toward a future audience can be read as a decision against seeking coterie patronage. It is useful to recall that for the mid-century London author by trade, there were two, usually intersecting, routes of possible escape from a hand-to-mouth existence: one was to produce works whose built-in durability would make them profitable investments for booksellers, and for which, therefore, immediate copy payment and potential further remuneration could be substantial. The other was to find subscribers, generous patrons, and even long-term posts or pensions in a patronage system. This system persisted, as my discussion of the Yorke–Grey circle has demonstrated, in the personal relations fostered by the coterie; indeed, Dustin Griffin shows in his 1995 study *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* that it was evolving to meet new and ongoing cultural needs of authors and those who supported, and wished to be known to support, British letters.

From the perspective of such would-be patrons, Johnson's choice against such support seems to have been incomprehensible. Foremost among these scribal commentators are Highmore, Talbot, and Carter; in attempting to create a readership for *The Rambler* by talking it up and writing about it, these individuals were taking upon themselves the role of patronage brokers – advising the author and seeking to widen the circle of the periodical's advocates and audience. The socially superior Talbot's careful channelling of advice through Carter as a former London colleague of Johnson's shows their self-consciousness not only about the role they were playing but also about the complicated blend of social inequality and emerging professional pride that could make it difficult for an author to straddle the line between the two systems; she writes, "He ought to be cautioned . . . not to use over many hard words. This must be said with great care . . . Any hint that is known to come from you will have great weight with the Rambler, if I guess him right, particularly given in that delicate manner you so well understand." Carter even seems to have had vague hopes of some sort of pension for Johnson, a hope she articulates in its disappointment, in response to Mr. Rambler's farewell: "For some minutes it put me a good deal out of humour with the world, and more particularly with the great and powerful part of it . . . In mere speculation it seems mighty absurd that those who govern states and call themselves

politicians, should not eagerly decree laurels, and statues, and public support to a genius who contributes all in his power to make them the rulers of reasonable creatures.”<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately, Carter’s and Talbot’s letters reveal their frustration at the paper’s failure to construct a sociable author–reader relationship. Despite their best efforts on both the producing and the receiving ends, the author stubbornly refused to cater to the tastes of worldly contemporary readers, and readers refused to be told what they should like. A letter from Jemima Grey indicates that Talbot’s advocacy for the periodical targeted members of the Yorke–Grey coterie; on June 28, 1750, Grey writes from Wrest, “Look-ye, my dear Miss T—t, if you really are the Writer of the Rambler, or if any particular Friend of Yours is an Assistant, (& without one of these I can’t guess how you should be so well acquainted with the Author’s Thoughts or Designs) You should have given me a Hint that I might be more cautious in my Remarks upon it. But as it is too late now, & I have already done as bad as I can do, I must e’en plunge on, & support the Sentence given at this Place.” Grey’s comment makes it clear that the arguments fell on deaf ears, and Talbot finds herself writing a post-mortem for the periodical to Carter:

I assure you I grieved for [the death of that excellent person the Rambler] most sincerely, and could have dropt a tear over his two concluding papers, if he had not in one or two places of the last commended himself too much; . . . Indeed `tis a sad thing that such a paper should have met with discouragement from wise, and learned, and good people too – Many are the disputes it has cost me, and not once did I come off triumphant.

Carter commiserates in reply, “It must be confessed . . . that you shewed an heroic spirit in defending his cause against such formidable enemies even in London. Many a battle have I too fought for him in the country but with very little success.”<sup>12</sup>

What *The Rambler*’s first and friendliest readers were observing, then, was Johnson’s deliberate rejection of one media culture’s modes of relation in favor of another’s. Chapter 3 will demonstrate that Carter (and the Montagu and Shenstone coteries in general) did understand the appeal of the potentially transhistorical and disembodied audience offered by print. But as a committed practitioner of social authorship, Carter did not share Johnson’s view that the model of reader-as-patron should, or even could, be circumvented, and for the early 1750s she was right. Pensions aside, the publishing world of mid-century London remained one dependent upon recommendations, whether through personal contacts within the trade or

through an overlap of commercial and patronage networks; the very determination with which Talbot, Carter, and others pursued their goal of influencing both *The Rambler* papers and their reception affirms the potentially decisive role of social interactions in determining the “reach” of an author in this hybrid, geographically centralized literary culture.<sup>13</sup> Yet the contest over *The Rambler*’s immediate reception stands as a moment of differentiation, in which the social embeddedness of periodical writing as continuous with oral and manuscript communication was at odds with the increasing generalization of context into which print was moving with the rapid expansion of readerships and distribution networks.

If the debate over Johnson’s *Rambler* put pressure on the bonds holding scribal and print-trade practices together, Elizabeth Carter’s major literary project of the 1750s, her translation of the writings of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus from the Greek, demonstrated how well the system could work. The translation originated in 1748 as a personal project requested by Talbot (apparently to assist her in dealing with her grief over the death of Secker’s wife Catherine early in that year) and supported by the scholarly expertise of Thomas Secker; over the first five years of its gestation, the Carter–Talbot correspondence records the steady encouragement, even pressure, brought to bear on Carter by Talbot and by Secker through Talbot, as the translation competed with Carter’s duties of educating her brother and keeping house for her father’s family. In this sense, the work arose out of the mutually nurturing sociability of the coterie without the need of print publication to justify it. Yet the print medium offered itself as the best means to fulfill the project’s goal as expressed from the beginning in discussions between these three individuals: to capture Stoic philosophy in a manner that would speak forcefully to contemporary readers. To maximize the potential impact of the translation, Secker urges Carter to adopt a plainspoken style that will not only accurately represent the original but also “be more attended to and felt, and consequently give more pleasure, as well as do more good, than any thing sprucer.”<sup>14</sup>

In convincing Carter to do public good by harnessing the power of print, her friends were simultaneously harnessing the power of their social connections to support the project. Secker used his contacts to ensure that no rival translation was in the offing, mediated consultations with the classicist James Harris about difficulties in the Greek, and debated with Talbot and Carter how best to adjust the tone and contents of the textual apparatus. As Carter writes of the discussions with Harris, “This has made the scheme public, however; and so this poor foolish translation, if it ever does appear, instead of the comfort of

sneaking quietly through the world, and being read by nobody, will be ushered into full view, and stared quite out of countenance.” While Talbot graciously declined having her name printed as dedicatee (“Your inscription I would have you consider as already made, and in manuscript thankfully accepted; nor can I ever forget the goodness you have had in undertaking on my idle request so laborious a work. But further than this your request cannot possibly be granted”), the published work was fittingly prefaced with a commendatory ode by Carter’s coterie friend Mulso. The initial subscription of 1031 names – according to Carter’s nephew and memoirist Montagu Pennington, who says some of these names were written into Carter’s own copy – earned Carter a modest financial independence. It seems to have been this subscription, moreover, that brought Carter to the attention of Elizabeth Montagu, who pursued her acquaintance as she did those of others from whom she could benefit intellectually and morally. In this respect, the coming together of these two women at the center of a coterie in the late 1750s was a culmination, for Carter, of the formation she had undergone through her sociable literary connections of the 1740s and early 1750s.<sup>15</sup>

### Elizabeth Montagu constructs a coterie

Meanwhile, Carter’s contemporary Elizabeth Robinson Montagu was embarked on a similar trajectory with respect to sociable literary exchange, albeit from the starting point of a talent for lively and entertaining letter-writing. As the young Duchess of Portland’s teenaged companion in the 1730s, Elizabeth Robinson displayed a ready wit that led to an early reputation in coterie circles, reflected in the circulation of stories of “Fidget’s” bon mots and in a letterbook kept by the Duchess of extracts from Elizabeth’s correspondence. Anne Donnellan, a member of the Duchess’s circle, writes to Montagu in 1745 in terms that demonstrate both the literary value attached to the familiar letter in general and the particular value attributed to this writer’s compositions: “Your letter is in your own strain . . . tis a valuable piece to add to my invaluable collection which I shall leave to posterity as a trophy that I had a friend who could think so justly & so brightly, & in both or touch the collections of Pope Swift &c.” By 1754, Montagu’s written critique of Bolingbroke’s recently published *Philosophical Works* is being shown to the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>16</sup> Montagu’s letters from the start display a tendency toward set-pieces – for example, on the significance of the sea, in the above-

referenced letter to Donnellan – that might show up in altered form to different correspondents, suggesting her self-consciousness about the genre she is cultivating.

It is in her deliberate cultivation of ever-more accomplished correspondents and in her increasing tendency to discuss reading and ideas that Montagu parallels Carter's exploration of the possibilities of scribal culture. As Markman Ellis has demonstrated in an illuminating analysis of Montagu's epistolary networks of the 1750s, she moved steadily through a series of corresponding circles, from one comprised principally of family, wherein she discusses books with her husband and her sister Sarah and is assisted in Latin by her cousin William Freind, to one that centers on the poet Gilbert West (another cousin) and his family, and then through West (who died in 1756) to a core literary group consisting of Lyttelton (from at least 1756), Benjamin Stillingfleet (from 1757), Carter (from 1758), and Bath (from 1760). Ellis notes that by the late 1750s, Montagu's correspondence with the members of her incipient coterie can be sharply distinguished from that with almost all her other contacts (the exceptions are her husband and her sister Sarah) by its discussions of reading, indicating the importance of intellectual exchange to this group's identity. Of most importance to the identity and stature of this coterie, besides Montagu, was Lyttelton; as she writes after his death in 1773, "He was my Instructor & my friend, the Guide of my studies, ye corrector of ye result of them. I judged of What I read, & of what I wrote by his opinions. I was always ye wiser & the better for every hour of his conversation." Lyttelton's biographer Rose Mary Davis has asserted, in turn, that her subject's "principal claim to importance at the time of his death was his position in the Blue-stocking circle."<sup>17</sup>

A high-profile friend of Bolingbroke and member of the emerging Whig opposition to Walpole during the 1730s, Lyttelton held positions in the ministry from 1744 to 1756 while achieving considerable acclaim as an author (in 1747, his forthcoming *Monody* commemorating his first wife is announced by Birch to Philip Yorke as a notable literary event)<sup>18</sup> and patron (Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* was dedicated to Lyttelton, and he is commemorated in the 1744 edition of James Thomson's *The Seasons*). Nevertheless, Lyttelton's political fortunes waned in the 1750s, in part because of his shift in allegiance from William Pitt to Chancellor Hardwicke and the Duke of Newcastle, and after the mid-1750s he found himself more or less in retreat at his country estate of Hagley (inherited from his father in 1751) and dealing with the fallout from an unfortunate second marriage. It was in this situation that his friendships

with his cousin West, and through him, Montagu, developed. Even more deeply in the political wilderness since his widely condemned acceptance of an earldom in the negotiations following the 1742 fall of Walpole, Bath was seventy-six and had been widowed two years earlier when he became a member of Montagu's inner circle in 1760. As these pre-histories show, although the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie made relatively intermittent use of print as a medium in comparison to its voluminous private writings, its members brought to the group established public identities.

Montagu makes some explicit statements, during the process of her own and her coterie's formation, about her use of conversation and letters as the framework of a program of study that will allow her to develop intellectually and morally. Early in her marriage she writes gratefully that "Mr Montagu . . . is always ready to give me Instructions in whatever I am reading" and reports to him that in his absence she "rise[s] as soon as it is light & stud[ies] very hard when [she is] not obliged to be in Company." In 1752, she writes about the Wests, "I am very happy in such neighbors, the whole compass of [our] Island does not contain Persons I esteem more highly nor in whose conversation I could find greater pleasure & improvement." Six years later, she confesses to Carter,

I may be accused of ambition in having always endeavoured to ally my mind to its superiors, but I assure you vanity is not the motive, it is much more the happiness than the honour of Miss Carters friendship that I desire . . . When I was young I was content with the brilliant, if there was lacquer enough – I thought the object fine; now the brightest gilding, the finest varnish would da[mp]en me, I must have solid gold, where ye real value surpasses even the apparent.<sup>19</sup>

Connections with literary circles did not simply mean second-hand knowledge gained through conversation; they could also mean first-hand access to the latest publications, at times even before they went to press. Thus, we hear the excitement in Montagu's voice when she writes to her husband in 1746 that Conyers Middleton, her step-grandfather, has visited and let her read in manuscript "an account of the Roman Senate" that he will publish imminently, or to West in 1752 that she is sending him Archbishop John Tillotson's life, left for him by its author, "Mr Birch himself," after she has "read it thro', & [been] charm'd with ye character."<sup>20</sup> For both Montagu and Carter, though from rather dissimilar starting points, expertise in the multimedia world of mid-eighteenth-century communications necessarily included the development of a sociable literary network and was embedded in its practices of conversation and epistolary exchange.

Thus, Montagu's own fame expanded in the late 1750s as a natural continuum of that achieved already through her coterie activities as correspondent, conversationalist, and hostess. By the mid-1750s, Carter's reputation as the joy of Plato and admiration of Newton, "equal'd by few of either sex for strength of imagination, soundness of judgment, and extensive knowledge," was celebrated by John Duncombe in his *Feminiad* (1754); this reputation was only heightened by her *Epictetus*.<sup>21</sup> By the time Montagu sought out Carter to become a member of her coterie in 1758, her epistolary overture shows a consciousness of the exchange being negotiated between her own social status, wealth, and reputation as hostess and conversational wit, on the one hand, and the learned accomplishment and moral force Carter will bring to the friendship, on the other. Montagu delicately positions herself as intellectually and morally inferior to Carter in order to offer a point of equilibrium to her diffident correspondent:

I can perfectly understand why you were afraid of me last year, and I will tell you, for you won't tell me; . . . you had heard I set up for a wit, and people of real merit and sense hate to converse with wittings; as rich merchant-ships dread to engage with privateers: they may receive damage and can get nothing but dry blows. I am happy you have found out I am not to be feared; I am afraid I must improve myself much before you will find I am to be loved.<sup>22</sup>

What Montagu's feminocentric coterie offered, then, was a kind of meritocracy that would allow middle-class individuals, especially women, to participate fully. Frances Burney's much-later, rather satirical depiction of Montagu's salon circle, as laid out "with a precision that made it seem described by a Brobdignagian compass" in its placement of "the person of rank, or consequence, properly, on one side, and the person the most eminent for talents, sagaciously, on the other,"<sup>23</sup> nonetheless captures in a vivid image what must have been the coterie's unique appeal in the 1760s and 1770s.

### Literary production in the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie: script

As already suggested, the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie was the point of origin for a number of modes of literary production, making use of both script and print media. First and foremost of these was the familiar letter, the form at which Montagu excelled. Continuing the pattern already noted for the Bulstrode circle, a common entertainment of members of the coterie was reading preserved series of letters. At one point, for example,



Bath offers an extended reader response to the Montagu–West correspondence of the early 1750s, which she has given him to read:

Ten thousand thanks to you Dear Madam, for the most agreeable entertainment, I ever had in my Life, from reading. Nothing but your own Conversation can come up to it. My Passions were agitated just as I read; Sometimes in the highest Spirits, & then again dejected, & thrown into a sudden lowness of them from a melancholy line or two. If I found you under Affliction, for your friends, or describing your own sufferings, from Spasms, Convulsions and Rheumatism's, it was impossible not to suffer with you, & shed a Tear for your misfortunes. Then again, in an Instant Elated with excessive Joy, on the return of your health & Spirits, describing your Visit to Courayer, going thro' a shopful of Toys and Vanities to arrive at Wisdome, & clambering up a very difficult narrow pair of Stairs to get at Philosophy or relating a most ridiculous story of your Kinsman, young Worth, being caught in a Peice of roguery, & being in danger of the Gallies. In short your cheerful descriptions of the beauty & Innocence of the Country, or your just severitys and Censures of the Follys and Wickednesse's of the Town, are equally agreeable.<sup>24</sup>

At another, in 1762, Bath has received from Lyttelton her letters discussing elements of dramatic tragedy in general, and of Shakespeare's plays in particular; while he enjoys the manuscripts in their own right, we glimpse the germination of the project that was eventually published as the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear*, discussed below.

Such letter circulation served first and foremost, however, to establish and reinforce ties between members of the group. Truly exclusive circulation, explicitly designed for only one or two members of the coterie, is relatively rare in the surviving collection of its correspondence,<sup>25</sup> while occasional poetry and other writings are used to reinforce group solidarity. One witty exchange, begun in late 1760, initiates a lengthy string of references that ties together the Montagu–Bath correspondence over a period of at least two years. The sequence begins with the eighty-year-old Bath addressing the forty-year-old Montagu in the plaintive strains of a dying lover; Montagu responds by graciously promising to hear his suit when she is double her present age, launching a millennium of love in the year 1800 (although Bath gallantly calculates the doubling of her age to arrive in a mere twenty years); Bath pleads for a reduction of the waiting period, protesting that while he can die for her he can't promise to live for her. Subsequent letters refer constantly back to the tedious waiting period this admirer is enduring, mention that Carter is writing the epithalamium, compare Scott's newly published novel *A Description of Millenium Hall*

to the lovers' proposed idyll, and so on. Although the original sequence appeared posthumously in the selected 1813 edition of Montagu's letters, its contemporary "fame" was entirely based upon manuscript circulation. Thus, the Montagu collection itself contains two copies, at least one in a copyist's hand, of Montagu's letter to Bath, while she writes to her sister that she is enclosing a copy of "the billet doux of the witty and the gay Lothario [Bath]" (presumably with her reply included). At the same time, the earliest letters in the sequence trace the parallel circulation of a manuscript pastoral letter written by the Bishop of London, Thomas Sherlock, to the newly ascended George III. Montagu has received a copy from the Bishop (produced by his Secretary), which she sends on to both Lord Bath and the Duchess of Portland, requesting that Bath keep the letter "honourably placed . . . in [his] cabinet," for fear "that by some accident it may be degraded by an appearance in a magazine or chronicle"; she "think[s] it necessary to put those restraints on the friends to whom I communicate it as may secure me from blame if ye letter should be made publick."<sup>26</sup>

If Bath and Montagu are particularly gifted at creating letters with exchange value, it is Carter and Lyttelton who use poetry to articulate important moments in the coterie's history. I will discuss later the odes produced by Carter to celebrate her visit to Tunbridge Wells with Montagu, Bath, and Lyttelton in the summer of 1761; in July of 1762, it is the turn of Lyttelton to send a poem entitled "The Vision" to Montagu in honor of a June visit to Hagley made by the Montagus, Lord Bath, the Vesseys, and several others. This poem, of which a manuscript copy remains in the Montagu collection, was sent by Montagu to Vesey, Carter, Talbot, and perhaps others. Set in the author's landscaped grounds, "The Vision" describes the speaker's dream of a bard who first sees Bath as a towering oak, tended by Pallas and the druids, dispensing oracular wisdom to the British state, and then Montagu as a fragrant myrtle nursed by the muses and the virtues, sheltering Apollo. Thus the poem celebrates the physical gathering of the core members of the coterie and their spouses at Hagley (only Carter was absent), while asserting the importance of its members to the nation.

On another occasion, Montagu encloses to her close friend Lyttelton a witty, 139-line poem by their mutual friend Messenger Monsey spun out of a brief conversational exchange of December 5, 1758 (the exchange, apparently, consisted of "L: I must go to Eaton; M: You shall not go to Eaton"). Lyttelton replies to Montagu: "I return you Monsey's Verses with some of my own. Upon reading his over again since I left you and

Miss Carter together, his Muse caught and inspired me all in a sudden, as the Spirit of Fanaticism catches the Audience at one of Whitfields Sermons. If you like them, you may send them to him; if not, my excuse is, that they were conceived, born, and drest as you see them, in less than half an hour.” The poem itself and the surrounding exchange reinforce the mutual characterizations of the group: Montagu as beautiful and sensible lady, risking her own health in concern for her friends, Lyttelton as devoted admirer and cultivated courtly poet who can compose extempore, Monsey as whimsical and extravagant conversationalist. Similarly, the work a single letter can perform to reinforce the circle of the cultivated while excluding the uncultivated peer and the object of patronage is illustrated by a single paragraph in an undated letter of 1766 from Montagu to her Irish friend and fellow-salon hostess Elizabeth Vesey: “Lord Lyttelton desires Lord Orrerys wretched letters on ye English history may not be attributed to him neither as to ye matter or ye manner. I enclose a letter Mr Walpole wrote to Rousseau in ye name of ye King of Prussia. I have taken ye liberty to enclose 4 proposals for my friend Mr Woodhouse [a former shoemaker, discovered by Shenstone as a poet, and patronized by Montagu], as you love virtue & verse I am sure you will be glad to dispense of them for him, & it will be of great service to him to be introduced into Ireland under yr patronage.”<sup>27</sup>

These brief examples begin to demonstrate the circulation patterns of manuscript materials in the Montagu coterie and its associated networks: items move both within an inner circle of Montagu’s most intimate correspondents – Carter, Bath, Lyttelton, Monsey, Vesey – and also flow in from, and out toward, intersecting circles that include the likes of Scott, the Bishop of London, Walpole, Thomas Gray, Lord Kames, the Duchess of Portland, and at its farthest reaches, Voltaire and Benjamin Franklin. While some of the materials circulated in this way are political, they are not partisan in an early eighteenth-century sense – they are better described as nationalist and socially conservative. Their restricted circulation thus appears at once to elevate the social capital of the person who has obtained them (as was the case for Birch in [Chapter 1](#)) and to maintain links among a well-educated, patriotic but cosmopolitan elite that relies on manuscript circulation to maintain its shared sense of values.<sup>28</sup>

### Literary production in the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie: print

This scribally reinforced solidarity translated into the conception and staunch support of publications on the part of members of the coterie.

In 1759, Lyttelton published *Dialogues of the Dead*, which contained three dialogs by Montagu. The latter were contributed anonymously, but their authorship soon became known, and Lyttelton took pleasure in reporting their praises both before and after the general discovery of their authorship. Bath seems to have become acquainted with the volume through his friendship with Montagu, writing to her, “Last night after I left you, I read near threescore Pages, of Lord Littletons charming Book. You may divert your self, with your french Authors if you please, but I will back my Lord, against them all, either in Verse, or prose, throwing any Voltaire & Rousseau into the bargain, and leaving Old Aristotle or your friend Longinus, to decide the controversy.”<sup>29</sup> The first publishing project of the fully fledged coterie, however, was the edition of Carter’s *Poems on Several Occasions*, published by Rivington in January of 1762.

Carter’s letters to Talbot during the Tunbridge visit of summer 1761 stand out for their light-hearted pleasure in the company of Montagu, Bath, and Lyttelton, entering into their teasing about her competition with the card-playing Lady Abercorn for the attentions of Bath, for example, and enthusing about drinking tea with Montagu after dark on the wild rocks of the seashore. It is in these letters that she half-complains of the “very serious difficulty” she is in as a result of “a plot contrived by Lord Bath and Lord Lyttelton, aided, abetted, and comforted by Mrs. Montagu,” to publish her poems.<sup>30</sup> Immediately following the Tunbridge summer of 1761, as already mentioned, Carter produced two odes: one to Bath and another “To Mrs. [Montagu]” (which forms the epigraph to this chapter), celebrating the life of the coterie there, where “philosophic, social Sense” brightened the “Noon-day Sky” and softened the “peaceful Radiance of the silent Moon,” but also asserting that “lasting Traces” remain of those “happier Hours,” in the ensuing hours that the group’s members devote “to each Improvement . . . / Which Friendship doubly to the Heart endears.”<sup>31</sup> Montagu’s correspondence with Carter in the following months interweaves discussion of this ode with plans for the edition of poems. Thus, questions about the propriety of displaying the coterie in print – whether or not to include the names of Montagu and Bath, dedicate to Bath, and insert a Lyttelton poem written in praise of Carter at Penshurst Park – alternate with regret for the days of Tunbridge and with debates about the size of the print run. Lyttelton supplies copy, in the form of his Penshurst poem, Bath offers to pay for Carter’s stay in London during the preparation of the edition, and Montagu writes, “Let me have yr manuscript sheets, let me have the printed sheets, let me have as much to do as possible in ye business of your Book.”<sup>32</sup>

In the final phase of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie, after the death of Bath in 1764, two very long-term projects issued from the press. One, Lyttelton's *History of the Life of King Henry the Second*, published in five volumes between 1767 and 1771, was the labor of decades, during the latter of which Montagu had faithfully urged him on, and both she and Carter had read the manuscript; Lyttelton was complaining of slow printing as early as 1763, and reading parts of the work to Montagu in 1764. The second was Montagu's 1769 *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets, with Some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire*, a critical work which, as noted earlier, originated in epistolary discussions with Lyttelton initiated in about 1760 and which Bath had read as early as July 1762, immediately after the Hagley visit. Bath writes,

I will not yet send you back your own most Charming Letters to Lord Lyttelton, I will read them over & over again, and am greatly rejoiced to hear you design to go on with them . . . Observations, & Comparison's of Modern Authors, with Ancients, *Shakespear* with *Sophocles*, is a work worthy of your Pen. Why do you say it shall never be seen, by any body but Lord Lyttelton, Mrs carter, and my self; for the vanity, or the praise it may bring, you need not print it, but surely the world ought not to be deprived of such a work, when it is finished.

In addition to illustrating the early genesis and coterie origin of the project, Bath's exhortation offers a variation on the common theme of public usefulness with which the coterie's members urged one another into print. While Montagu demurred, insisting that "as people generally profess to write for their own Amusement, and the instruction of their readers, on the contrary, I shall write for my own instruction, and the Amusement of my few readers," the encouragements of Lyttelton, Carter, and Montagu's sister eventually bore fruit. Even in the final extant letter of Lyttelton to Montagu before his unexpected death in August of 1773, potential publishing projects are being discussed: he responds to her urging that he write about the Roman history that, although the subject has been "exhausted" by "the most acute Understandings and most elegant Pens both of ancient and modern times," "if the English Minerva [Montagu] will inspire my Genius with some portion of her Sagacity and Judgement, I will not despair of being able to say something New and worthy of Attention."<sup>33</sup>

Two other cultural contributions of the coterie should be noted. The first is the epistolary travel writing of its central figures Elizabeth Montagu and George Lyttelton. The influence of such writings on the

development of the commercially important genre of the domestic tour, and on the explosion in popularity of such tourism through the latter decades of the century, will be discussed in some detail in [Chapter 6](#) of this study. The second significant development is in the group's reception of the ballad and bard poetry of the second half of the century. If the manuscript circle and esthetic values cultivated by William Shenstone (see [Chapter 3](#)) led directly to the young Thomas Percy's 1765 publication of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, Montagu, Lyttelton, and Vesey were in the vanguard of enthusiastic interest in, and critical reception of, such work. The coterie embraced the Ossianic poetry of James Macpherson from the time of its first publication in 1760 in *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland*, and Montagu's correspondence shows her to be actively engaged in debates over the poems' authenticity. The Montagu collection includes not only manuscript passages from Macpherson's work circulated in advance of their publication but also an Ossianic imitation by Lyttelton and several related items of unknown origins – “Malvina's Dream,” “The Death of Ela,” and “Down in yon Garden Green the Lady as She Goes” (a kind of Ossian-ballad hybrid labeled “For Mrs. Montagu”).<sup>34</sup> In addition, the members' correspondence includes frequent references to Vesey's Bower of Malvina at her Irish home of Lucan, and London gatherings hosted by Montagu and Vesey are called “feasts of shells” and feature numerous “bards.” While in part the Ossianic language served as a cohesion device, almost a secret code, for the group, JoEllen DeLucia has also noted “the central role played by the Ossian poems in creating Montagu's particular brand of Bluestocking sociability, which cast women as lead actors in the development of civil society.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the disappointment of her desire to believe the Ossian writings authentic, Montagu does not waver in her tastes from her 1760 description of them as displaying “ye noblest spirit of poetry,” agreeing with Lyttelton's assessment that if Macpherson has composed the works, he is “certainly the First Genius of the Age.”<sup>36</sup> In this instance, we glimpse the coterie contributing to “modern” taste in endorsing the “past.”

Thus, the history of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie and of the fame it attained through manuscript production and collaboratively conceived writing projects demonstrates the close integration of manuscript and print in mid-eighteenth-century literary culture and calls for a closer examination of the mechanisms governing this media interface. For a start, it is clear that a simple sequential model of media succession is inadequate to explain the dynamics at work in this moment, when manuscript and print media collaborated both to reinforce coterie culture and to

establish literary reputations. These reputations, moreover, were not simply those of the core group; in the [next section](#) of this chapter, I will return again to Hester Mulso, now Hester Chapone, as an example of the effective patronage model practiced by Montagu.

### Patronage in the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie: Hester Mulso Chapone

One feature of Montagu and Carter's friendship from 1758 was a practice of pooling Carter's middling and small-town connections with Montagu's financial means and elite social networks to find suitable situations for women in various kinds of need. It was therefore inevitable that when Hester Mulso Chapone's husband of only nine months died in September 1761, leaving his wife with almost no material assets, Carter would bring her young friend to Montagu's benevolent attention. Montagu's first expression of sympathy for Chapone comes in a letter written to Carter right after John Chapone's death, and in the summer of 1762 she reports visits to Chapone, who was leading a peripatetic existence between the homes of various family members. We have already seen that a middling sort of egalitarianism had in part been the attraction of Richardson's coterie, but also that theory fell victim to gender practices in the case of the unmarried Mulso and perhaps other young female members of the group. Montagu's frequent representation of herself to Carter as the gainer by their relationship is very likely the approach she used in putting Mulso, now the widowed Chapone, at ease as well. Chapone writes to Carter in 1762 thanking her for making her acquainted with Montagu and adding that "I begin to love her so much that I am quite frightened at it, being conscious my own insignificance will probably always keep me at a distance that is not at all convenient for loving."<sup>37</sup>

Montagu did bring the resources of her connections into play in an attempt to find a suitable employment income for Chapone. Montagu's exchanges with her sister in the fall of 1762 show them discussing with their friend the Duchess of Beaufort the possibility of a position as governess and companion to the Duchess's daughters. The sticking point was the fact that Chapone would not have been admitted to dine at the Duchess's table, making her a servant rather than companion. Significantly, Montagu understands and respects Chapone's position, writing to Scott:

I imagine Mrs Chapone wd not accept of service on any terms whatever. Her Brother who is very fond of her is in very good business, her Uncle is Bishop of Winchester, & tho she has a very small income of her own, yet

leisure & liberty are of infinite value, to such a Person. She spent this summer at Kensington with her Brother who had taken a very genteel house there, & he treats her with great respect as well as kindness, & I imagine as soon as Mr Chapones affairs are settled ye Bishop will give her something decent, or get her some bounty in pennison or employment of the King.

Montagu does not fault the Duchess, agreeing that she herself could never accept the notion of a female companion (“I must own I should as soon keep a person to blow my nose as to amuse me”), but she seems in this case to be able to imagine Chapone’s merit as demanding reciprocity across status lines.<sup>38</sup>

In fact, Montagu proudly cites to Carter a passage from a Lyttelton letter of October 1762 in which he places her in a triumvirate of female wits that includes Carter and Chapone; Lyttelton has written that “I have lately read over again our Friend Miss Carter’s Preface to Epictetus, and admire it more and more. I am also much struck with the Poem prefixed to it by another female Philosopher, whose name I wish you would tell me. If you will but favour the World with a few of your compositions, the English Ladies will appear as superiour to the French in Witt and Learning, as the Men do in Arms.” “The fine Ode is our friend Mrs. Chapones, but she does not own it,” Montagu replies to Lyttelton. It seems she continues to promote Lyttelton’s positive assessment of Chapone, so that in 1770, as the two women plan a trip to the North, Lyttelton writes courteously of his anticipation of their stop at Hagley en route: “I long to show my Park [to Mrs. Chapone], as her old acquaintance and friend, and as she is one of the English Muses, to whose Divinities it is consecrated.” On their return from the same tour, Montagu writes to Lyttelton, “When I have the pleasure of seeing your Lordship in Town I will shew you some poetical performances of Mrs Chapones which you will admire.”<sup>39</sup> It is plausible that a little manuscript booklet of Chapone’s early poems, those of the Richardson era, found in the Montagu collection, dates from this promise to Lyttelton.<sup>40</sup> Knowing Lyttelton’s commitment to those he patronized, it seems that the stage was being set for the coterie’s next push toward print, this time on behalf of Chapone.

From this same Northern tour, Chapone reports to Carter, “I am grown as bold as a lion with Mrs. Montagu, and fly in her face whenever I have a mind; in short I enjoy her society with the most perfect *gout*, and find my love for her takes off my fear and awe, though my respect for her character continually increases.” It appears that, as Montagu’s friend and now travelling companion, Chapone achieved with her an equilibrium that



balanced the latter's wealth, social power, and recent publishing success with her *Essay on Shakespeare* against Chapone's monitoring of her friend's practice of virtue in high life. Thus, this same letter to Carter continues, "[Mrs. Montagu's] talents, when considered as ornaments, only excite admiration; but when one sees them diligently applied to every useful purpose of life, and particularly to the purposes of benevolence, they command one's highest esteem." And in 1772, Chapone writes approvingly to Montagu about the latter's attentions to her mentally ill brother John: "Surely next to the happiness of self-approbation is that of seeing a friend engaged in a course of action that confirms & heightens all one's esteem & admiration! No one bestows more of this gratification on their friends than yourself, and I must thank you as well as love you *for being so much what I wish you to be.*" This is a remarkable expression of moral monitorship on the part of a woman who, in the same letter, laments the fact that her "own little home" does not "admit air enough for [Montagu] to live in two or three hours sometimes," and concludes by hoping "for the favour of a Summons when you are settled & composed in Hill Street after yr Journey."<sup>41</sup>

Montagu, in her turn, is "charm'd with the rectitude of [Chapone's] heart & soundness of understanding. She is a diamond without flaw."<sup>42</sup> It is from this post-Richardsonian coterie context, founded upon similitude of gender and intellectual interests and exhibiting a carefully calibrated balance of material property and status versus uncompromising moral rectitude, that Chapone's second phase of fame issued. While financial need was certainly an incentive, Chapone's stance of moral authority can be seen in the first choice of work, an educational treatise in the form of letters to a younger woman (originally her niece) entitled *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*. But the work also proudly wears the endorsement of the particular coterie to which Chapone belongs, in the dedication acknowledging Montagu's encouragement, critical judgment, and suggestions for revision. It is "the partiality of [Montagu's] friendship" which has led the author to believe that the letters might be "more extensively useful"; in effect, the coterie authorizes the print publication as a means of meeting its broad social aims.<sup>43</sup>

As Sylvia Harkstarck Myers asserts and the bibliographical work of Rhoda Zuk has confirmed, Chapone's *Letters* "was the most widely read work of the first generation of Bluestockings."<sup>44</sup> Thus, Mrs. Chapone, through a second experience of a literary coterie, was put into a position that allowed her to make constructive use of the "uncommon solidity and exactness of understanding" that Elizabeth Carter had recognized in

Miss Mulso twenty-three years earlier, but which had contributed to uneasy relations in the Richardson circle at North End. E.J. Clery has suggested that Chapone's *Letters* served as "a manual for the creation of future generations of Clarissas" and therefore as a realization of Richardson's hopes for Mulso and his fostering of her abilities "by private debate." While this claim is valid in its recognition of the continuity between the two apparently disparate phases of Hester Mulso Chapone's career, it is only ironically so, because a coterie with Richardson at its center could never quite give its blessing to the notion of, in Clery's terms, "private debate as preparation for more public interventions."<sup>45</sup> By contrast, as Chapone's experience with the dedication of her *Letters* to Montagu illustrates, the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie was prepared to exert its collective cultural influence by endorsing print publishing projects, such as Chapone's, that it deemed of personal and public benefit.

### Catherine Talbot's rejection of coterie authorship

And what of Catherine Talbot, another woman admired by Richardson and Edwards for her literary accomplishments, as we saw in [Chapter 1](#)? What was her trajectory through this shifting landscape of coteries? The final portion of this chapter will trace the sequence of Talbot's significant engagements with several coterie networks, while noting her paradoxical determination to shield her literary productions, whether in script or print, from every sort of public exposure. Her story thus underscores by contrast the fact that well-received coterie writing did not inevitably lead either to print or to the identity of author, even in the interdependent media climate of the mid-eighteenth century. As already noted, Talbot's primary, mostly elite literary connections were with members of the Yorke–Grey coterie, established through her childhood friendships with Mary Grey and Jemima Campbell and carried on into the exuberant and creative coterie life at Wrest Park. In the year 1751, however, Talbot and her mother underwent the upheaval of moving from their longtime home, the rectory of St. James, Piccadilly, in the most fashionable part of town, to the Deanery house of St. Paul's Cathedral, in the heart of the City. While the friendship with the Marchioness and other women of the Yorke family continued, there seem to have been tensions marring the former intimacy and trust. Shortly after the move Talbot is hopeful that, paradoxically, she will see more of her friends because more formal planning of visits is necessary, but she often expresses a sense that the

geographical divide is paralleled by a growing psychological and social gulf separating her from the leisured lives of Grey and the others of the Yorke circle: “they live in a world vastly separate from ours, and cannot enliven many a lonely evening when you, dear Miss Carter, will be kindly at hand,” and they are victims of “that cruel influenza, the enchanted circle of dissipation and amusement.” For Grey’s part, she regrets “the Confinement & *Tristesse* of St. Pauls” to which her friend is subject.<sup>46</sup> An important connection formed in the early 1750s reinforces the sense that Talbot was consciously seeking relationships of greater intellectual and moral depth: in 1753 she sought out the elderly Duchess of Somerset, who as the Duchess of Hertford was at the center of the coterie that had anchored Elizabeth Rowe’s late-life fame, and had more recently been an important patron of James Thomson.<sup>47</sup> The two women formed an immediate and strong bond that was cut short by the Duchess’s death in 1754. Though brief, the friendship was characterized, again, by the typical practices of scribal culture – while visiting the Duchess at Percy Lodge, Talbot read the manuscripts of Rowe; she in turn introduced the Duchess to Edwards, with whose sonnets the Duchess was “charmed”;<sup>48</sup> and she composed an educational fairy tale for the Duchess’s grandson.

The Duchess’s death, however, left Talbot with the just-genteel, morally earnest Richardsonian circle, discussed in [Chapter 1](#), as ballast to her relations with the more elite “enchanted circle of dissipation” in which she was required to participate to some extent but about which she felt highly ambivalent. Indeed, it was shortly before this that Talbot encountered and greatly admired *Clarissa*, writing to Carter, upon discovery of Richardson’s insertion of Carter’s “Ode to Wisdom,” “Are you so happy as to be acquainted with these Richardsons? I am sure they must be excellent people, and most delightful acquaintance.”<sup>49</sup> As Clery puts it, “by making *Clarissa* and Anna Howe studious, articulate, critical, perpetually scribbling young women from genteel families, [Richardson] made a direct appeal to their counterparts in real life.” She goes on to suggest that the conjunction of Johnson’s *Rambler* and Richardson’s work on *Grandison*, together with new publications by Cockburn and Lennox that she promoted, “aroused in Talbot a renewed enthusiasm for participating actively in the literary public sphere.”<sup>50</sup> Talbot obviously felt a strong affinity for the novelist’s thematic preoccupations and supported his authorial aims; with the move to St. Paul’s, she became his neighbor and began to record his regular visits in her journal.

Indeed, this relationship drew Talbot into intense editorial involvement in the writing of *Sir Charles Grandison*. While Richardson’s biographers

imply that Talbot overestimated her position as in reality only one among many “ladies” whose counsel Richardson never really intended to follow, they acknowledge that “there is no reason to doubt that a good many of her painstaking corrections were accepted.”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, there is no record of a similarly extensive editorial role to that played by Talbot (with the participation of Secker). She devotes eighteen or more months to “our Incomparable Manuscript which I am reviewing as Carefully & I could almost say as Conscientiously as I can” and engages in hours-long consultations with the author, during one of which “four Volumes [are] dispatched.” That Richardson too was taking this process very seriously is implied when Edwards indicates in the summer of 1752 and again in 1753 that his friend is waiting with bated breath for the return of his manuscript or printed sheets from Cuddesden, the summer home of Secker and the Talbots. Carter writes to Talbot, upon receiving from Richardson the first four volumes of the novel, that “Every body, I am sure, will be struck with the advantageous differences of the language, though but few can observe it with the peculiar pleasure that I do.”<sup>52</sup> Given the unique combination of attributes Talbot brought to the project – intelligence, good taste, an insider’s knowledge of the manners and attitudes of social elites, and a sincere commitment to their moral improvement – her advice must have been invaluable in the composition of a book that, if criticized by some of her friends for such features as Harriet Byron’s talkativeness and Sir Charles’s foreign education, was by the same measure successful in becoming the subject of fashionable conversation.<sup>53</sup>

Although she retained her loyalty and respect for Richardson when other members of the coterie had distanced themselves, Talbot’s outsider position with respect to her two coterie groups is neatly captured in her 1756 report to her friend Anne Berkeley, widow of the Bishop of Cloyne, that she has visited Richardson in his new suburban residence of Parson’s Green, in “an Arbour as pleasant as a Yew Arbour can be, that is besides decorated with indifferent Shells & bad Paintings, but the Air was sweet, the Garden gay with Flowers & the Company Agreeable.”<sup>54</sup> At the same time, even more than for Mulso, it seems to have been her relationship with Carter that served as ballast for Talbot through this period of division. I have shown throughout this study how the two women debated and collaborated in their relationships with Richardson and Johnson as authors – it was this bond with one another that flourished beyond the life of the Richardson coterie, as Talbot embarked on the long project of assisting with and obtaining subscriptions to Carter’s publication of her

translation of Epictetus, which finally appeared in 1758, and indeed beyond Richardson's death in 1761.

Talbot, of course, did not need the patronage of either Richardson or Montagu. While Carter was becoming Montagu's friend in the aftermath of *Epictetus*, she was taking up life at Lambeth Palace as a member of the household of Thomas Secker, now Archbishop of Canterbury; there she often served as his secretary and as a conduit for managing the clerical patronage that went along with his office. References to Montagu in the Talbot–Carter correspondence as Carter and Montagu become increasingly close suggest that she and Talbot were not prior friends, though by the 1750s Montagu was moving in a similar social sphere, and there is a reference in the Mary Delany correspondence for 1754 to a simultaneous visit from Miss and Mrs. Talbot, Montagu, and the Duchess of Portland. We see Carter initially mediating the relationship, with Talbot writing in June 1758 that she now loves Montagu “twice as well as usual for the justice she does to you, though, she must be blind not to see and feel your merit,” and Carter expressing the wish, in November 1758, that Talbot “will see [Montagu] often, as I am persuaded the better you are acquainted with her, the more you will be convinced of the excellency of her character.”<sup>55</sup> By the 1760s, both Talbot's and Montagu's letters to Carter mention regular contacts between them in the form of notes, messages conveyed by mutual friends, and visits. Often the two women combine forces to patronize or promote worthy junior clergy, women fallen on hard times, and authors of morally improving works.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, Montagu's references to Talbot in her correspondence with Carter frequently mention the awkwardness of their friend's residence at the Archbishop's palace in Lambeth, on the south side of the Thames, suggesting that once again a geographical barrier separates Talbot from full participation in a literary coterie. This physical impediment can be taken to stand for not only the more insurmountable social barriers of Talbot's duties in relation to her elderly mother and the Archbishop (exacerbated by the relatively public nature of his household) but also the more long-standing psychological or ideological ones of Talbot's extreme reluctance regarding any sort of circulation of her writings. Thus, just as Richardson's surviving correspondence contains only one brief, rather formal note of New Year's greeting from Talbot, there is but a single surviving letter from Talbot to Montagu. Demonstrating the importance of Carter's mediating role in this relationship, the witty and engaging letter sent to Tunbridge in 1761 responds to the plan being devised for the publication of Carter's poems, addressing Montagu as “the Lady of the Rose colour'd Gown” and

assuring the circle at Tunbridge of Talbot's own "readiness to obey the Commands of Lady Ab:s Tunbridge Cotterie." The letter concludes with the hope that Montagu will "sometimes in your Airings . . . have the Charity of bringing an Hours Cheerful Improvement to this Retirement [Lambeth], which wants so many of the Rural Joys of the real Country, that only such a Neighbour as You can reconcile one to its nearness to London." And yet, where the recipient might have been drawn into further correspondence in response to this jeu d'esprit, Talbot in fact shuts any such possibility down, facetiously observing that Montagu is now in Talbot's debt for a reply after an entire year's interval, "for since you have been rash enough to begin I am resolved I will be wise enough to go on." Knowing well the rules of scribal exchange and possessing the literary talent to shine in this milieu, Talbot nevertheless chooses to remain on its margins rather than fight against the circumstances that have placed her there.<sup>57</sup>

If Talbot did not need patronage to live, she certainly eschewed the publicity afforded by coterie circulation of manuscripts. It is possible that her determined efforts to avoid such publicity – what she would have considered notoriety – explain the above-noted lack of letters in the correspondence of individuals such as Richardson and Montagu, both of whom were well known for the circulation and reading of letters within their coteries and beyond. Her consistently expressed dismay at the propagation of her manuscript writings appeared extreme even to her fellow coterie members, who teased her with threats of sending her letters to the *Magazine of Magazines*, or were simply bewildered, in the case of the Duchess of Somerset, when she would not even allow the Duchess's grandson's tutor to see the educational fairy story she had written for the child.<sup>58</sup> But despite her efforts at secrecy, Talbot's juvenile writings, especially, continued to circulate in scribal networks, returning to haunt and discomfit her. In 1745, for example, she writes with dismay of a group of visitors to Wrest including a Mrs. 15.5 ["P—e" in Talbot's code] who "struck me down at once with talking of Verses of Mine forsooth that she had seen at Bath 14 Years ago. Well, if she did then see some follies of a Child, are they to be reproached her on to Four score . . . They [Yorke and Grey] make themselves vastly merry with the numberless Persecutions I undergo, & my hatred to this detestable *Fame*."<sup>59</sup>

Birch's letter-books contain copies of one of the works Mrs. 15.5 might have heard of – not a child's poem, but a more recent witty letter of welcome to her newborn cousin, written in 1742. Sometime after 1761, Talbot writes to Eliza Berkeley, wife of George, in response to having been

sent a copy of this same 1742 letter, of her disappointment a finding “the Ghost of my own poor Letter (that has been dead & gone so many Years) still walking about the World & Haunting me even here.” Zuk reports that a revised version of the letter appeared in print in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* a month after Talbot’s death, as “Letter from the late Miss Talbot, to a new-born Infant, daughter of Mr. John Talbot, a Son of the Lord Chancellor.”<sup>60</sup> Talbot’s experience with the long-term uncontrolled circulation of her manuscript writings thus makes her the unwilling proof of Harold Love’s observation that “[s]cribal publication, operating at relatively lower volumes and under more restrictive conditions of availability than print publication, was still able to sustain the currency of popular texts for very long periods and bring them to the attention of considerable bodies of readers” – even in the supposedly more attenuated scribal culture of the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

By contrast, Carter’s publication of Talbot’s works, shortly after her friend’s death from cancer in January 1770, was presented as entirely a print undertaking rather than as mediated by a coterie: unlike the edition of her own *Poems* eight years earlier, Carter had the works published at her own expense and presented them directly “to the World in general,” rather than as a subscription edition or as in some way endorsed by a group. Zuk records seven London editions between 1770 and 1772 of a Talbot work completed in manuscript as early as 1754, the devotional *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week*; this success was followed by compilations of her essays and poems. Thus, although Talbot’s posthumous reputation was eventually absorbed into that of the “Bluestocking” women through her association with Carter and the publications of Carter’s nephew Montagu Pennington, her fame was for some decades her own.<sup>62</sup>

From a media cultures perspective, therefore, Talbot’s writing life serves as a foil to that of Chapone: instead of achieving the continuity between coterie and print modes represented by the title of Chapone’s 1775 *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, By Mrs. Chapone, Author of Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Talbot’s career remained fragmented to the observer until Carter created the posthumous vehicle that coalesced and shaped her reputation. This fragmentation, I wish to underscore, is the consequence not of a life lived in coterie circles, but rather of a lack of desire, or freedom, to exploit the modes of circulation offered by either manuscript or print practices of the period. Where Chapone was able to multiply her effectiveness as an author by joining the forces of coterie and print cultures, Talbot worked assiduously to thwart their combined efforts to draw attention to her. Nevertheless, her achievements in actively

proposing, encouraging, and furthering the writing of others, not only in terms of patronage, but also to the extent of significant editorial labor, should not be undervalued. In these respects she was playing almost all the important roles of the member of a literary coterie, and during her lifetime, her influence on the world of print was arguably as great, however invisible, as it could have been through her own print publications.

Although the core members of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie held no current institutional offices and subordinated any participation in the commercial literary world to their identities as aristocrats, retired politicians, coalmine owners, estate managers, salon hostesses, housekeepers, educators, and friends, they saw themselves as holding a position of public significance. The mixed-gender coterie centered by Elizabeth Montagu registered successes on the multiple fronts of social, literary, and even political power. It might be said, and surely was felt at the time by members of this circle, that they had acquired the ability to fully exploit the potential of the interconnected media forms they cultivated, when schoolboys were assigned compositions comparing Carter and Montagu to “determin[e] the just merits & standard of a literary female,”<sup>63</sup> or French and English observers debated the effectiveness of Montagu’s attack on Voltaire in her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear*, or extensive networking procured an Oxford doctoral degree and a royal pension for her protégé James Beattie in 1773.

Indeed, a letter written to Montagu by Sir John Macpherson of Madras India in 1772 draws together her literary and political power in a compliment she must have relished:

How much, Madam, have I been obliged to the Genius of Shakespear illustrated by thine! For a whole year, that I spent at Sea in my passage to this place, both afforded me the highest pleasure I could enjoy in my Situation . . . I sincerely hope the dark gloom of politicks which deaden’d ingenious and Elegant life in London in the years 69–70 has vanished before now. George the third does not know how much he is indebted to the chearful and Classic Assemblies of your Chinese Room. You gave that sweetness and refinement to the thoughts of our Statesmen which could alone counteract the acid and gloom of their Dispositions . . . indeed, Madam, we are all indebted to you; and that without your being sensible of it.<sup>64</sup>

Such recognition, especially the acclaim with which Montagu’s *Essay on Shakespear* was received, along with its symbolic engagement of Johnson’s own 1765 edition of Shakespeare, might have appeared to vindicate equally the dual routes to cultural power taken by Johnson and by Carter,



Montagu, Chapone, and even Talbot. In [Chapter 5](#), however, I will explore the fortunes of Montagu after the death of Lyttelton, tracing how Montagu's embrace of her patronage power and her broad, print-based fame, along with changing conditions in the literary landscape, created conflicts that erupted in the quarrel of Montagu and her friends with Samuel Johnson over the latter's "Life of Lyttelton," published in 1781.

*Identity and influence from coterie to print  
Carter, Chapone, and the Shenstone–Dodsley collaboration*

I cannot help looking on my self as a fellow of no mark nor likelihood, as Shakespear calls it, so that whether thro' my fault or misfortune, perhaps from a mixture of both, it is of no manner of consequence to the world whether I am in it or out of it. My Country cannot thank me for increasing her wealth, her knowledge, or her numbers; and when I die, except two or three friends whose goodness overlooks my insignificancy, few will know that I even have been, none will regret that I am no more . . . How shall a man free himself from this state of annihilation and emerge into being? (Thomas Edwards, 1734)<sup>1</sup>

A Mind too of so slight a Make, in a Body so liable to weariness, & that makes such large demands of time for refreshment & amusement. But perhaps it is all my allotted Business Now to Enjoy a Happy Easy situation & be Thankfull for it. How Gracious the Allotment! Yet I am formed with a Principle of higher Ambition; Life is a School & must my Part be all Play & No Work? Can this Come out well? I do not doubt its coming out well if this be really appointed me, but do I not Play away more time than I should & Overlook my Task? That is my only fear. (Catherine Talbot, 1751)<sup>2</sup>

“Indolence is a kind of centripetal force.” (William Shenstone, 1764)<sup>3</sup>

In the middle decades of the eighteenth century, some young members of the gentry faced a crisis that is recorded in anguished outbursts to trusted friends: a crisis of uselessness. Thomas Edwards, probably aged about thirty in the first epigraph to this chapter, complains to his friend Lewis Crusius that he suffers from the “misfortune” that “it is of no manner of consequence to the world whether I am in it or out of it.” This misfortune is, in Edwards’ view, directly linked to his social position in the world. Vainly attempting to raise himself, should he perhaps rather allow himself to sink downward “to a lower degree of usefulness”? Heir to a modest estate, apparently without the temperament to actively pursue the family profession of the law, and without the means to attract a satisfactory

marriage partner, Edwards retired to the country, first to his paternal estate of Pitshanger in Middlesex, and then to a small farm at Turrick, in Buckinghamshire. It was from this retreat that his coterie friends Daniel Wray, Philip Yorke, and Samuel Richardson coaxed out, encouraged, and circulated Edwards' literary productions. Yorke, for example, appears at one point in 1751 to have set Edwards to work on a plan of a winter garden for Wrest Park, some sort of response to Voltaire, a sonnet, and an unspecified "work of invention."<sup>4</sup> Without these encouragements, it is unlikely that the sonnets and critical treatises that were ultimately published in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* and in his own *Canons of Criticism* and *Account of the Trial of the Letter Y [Upsilon]*, both printed by Richardson, would have come into being and been preserved as important contributions to the eighteenth-century sonnet revival and to the development of modern principles of scholarly editing. Edwards' letters, at once witty and affectionate, make clear how fundamental his membership in these literary coteries was to his sense of self-worth and of the value of his writings. Telling his friend John Lawry about a sonnet he has recently sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he observes, "I am proud to think that the friendship of worthy Men will be an honor to my memory, if what I write should survive to posterity."<sup>5</sup> And when he perceives the coterie to repudiate his work, as in the case of Susanna Highmore and John Duncombe discussed in [Chapter 1](#), he suggests that this "frost" may have "checked" his impulse to write poetry. Ultimately, Edwards imagines his circle of friends as extending into the virtual networks created by print; after the publication of the third edition of his *Canons* in 1750, he comments frequently on the "new friends" the work has made for him in places like Gloucester and Cirencester.

Certainly the words of Edwards – "How shall a man free himself from this state of annihilation and emerge into being?" – and of Catherine Talbot – "Yet I am formed with a Principle of higher Ambition" – suggest that even individuals with a firm belief that this life was but a brief preparation for an eternal state felt an imperative to make a mark, and thereby establish an identity in this world, one that could not consist solely of fulfilling their relative duties to kin, friends, and dependents. Talbot's sense of a conflict between inutility and "ambition" is telling. The disjunction between her relatively high social status and elite connections yet lack of wealth to marry suitably or live independently from her mother and Secker affected not only her social but also her literary life. Even in the early 1760s, when living in Lambeth Palace and serving as almoner and secretary for Secker, now

Archbishop of Canterbury, she was still writing, probably to George Berkeley, in a fit of winter dispiritedness,

I feel myself the most useless & consequently the most contemptible Creature upon the face of the Earth – & yet after all wherein is a Tip Top fine Lady less useless than myself? Why no, I beg her pardon I must Yield the Palm of Contemptibleness to her if she is a very fine Lady indeed: But among sober people that have leisure to think & to employ themselves to purpose if they would I am certainly one of the very very lowest & most insignificant. . . I am very good for nothing to be sure, & I have had a Cold near this fortnight into the bargain.

Turning toward self-mockery, she adds, “No, nothing will serve me I find but to have the whole direction of Church & State, the Regulation of the Press, the Improvement of Laws, the Dispensing of more Riches than six such Nations as this Possess, & to be Censoress general over all persons in all matters great & small.”<sup>6</sup>

Talbot’s articulation of her existential dilemma is merely an extreme version of a struggle visible in other mid-century lives squeezed between, on the one hand, a belief in human potential cultivated by education and called to action by contemporary theologies of practical Christianity, and, on the other, a lack of meaningful occupational opportunities due to the social and financial constraints placed upon the genteel of limited means. Studies of intellectual movements and social demographics in eighteenth-century Britain provide grounds for this notion of an identity crisis among the well-educated and intelligent of the lower gentry and upper middle classes who found themselves so constrained between limited opportunity and high expectation. Clifford Siskin and William Warner have recently postulated that the primary outcome of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was an entire reconceptualization of the self as its own primary end product. Practically speaking, such phenomena as the growth of the professions in visibility and prestige in contrast to the restraints on active engagement for many young men of birth, the inability of many young men and women to marry due to the inadequacy of their inheritances in a time of changing status and economic structures, and the relative unavailability of opportunities for intelligent single women loom behind the laments of an Edwards and a Talbot.<sup>7</sup>

It is arguable that the press, through its development and wide dissemination of devotional, biographical, and fictional models of self-cultivation and achievement, let alone its fostering of an awareness of the fame and influence that might be possible through its means, contributed

significantly to creating the link between obscurity and wasted potential. Talbot, for example, found the perfect expression for the twin dilemmas of obscurity and uselessness in her contemporary Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, first printed in 1751. Reflecting on the life of the playwright and polemicist Catharine Trotter Cockburn, whose subscription edition of works (edited by Thomas Birch) she was currently promoting, Talbot applies the *Elegy's* striking definition of unfulfilled potential to Cockburn's lack of an audience:

What a pity that her last years were in  
 a manner lost in obscurity so little suited  
 to her genius. But  
 "Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
 The deep unfathomed caves of ocean bear;  
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Talbot is writing to Elizabeth Carter here; in her journal of the same period, Talbot is more explicit about a link between Cockburn, who had died impoverished in 1749, and her friend:

[Mrs Cockburne] was a remarkable Genius, & Yet how Obscure her Lot in Life! It seems grievous at first, & such Straitness of Circumstances as perplexes & Cramps the Mind, is surely a Grievance, but on consideration what Signifies Distinction & Splendour in this very Transitory State? Hereafter Every Good Heart shall be distinguished in Honour & Happiness. But methinks those who knew such Merit did not do Their Duty in letting it remain so Obscure. E.C. [Elizabeth Carter] is her superiour – Alas will not she live & die perhaps as Obscurely, & What alas can I do to prevent it:<sup>8</sup>

As Chapter 2 has already shown, doing her duty to bring merit out of obscurity – the merit of Cockburn and Carter here, at other times that of Johnson or some other obscure poet – in fact became for Talbot at least a partial cure for her own sense of being “formed with a Principle of higher Ambition” that could not find a satisfactory expression. In this way, participation in a literary community of conversation and scribal exchange could offer an outlet for ambition. The coterie context provided meaning through the active work of building and maintaining community by means of letter-writing, the production of works celebrating the group, the encouragement of writing projects, and the patronage of writers and other causes that the group found deserving. As I have shown for the Montagu–Lyttelton circle, the coterie might over time also join forces to

initiate and promote print projects of its own. The goals of such projects were generally articulated as the securing of fame or the preservation of work for posterity; simultaneously, they often functioned, in the model I am suggesting here, to meet the material needs of the work's author while satisfying the desire for meaningful action on the part of the coterie members promoting the work. Thus, the mid-eighteenth-century literary coterie continued to fulfill an important function typical of such groups – that of furthering the stature of its members in the world of letters – by managing the interface of manuscript and print production. And as it did so, it provided individual as well as collective purpose.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on several cases in which the literary sociability of the coterie and its extension into print offered a resolution to the personal dilemma of uselessness. I will briefly revisit the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie's publications of Elizabeth Carter's *Poems* and Hester Mulso Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* from this perspective, before turning to a detailed examination of the Poet of the Leasowes, William Shenstone, as an example of how coterie values could be used to forge an identity that, paradoxically, redefined a life of apparent idleness and retirement as an embodiment of genuine taste. Finally, I will show how this coterie-based esthetic, manifested through the practice of multiple media arts, was represented and thereby solidified, in a further paradox, through the printing projects of Robert Dodsley. With such forays into print, the coterie values of Chapone and Shenstone, in particular, became influential in the directions taken by modern literary culture.

### Carter and Chapone: identity and influence

As [Chapter 2](#) has shown, the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie, during the first few years of its existence, featured virtuoso letter-writing, avid discussions of reading, travel description, and various literary projects such as collections of dialogues, poems, and criticism. Montagu's letters circulated among admirers beyond the coterie, as did Lyttelton's travel descriptions (see [Chapter 6](#)), and their dialogs of the dead were well received by their contemporaries both in print and in manuscript.<sup>9</sup> [Chapter 2](#) has already discussed the similar interpenetration of coterie and print considerations in the project to publish Carter's poems; here I wish only to consider the conceptualization of the project as a means of broadening Carter's reputation and influence. As Montagu puts it in a letter to her friend:

I am sorry for your tremors & trepidations, but they are mere nervous disorders, & the manuscript must be printed so my Dear Urania away with your lamentations, sit down revise, correct, augment, print, & publish. I am sure you will have a pleasure in communicating the pious virtuous sentiments that breathe in all your verses. My inferior soul will feel a joy in your producing such proofs of genius to the World, let it see that all your advantages are not derived from study. The envious may say you brought your wisdom from Athens [a reference to the *Epictetus* translation], your witt is your own . . . The very best of your poetical productions have never been publish'd, they may indeed have been seen by a few in manuscript, but the finest things in sheets are soon lost; foliis tantum ne carmina monda; ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis, print them & bind them fast I beg you.<sup>10</sup>

While Montagu certainly holds out to Carter the possibility of widening her contemporary reputation from that of scholar to that of wit (i.e. an original genius), she also entices her with the moral “pleasure [of] communicating the pious, virtuous sentiments that breathe in all your verses” to the “world.”

In this, Montagu takes a position similar to *The Rambler's* appeal to posterity through print, discussed in Chapter 2. At the conclusion of that episode, Carter, complaining to Susanna Highmore about the demise of the periodical, revealed that she grasped the Rambler's vision of the ability of print to reach beyond the limitations of an immediate audience: “we may both comfort our selves that an Author who has imployed the noblest Powers of Genius & learning, the strongest Force of understanding the most beautiful Ornaments of Eloquence in the Service of Virtu[e] and Religion, can never sink into Oblivion however he may be at present too little regarded.” Carter too felt the pull of an authorial agency that extended beyond the immediate present – as Bigold has summarized it, “Carter lived for posterity” – as much in the “distinctly modern” sense of managing her image as in the sense of an immortal afterlife. This aim accords well with Montagu's emphasis in the quotation above on an authorial subjectivity fixed in print for the sake of reputation and influence with a contemporary readership. But this notion of extended reach need not be incompatible with a coterie notion of writing as an extension of the social self, as the Chapone and Shenstone cases in this chapter will show. Margaret Ezell has written, for period just before this, of how the leaving of “remains” to be printed after one's death could be seen as a continuation of the circulation of one's writing among a socially restricted circle: in both cases, writings were a continuation of living presence. Thus, Carter's *Poems* as a coterie project is of a piece with her regular reminders to Talbot of the

value of the everyday, the sociable, and the mundane – what Karen O’Brien has identified as “Bluestocking theology”; in particular, Carter’s “vision of religion [is] as something residing in the everyday, pleasurable practice of virtue and benevolence.”<sup>11</sup>

Just as Carter’s poems demonstrated the originality of her wit, publications in the form of letters could exploit the association of intellectual women with epistolary skill. This was the case with Hester Mulso Chapone’s 1773 *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, the culmination of a thirty-year process of reputation-building. As elaborated in [Chapter 1](#), the young Mulso began to accrue fame as a skilled letter-writer in the late 1740s and early 1750s, especially through her membership in Samuel Richardson’s coterie. With the *Letters*, Chapone successfully carried into print the private origin of advice written to her teenaged niece. In the view of Chapone’s brother John Mulso, it was precisely this transmediation that constituted the appeal of the work: “How was it with Mrs Chapone? it was the genuine Affetuoso, the con amore of her Book that gave it it’s Run: Had She wrote to an imaginary Niece the most animated Traits would have escap’d her Pen.” Chapone cultivated this aura of intimacy, presenting her work as originating in a purely private communication with one beloved individual: “I never entertained a thought of appearing in public, when the desire of being useful to one dear child, in whom I take the tenderest interest, induced me to write the following Letters.” The letters themselves begin by asserting the efficacy of the handwritten letter, combining as it does the forces of affect and truth:

My dearest niece, Though you are so happy as to have parents, who are both capable and desirous of giving you all proper instruction, yet I, who love you so tenderly, cannot help fondly wishing to contribute something, if possible, to your improvement and welfare: – And, as I am so far separated from you, that it is only by pen and ink I can offer you my sentiments, I will hope that your attention may be engaged, by seeing on paper, from the hand of one of your warmest friends, Truths of the highest importance, which, though you may not find new, can never be too deeply engraven on your mind.<sup>12</sup>

The book’s readers, of course, will not see handwriting on the paper before them: Chapone creates a palimpsest of powerful media associations, layering the ancient image of sacred words carved on a tablet and on the heart over contemporary beliefs about the manuscript letter’s capacity to communicate directly to the emotions even when remediated by print.



Chapone underscores the coterie origin and context of her authorship by dedicating the publication to Montagu as the friend-patron (“perhaps it was the partiality of friendship, which so far biased your judgment as to make you think them [the letters] capable of being more extensively useful, and warmly to recommend the publication of them”) and advisor (“some strokes of your elegant pen have corrected these letters”) who has enabled its publication. To Carter, Chapone articulates in blunter terms the value of combining a coterie’s authority with a shrewd reading of the print marketplace: “I attribute [*Letters*]’ success principally to Mrs. Montagu’s name and patronage, and secondly to the world’s being so fond of being educated, that every book on that subject is well received.”<sup>13</sup> But such statements invite the question: if the natural home of Chapone’s very popular *Letters* was in the private contexts of her family and the Bluestocking coterie centered on Elizabeth Montagu, why print at all, rather than circulate the work through scribal channels?

Correspondence quoted in [Chapter 2](#) has made clear Chapone’s very reduced financial circumstances after the death of her husband and the attempts of friends such as Carter, Montagu, and Montagu’s sister Sarah Scott to find sources of income for her. We have also seen, however, that an educated and intellectual woman with good family connections like Chapone might reject the possibility of an income that might compromise not only her social status, but also her ability to maintain a life that met her intellectual and ethical standards. Like Carter, then, who would refuse to stay at the London home of Montagu when she was in the city, but would accept the use of her friends’ carriages, Chapone’s decision to publish cannot be attributed simply to external financial pressures, although that must not be dismissed entirely. Ten years earlier, shortly after the death of her husband, and with that event the loss of purpose in managing a household and potentially educating children of her own, Chapone had acknowledged to Carter her struggle against “a certain weariness of life, and a sense of insignificance and insipidity, [that] deject my spirits.” Retrospectively, she confides to Carter in 1777 that the success of her three publications of the decade has “appease[d] in some measure, that uneasy sense of helplessness and insignificance in society, which has often depressed and afflicted me; and gives me some comfort with respect to the poor account I can give of ‘That one talent which is death to hide.’”<sup>14</sup> In short, there is an element of selective media deployment at work, as well as the understanding that a coterie can provide the tangible and intangible support from which a publishing venture can be undertaken with dignity and success. In an insightful discussion of print publication

on the part of “women who might be neither aristocratic nor enormously wealthy,” Harriet Guest observes a pattern that applies to both Carter and Chapone: actuated at once by “quite extreme personal self-effacement and the obligation to publish exemplary work,” they are able to view print publication as “a source of largely pleasurable reputation and money.”<sup>15</sup>

Chapone’s friends, she reports soon after the publication of *Letters*, “fret and scold at me for having sold my copy, and grudge poor Walter [J. Walter, her bookseller] his profits. But for my part I do not repent what I have done, as I am persuaded the book would not have prospered so well in my hands as in his.” Just as she recognized what Montagu’s and her own contributions had been to the production, she also recognized the need for a certain kind of writing to be marketed through the resources of the print trade. With her next publication, titled *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, By Mrs. Chapone, Author of Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* and published in 1775, Chapone showed that coterie authorship was in her no mark of an incapacity for business: the bargain she drove based on the success of *Letters* earned her five times as much for the sale of this slim volume’s copyright to the Dilly brothers and Walter as she had procured for her first foray into book publication, and the admiration of her brother.<sup>16</sup> This miscellany successfully exploits an interest on the part of Chapone’s booksellers in commercializing the coterie – indeed, it flaunts rather than hides its origins, with poem titles indicating the occasion and date of writing, added footnotes clarifying these origins, and the incorporation of answer poems by Edwards and Highmore. What initially appears as a bifurcated, even self-contradictory career, then, in fact suggests that in the second half of the eighteenth century coterie literary credentials continued to authorize and lend cachet to a writer who chose to remediate her work in the very different context of print.

#### “Industry of a better Kind”: William Shenstone theorizes retirement

Like Edwards, Talbot, Carter, and Chapone, the country-gentleman poet, miscellaneous writer, and landscape artist William Shenstone (1714–63) began his adult life acutely conscious of a tension between his ambition to make a mark in the world through a profession, literary fame, and/or some form of preferment, on the one hand, and the retired rural life to which his limited means and lack of taste for public engagement consigned him, on the other. Shenstone inherited a modest estate of about £300 per year and studied at Pembroke College, but left Oxford in 1739 without taking a degree. In 1737 he published a small collection of poems, and his letters

of this time suggest attempts to leverage his writings, especially a Spenserian parody *The School-Mistress* and a 1741 poem *The Judgment of Hercules*, dedicated to George Lyttelton, into some form of favor and place in the world. Moving restlessly between London and the residences of friends, and disappointed in his hopes of preferment, Shenstone's letters of the early 1740s acknowledge his goal of winning "praise" as "the desired, the noted, and the adequate reward of poetry," while lamenting that he is only "suffer[ing] [him] self to be deluded with the hopes of it [fame]" in order to "avoid impatience, spleen, and one sort of *despair*: I mean that of having no *hopes* here [in this world], because one sees nothing here that deserves them." A recurrent theme of indolence struggling against ambition runs prominently through his entire correspondence – even in these early years, he describes himself as "sick of exhibiting so much sameness" while "impatient to be doing something that may tend to better my situation in some respect or other," and points out the "hypocrisy" of the *Hercules* poem's advocacy of active virtue in contrast to his own "laziness."<sup>17</sup>

Yet in these years, Shenstone was actively developing the practices of poetry exchange and revision that would characterize the group that has been called the "Warwickshire" or "South Midlands" coterie. Like that of the Yorke brothers, Shenstone's scribal habit seems to have begun as a means of maintaining ties with his school and college friends, but with a more explicitly articulated goal of seeking to further the group members' place in the world.<sup>18</sup> Principal participants initially were Richard Jago, Richard Graves, Anthony Whistler, and William Somerville, all of whom were, or became, recognized writers in their own right; through Jago and Somerville, Henrietta Knight (Lady Luxborough) entered into correspondence with Shenstone; over time, John Scott Hylton, John Pixell, and a Miss White (later Pixell's wife) were at least occasional participants in the group's exchanges; and in the latter years of Shenstone's life, Thomas Percy and Robert Dodsley were integrated into the circle. Shenstone's role at the center of this coterie, however, was not that of the ever-creative instigator of achievement and emulation, like Philip Yorke and Daniel Wray, or the bustling mentor, like Samuel Richardson, or the powerful, well-connected patron, like Elizabeth Montagu and George Lyttelton. Shenstone was, indeed, a consistent encourager and supporter of the career aspirations of coterie members like Richard Graves and Thomas Percy, whose individual achievements after his death were considerable. With his increasing fame, Shenstone also stimulated and furthered the careers of aspiring poets such as Mary Whateley (later Darwall) and James Woodhouse.<sup>19</sup> But his

position, initially by default and ultimately by choice, was rather that of the still center in the midst of those seeking to make their way in the world, the inspirational source, and even more, the embodiment of the esthetic principles of retirement, simplicity, and love of nature that emerged as a dominant strain of poetry in the decades following his death.

The terms used by Lady Luxborough in a letter of June 24, 1749 to Shenstone encapsulate this paradoxical dynamic:

Pardon me for differing with you in opinion. You are not the idle man of the creation. You may be busied to the benefit of society without stirring from your seat, as much as the mischievous man with seeming idleness may be busied in the destruction of it. You give innocent pleasure to yourself, and instruction as well as pleasure to others, by the amusements you follow. Your pen, your pencil, your taste and your sincere unartful conduct in life (which are the things that make you appear idle) give such an example, as it were to be wished might be more generally followed – few have the capacity, fewer have the honesty to spend their time so usefully, as well as unblameably.<sup>20</sup>

If this description appears overly idealized, Shenstone's own self-characterizations never lose their flavor of self-deprecation and their honesty with regard to economic realities. Thus, one of his most memorable counsels, to his friend Jago, to "cultivate your garden; have a bird or two in the hall (they will at *least* amuse your children); write now and then a song; buy now and then a book" is framed by the admission that "one may easily habituate one's self to cheap amusements; that is, *rural* ones (for all town amusements are horridly expensive)."<sup>21</sup> While this economic realism made some of the first readers of his correspondence uncomfortable, as Chapter 4 will demonstrate, it was also intrinsic to Shenstone's influence. It was part of the mix that allowed him to take on a position of cultural leadership through what he lacked, to represent the coterie poet as retired, geographically localized, and removed from the tainted pursuits of those seeking a more ostentatious form of usefulness. As James Turner summarizes it, "we are meant to think of Shenstone as one who has found in garden design a *scheme of life* (of the kind that eluded *Rasselas*), a means of combining the better halves of otherwise incompatible worlds – retirement and sociability, probity and desire, sexual form and innocent vegetable content."<sup>22</sup>

Essential to this persona was the Leasowes. Even when seeking preferment in London, Shenstone begins to write of his "gratitude" for this family farm, near the village of Halesowen and the Lyttelton estate of Hagley. "Over-run with shrubs, thickets, and coppices, variegated with

barren rocks and precipices, or floated three parts in four with lakes and marshes,” the Leasowes is perfectly suited, he finds, to his “particular humour” as a poet.<sup>23</sup> In about 1744 he turned his back on London to take up permanent residence on the farm and began to dabble in small landscaping projects there. Initially, the coterie exchange of poetry seems paramount in the correspondence record, with the gardening projects as mere “amusements.” Gradually, however, the landscaping gains in importance as Shenstone develops the notion of a *ferme ornée*, or ornamented farm, whereby the grazing and arable lands are surrounded by a circuit walk (with decorations of urns, benches, alcoves, and small structures along the sides of the walk) that allows for a variety of perspectives on the farm and its surroundings.<sup>24</sup> He begins to report visits from the local gentry and landowners, starting with George Lyttelton and his family and guests at Hagley, and Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough, whose residence of Barrels was about a half-day’s journey from the Leasowes. Thus, landscape gardening and poetry become inseparably intertwined arts in the artist’s epistolary rhetoric: “I have an alcove, six elegies, a seat, two epitaphs (one upon myself) three ballads, four songs, and a serpentine river, to shew you when you come,” Shenstone writes to Jago, in a letter tentatively dated 1744. And in a 1750 letter to Lady Luxborough, he surveys the shift in his perspective from deprivation to potential plenitude:

Give me Leave here, my good Lady! to mention what a Change there is in my Scheme since I first began to lay out my little Farm in Paths, etc. At First I meant them merely as Melancholy Amusements for a Person whose circumstances required a solitary Life. They *were* so; but I ever found ye solitude too deep to be agreeable. Of *late* encourag’d by your Ladyship and some others I begin to covet to have my Place *esteem’d* agreeable in its way; to have it *frequented*; to meet now and then an human Face unawares – to enjoy even ye Gape and Stare of ye Mob . . . but above all possible Contingencies to have it honour’d wth ye Company of your Ladyship and your Acquaintance.<sup>25</sup>

Shenstone’s literary and gardening activities have been discussed by some critics as a variation on the prominent Augustan trope of retirement.<sup>26</sup> This placement is instructive, in that it helps to explain his role as a mediator or democratizer of the eighteenth-century gentleman’s values of disinterestedness, *concordia discors*, and the moralization of landscape as they were expressed in poetry and garden design by practitioners such as Alexander Pope at Twickenham and Viscount Cobham at Stowe; this role will be discussed further below and in [Chapter 4](#). For my purposes here, these activities are significant in that they represent Shenstone’s solution to the

dilemma of social uselessness experienced by a man of his education, connections, and upbringing hampered by restricted means and limited opportunities for engagement. Ultimately, Shenstone's repeated returns to the issue of industry and idleness bring him to the assertion that he is practicing "*Industry of a better Kind* than what employs the *Animæ viles* of a Drawing-room."<sup>27</sup>

In his correspondence, the reader can trace the shifting nature of Shenstone's "ambition," with his recognition that he can attract the attention and approbation of the great through his landscaping of the farm ("A Coach with a Coronet is a pretty Kind of Phænomenon at my Door"), not despite, but because of its contracted scale. If early on he tends to align taste with social standing, as when he writes in a letter tentatively dated 1744 of his regret that his house is not fit to "receive a sufficient Number of polite Friends" to allow him to "cultivate an Acquaintance with about Three or Four in my Neighbourhood, that are of a Degree of Elegance, & station superior to ye common Run," he eventually classifies his visitors, not by status and the assumed level of cultivation it represents, but by a hierarchy of "genuine *Taste*," which "differs as widely from [good-sense] as the Palate differs from the *Brain*." True taste is neither the birthright of the aristocrat, nor the acquisition of the nouveau riche, nor the accomplishment of the highly educated professional: it may belong to the wife whose husband has none, or to the more humble gardener or craftsman. His "ambition" is now to win the approbation of "the small number of tasters" rather than "the *large crowd* of the vulgar," "to please a few friends of taste before mob or gentry, the great vulgar or the small; because therein one gratifies both one's social passions and one's pride, that is, one's *self-love*."<sup>28</sup> As David Hill Radcliffe has shown, Shenstone, in his important 1750 ode "Rural Elegance," outlined a kind of manifesto of a "disinterested republic of taste," in which the private improver of the rural landscape plays a more productive social role than the hunting squire, a role equal in its own way to that of the swain:

And sure there seem, of human kind,  
Some born to shun the solemn strife;  
Some for amusive tasks design'd,  
To soothe the certain ills of life;  
Grace its lone vales with many a budding rose,  
New founts of bliss disclose,  
Call forth refreshing shades, and decorate repose.<sup>29</sup>

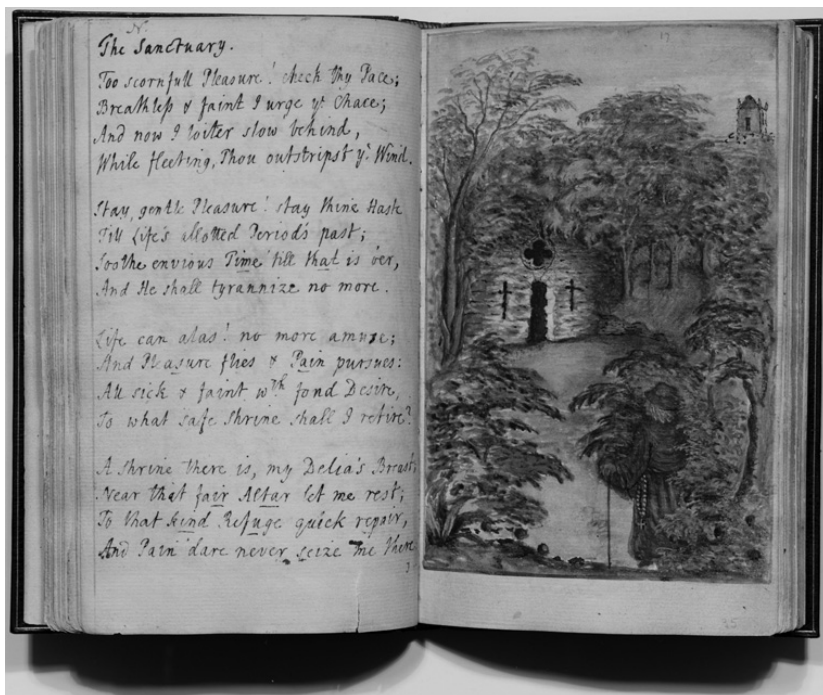


Figure 3.1 William Shenstone, “The Sanctuary” and illustration of a ruined priory gate, from Shenstone’s illustrated manuscript of poems. The “ruin” was one of the structures along Shenstone’s circuit walk around the Leasowes.

In a recent discussion of the illustrated manuscript album presented by Shenstone to his housekeeper Mary Cutler in 1754, Sandro Jung has noted that the artist’s vision was insistently intermedial, requiring that visitors to his garden read landscape, architecture, and poetry as intertextual, and expecting that through this reading they themselves would participate in a communal process of self- and social improvement. Shenstone’s letters reveal his own enthusiastic participation in multiple artistic technologies, including painting in watercolors, the design and production of decorative paper and seals for his letters, book binding, the architectural design of buildings for his garden and renovations in his house, and what Jung describes as the creation of “soundscapes” of falling water and birdsong (Figure 3.1). Such an embodied, materialized esthetic embraces the values of coterie culture. It is notable, however, that for all his vision of “publishing verses once a week upon [his]

Skreens or Garden-Seats, for ye Amusement of my good Friends ye Vulgar,” Shenstone recognizes that in order to attract a more sophisticated audience of “tasters” to his and his neighbours’ displays – “those who were trained in intermedial reading practices and whose cultural literacy encompassed forms as varied and allusively evocative” (in Jung’s phrase) as the ones he was working in – “first we must take care to *advertise* them where their treasures lie.”<sup>30</sup>

Thus, a second, counter-intuitive factor in Shenstone’s success lay in the fortuitous conjunction of his firm adherence to the local and the scribal with an innovative use of the print medium by his unlikely friend, the bookseller Robert Dodsley. It is noteworthy that Jung’s discussion of the esthetics governing Shenstone’s manuscript album refers repeatedly to Dodsley’s role as mediator of that esthetic, not merely in its print dissemination but also in gathering it together and rendering it coherent prior to printing the posthumous edition of Shenstone’s *Works*.<sup>31</sup> While the role played by that publication in creating “Shenstone” as a persona will be discussed in [Chapter 4](#), I focus here on the poet’s artistic practice and its circulation during his lifetime, and on the significance of Shenstone’s friendship with the bookseller in this achievement. Dodsley enabled Shenstone to connect his physically and geographically retired artistic activity to the period’s most efficient distribution system for cultural values: the London book trade. It was this cross-media friendship, not unlike those of Philip Yorke and Thomas Birch or Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Carter, that “created” Shenstone the coterie writer as an influential leader of taste for his contemporaries by exposing his life and productions to a wide audience for admiration and imitation. Thus, in the final years of his life, Shenstone’s correspondence records increasing solicitation of his esthetic judgments in poetry, gardening, and other decorative arts, as he writes of his “*public life*” in the summer season, when strangers continually stop at his door; of “the noblesse, whom [he has] seen at The Leasowes, [who are] as complaisant to [him] as possible; whereas it was [his] *former* fate, in public places, to be as little regarded as a journeyman shoe-maker”; and of aspiring poets who dedicate and send copies of their works.<sup>32</sup> The final section of this chapter will elaborate on the role of the print medium in the coalescence and propagation of Shenstone’s esthetic values. But first, I wish to explore in greater detail the coterie principles upon which Shenstone’s retirement esthetic was built: relationality, embodiment and the resulting difficulty of access, modesty of scale, and simplicity.



## Shenstone's esthetics of embodiment

In his insightful and sympathetic analysis of Shenstone's approach to landscape gardening, David Fairer notes that Shenstone's esthetic is a "relational" one; challenging our tendency to invoke critical binaries of subjective "relativism" versus objective "principle," Shenstone is "fascinated by the relative, but this is not to be confused with a lack of judgment or with egotism. . . . Rather than returning and confirming the self, Shenstone's modes of looking encourage ideas of relationship, responsibility, and reassessment." In this respect he is an important figure in the history of eighteenth-century sensibility. Referring to Samuel Johnson's notorious implication in his "Life of Shenstone" that Shenstone's values were superficially based on mere "looks," Fairer counters with the contention that the poet's organic and sociable vision was not only interesting, but valuable, even ethical. This kind of relationality is encapsulated in the landscape gardening of Shenstone's *ferme ornée*, with its emphasis on circuitous walks offering multiple perspectives and its carefully sited inscriptions. But it is also reflected in his allegiance to scribal authorship, wherein the relationship between writer and readers can be as much a feature of a work's content and the way in which it is read as are concepts of formal integrity. Indeed, Fairer compares Shenstone's delight in the sociable pleasures afforded by the Leasowes with his coterie approach to his poetry; both attitudes reflect "his interest in, even what might be thought his need for, other viewpoints."<sup>33</sup>

An esthetic of relationship implies commitment to social connection as the ground and end of artistic production. While core members of Shenstone's coterie were lost through death or added as his sphere shifted from school and university friends to local gentry to the inclusion of more distant members such as Dodsley, its activities continued essentially unabated to Shenstone's death in 1763, as is demonstrated by a manuscript miscellany left among Shenstone's literary effects, produced after many of the coterie's members had achieved wider exposure through Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands*.<sup>34</sup> The group engaged in the standard coterie activities of mutual encouragement to write, exchanges of manuscript poetry (in Shenstone's case, sometimes in volumes with his own illustrations), commentary on each other's work, and discussion of past and contemporary literary productions. Yet it displays, once again, a unique character, determined by Shenstone at its geographical, social, and ideological center.

From the start, it is clear that what Trolander and Tenger term amendment criticism is a serious responsibility of each member of the group, inseparable from the social ties upon which the links between members are founded. Writing to Jago, for example, Shenstone reveals how intimately friendship and literary production are entwined:

I know I have thrown a great number of careless things into your hands, I know to *whom* I intrusted my follies; but I know *not* what they *are*:— I believe, in general, that they consist of mis-begotten embryos and abortive births, which it had been merely decent to have buried in — some part of my garden; but I was morally assured, that you would expose nothing of mine to my disadvantage.

Shenstone writes with unusual honesty, though also with tact, in response to his friends' works; thus to Jago he says:

I saw several beauties in your former elegy; but, though it was “*formosa*,” it did not appear to me “*ipsa forma*.” I like this that you have now sent *very* much. It has a simplicity which your last a little wanted, and has thought *enough*. I begin to be seldom pleased with the compositions of others, or my own; but I could be really *fond* of this, with a few alterations, that I could propose.

In return, Shenstone solicits his friends' views and suggestions for specific lines that dissatisfy him; typical is his reminder to Jago that “you promised your observations, and I desire you would make them with the utmost freedom. I can bear any censure which you shall pass by way of letter, and I beg once more that you would not be sparing. It will be esteemed as great a favour as you can do me.”<sup>35</sup> He will not show a poem to its addressee or primary audience until he has heard from Jago or Graves or Lady Luxborough — sometimes from all three. Thus Shenstone kept the Countess of Hertford, soon to become the Duchess of Somerset and Catherine Talbot's friend, waiting for somewhat more than two years for his “Rural Elegance” — a poem dedicated to her as the vehicle by which he hoped to gain her acquaintance and patronage — while he consulted with these three friends.<sup>36</sup>

As these circulation patterns suggest, an inherent feature of Shenstone's artistic practice is his insistence on embodied forms that make access difficult, whether to his garden or his poetry. It may appear self-evident that the eighteenth-century landscape garden could be fully appreciated only by visiting the site itself and taking in the views from its serpentine walks, but in Shenstone's case, “he wants us to feel that human identity itself can be discovered in the landscape, the estate, the property, the

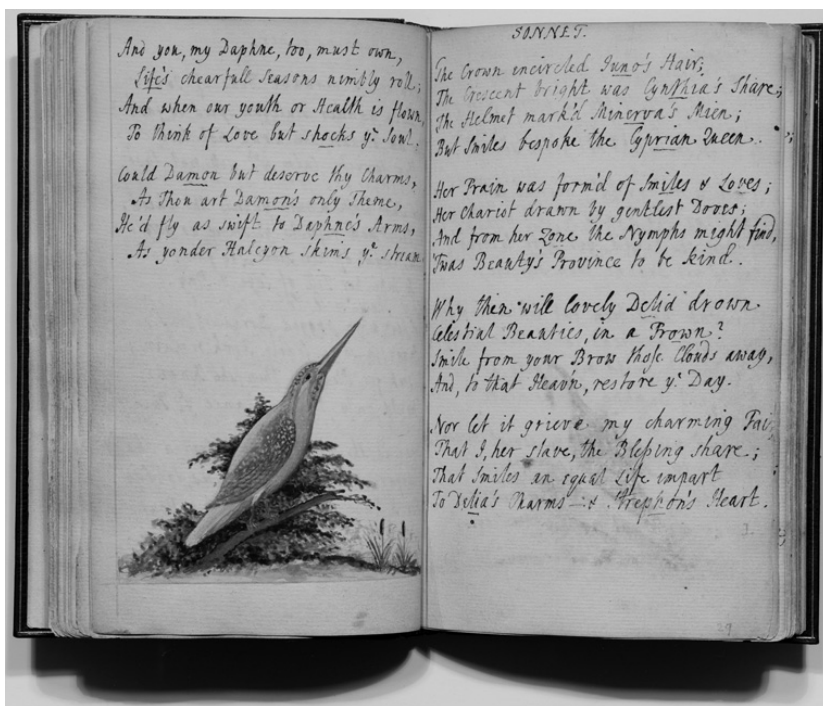


Figure 3.2 William Shenstone, “The King-fisher” stanzas 5 and 6 and illustration, from Shenstone’s illustrated manuscript of poems.

place.”<sup>37</sup> His poem “The Kingfisher,” for example, celebrates the rapid flight of the bird (also known as the halcyon) that “take[s] her fill of Love & Play” in the calm beauty of summer, knowing that “when rugged Boreas blows,” “To seek for Pleasure . . . / Would only, then, enhance ye Pain.” This careful observation of the bird that “skims ye stream” on his farm, accompanied by a watercolor image in his manuscript notebook, fuses in the poem’s concluding stanzas with the pastoral speaker’s own state of mind as he urges his Daphne to accept him before “our youth or Health is flown” (Figure 3.2) and ultimately becomes the basis of his coat of arms (see Chapter 4). While a reading of the poem’s final two stanzas in isolation might make it appear a collection of pastoral clichés, it takes on a richness through the internal descriptions of the bird’s changing flight patterns and the watercolor illustration, suggesting an experience and a self-recognition that the poet, and by extension the reader, can only encounter at the site of the Leasowes.

Perhaps as a reflection of this intimate identification of self with place, Shenstone's poetry was similarly hard to get at, even more so than that of the average coterie poet. Unlike the manuscript writings of Hester Mulso, for example, copies of which are still found in several collections (see [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#)), Shenstone tended to send his only copy of a work to a friend, a habit which led, in the case of "Rural Elegance" cited above, to the poem's being temporarily lost, despite its importance to him artistically and socially.<sup>38</sup> In an even more extreme form of limited access, the poet often tells a friend that his critical remarks on one of their poems cannot be conveyed by letter – only a visit to the Leasowes will do. Clearly a lure to draw guests to the farm, especially during the dreary months of winter, such an approach also identifies the work tightly with the place and hand of origin and underscores the privilege of catching a glimpse of it. Thus, the above-cited list of "an alcove, six elegies," and so on, intended to lure Jago into a Leasowes visit, continues with a further teaser: "Will the compositions come safe to you, if I send my book, which contains the *only* copies of several things (which I could not remember if they were lost)? – but I will not send them." Letters in his most intense writerly correspondences – with Graves, Jago, and Percy – frequently end with some variation on the formula "These Points & Many others cannot be so well adjusted as by a Conference betwixt us at The Leasowes; where I hope you will have Leisure to pass a day or two, when you have dispatched your other publications."<sup>39</sup>

Again, social connection is the ground of embodied art; art is made meaningful by social relations, particularly those of the coterie. Thus, Shenstone writes to Thomas Percy, "The *Renovation* of Spring has given me a pleasure in my Walks, which I always despair in *Winter* of their ever more affording me. But the *truest* Pleasure such things give, is of the social & *only-lasting* Sort; I mean the Pleasure *reflected* upon the Proprietor from ye Pleasure they *give a Friend*. Should *you* come over & be delighted here, the Pleasure would be increased an hundred-fold." Abstracting this expression of friendship more fully, he writes in 1755 that unlike the "Pleasures of Sense" and even the "Pleasures of Imagination," it is only the social pleasures, such as those evoked by the receipt of a letter from an old friend, that "encrease upon Repetition, and grow more lively from Indulgence." Shenstone elaborates:

Accordingly, though I first embellished my Farm, with an Eye to the Satisfaction I should receive from its Beauty, I am now grown dependent upon the Friends it brings me, for the principal Enjoyment it affords; I am

pleased to find them pleased, and enjoy its Beauties by Reflection. And thus the durable Part of my Pleasure appears to be, at the last, of the social Kind.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, the two activities of gardening and manuscript poetry exchange were culturally related, associated with a freedom of physical movement that allowed one to form and maintain select connections, which in turn came with a degree of education, leisure, and independent means. But these passages suggest that Shenstone developed a self-conscious, vocational approach to both pursuits, one that he articulated in his letters and other writings. Indeed, at times Shenstone's reports to his friends make it clear that he is staging the "coterie in the garden" as a kind of performance art. In September 1748, for example, he writes to Lady Luxborough of how her visit *would* have unfolded, had his stage management gone as planned:

For want of proper Contingencies, how many Noble Schemes have prov'd abortive! My Lord Dudley shou'd have met your Ladyship in ye Morning, & attended you thro' my Walks with extraordinary Complaisance & *Sprightliness*; Your Ladyship shou'd have been *unfatigu'd ye Moment* you got out of yr Chaise; notwithstanding ye *Length & Roughness* of your Journey; & as you came to the Seat which commands ye Water in virgil's Grove, I shou'd have come behind & dropt these Verses into your Lap, scribbled *extempore* no doubt with a blacklead-Pencil.

This account of a performance that never happened is matched by his description to the same correspondent, a year later, of an actual visit that transpired as if perfectly choreographed:

I had just fix'd up ye Lines I enclose in my Gothick Building, when who shou'd arrive but Mr Lyttelton, Mr. Pitt, & Mr. Miller. 'Twas impossible for me to conceal these, as I was oblig'd to accompany my Visitants all round my Walks. They happen'd to be much commended; all, except ye two first Lines of ye last Stanza; which I knew were flimzy, . . . The Building itself escap'd full as well as I cou'd reasonably expect; & indeed *better*. Many Parts of my Farm were extravagantly commended, but the Grove especially. . .<sup>41</sup>

In his discussion of the Shenstone poem "Upon a Visit to [a Lady of Quality] in Winter, 1748," Randall Calhoun has nicely captured the esthetic significance of performance for the poet, arguing that this occasional poem addressed to Lady Luxborough is "the culmination of William Shenstone's lyric art. Here the reader sees that graciousness, politeness, and lovely ritual are, for Shenstone anyway, truly beautiful."<sup>42</sup>

A third feature of Shenstone's esthetic, its modesty of scale, is articulated in a manuscript account by Shenstone of his first meeting with the

admired poet James Thomson. He writes, “Thomson assented to my notion of taste in gardening (that of contracting Nature’s beauties, altho’ he somewhat misquoted me, and did not understand the drift of my expression. Collecting, or collecting into a smaller compass, and then disposing without crowding the several varieties of Nature, were perhaps a better account of it, than either was expressed by his phrase or mine).”<sup>43</sup> In his elaborations of these ideas in his letters and his essay “Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening,” the emphasis on collecting into a small compass is accompanied by parallels between the gardener and a snail or an ant whose perspective can only be partial: “Man is not capable of comprehending the universe at one survey. . . we are placed in the corner of a sphere; endued neither with organs, nor allowed a station, proper to give us a universal view; or to exhibit to us the variety, the orderly proportions, and dispositions of the system.”<sup>44</sup> This perspective differs significantly from that of the disinterested lord of the estate surveying his wide landscape and disposing its beauties in an act parallel to the creation of the universe. Indeed, contemporary gossip about tensions between Shenstone and his near neighbor George Lyttelton, whose Hagley estate was later described by Johnson as an “empire, spacious and opulent,” dwarfing the “*petty State*” of the Leasowes, hints at a recognition of this divergence and the cultural shift it reflects. While initially a patron and friend, Lyttelton, it was alleged, became envious of the reputation Shenstone’s farm acquired, and deliberately toured visitors through the park the wrong way round so as to undermine its carefully planned effects.<sup>45</sup> For art historians, it is this ability to “collect into a small compass” that is the key to Shenstone’s importance as a landscape gardener; he “democratized” gardening for those who could not aspire to the opulence of a Hagley or a Stowe.<sup>46</sup>

In keeping with this spirit, the Leasowes acquired a reputation for simplicity and artlessness,<sup>47</sup> a principle that, again, is reflected in Shenstone’s literary practice. Not only did Shenstone turn increasingly to the pastoral, the ballad, the elegy, and the aphorism as his preferred forms for poetry and prose, but he increasingly identified simplicity as the value that distinguished his own taste from prevailing urban fashions. Thus, in advising the local playwright Thomas Hull on revisions to a play he writes:

I am with you aware, that the Story of the Spanish Lady is rather too simple, too destitute of Matter for the Generality of People who frequent the

Galleries of a *London Theatre*; but might not some Incidents of Humour be extracted from the Group of Sailors, [etc.] . . . Observe, I propose (or rather merely *allow*) this violation of the Simplicity of the Story, as a Means to make it answer the Purposes of Emolument to you, . . . for, as far as relates to my own Taste, I think, even in Representation, it could not be preserved too simple.<sup>48</sup>

Johnson finds the poet's predilection for the pastoral form regrettable and complains that his poetry in general lacks depth,<sup>49</sup> but Shenstone's influence in fact lies here. Shenstone's central role in encouraging and advising Thomas Percy in the preparation of his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* is the most documented example of that influence. Throughout his correspondence with Percy, Shenstone sounds the same refrain, whether in regard to Percy's projected translation of Ovid's epistles ("employ *me* as a mere Musick-master, whom you would wish to tune yr Harpsichord: At most, to retrench any little Incroachments upon Simplicity, ease of Style, and Harmony") or the collection of ballads ("I would wish you to consult for *Simplicity* as much as possible").<sup>50</sup> That this simplicity and artlessness came to represent elegance, which A. R. Humphreys describes as "his contemporaries' stock epithet for Shenstone,"<sup>51</sup> strongly suggests the success of the poet's articulation of these values – through the coterie forms of letters, poems, and landscape design.

### Dodsley's *Collection* and coterie fame

During the first decades of his adulthood, some of Shenstone's poetry was published to modest success. His Spenserian parody *The School-Mistress* first appeared in 1737 as part of a slim volume of poems "printed," as the title states, "for the amusement of a few friends, prejudic'd in his favour" when he was still at Pembroke; Robert Dodsley had published his *Judgment of Hercules* in 1741 and an expanded *School-Mistress* in 1742; his *Pastoral Ballad* in an imperfect version appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1751 without his knowledge; and other individual songs and poems were published in scattered magazines and song collections. At the same time, visits to his farm in the 1740s and 1750s generated sketches and manuscript descriptions, such as that by Joseph Spence (who visited the Leasowes with Dodsley) entitled "The Round of Mr Shenstone's Paradise" and illustrated by a drawing keyed to a list of features in Dodsley's hand (Figure 3.3).<sup>52</sup> The circulation of manuscript copies of such documents undoubtedly fuelled the growing demand among the elite, already noted, for consultation with Shenstone on gardening matters. But it was

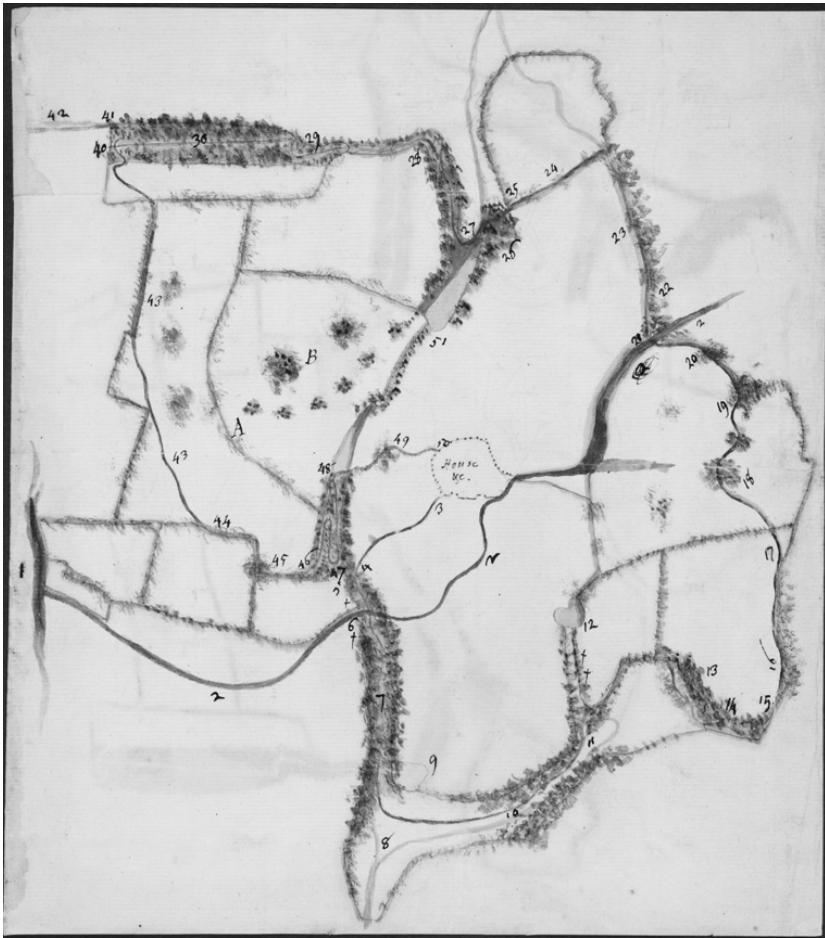


Figure 3.3 Artist unknown (possibly traced from William Lowe and keyed in Robert Dodsley's hand), a plan of the Leasowes, accompanying Joseph Spence, "The Round of Mr Shenstone's Paradise." The Huntington Library, San Marino, California (HM 30312).

Dodsley's presentation of the Shenstone coterie's poetry as an ensemble that created and widely disseminated the popular image of the Poet of the Leasowes. While Shenstone had an established publishing relationship with the bookseller for single poems, as already noted – most recently, *The School-Mistress* had reappeared in his 1748 *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* – Shenstone's and the Leasowes' growing reputation as a center of



taste seems to have drawn Dodsley to solicit poems and establish a friendship in 1753–54 as the latter was planning further volumes to his popular *Collection*.<sup>53</sup> In the end, the Warwickshire coterie featured prominently in two of the final three volumes of the anthology, published in 1755 (Vol. 4) and 1758 (Vol. 5); that prominence, in turn, fuelled the appetite for anything by or connected to Shenstone. Dodsley's packaging of Shenstone's retired coterie life culminated in his publication of the *Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.* in 1764, a year after the author's death. I will explore the popular and commercial success of this publication and its spin-offs in [Chapter 4](#), as an example of how a coterie writer's afterlife could flourish in print in the latter half of the century and thereby play a role in the literary culture of the time. My interest here lies in how Shenstone's interface with the London print trade, through Dodsley, reinforced the Poet of the Leasowes' image of usefulness in retirement. By holding up a mirror to his coterie life, the medium of print helped Shenstone make meaning out of what had once seemed nothing but the desultory circulation of poems, frustrated attempts at patronage, and the gilding of a rural cage.

Robert Dodsley himself was a risk-taker who entered the relatively ingrown London print trade as an outsider. A footman who made a name for himself as a poet among London's elite, Dodsley was established in the bookselling trade by Alexander Pope and by the late 1740s had positioned himself as the leading London publisher of *belles lettres*. Never a member of the "establishment" Stationers' Company, he seems always to have been relatively self-directed and independent as an entrepreneur, consistently publishing a majority of his titles on his own. The theorist of innovation Everett M. Rogers has suggested that risk-takers are most successful in their innovations if they can influence "opinion leaders," those individuals within a system who are open to the external and new and who are able to influence others through their social status and central position in their communication networks. This makes an innovator essentially parallel in network position and function to the bridge figure who traverses a structural hole in social network theory.<sup>54</sup> Initially the protégé of the daughter of Viscount Lonsdale and then of Pope, Dodsley continued to build strong connections among such patrons and influential writers of his day as George Lyttelton, Daniel Wray, Lord Chesterfield, Lord Bute, Horace Walpole, Joseph Spence, Joseph and Thomas Warton, Thomas Gray, Edward Young, Thomas Edwards – and, late in both their lives, William Shenstone.

Dodsley's most enduring fame arose from the use of his author networks to create his often-reprinted *Collection of Poems by Several Hands*. Michael Suarez notes the "distinctively patrician pedigree" of the *Collection* as a factor in its popularity over twelve editions and thirty-four years: "some ninety-five of the 226 poems in these volumes, no less than 47 per cent, are either written by peers or are dedicated or addressed to peers."<sup>55</sup> Extant correspondence between Edwards and Wray and between Dodsley and Shenstone also makes it clear that a considerable portion of the poetry in the final six-volume collection had previously circulated only in script. Initially, a number of the living poets who found themselves in the volume expressed unease at being in Dodsley's hands; more accustomed to scribal modes of circulation, they clearly associated the print trade with vulgarity and fraud. Gray writes to Horace Walpole after the appearance of the first edition that Dodsley "might, methinks, have spared the Graces in his frontispiece, if he chose to be œconomical, and dressed his authors in a little more decent raiment – not in whited-brown paper and distorted characters, like an old ballad. I am ashamed to see myself; but the company keeps me in countenance." And Edwards complains to Wray of having received a letter from Dodsley soliciting poems for an improved second edition while the first has just come on the market. Edwards worries that he is being drawn into a morally questionable plan: "You ought not . . . to have turned Dodsley loose upon me here alone, without sending me at the same time directions how to act . . . I cannot but think this scheme a kind of *Popish* trick and a hardship upon the purchasers of the first Edition, and that if it is so, I ought not to encourage it."<sup>56</sup>

Dodsley responded to such complaints, as Suarez has shown in some detail, by taking the collection up-market: between the first and second editions, especially, he transformed it from a low-cost, miscellaneous assortment of poems, many of which he already held the copyright for, into a value-added product by introducing new and better poems, adding copious ornamentation, and presenting the work in a more spacious arrangement on better-quality paper. Central to this process, as the above examples have suggested, was the involvement of figures such as Wray and Lyttelton, who could serve as mediators between the world of selective, scribal exchange, with its elite associations, and the more indiscriminate one of print. For Edwards and Shenstone, such mediation was an important reassurance: "I should have been glad if by some of my friends Mr Lyttelton could have seen all my pieces that I might have had his opinion which are worth publishing," writes Edwards to Wray, and Dodsley in turn offers to show Shenstone's later contributions to Lyttelton

or his brother, just as “most of those which compose the three first Volumes, were shewn to Sir George before they were inserted.” By the time Dodsley was actively soliciting poems from Shenstone’s circle for the later volumes, the poet felt he could assure Graves that “they will be read by the polite world.” Dodsley’s “Advertisement” to all editions of the *Collection* offers the reader, in turn, the guarantee that “nothing is set before him but what has been approved by those of the most acknowledged taste.” Marshalling the cultural authority associated with scribal culture, Dodsley’s project thereby put that culture on display. As Suarez summarizes it, “[Dodsley] was marketing poems by his coterie of authors and by the friends of his close associates for a particular readership”; for Barbara Benedict, from the perspective of the readers of such print publications, “literary collections [like Dodsley’s] . . . exhibit a clique yet aim at a general audience.”<sup>57</sup>

Dodsley took a creative view of book-making that can be compared to Shenstone’s approach to gardening; in fact, writing to Joseph Spence, another poet and enthusiastic gardener with whom he visited Shenstone, he compares landscape gardening with his own business activity in words that might have been addressed to Shenstone directly: “here am I, ty’d down to ye World, immerst in Business, with very little Prospect of ever being able to disengage my self. `Tis true, my Business is of such a Nature, and so agreeable to ye Turn of my Mind, that I have often very great Pleasure in ye Pursuit of it. I don’t know but I may sometimes be as much entertain’d in planning a Book, as you are in laying the Plan of a Garden.”<sup>58</sup> This makes it less surprising, perhaps, that as Shenstone revised his notion of the ideal audience for the *Leasowes* and for his poetry from the elite to the tasteful, he should find an affinity with Dodsley, whom he introduced to members of his coterie as one whose “genius is truly poetical, and . . . sentiments altogether liberal and ingenuous” – in other words, a man not primarily driven by the profit-motive of the tradesman.<sup>59</sup>

Shenstone and Dodsley ultimately formed what was to prove one of the most significant personal and professional relationships of each of their lives. From 1754 onward, Dodsley regularly visited Shenstone at the *Leasowes*, where they worked together on the former’s play *Cleone*, his poem *Melpomene*, and his collection of *Fables*, and on preparing Shenstone and the Warwickshire coterie’s poems for publication. In this sense Dodsley was a productive member of the scribal exchange from which he also profited as a bookseller; he clearly valued the advice of Shenstone and Graves, both on his own works and on the contents and ordering of his final volumes of the *Collection*.<sup>60</sup> Gordon in 1952 described Shenstone as

“virtually [the] editor” of the final two volumes of the *Collection*, based on his role in supplying and commenting on about one-fifth of the poetry they contain.<sup>61</sup> But a careful examination of the Shenstone and Dodsley correspondences suggests that it might be more illuminating, rather than assuming a print-publishing model, as the term “editor” does, to consider the extent to which Shenstone’s – and perhaps more surprisingly, Dodsley’s – working schema for literary production and circulation in this case was an extension of the scribal model of publication. For Shenstone and his coterie, just as for Carter and Chapone, printing could be understood as serving the ends of extending their contemporary influence and embodying an image of themselves in print for their contemporaries and for posterity.

That image, as Dodsley conveyed it, certainly “exhibited the clique,” or coterie. In Volume Four of the *Collection* (1754), the group centered around Shenstone was featured as a block in the final sixth of the volume;<sup>62</sup> following poems by Somerville, Hylton, Lady Luxborough, Jago, Whistler, and Graves were thirteen by Shenstone, culminating in his *Pastoral Ballad* accompanied by Arne’s musical setting of its first part. Further, this collection within the *Collection* included several poems featuring the Leasowes and the theme of rural landscape gardening – Luxborough’s “Written at a Ferme Ornee near Birmingham,” several of Shenstone’s pastoral songs which speak of a poet-gardener seeking to impress his love on a visit to his garden, and a set of three “Rural Inscriptions” reproducing poems that adorned decorative features of Shenstone’s garden. The grouping must have been well received because Dodsley’s 1758 Volume Five opens with Shenstone’s “Rural Elegance: An Ode to the late Duchess of Somerset,” continues with 28 more Shenstone poems and songs, and then follows with another 15 poems from coterie members, including Joseph Giles, a Birmingham engraver whose work Shenstone had also sent along to Dodsley. As already noted, “Rural Elegance” can be read as a manifesto of Shenstone’s esthetic of taste, making its placement at the head of Volume 5 significant. Other Shenstone poems include another inscription, this one for a sheep-cote, and more pastoral songs; those of the coterie include Jago’s “Verses to William Shenstone, Esq; On receiving a Gilt Pocket-Book” and Graves’s “The Pepper-Box and Salt-Seller. A Fable,” which addresses its moral to “my Shenstone.”<sup>63</sup>

Dodsley, for his part, gained through his friendship with Shenstone access to materials that were actively circulating but had not yet appeared in print. These materials came to him with the hallmarks of coterie

practice – transcribed by Shenstone, often revised by him and others and unidentified by individual author. The method is illustrated in a letter from Shenstone to Jago as Volume 4 is in production:

I did send [Dodsley] several [Pieces] of my own, some of my Friend Whist [ler.] Graves, and some accidental Pieces of others which lay in my Drawer. I meant to send something of yours, of my own accord if I was hurry'd, otherwise not without applying for Consent. He wrote me word last week that his Public[ation] must be defer'd upon account of the Elections. So that we shall now have time enough to meet or write upon ye Subject – What I purpos'd was your Linnets – 'I owe etc.' Dick Graves send [*sic*] me the Inclos'd little comical Fable. I made some few alterations & put it into Dodsley's Hands. Be so good as to return it, as I have now no other Copy.

Coterie modes of exchange and revision fluidly cross the line into publication methods in this case. That Shenstone was not overly troubled about proprietary authorship in the process is further indicated by a letter from Dodsley in August 1764 listing, apparently at Shenstone's request, eighteen poems he has received from him in his various "pacquets," and asking that Shenstone "be so kind as to distinguish which are yours, & to favour me with any others that you may think proper for my purpose." Dodsley himself, as "a gentleman, whose judgment, I am convinc'd, is not inferior [to Shenstone's], & who is under the strictest Obligations to Sincerity," was invited by Graves to exercise the final judgment regarding the inclusion of, and alterations to, his own poems submitted by Shenstone for the volume. Thus, Dodsley was taking his cue from the coterie itself in treating the poems of Graves, Hylton, Jago, Luxborough, Somerville, and Whistler as already published in manuscript form and in consulting only with Shenstone about final editorial decisions.<sup>64</sup>

Significantly, of the authors of this coterie only Richard Jago seems to have objected outright to these methods, and that only several years later, in response to the production of Volume 5 of the *Collection*. Jago protests to Dodsley, "I am sensible, Sir how advantageous Mr. Shenstone's Recommendation is, and that it is no inconsiderable Compliment to be admitted to a Place in a Collection under so judicious a Compiler: At the same Time Sir, You must permit me to claim such an Interest in my own, as to give my Consent both to the Dress, and the Manner of its Insertion" – to which Dodsley replies that he thought Jago had been informed of the submissions, which have already been printed off. Overall, these anecdotes suggest that for most members of the coterie, while they cared deeply that their work appear to the best possible advantage, their poems had already been "published" in the act

of relinquishing control of the manuscripts to the coterie process of collaborative amendment. Like Chapone valuing the expertise of her bookseller in marketing the *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Shenstone and his coterie acknowledge Dodsley's "Judgment & Character" in bringing the right material before the public in the best possible light (although this did not prevent Shenstone, an inveterate reviser, from hoping for the opportunity of a new, more correct edition). Soon after the appearance of the 1755 Volume 4, Shenstone "wish[es] . . . that the volume may recompence Dodsley for his trouble: I may also add, for his ingenuity, and for his politeness in giving each of us a compleat sett."<sup>65</sup> In short, for this coterie, printing was an extension of their circulation practices, to similar ends. The distinctly commercial realm of print was recognized, but primarily in the sense of shared concerns – about obtaining enough poetry to fill a volume and publishing it before the London season ended to gain maximum exposure – along with an acknowledgment of Dodsley's expertise in knowing how to bring material before the public successfully. The broader aim underlying these material concerns was of course the accrual of social capital to the coterie's members, both collectively and individually.<sup>66</sup> The influence of Shenstone's work as reflected in magazine reprints, tributes, and imitations is discussed in detail in [Chapter 4](#), but the start of that dissemination was here, in the decision to have the coterie imaged so substantially in Dodsley's *Collection*.

Shenstone's colonization of print to serve his own esthetic principles is also demonstrated in the triangular working relations between himself, Dodsley, and the innovative type-designer John Baskerville, to whose specialized press in Birmingham, near the Leasowes, both men turned for small editions of works destined for exclusive audiences.<sup>67</sup> Writing to Jago regarding a possible printing of the late-life manuscript miscellany referred to earlier, Shenstone nicely articulates this extension of the localized scribal community through a selective use of print inflected by notions of controlled dissemination:

Be not apprehensive: there shall nothing appear in print of your composition any more, without your explicit consent. – And yet I have thoughts of amusing myself with the publication of a small Miscellany from neighbour Baskerville's press, if I can save myself harmless as to expense – I purpose it no larger than a "Landsdown's," a "Philips's" or a "Pomfret's Poems."<sup>68</sup>

Shenstone's placement of himself in a tradition defined by Lansdowne, Philips, and Pomfret is presented as self-deprecation, but it in fact reveals

his ambition to be recognized as belonging to a line of poets publishing modest, carefully curated collections principally for a select readership.<sup>69</sup> Harold Love suggests that one reason for the decline of scribal publication was the decline of the political or religious need to maintain separate ideological communities among the governing classes, but as this case shows, a mid-eighteenth-century country gentleman might turn political and economic marginalization into a voluntary separation based on taste.<sup>70</sup>

Shenstone achieved this end in large part, as we have seen, by restricting his own practice to two forms of circulation – of manuscripts and of travelers between landscape gardening projects. Thus, even in this age of efficient postal service, Dodsley was forced to travel regularly to the Leasowes in the latter years of his life, not merely to further his own manuscripts and to admire the *ferme ornée*'s improvements but also to extract from Shenstone the hoarded, much revised manuscripts that he could not be persuaded to relinquish to the post. Indeed, at one point in 1758, after months of delay in the return of corrected proofs for Volume 5 of the *Collection*, an exasperated Dodsley writes about the poem he had hoped to print three years earlier, in Volume 4, "Pray send the Rural Elegance, & let me finish, for I shall now be in great trouble & anxiety which accompany'd with pain [from gout] is too much. The Season is wasting, and I have between 6 and 7 hundred pound bury'd in the Paper & print of this Edition, which I want to pay and cannot till I publish." Paradoxically, Shenstone's stance of reluctance, of viewing as a hardwon privilege, and of a necessary link between the text and its physical source in the author was, as we have seen, a part of his construction as a leader in taste – heightened, perhaps, by its contrast to the technologies of communication and travel advancing around him. Deliberately working in allegedly "anachronistic" or "devalued" media, Shenstone established his place in literary history as "a forerunner of a later generation" (in the 1933 phrase of Marjorie Williams) through his coterie esthetic of relation and sociability, embodied art, modesty of scale rather than extravagant display, and formal simplicity. In this way, Shenstone came to represent the cutting edge of literary trends rather than the past.<sup>71</sup>

Like Elizabeth Carter and Hester Mulso Chapone, William Shenstone succeeded in transmediating his coterie values into print, resulting in an extension of his influence. Harold Love has suggested (drawing on Walter Ong) that Walter Benjamin's notion of the "aura" of the work of art prior to the age of mechanical reproduction, its link to authorial presence, can be applied to manuscript publication's authority in the age of print.<sup>72</sup> From one perspective, this aura can be seen to be exploited by the print trade for

commercial purposes. But Shenstone's reputation, based on the social cachet of activities such as gardening and coterie exchange, was secured for literary history by the appearance of his work in print, particularly in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*, reissued repeatedly, and in the same publisher's posthumous edition of his friend's works, discussed in [Chapter 4](#).<sup>73</sup> Shenstone's approach to his writing, gardening, and other media arts might thus be viewed as an already restricted esthetic practice that takes on a heightened aura of authenticity in proportion to its representation in a commercial print medium that is anything but exclusive. Shenstone's artistic practice and posthumous reputation serve to demonstrate how allegedly "anachronistic" media phenomena can, with the collaboration of print institutions, be refigured as setting "modern" standards of taste for the consumption of that expanded print readership.



*Memorializing a coterie life in print*  
*The case of William Shenstone*

I have read an octavo volume of Shenstone's letters. poor Man! he was always wishing for money, for fame, & other distinctions; & his whole philosophy consisted in living against his will in retirement, & in a place, which his taste had adorn'd; but which he only enjoy'd, when People of note came to see & commend it. his correspondence is about nothing else but this place & his own writings with two or three neighbouring Clergymen, who wrote verses too.

(Thomas Gray, 1769)<sup>1</sup>

Eagerly, according to custom, looking over the contents of your Magazine for December last, p. 505, I dropped upon the birthplace of my favourite Shenstone, and glad I am that there is a semblance of it preserved . . . Modest and worthy Shenstone! I knew him well. Amiable in his manners, willing to communicate, he was the friend of merit and the fosterer of genius. I well remember when a youth, that I showed him some Verses I had written on the Leasowes, which, although they have little to recommend them, I will introduce, to show the willingness he had to assist a rhyming adventurer, and likewise the facility with which he wrote. With a pencil he immediately annexed the eight last lines, and returned me the verses.

(A.F., *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1812)<sup>2</sup>

The poet Thomas Gray's dismissal of William Shenstone's correspondence, published posthumously in 1769 as the third and final volume of Dodsley's edition of Shenstone's *Works*, calls for two caveats. First, Gray is responding to a limited selection only. This early volume did not contain the correspondences with Lady Luxborough, Thomas Percy, and Robert Dodsley, for example, and thus its focus was by default on the struggles of Shenstone, Graves, and Jago to establish themselves through preferment or public recognition; the extensive discussions of landscape gardening with Lady Luxborough, of poetics and the ballad genre with Percy, and of various publishing projects with Dodsley are all absent. Secondly, Gray's own negotiation of his authorial persona in relation to publicity and

audience was a vexed one, and his discomfort over the revelation of Shenstone's attitudes toward his financial limitations, his pride in connections to "People of note," and his restricted literary and social circle might well have involved an element of self-recognition. Gray's tone aside, there was clearly some basis for the conclusion that Shenstone was to be pitied as a victim of ambition unfulfilled and potential unrealized. Elizabeth Montagu responded to these themes through a patron's lens, recognizing the difference a more organized patronage network might have made to this career; she writes of the letters:

they have made me regret I did not know him, not from the witt or genius they display but that I fancy I should have urged him to have had his Works printed by subscription. A few hundred pounds would have given him ease. His taste was above his fortune & to purchase some elegance for his retirement he was obliged to deny himself many little comforts. Eye upon the rich & great who professd to admire his works! He was not happy . . . This poor Man seems to have had a friendly good heart, narrow circumstances & ye churlish World sufferd it not to expand itself. He appears to have had no strict friendships but with authors.<sup>3</sup>

Montagu's knowledge of how literary fame and accompanying financial ease were to be achieved by an individual of the middling sort or lower gentry in the 1750s and 1760s is not to be dismissed, as the past chapters have shown. The paradox in the case of Shenstone's career is the fact that this "patronage" enabled by print was realized posthumously through Robert Dodsley and, more broadly, the Dodsley firm.

This chapter will trace the record of Shenstone's reception as it is found in book publications and in the periodical press in the decades following his death of a putrid fever on February 11, 1763, at the age of just forty-eight. Just as Robert Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands*, especially its fourth and fifth volumes, was shown in [Chapter 3](#) to disseminate Shenstone's coterie, the bookseller's production and diligent marketing of a posthumous edition of Shenstone's works created a representation of the Poet of the Leasowes whose essential features remained unchanged through the century following his death. This fact is illustrated by Gray's and Montagu's comments cited above – Dodsley's celebration of his friend, extended to the volume of letters preserving exchanges of the coterie (published after Dodsley's own death by his brother James), provided the material basis for their image of "poor Shenstone." It was the meaning of this representation, rather than its content *per se*, that was subject to contestation and mutability as literary values and fashions, as well as the institutional and market structures supporting literary reading and

readerships, diverged and developed. A closer examination of this record therefore reveals much about shifts in notions of literary production and their relation to concepts of literary value. This chapter will show how these shifts were grounded in the interdependent yet competing practices of media systems. The differing orientations of these systems resulted in radically different hierarchies of authorship and reading – between the print-oriented professional and the manuscript-circulating amateur, between the “universal” audience sought by print and the local readership of the coterie, and between the critic and the reader of magazines. Shenstone’s afterlife thus becomes for us a means of tracing the intermediality of the literary coterie and the print trade (the latter itself bifurcating into popular and institutionalized modes) in the final decades of the eighteenth century.

This is because of a second line of influence stemming from Gray’s response to the Dodsley edition of the correspondence. Gray’s jab, initially in a private letter but made public when his own letters were published posthumously by William Mason in 1775, received a highly visible endorsement by its inclusion in Samuel Johnson’s “Life of Shenstone,” published in 1781 as part of his “Lives of the English Poets.” Johnson summarizes Dodsley’s account of Shenstone’s character and physical appearance from the preface to the edition, before quoting from Gray’s letter. Johnson’s portrait is most often described as condescending; while he couches his skepticism of Shenstone’s landscape gardening with qualifiers and assigns them to “a sullen and surly speculator,” he insinuates that, in expending his energies thus, Shenstone devoted himself “rather [to] the sport than the business of human reason” – however “innocent” the “amusement” and however he might be commended for “doing best what such multitudes are contending to do well.” He represents as fact an exaggerated version of the financial constraints Shenstone experienced, writing of a house falling to ruin and of woods filled with duns who drowned out the birdsong. Led by his own dislike of the pastoral and blank verse forms to depreciate a number of Shenstone’s most well-known works, Johnson nevertheless expresses admiration for his very popular and much-imitated “Pastoral Ballad” and acknowledges “Rural Elegance” and “The School-mistress” to be poems of some importance. The overall impressions nevertheless are of a literary production that is superficial, narrow, lightweight, and does not quite attain the standard of being “agreeable,” let alone “great” – and of a life harmless but also useless.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in its dismissal of Shenstone as essentially irrelevant, Johnson's biographical preface refuses to acknowledge the carefully constructed esthetic Shenstone himself had articulated and Dodsley had foregrounded in his edition, whereby rural retirement and landscape gardening could constitute a contribution to the moral and esthetic good of society. The implicit value system is that of the urban print professional, which Linda Zionkowski has similarly traced in Johnson's biographies of Lyttelton and Gray, and which I will discuss in more detail in the [next chapter](#). Johnson's qualified judgments, stripped of their caveats, quickly became common critical currency and until very recently have strongly influenced discussions of Shenstone. Yet very little critical attention has been paid to the enormous popularity and influence of the Poet of the Leasowes in the decades following his death. The steady stream of visitors who circulated through his *ferme ornée*, the dozens of editions of his works in every form, and the hundreds of invocations of Shenstone or the Leasowes in magazine tributes, anecdotes, poetry excerpts, and illustrations demonstrate that Shenstone and his coterie values were embraced by an international audience as an object of admiration and affection, and as an ideal to which they could aspire.<sup>5</sup> Beginning with the powerful influence of Dodsley's edition of the *Works* and the line of publications of the Warwickshire coterie issuing from the Dodsley firm, then, this chapter will go on to consider their legacy in the magazines, but also the ultimate tendency of those venues to represent a "Shenstone" freed of factual and coterie constraints. I will conclude with a discussion of the counter-influence of Johnson's "Life of Shenstone" on the tradition of critical representations of Shenstone, together with the last vestiges of coterie resistance to this tradition.

### Dodsley's Shenstone: the 1764 *Works*

As already noted, Shenstone's reputation built gradually through the 1740s and 1750s, expanding outwards from the Leasowes through the visits of persons of taste to his *ferme ornée* and encompassing his poetry and that of his coterie as collected by Dodsley for his 1755 and 1758 *Collection* volumes. Acknowledgments of Shenstone's leadership in poetic and gardening taste were on the increase in the late 1750s and early 1760s, including letters seeking permission to dedicate works to him, unsolicited manuscripts from aspiring poets, and poetic tributes. Typical was the anonymous verse offering of "Cotswouldia" "To William Shenstone, Esq.," which he was delighted to receive by post in September of 1761, and which was published

in the *London* and *Scots* magazines for January and February 1762, respectively. With Shenstone's death in 1763, such works swelled inevitably into poetic eulogies such as "Lucinda's Testimony of Regard for Mr. Shenstone," "The Sequestered Bard: An Elegy," "To the memory of William Shenstone, Esq., by "Dr. S," and "Corydon: A Pastoral" by J[ohn] Cunningham, all of which appeared in print within about a month of the poet's death. As their titles suggest, these poems lament the loss of an elegant shepherd who mentored his flock of "poetic youths" with kindness and respect:

'Twas Shenstone's choice to raise with gentlest care  
The tender shoot of blooming Fancy's tree,  
To stamp a genuine mark on what was rare,  
And bid each muse-fir'd poet "dare be free."<sup>6</sup>

Riding the wave of popularity that he had helped to swell, Dodsley, in equal parts a sincere admirer and shrewd businessman, had sought for years after the publication of his *Collection* to persuade Shenstone to agree to publish an edition of his works, especially his elegies, while Shenstone just as obstinately held back, endlessly planning to improve them.<sup>7</sup> But by making Dodsley one of his literary executors, Shenstone determined his posthumous fate as above all a print-based one. With the active assistance of Richard Graves and other members of the coterie, Dodsley produced, in little more than a year after the poet's death, *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq; most of which were never before printed, In two volumes, with decorations*. However he might have quibbled over the precise wording of a line or the inclusion of a song or two, Shenstone's trust was not misplaced, for Dodsley designed his edition to reflect Shenstone's esthetic values. This print memorialization began with a biographical preface of Dodsley's own composition, explicitly focusing on the embodied nature of the poetry. The preface opens:

A great part of the poetical works of Mr. Shenstone, particularly his Elegies and Pastorals, are (as he himself expresses it) "The exact transcripts of the situation of his own mind;" and abound in frequent allusions to his own place, the beautiful scene of his retirement from the world. Exclusively therefore of our natural curiosity to be acquainted with the history of an author, whose works we peruse with pleasure, some short account of Mr. Shenstone's personal character, and situation in life, may not only be agreeable, but absolutely necessary, to the reader; as it is impossible he should enter into the true spirit of his writings, if he is entirely ignorant of those circumstances of his life, which sometimes so greatly influenced his reflections.

In other words, this case is unique, going beyond that of the typical author whose life is the object of a print reader's curiosity: with Shenstone, the poetry cannot be comprehended, and certainly not properly appreciated, without an understanding of its relation to his life and its setting of the Leasowes. Touching in turn on the poet's modest gentry origins, benevolence, friendship, financial limitations, unhappiness in love, writing "distinguished by simplicity with elegance, and genius with correctness," indolence, perfectionism, and "profound knowledge of the human heart," Dodsley rings the changes which will feature for generations in commentary on Shenstone, concluding that "if he be not injured by the inability of his editor, there is no doubt but he will ever maintain an eminent station among the best of our English writers."<sup>8</sup> The "decorations" accompanying the edition, beginning with a title-page rendering of the poet's self-designed coat of arms, prominently featuring a kingfisher or halcyon (Figure 4.1), reinforce the editor's belief in the "eminent station" which this poet deserves, along with its foundation in nature – the "flumina amem, silvasque inglorious," or "rivers and forests inglorious" that Shenstone chose from Virgil as his motto.<sup>9</sup> As one of Shenstone's coterie members, John Pixell, writes to Dodsley shortly after the appearance of the two 1764 volumes, "You have certainly done your utmost to hand [the Writings of Mr Shenstone] down to Posterity in the most elegant manner, which must be esteem'd as the highest Instance of your friendly Zeal for his Fame & Reputation."<sup>10</sup>

While the first volume of the edition consists entirely of Shenstone's poetry, beginning with the hitherto unpublished elegies, the second volume, primarily comprising prose pieces, culminates in a representation of the Leasowes-centered coterie. Dodsley himself contributes "A Description of the Leasowes," a 32-page prose account, keyed to a drawing of the farm's plan and embedding Shenstone's poetic inscriptions as they were scattered through the farm's circuit walk.<sup>11</sup> This volume then concludes with nine sets of "Verses to Shenstone" celebrating the Leasowes. Some of these poems are written by members of the coterie themselves – Luxborough, Graves, and Dodsley himself are identified – while others are tributes by writers attracted to the Poet of the Leasowes, such as the shoemaker poet James Woodhouse whom Shenstone had mentored. But all draw attention to the physical site as the dwelling place of undisguised Nature (not to mention the fairies, dryads, Muses, and Graces), flourishing because of its Bard/Hermit's adherence to "SIMPLICITY" and "the WAVING LINE." "Verses by Mr. Dodsley on His First Arrival at the Leasowes, 1754" neatly inverts this rhetorical device

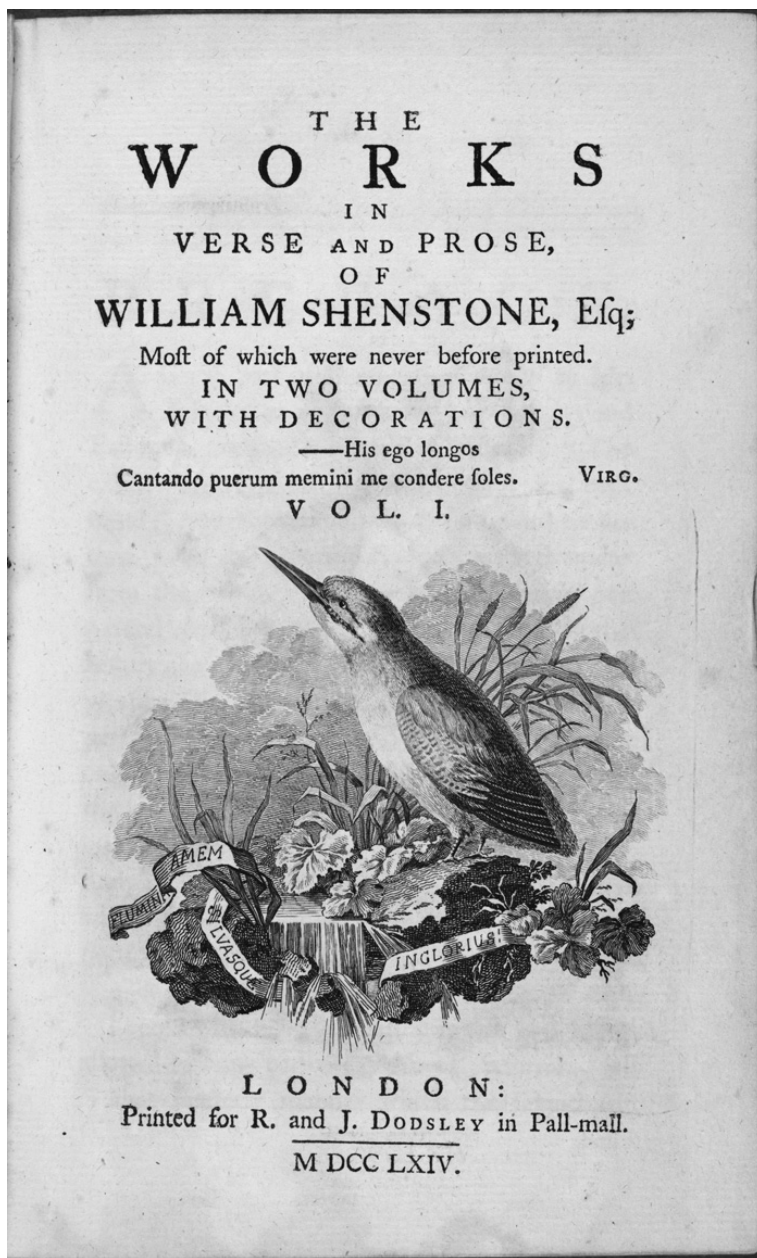


Figure 4.1 William Shenstone, *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.* (1764), title page. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California (RB 106624).

for effect. It is structured by the visitor's search for the "Naïd" [*sic*], "Dryad," or "rural Deity" who has created this paradise, as he penetrates ever deeper into its beauties. The poem culminates in the discovery that the "enchantment," represented by "The powerful incantations, magic verse,/ Inscrib'd on every tree, alcove, or urn," is in fact the work of the speaker's friend:

Yes, great magician! Now I read thee right,  
And lightly weigh all sorcery, but Thine.  
No Naiad's leading step conducts the rill;  
Nor sylvan god presiding skirts the lawn  
In beauteous wildness, with fair spreading trees;  
Nor magic want has circumscribed the scene.  
'Tis thine own taste, thy genius that presides,  
Nor needs there other deity, nor needs  
More potent spells than they.<sup>12</sup>

In all these ways, the two volumes not only preserve the poet's works but also mediate them through the coterie's image of itself and of its character as established by Shenstone. As already noted, the *Works* were completed in 1769 by a third volume consisting of Shenstone's letters; these letters were given editorial titles such as "To Mr. Graves, on Benevolence and Friendship" or "To a Friend, disappointing him of a Visit" that rendered them works of literary interest as occasional coterie writings as well.

The success of the *Works* was not left to chance or the vagaries of consumer interest. A search of periodical databases reveals that at least twenty-three items from the *Works* appeared in magazines of April to September 1764, fourteen of those in the first month alone, coinciding with the edition's publication on April 6. Nine different excerpts of previously unpublished items from the *Works* – two elegies and several essays, in addition to the preface – appeared in the *London Magazine*, in which Dodsley held a quarter share. Dodsley's preface, with its account of the author and assessment of his writings, appeared that April in no less than five magazines: the *London*, the *Gentleman's*, the *Scots*, the *Royal*, and the *Universal*. The first three of these, in particular, had existed since the 1730s and were influential and authoritative venues for the publication of original poetry. As Michael Suarez's account of the publication history of Gray's *Elegy* shows, manuscript circulation, periodical distribution, and appearance in print could mutually enhance, rather than undercut, one another.



It is clear that Dodsley worked hard to whet curiosity and create demand.<sup>13</sup>

Shenstone's *Works* was very successful in its own right – the 1791 edition announced itself as the sixth, with a final eighteenth-century “new edition” issued by Cadell in 1798, a year after the demise of the house of Dodsley; George Faulkner issued editions in Dublin in 1764, 1769, and 1777, as did Alexander Donaldson in Edinburgh in 1765, 1768, 1770, and 1775; there were also imprints originating in Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Manchester. Alongside these full editions, more or less identical to the Dodsley, smaller editions of “select works” or of the poetry alone began to appear in 1770, and in 1780 the series began, as the three volumes became part of “The Poetical Magazine: or, Parnassian Library,” the “Wenman's Cheap Editions,” “Parson's Edition of Select British Classics,” and “Cooke's Pocket Edition of the original and complete works of select British poets, or Entertaining Poetical Library.” Finally, in the 1790s, the prose works came into fuller prominence, with a volume of *Essays on Men and Manners* by William Shenstone, Esq.<sup>14</sup>

Another measure of the influence of Dodsley's representation of Shenstone is the stability of the contents of these volumes: despite the very occasional magazine appearance of a purported Shenstone poem “never before published,” none succeeded in being added to either the Dodsley or the numerous other editions.<sup>15</sup> Omissions are even more rare, with the exception of the obvious genre sorting that took place with the appearance of poetry- or prose-specific volumes.<sup>16</sup> Within this continuity, however, there are indications not only of a hardening of the definition of the “literary” but also of an elevation of the single author and a waning of interest in the more collaborative spirit of the coterie, in keeping with the more individualistic print-based model of literary production that, as the remainder of this study will show, began to reshape scribal practices and the representation of them in print in the later decades of the century. Thus, the items most likely to be dropped in the late 1780s and 1790s in non-Dodsley editions are Dodsley's prose “Description of the Leasowes” – sometimes with the Shenstone verse inscriptions that were originally embedded within the “Description” retained as separate poems – and the commendatory verses addressed to Shenstone by members of his circle or admiring protégés. Nevertheless, the Dodsley editions issued simultaneously with these continued to foreground the Leasowes and the Warwickshire coterie.

### The house of Dodsley and the Warwickshire coterie

After Robert Dodsley's death in 1764, the firm's continuing investment in Shenstone's posthumous reputation was reinforced, under the leadership of Robert's brother James, by a close business relationship with the poet's circle. This is illustrated by Table 4.1, which lists Dodsley publications from 1764 onward that were authored by members of the coterie. Appearing in the same year as the *Works* (and reviewed together in the *Monthly Review* by the poet John Langhorne) was *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, the work of Mary Whateley Darwall, whom Shenstone had recommended to Dodsley, and whom Mary Scott was to call "Daughter of Shenstone" in her 1774 poem *The Female Advocate*.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Percy's groundbreaking 1765 *Reliques of English Poetry*, while obscuring the extent of Shenstone's editorial role in the project, acknowledges the encouragement of "such judges as the author of the Rambler, and the late Mr. Shenstone," and includes Shenstone's ballad "Jemmy Dawson," as "printed among his posthumous Works, 2 vols. 8," but "here given from a Ms. copy."<sup>18</sup> Richard Jago's wide-ranging topographical poem in four books, *Edge Hill, or, The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized*, was published by subscription with James Dodsley in 1767; this poem pays tribute to Shenstone as the one-time school friend who "smooth'd my incondite Verse" and who presided over the "social Circle" that "round his *Leasowe's* happy Circuit rov'd." A year later, Jago's *Labour and Genius: or, the Mill-Stream, and the Cascade* announces itself on the title-page to be "A Fable. Written in the Year, 1762; and inscribed to The late William Shenstone, Esq." As an allegory of the utilitarian and profitable versus the pleasing and admired, the poem cleverly deploys the contrast between the jealous local millstream and one of Shenstone's artfully designed cascades. Suggesting that Nature has distributed talents and their rewards in such unequal proportions that "Hundreds eat, who spin, or knit,/For one that lives by Dint of Wit," the speaker concludes that a Wit such as "Damon" the landscape artist may have gained praise, but "never got a Shilling"; the poem ends by reiterating, in a concise equation spoken by the cascade, the economic-esthetic exchange posited by Shenstone in his "Rural Elegance": "We gain our Ends by different Ways, /And you get Bread, and I get – Praise."<sup>19</sup> This 1768 portrayal of Shenstone's circumstances as a self-conscious life choice provides a frame that the reader might use to read the 1769 edition of Shenstone's letters to Graves and Jago, with their wishes for money and fame and visitors. The letters, in turn, were supplemented by the 1775 *Letters written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough to*

Table 4.1 *Shenstone coterie publications issued by the Dodsley firm, 1764f.*  
*Entries are based primarily on information from the English Short Titles*  
**Catalogue.** *First editions only are shown, except in the case of Shenstone's Works.*

Date	Author	Title	Edition
1764	Shenstone, William	<i>The works in verse and prose, of William Shenstone, Esq. Most of which were never before printed. In two volumes, with decorations. Vol. I–II</i>	1st ed.
1764	Darwall, Mary Whateley	<i>Original Poems on Several Occasions. By Miss Whateley</i>	
1765	Shenstone, William	<i>The works . . . of William Shenstone, Esq. Vol. I–II</i>	2nd ed.
1765	Percy, Thomas	<i>Reliques of English Poetry. Vol. I–III</i>	
1767	Jago, Richard	<i>Edge Hill, or, The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized. Vol. I–IV</i>	
1768	Jago, Richard	<i>Labour and Genius: or, the Mill-Stream, and the Cascade</i>	
1768	Shenstone, William	<i>The works . . . of William Shenstone, Esq. Vol. I–II</i>	3rd ed.
1769	Shenstone, William	<i>The works . . . of William Shenstone, Esq; Vol. III. Containing letters to particular friends, from the Year 1739 to 1763.</i>	1st ed.
1773	Graves, Richard	<i>The Love of Order: A Poetical Essay</i>	
1773	Graves, Richard	<i>The Spiritual Quixote. Vol I–III</i>	
1773	Shenstone, William	<i>The works . . . of William Shenstone, Esq. Vol. I–III</i>	4th ed.
1775	Knight, Henrietta (Lady Luxborough)	<i>Letters written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Esq.</i>	
1776	Graves, Richard	<i>Euphrosyne, or, Amusements on the Road of Life</i>	
1777	Shenstone, William	<i>The works . . . of William Shenstone, Esq. Vol. I–III</i>	5th ed.
1778	Hull, Thomas	<i>Select Letters between the late Duchess of Somerset, Lady Luxborough, Miss Dolman, Mr. Whistler, Mr. R. Dodsley, William Shenstone, Esq. and others. Vol. I–II</i>	
1779	Graves, Richard	<i>Columella, or, The Distressed Anchoret: A Colloquial Tale. Vol. I–III</i>	
1784	Jago, Richard	<i>Poems, Moral and Descriptive</i>	
1785	Graves, Richard	<i>Eugenius: or, Anecdotes of the Golden Vale</i>	

Table 4.1 (cont.)

Date	Author	Title	Edition
1786	Graves, Richard	<i>Lucubrations: Consisting of Essays, Reveries, &amp;c., in Prose and Verse</i>	
1788	Graves, Richard	<i>Recollections of Some Particulars in the Life of the Late William Shenstone</i>	
1789	Graves, Richard	<i>The Rout, or, A Sketch of Modern Life</i>	
1790	Graves, Richard	<i>Plexippus, or, The Aspiring Plebian</i>	
1791	Shenstone, William	<i>The works . . . of William Shenstone, Esq. Vol. I–III</i>	6th ed.

*William Shenstone, Esq.*, edited by John Hodgetts, and the 1778 *Select Letters between the late Duchess of Somerset, Lady Luxborough, Miss Dolman, Mr. Whistler, Mr. R. Dodsley, William Shenstone Esq. and others*, edited by Thomas Hull, which together supplied correspondence to and from members of the coterie who had not been represented in the 1769 volume.

An even more long-term, and presumably profitable, relationship between the Dodsley print enterprise and Shenstone's coterie was with Richard Graves, who followed up his poems in the *Collection* and his editorial assistance on the Shenstone *Works* with *The Love of Order: A Poetical Essay* in the manner of Pope's *Essay on Man* (1773) and at least eight other works of substantial length, beginning with his popular novel *The Spiritual Quixote* (1773). Graves's publishing success continued unabated to the time of his death in 1804 (though no longer with the now-defunct Dodsley imprint), implying that he surpassed his friend Shenstone in navigating the world of print. Yet the reality is more complex. Like so many instances in this study, Graves's publications depended on his representations of the coterie, as part of his general tendency to process his life in his writings. In this case, he turned Shenstone and the Leasowes into, first, the object of his protagonist Geoffrey Wildgoose's crazed iconoclastic attack in an episode of *The Spiritual Quixote*, and then, in *Columella, or, The Distressed Anchoret: A Colloquial Tale* (1779), the primary focus of his critical attention. The latter work has been described by David Oakleaf as "disparage[ing] idle solitude – his view of Shenstone's retirement," but Clarence Tracy nuances this by clarifying that "the novel was not a biography of Shenstone, much less a satire on him, but rather an apologue in which some parts of Shenstone's experience were used to

illustrate a theme: the dangers implicit in a retired way of life.”<sup>20</sup> The questions Graves raises in these works about the social and moral risks of any eccentricity or enthusiasm are already traceable in the frank correspondence between him and Shenstone. There he teases the latter about building a “cabbage-garden *ornée*” in much the same manner that the second canto of *The Love of Order* warns against “an Affectation of Irregularity, in laying out small Plots of Ground, [that] has of late been carried to a ridiculous Extreme,” exemplified by the landlord of the local inn who, in a vain attempt to ape the harmonious irregularity of the great William Pitt’s estate, jumbles his small plot of land instead of planting his cabbages in proper rows.<sup>21</sup> Yet Graves seems ambivalent: does Shenstone most resemble the innkeeper who is the laughing stock of his social superiors, or is he one of those superiors? After all, the Leasowes was much admired by William Pitt, who reportedly offered a monetary contribution to its improvements and consulted Shenstone about his own landscaping projects. The correspondence also makes clear that it was Shenstone who steadily urged Graves to complete and seek print publication for his works, out of a belief in his potential for gaining fame and preferment in this manner and from the knowledge that he needed to support a growing family.

Thus, it is not necessarily a contradiction that the same Graves who could poke fun at Shenstonian eccentricities should also be his most vigorous print defender in response to Gray and Johnson. In 1775, the *Monthly Review* published (and endorsed) an anonymous letter from Graves complaining about “an offence against propriety at least, if not against humanity” in William Mason’s edition of Gray’s letters,<sup>22</sup> and his response to Johnson’s “Life of Shenstone” was even more substantial. Graves’s 1788 *Recollections of Some Particulars in the Life of the Late William Shenstone, Esq.* is one of his Dodsley publications and benefitted from the use of materials likely in the publisher’s stock – an engraving of Shenstone possibly prepared for the Hull edition of letters and an image of a garden labeled “Shenston”<sup>23</sup> – and no doubt also from the firm’s interest in upholding the value of an author so closely identified with it. Graves’s memoir of his friend appeals through the author’s characteristic stance of fair-minded, lightly satirical, yet affectionate assessment. Thus, he takes courage from “a rage for anecdotes of every kind” in this age, when “the colour of Dr. Johnson’s coat, his oaken staff, his inordinate love of tea, and his flatulencies, are listened to with patience and complacency”; although Shenstone “was by no means to be compared to so great a man,” the public may by turns be amused by “the little Polish Count, and the Irish Giant.”

Graves adroitly justifies the rehearsal of temporally distant events tangentially concerning himself, not by a claim about their enduring significance, but by virtue of the interest Johnson's own account of Shenstone (along with Gray's) has aroused in the subject. His second justification is the one of friendship, which at once calls upon him to defend the character and writings of a man to whom he is "bound by gratitude and affection" and lends him authority, by virtue of "intimacy," on a subject that Johnson can only know at second hand.<sup>24</sup>

Graves asserts Shenstone's originality and influence in two areas: "that natural and simple taste in rural ornaments, which now so generally prevails in the nation" and his much-imitated "writings in the elegiac and pastoral style." Throughout his *Recollections*, Graves pits prudence against taste, implying that the former is the mark of a money-oriented professional, while Shenstone chose the latter with at least as great a chance of happiness:

In short, Indolence persuaded him, that to contract our desires, or to enlarge the means of gratifying them, is much the same thing; and that it was better to enjoy ease and independence with a competent fortune, than to toil, and be subject to the caprice of others, to augment it. In this decision the happiness of Mr. Shenstone was materially concerned. Whether he determined wisely or not, people of taste, and people of worldly prudence, will probably be of very different opinions.

Though Graves is careful not to say so outright, it is clear that Johnson cannot appreciate Shenstone in part because he falls into the category of "people of worldly prudence." Similarly, Graves dismisses Johnson's insinuation that planting a walk could demand "no great powers of mind" as revealing the ignorance of an urbanite: "he seems to have been contemplating some zig-zag shrubberies and wheel-barrow mounts in the tea-gardens near the metropolis, or at some inn on the road." The pleasure gardens of the nobility and gentry, by contrast, display as great a genius as do the poems of Thomson or the paintings of Rosa. Graves suggests further that Johnson's cold appraisal of Shenstone's poetry reflects his urbanized inability to appreciate the pastoral and blank verse forms. In response to Gray's reflections, the author takes a somewhat different tack, noting that Gray, while perhaps a superior poet with greater social and material advantages, was in fact more like than unlike Shenstone in a "great and even *excessive* delicacy" that vied with his love of praise; the hint is that, unlike Johnson, Gray was not uncomprehending but rather petty and even hypocritical. In these ways, the Warwickshire coterie publications

issuing from the house of Dodsley through the decades following the 1764 *Works* both implicitly and explicitly endorse and uphold the esthetic values and reputation of Shenstone.<sup>25</sup>

### Shenstone in the magazines

While Graves's *Recollections*, by virtue of its book format and its riposte to Johnson and Gray, is the most high profile of the Shenstone defenses, it is only the tip of the iceberg when periodical publication is brought into the picture. In his 1985 dissertation on Shenstone's esthetic theory, a review of comments about the poet from "authors of note" in the first half of the nineteenth century leads Randall Calhoun to conclude "not only that Shenstone was known widely but also that something about him had a wide appeal."<sup>26</sup> That appealing "something" is now made even more open to examination by the aid of searchable databases bringing together hundreds of periodical titles. For if the printed book increasingly represents works that can be categorized as "poetry" or "essays" and as the *oeuvre* of a solitary literary author, magazines and their readers are more capacious, more sociable, in their ethos, and thus seemingly more open to what Shenstone represents.<sup>27</sup> I will now turn to a summary of the results of searches carried out in 2013 for the terms "Shenstone" and "Leasowes" in three electronic resources: the British Periodicals database, that of the American Antiquarian Society, and that of the Burney Newspaper Collection.<sup>28</sup> Excluding advertisements, I was able to examine seventeen lifetime and 230 posthumous appearances of material by Shenstone, in imitation of Shenstone, about the Leasowes, or about Shenstone's life and works spanning 110 years after the publication of Dodsley's edition, up to 1874 (Table 4.2). These results are of course subject to the limits of optical character recognition software and the periodical coverage of the databases in question, and also exclude any reprintings of Shenstone's works or extracts from them that might have appeared without attribution; thus, the actual number of posthumous references, even within the periodicals included in these databases, would be higher and this can only be considered a sampling.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the size of this sample has allowed some patterns to emerge and suggests some conclusions about the afterlife of William Shenstone as an ongoing stimulus to a form of literary sociability, as well as some of the tensions between such use and the developing institutions of print, especially professional criticism.

One of the patterns suggesting Shenstone's popular appeal is the breadth – social, geographic, and generic – of his penetration of the

Table 4.2 *A survey of periodical references to Shenstone or the Leasowes, 1749–1874.*

Year	Total by time period	Shenstone poem	Shenstone essay	Shenstone poem set to music	Tribute poems	Shenstone imitation	Shenstone anecdote	Shenstone biography or criticism	Antiquarian note on Shenstone
1749–62	17	7			10				
1763 (death)	4				4				
1764 ( <i>Works</i> )	25	11	7		1	1		5 (RD's Preface)	
1765–69	8	3	3 (3x)			2			
1770–74	9	1			5	2	1		
1775–79	8	3			4	1			
1780–84	33	2	3 (2x)	22	3	2		1 (RD's Preface)	
1785–89	13	2 (1x)	2		7 (1 prose piece)	1	1		
1790–94	12	4			4	3		1	
1795–99	12	6	1		2	2	1		
1800–1804	15		3 (3x)		2	1	2	2	5
1805–1809	11	4			2 (1 also antiq.)	1	1		4 (1 also tribute)
1810–14	6		1 (1x)			2			



1815–19	3	2			1 (1 also antiq.)				3 (1 also tribute)
					1 (1 also antiq.)				1 (1 also tribute)
1820–24	7	1			1		4		1
1825–29	8		1 (1x)			1	4	1	1
1830–34	4		2 (1x)		1			1 (1x)	
1835–39	7		4 (3x)		1 (1 also biog.)			2 (1 also tribute)	1
1840–44	5	2	2 (2x)				1 (1x)		
1845–49	3	2						1	
1850–54	11	1	5 (5x)				4	1	
1855–59	5	2 (1x)	3 (3x)						
1860–64	3	1 (1x)						2	
1865–69	11	1 (1x)	1 (x)		1 (founding of Shenstone Tree Society)			2	6 (all in <i>Notes &amp; Queries</i> )
1870–74	7	2 (2x)	5 (5x)						
<b>Total by type</b>		57	43	22	50	19	19	19	22

All individual appearances are noted, including items that may be duplicates of articles published in other periodicals. The “x” denotes an item that is an excerpt only. Items that fall into two categories are recorded in each and cross-referenced. Thus the total number of individual items for each time period may not equal the sum of category totals for that period.

English-reading world. The periodicals in which his work and discussions of it appear range from the highly respectable *Gentleman's Magazine* to the broadly pitched *Weekly Entertainer, or: Agreeable and Instructive Repository*, full of stories, poems, and riddles, to the more specialized *Western Sunday School Visitant & Christian Miscellany*, the *Prisoner's Friend*, and the newly founded *Notes and Queries*. The immediate appearance of excerpts from Dodsley's 1764 edition in the *Scots* magazine, published in Edinburgh but relying heavily on materials from London-based periodicals,<sup>30</sup> no doubt responded to and enhanced Shenstone's popularity in Scotland, where an edition of the *Works* was put out a year after Dodsley's appeared. Other Edinburgh-based magazines featured the poet's works as well as a previously unpublished letter from him to the writer John MacGowan, whom Shenstone had described as his "very good Friend in Scotland."<sup>31</sup> Geographical range is further signaled by appearances in a number of North American publications, such as the *Philadelphia Repertory*, the *Nova-Scotia Magazine*, and *Moore's Rural New-Yorker*. Modes of representation of Shenstone's productions are equally broad, including drawings of the Leasowes or its features, several complete reproductions of the lengthy Shenstone essay "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening," the excerpting of short extracts or handfuls of aphorisms, and in the middle years of the nineteenth century, extended critical treatments. This wide reach across demographic levels, geographical distances, and generic forms suggests at once the attraction of Shenstone for almost any reading audience, the usefulness of his work for extraction and insertion as filler, and the ubiquity of editions from which such work could be lifted (recognizing, of course, that much of this material could also simply be taken from other magazines).<sup>32</sup>

A closer look at poems identified in their titles as tributes to, or imitations of, Shenstone reinforces what this "distant reading" suggests. There are thirty-eight poetic tributes to Shenstone in the magazines, ten of these preceding his death, but the remainder appearing at a steady pace to the 1830s. The tributes are hagiographical in character; fourteen in fact are epitaphs of some sort, partaking of the intense eighteenth-century interest in the form. All draw on the ideas of artless nature, simplicity, and gentleness associated with the persona. Many more specifically invoke a place – the Leasowes, its neighborhood, or other gardens associated in some way with Shenstone – whether in the form of the inscription on an erected monument on an estate or a vision of the poet in his own rural retreat, nurturing the shoot of plebian genius, planting trees for the birds, or singing of his lost love. Reflecting the economic conflicts and the

rejection of worldly values so central to Shenstone's own poetry and letters, more than one speaker is inspired by a resident spirit to abjure ambition and the madding crowd in favor of nature, poverty, and content.<sup>33</sup> In those poems purported to be stimulated by visits to the Leasowes specifically, pilgrims hear laments in the falling waters, see visions of mourning pastoral muses, "and crown what he lov'd with a tear."<sup>34</sup>

Of the nineteen poetic imitations my search revealed, all fall roughly into the first half of the period covered by my overview and all but two are of the very popular *Pastoral Ballad* or some other pastoral poem or elegy, usually lamenting lost love, youth, or opportunity in the voice of a shepherd or shepherdess. Despite the temptations of burlesque to which the pastoral lends itself, with the precedent of prominent eighteenth-century examples like John Gay's *The Shepherd's Week*, Shenstone's pastoral imitators are overwhelmingly sincere – I have found only one poem which turns on the form, and by implication on Shenstone and all his imitators, by having the shepherd announce that he's abandoning the sheep, since after all the tears he's shed, they've never wept for him in return. Clearly, most of these poets identified with Shenstone and sought to enact his esthetic principles of simplicity and sincerity of tone, even where they failed to attain the more elusive goals of musicality and originality which had helped to build his reputation. In this sense, the imitators participated in transforming the embodied coterie of the Leasowes into a "school of Shenstone," founded not on reciprocity or collaboration, but on unidirectional inspiration and a perception of knowing in what the essence of his poetry consisted.

Nor did readers stop here – they also felt an affinity for the man as they understood him, taking the Dodsley preface to heart in its encouragement of biographical reading. Ironically, two of the most prominent themes in tributes to Shenstone distort or even fabricate elements of his character and experience. The first of these is his supposed unhappiness in love, the theme of his "Pastoral Ballad," composed when he was in his late twenties. Probably due to the speaker's stance and Dodsley's assertion that the poem recorded a "[tender impression], which he received in his youth, [that] was with difficulty surmounted," Shenstone came to be described as having died of a broken heart. This belief appeared risible to those who knew him; Montagu, for example, reports to Lyttelton after her meeting with a Marquis de Pesay from France, whose visit to England had included a stay at Hagley, that she has seen "a very pretty copy of verses he made upon Lady Nunehams laughing at his supposing Shenstone dyed for love, her Ladyship thought Mr Shenstone had not the air of a Pastor Fido." But

this did not prevent sympathetic readers such as “Anna,” in “On Reading Shenstone’s Pastorals,” from expressing her pity for “Gentle Shenstone,” at last “gone where all sorrow shall cease,” in the *Monthly Visitor* of June 1800. Nor were lovers deterred from insinuating, as they presented copies of Shenstone’s works to young ladies, the fatal consequences of rejecting the gift and the poet-lover who gave it.<sup>35</sup>

### An “Original Anecdote of Shenstone”: the comforts of economic distress

The second fictional extrapolation from Shenstone’s life seems to have begun with his reputation for benevolence, as asserted again by Dodsley: “Tenderness, indeed, in every sense of the word, was his peculiar characteristic; his friends, his domestics, his poor neighbours, all daily experienced his benevolent turn of mind.” There is evidence of this quality in some of Shenstone’s letters, most notably when he writes to Thomas Hull in 1761 about refusing to prosecute a poor laborer who has stolen fish from his pond to feed his starving wife and five children: the writer describes himself as torn between distress over the cruel way in which the fish were killed, pity for the plight of the thief, defensiveness at being arraigned by “conscientiously-upright Neighbours” for undermining the law, and frustration at the inconvenience and expense of pursuing a conviction, but his overarching conclusion is that the severity of the penal laws would lead to an unjust outcome. Although this letter was not published in Dodsley, first appearing in Hull’s 1778 edition of additional letters, the story or the manuscript letter itself may have circulated widely enough to invite the attachment of an apocryphal anecdote to Shenstone, one that combined his love life and his financial restrictions with his benevolence.<sup>36</sup>

This anonymous “Original Anecdote of Shenstone,” as it is titled upon its first appearance in the *Westminster Magazine* of 1774, is introduced by a letter to the editor which in itself embeds a letter dated “Cambridge, Aug. 27, 1768,” purportedly found “among the papers of a deceased Friend.” At three removes of anonymity from its subject, then, the Cambridge letter begins with a paragraph-long encomium to benevolence: “I am always pleased when I hear of a generous action . . . And certainly, were men to reflect, that benevolence and affection towards their fellow-creatures is the first duty of moral life, the world would be once more restored to the Golden Age. – Do you not guess I am going to say something about your beloved Shenstone? – I know you wish it. Your wishes shall not be disappointed.” Having framed the ensuing anecdote with this

conjunction of benevolence, the pastoral ideal (“Golden Age”), and Shenstone, the letter-writer begins:

Shenstone was one day walking thro’ his romantic retreats, in company with his Delia (her real name was Wilmot); they were going towards the bower which he made sacred to the ashes of Thomson, our harmonious countryman. “Would to Heaven (said Shenstone, pointing to the trees) that Delia could be happy in the midst of these rustic avenues!” He would have gone on, but was interrupted. A person rushed out of a thicket, and presenting a pistol to his breast, demanded his money. Shenstone was surprised, and Delia fainted. “Money, says he, is not worth struggling for. You cannot be poorer than I am, unhappy man, (says he, throwing him his purse) take it, and fly as quick as possible.” That man did so. He threw his pistol into the water, and in a moment disappeared. Shenstone ordered the footboy, who followed behind them, to pursue the robber at a distance, and observe whither he went. In two hours time the boy returned, and informed his master, that he followed him to Hales Owen, where he lived; that he went to the very door of his house, and peeped thro’ the key-hole; that as soon as the man entered, he threw the purse on the ground, and addressing himself to his wife, “Take (says he) the dear bought price of my honesty” – then taking two of his children, one on each knee, he said to them, “I have ruined my soul, to keep you from starving;” and immediately burst into a flood of tears. You know how this tale of distress would affect Shenstone. He enquired after the man’s character, and found that he was a labourer, honest and industrious, but oppressed by want and a numerous family. He went to his house, where the man kneeled down at his feet, and implored mercy. Shenstone carried him home, to assist at the buildings and other improvements which made himself so poor; and I am told, when Shenstone died, that this Labourer wet his grave with the true tears of Gratitude.<sup>37</sup>

The recognizable Shenstone clichés are called upon in the anecdote itself, in the form of the immovable love-object (there is no Miss Wilmot hinted at in the correspondence, only the local parson Dr Pynson Wilmot, whom Shenstone heartily despised), the poet’s impulsive action arising out of his despairing love, his own pecuniary distresses, his mentoring of social inferiors, and the pathos of his death. Thus, its very extravagance of conventions raises red flags about its authenticity, and yet it represents eighteen of the 230 posthumous Shenstone magazine appearances I have analyzed.

E.W. Pitcher, in a 1998 *Notes and Queries* article, was the first to identify this act of forgiveness as attributed to a Parisian counselor of parliament in the 1660s, a M. de Salo, in an account translated into English for a 1721 miscellany and reappearing in *The Entertaining Medley* in 1767. Pitcher also notes that the Parisian anecdote had a parallel magazine life of its own,

concluding, “That no contemporary editor recognized or cared to remark upon its expropriation in the prose and verse tributes to Shenstone seems to underscore the separation which existed in the eighteenth century between popular literature and ‘high art.’”<sup>38</sup> The problem with this reading – of the anecdote as popular literature and Shenstone as belonging to the realm of “high art” – is that there is in fact little difference between the venues in which “Shenstone the Benevolent” and the story as simply a reflection on “the Miseries of Human Life” appear – there is not much to choose, for example, between the *Westminster Magazine* and the *Universal* and *London Magazines* where the anecdote appeared in its original guise. We are seeing, I would suggest rather, a kind of folkloric or popular “Shenstone” who originates in the persona and the esthetic originally crafted by the poet himself and popularized by Dodsley’s posthumous edition but who has taken on a life of his own, simplified and endlessly replicated in print just as an urban legend might be propagated through social media in our own day. It can be argued that this anecdote’s popularity reflects not only attachment to a particular image of Shenstone but also the desire of middle-class British and American readers for comforting images of sentimental connection across the gulf that divided the propertied from the disenfranchised poor in an age of deepening inequality and revolution. But what made this “Shenstone” such a convenient receptacle for such material? Why, when the anonymous Cambridge letter-writer generalizes about benevolence in the Golden Age, should he continue, “Do you not guess I am going to say something about your beloved Shenstone? – I know you wish it”?

In my [previous chapter](#), I noted modesty of scale as one of the most innovative features of Shenstone’s gardening esthetic and a key to his democratization of landscape gardening. I would now add that in this strand of the afterlife of Shenstone as set in motion by Dodsley, his financial distresses become not a shameful consequence of gardening fever, as Gray would have it, but an enhancement of his appeal. Whereas the impoverished gentleman or gentlewoman would traditionally maintain appearances and avoid explicit discussion of financial affairs, and the prosperous professional would despise the amateur who could not make his way in the world, Shenstone’s letters and even his poetry, as we have seen, openly bring economic pressures, and related issues of social hierarchy, into play with the esthetic. There is something refreshing about an eighteenth-century poet who writes, as cited in [Chapter 3](#), “A person may amuse himself almost as cheaply as he pleases.” David Hall Radcliffe has argued that Shenstone’s “Rural

Elegance” ode makes of the Duchess of Somerset’s Percy Lodge “a site for aesthetic commerce” where not only do private improvements contribute to public good by the employment of laborers but also the reader of taste is enabled to participate in the Duchess’s estate through “disinterested contemplation.”<sup>39</sup> In the hands of a laboring class poet such as James Woodhouse, as Sandro Jung has pointed out, such arguments could serve as authorization as well as inspiration for a pastoral that was explicitly not proprietary.<sup>40</sup> In a similar vein, this anecdote recuperates Shenstone’s financial impecuniousness, not simply by his throwing a purse full of money at the man in a gesture of romantic despair but also more politically by his employment of the man “to assist at the buildings and other improvements which made himself so poor.” Conspicuous display at the Leasowes may not have attained the scale of that at Hagley or Percy Lodge, but it redistributed resources and made a significant difference in the local economy.

The complexity of this influence can be illustrated by a citation from Walter Scott’s late-life autobiographical memoir, in which he justifies his decision to become a landowner:

I purchased a small farm of about 100 acres, with the purpose of planting and improving it, . . . and thus an era took place in my life, almost equal to the important one mentioned by the Vicar of Wakefield, when he removed from the Blue-room to the Brown . . . Abbotsford . . . had a stretch of meadow-land along the river, and possessed, in the phrase of the landscape-gardener, considerable capabilities. Above all, the land was my own, like Uncle Toby’s Bowling-green, to do what I would with. It had been, though the gratification was long postponed, an early wish of mine to connect myself with my mother-earth, and prosecute those experiments by which a species of creative power is exercised over the face of nature. I can trace, even to childhood, a pleasure derived from Dodsley’s account of Shenstone’s Leasowes, and I envied the poet much more, for the pleasure of accomplishing the objects detailed in his friend’s sketch of his grounds, than for the possession of pipe, crook, flock, and Phillis to the boot of all.<sup>41</sup>

In recounting his transition to being a man of property – an accomplishment he assures the reader is only enabled by the hard work of novel-writing – Scott carefully aligns himself with beloved literary examples from the eighteenth century of unambitious men completely absorbed in making the most of the restricted landscapes in which their modest spheres of influence have set them. By placing himself in this tradition, Scott disclaims any pretensions to social grandeur; it is possible to “exercise” one’s “creative power . . . over the face of nature” with limited means, and

without losing the endearing modesty of the middle class or lower gentry. And, once again, it is “Dodsley’s account of Shenstone’s Leasowes,” not any personal acquaintance with the poet’s garden or appreciation for his poetry, which arouses this powerful desire in the young boy.

Interestingly, Shenstone still retains a place in gardening history as the creator of, in John Riely’s words, “a modern Arcadia, the model of the ideal landscape for all those whose means did not enable them to garden on the grand scale.”<sup>42</sup> Most recently, Shenstone’s ingenuity in creating a blend of poetic and landscape effects with limited means, as well as his aphoristic “Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening,” served as an important influence for the Scottish concrete poet and landscape gardener Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006) in creating his own garden, Little Sparta, with accompanying works such as his allusively titled *Unconnected Sentences on Gardening*. Shenstone’s modest coterie life in this sense perhaps begins to represent for our culture, drawn to “unplugged” musical performances, “slow food” movements, and “-isms” such as “craftivism” and “locavorism,” a life given meaning and pleasure through attention to its most mundane aspects. In this reception history, however, the mentorship, the collaborative writing and criticism, the use of scribal forms, and the strong sense of place and occasion in the poetry – in short, the specifically eighteenth-century apparatus of the coterie – are obscured as an acknowledged feature of Shenstone’s writerly practice. Although a transmediated form of literary sociability lives on in Shenstone appreciations and imitations, in the representations of him as a beloved poet, as “one of us,” and in the emphasis on themes of friendship, mentoring, and hospitality, the coterie is not “named” as such. Rather, the emphasis is on an increasingly limited set of individually authored works and personal anecdotes, and the community of “Shenstonians” appears to exist entirely in the virtual world of periodical print. In the final section of this chapter, I will consider evidence of the trajectory of the actual Shenstone coterie as it appears in the magazines and as it fights to preserve its center in the face of the Johnsonian tradition.

### Two traditions: criticism and the coterie

Richard Terry has noted the prominence of issues of biography and personality in criticism of Shenstone – the ways in which Shenstone’s life “was rendered, made shapely, so that it could be morally serviceable.” The reception narrative he presents, however, is very different from the one I have been tracing in the magazines. For Terry, Shenstone’s life and



character were “curiously prone to being factitiously shaped, to being dressed up by others, mostly so as to be exemplary of general human frailty or futility.”<sup>43</sup> We have already noted the origins of this narrative, which views the poet’s retirement to the Leasowes as a mistake, as a tragic exemplar of a life spent in futile and insignificant pursuits, finally subject to the depredations of time in both his own early death and in the mutable fate of his garden, in Dodsley’s biographical preface, Gray’s 1769 letter, and Johnson’s 1781 “Life” – to which Terry adds a 1773 Goldsmith essay on the disrepair of the Leasowes and Graves’s 1779 *Columella* and 1788 *Recollections*.<sup>44</sup> While I interpret Graves’s *Recollections* differently, the very existence of the morality tale Terry identifies is important to my argument because it reveals the emergence and growing influence of “critical reading” – the work of professional readers, or critics, whose task it was to identify what was of value in a writer’s work and to place that work in the context of a print-based canon. In other words, there are two traditions of responses to Shenstone, both biographically based, but unlike the appreciative magazine-based tradition which was built upon the efforts of the Dodsleys assisted by members of Shenstone’s coterie, the second might be seen as a meta-tradition fostered by the institution of literary criticism and the canon-building exercise it supported. This meta-tradition can be seen as receiving its most influential statement in Johnson’s “Life of Shenstone,” as we saw at the start of this chapter. While Graves’s witty rebuttal of Johnson in his 1788 *Recollections* was effectively calculated to qualify and question Johnson’s claims, it could not over the long term attain the stature of the “Lives,” with their collective and much-anticipated pronouncements on the relative merits of English poets, issued by the most authoritative print author of the day and underwritten by a consortium of leading London booksellers.

In its immediate context, however, Graves’s spirited defense of his friend was well received, not only by the Montagu coterie and Philip Yorke, second Earl of Hardwicke, who had their own reasons for disputing Johnson (see [Chapter 5](#)), but also by readers unwilling to accept Johnson’s version of their favorite Shenstone. Thus, the decade of late 1781 to 1792 saw seven of the thirteen printed epitaphs I have found, while the stream of tributes to the Leasowes and praise of its recent owners continued unabated. More broadly, the years 1780–1809 show the greatest range and number of Shenstone-related offerings in the magazines since the year of Dodsley’s original publicity blitz for the *Works*. While many of these make no reference to Johnson or Graves, effects of the two representations can be found – for example, in the fact that Dodsley’s biographical preface is

reprinted in December 1781 for the first time (that I have been able to discover) since 1764.<sup>45</sup> The most sustained challenge to Johnson's narrative, however, occurs with the beginning of an antiquarian or scholarly approach to Shenstone, represented by a flurry of items appearing in such periodicals as the *European Magazine*, the *Monthly Visitor*, the *Edinburgh Review*, and especially the *Gentleman's Magazine* at the start of the new century, nearing the fortieth anniversary of the poet's death.

In the first months of 1801, the *European* printed an account, submitted by "A.X.," of "The Origins of Shenstone's Ballad of Jemmy Dawson." In the spring of 1802, the *Monthly Visitor* offered a detailed "Sketch of the Memoirs of William Shenstone, Esq., Embellished with a fine Portrait." Although ostensibly produced by "E." of Islington, the heart of the sketch quotes, with acknowledgment, seven key paragraphs from Johnson, and the remainder is in fact a close paraphrase of the same. With more apparent scholarly legitimacy, an anonymous essay in the December 1804 *Literary Magazine* assesses positively Shenstone's achievement as a landscape designer; in this case, however, while Johnson's "Life" and a few writers on gardening are cited by name, a number of passages from the essay are taken directly from Graves's *Recollections* without any mention of that author or work. The *Monthly Visitor* and the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, in 1803 and 1809 respectively, print hitherto-unpublished letters by Shenstone. Other magazine pieces offer an account of the epitaphs in the Hales-Owen church, including Shenstone's; a detailed report of the current state of the *ferme ornée's* walks, water features, and decorations; and a series of observations and questions about details of the relationship between Shenstone, Johnson, and Gray as indicated by the correspondence record. This interest in Shenstone "remains" on the part of antiquarian contributors to the magazines makes it clear that, at least among educated gentlemen in the rural parishes of England and Scotland, there were many who considered the poet's contribution to the English literary tradition worth preserving.

Of special interest is a burst of exchanges submitted to Mr Urban of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1806, incited by an anonymous travel writer who claims of the Leasowes (and Hagley) that "*too much* has been already said," adding that "the natural timidity of its Fauns and Dryads seems never to have recovered from the shock inflicted by the bitter persecutions of the merciless bailiff"; that the "lowly thatch" of Shenstone's house is long gone; and that the garden inscriptions are little more than a "profuse sprinkling of poetical scraps." This intrepid critic is called to account for his "illiberal observations" by "A Shenstonian," who notes the first writer's dependence

on “Dr. Johnson’s sarcasms” and refers him to pages 72 and 73 of Graves’s *Recollections*, “printed by Dodsley in 1788,” for correction. The Shenstonian promises a further account of the Leasowes in its present state but is followed rather in the next month by “Arcadio,” asking “why should the memory of such a man be in any way traduced?” Arcadio, apparently the same whose tribute to Shenstone had been published more than forty years earlier in Volume Two of the 1764 *Works*, presents his own credentials – “I assure you, Mr. Urban, I have seldom met with any of his acquaintance (and many I have conversed with in the shades of his favourite Leasowes,) but have dropt the tear of sympathy, at the bare mention of his wonted benevolence and friendship” – and concludes with lines he wrote at the Leasowes.<sup>46</sup>

Again in December 1811, David Parkes, an antiquarian schoolmaster born near Shenstone’s home village who had contributed an addendum to the above-mentioned 1803 article on Halesowen epitaphs, submits to Mr Urban drawings of the birthplaces of Shenstone and William Wycherley, prompting “A.F.” to write early in the new year with gratitude “that there is a semblance of [the birthplace of my favourite Shenstone] preserved” and a request that Mr Parkes or someone else would provide a view of the Leasowes at about the time of the poet’s death. This correspondent continues:

Modest and worthy Shenstone! I knew him well. Amiable in his manners, willing to communicate, he was the friend of merit and the fosterer of genius. I well remember when a youth, that I showed him some Verses I had written on the Leasowes, which, although they have little to recommend them, I will introduce, to show the willingness he had to assist a rhyming adventurer, and likewise the facility with which he wrote. With a pencil he immediately annexed the eight last lines, and returned me the verses.

There follows a short poem, “Verses written at The Leasowes, May 19, 1759,” incidentally containing what, if authentic, would likely be the last previously unprinted Shenstone piece to surface for the next century.<sup>47</sup> Parkes at last complied with A.F.’s request in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of August 1823, accompanying it with yet another citation of Graves to refute Johnson, and with an anecdote about the decoration of one of the rooms. The diligent Mr Parkes also contributed, in April 1815, an epitaph to the memory of Shenstone composed by Thomas Hull and enclosed in a letter to John Scott Hylton, another member of the coterie.

The 1806–23 exchanges in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* are of interest for their blend of antiquarian motivation and coterie spirit. In this latter

respect, they differ from the more vaguely biographical and imitative magazine *Shenstoniana* I have reviewed above – these writers are clearly motivated by the belief that they are the vestiges of a once physically embodied, if now scattered and dissolving, network centered around Shenstone at the Leasowes. As such, they understand it as their social responsibility to defend the poet’s reputation and preserve the memory of the *ferme ornée*, even if it now exists only in prints and drawings (Graves, the longest lived of the initial members, had died in 1804, but Thomas Hull submitted a poem lamenting the garden’s neglect in 1823).

The perceived need for such efforts implies that Shenstone was beginning to recede into the author-centered narrative of literary history – and concomitantly, that he was increasingly judged on his authorial merits in isolation, still connected to the Leasowes, to be sure, but not first among equals as originator and mentor of a productive literary coterie. As contemporary memory faded and the taste for “nature,” “simplicity,” and retired melancholy that Shenstone himself had helped initiate became paramount, the shift to an institutionalized literary criticism aligned with “Romantic” values in poetry became complete. The hegemony of the literary critic is nicely illustrated by an 1836 report in *The Analyst* on Shenstone’s marginalia in his 1733 edition of Prior’s poems, contributed as a sample of the kind of “data” needed in order to “judge of the talents, the taste, the intellectual cultivation and acquirements of men eminent in their generation” and to move beyond “fulsome eulogies” or “bitter and harsh declamations” calculated “to gratify and tickle the whimsical and capricious palate of a false public taste.” Criticism’s adherence to Romantic values is equally well represented by a lengthy critical assessment by H.T. Tuckerman, published in *Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, a Philadelphia publication, in 1849. For Tuckerman, it is “a singular evidence of the mutations of taste to compare [Shenstone’s] effusions with the order of poetry now in vogue.” The reader need only “note how tamely the changes are rung on Damons, Melissas, Philomels and Cynthias” in Shenstone’s pastorals, in comparison to the work of Wordsworth, Byron, and Tennyson, to “feel, by the force of contrast, what a glorious revolution has taken place in English poetry.” Despite contemporaries’ admiration of him as the “great magician” whose “powerful incantations, magic verse” are “inscrib’d on every tree, alcove, or urn,” Shenstone now represents, in both his writing and his landscape gardening, “the artificiality of his day”; indeed, as a votary of taste rather than “creative power,” Shenstone not only betrays his inner poverty but thereby represents the state of “decline” of his literary epoch. The professional

framework through which Tuckerman makes these evaluations is again revealed by his concluding concession that, because “the mass of people need to be refined, to acquire more delicate standards of judgment and to educate the perceptions,” “the amateur [like Shenstone] has his place in the social economy.”<sup>48</sup>

In short, what had once been the height of elegance and of life as art was now the epitome of convention and cliché, and Shenstone came to represent, within the specialized landscape of literary criticism, not an innovative democratization of elite literary values and coterie practices, but rather “men of the virtuoso class” who, “by surrounding themselves with quaint, beautiful and curious memorials . . . seek to reflect instead of embodying their finest instincts.” While an 1854 review of a new edition of Shenstone’s poems could still recommend the reading of this “minor minstrel” for his “homely simplicity and gentle grace,” and the occasional critic could still acknowledge Shenstone’s “exquisite ear for melody, and . . . wondrous acquaintance with the pastoral poetry of the ancients,” Johnson’s increasing elevation as a towering critical authority diminished those voices that contended with his, obscuring the very real divergence of views of Shenstone in the preceding decades. Indeed, the last-cited critic, Edward Jesse, expresses his dismay at the “severe wound [inflicted] on the reputation of Shenstone by Dr. Johnson, capturing at once the necessity and the hopelessness of reparation by concluding his 1862 piece with the assertion that “whoever shall attempt to roll back the stone of prejudice which Dr. Johnson contrived to place at the entrance to the Leasowes, will be a real benefactor to the present age.”<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, the material reality of Dodsley’s edition continued to command attention even in the mid-nineteenth century. The Tuckerman essay from which I quote above opens with the recent purchase of an old book, “illustrated with a portrait and frontispiece representing some kind of aquatic bird peering up from among the reeds, by the side of a little waterfall. There is an eulogistic preface by Dodsley, several pages of tributary verse, and a map of the bard’s rural paradise. The care bestowed upon the work, indicates the estimation in which Shenstone was held by his contemporaries.” For all his lack of appreciation for the poet and his certainty of a subsequent glorious revolution in poetry, and despite his inability to identify the bird on the coat of arms, thereby missing the symbolism of Shenstone’s kingfisher, the critic is at least driven to reflect on a “mutation of taste” that just momentarily hints at the transience of his own. One might invoke here Acland’s observation, cited in my introduction, about “the tenacity of existing

technologies . . . [and] their related materials and practices.” Ironically, the Dodsley firm’s printed celebration of Shenstone and his coterie continues to generate response, mediating the gap in comprehension opened up by print’s own tendency to reinforce normative esthetic values and authoritative critical voices.

Recently, a revival of interest in manuscript records and scribal modes of literary circulation has begun to bring Shenstone into view once again. Interest in the ballad revival fuelled by Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* has incidentally highlighted how centrally Shenstone and his esthetic judgments were involved in the preparation of that watershed publication. Work on the manuscript poetry collections of Shenstone is reacquainting literary historians with an artist whose accomplishments encompass not only poetry and gardening but also watercolor painting and bookmaking. At the same time, fuller histories of the eighteenth-century book trade, such as James Tierney’s edition of Robert Dodsley’s correspondence, together with unprecedented digital access to facsimiles of original, ephemeral print materials such as magazines, make it possible to trace how a poet’s persona might have been disseminated far beyond the confines of his immediate circle through a collaboration with print. The sum of these reconsiderations can make more comprehensible to us William Shenstone’s contemporaries’ and immediate successors’ perception of him as an innovative and original arbiter of taste, popularizing or pointing the way toward the period’s democratic, naturalistic, and Romantic turns in poetry, landscaping gardening, and collecting. Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this study, we can now appreciate more fully how interdependent the workings of a scribal coterie and the printing press might have been in managing a poet’s reception in late eighteenth-century Britain despite the growing power of culturally authoritative print institutions like literary criticism and canon construction. My [next chapter](#) will re-consider the question of a coterie member’s afterlife from a more personal and passionate perspective, examining the skirmish that pitted Elizabeth Montagu and her allies against Samuel Johnson over the question of whether a man’s character belonged to his coterie or to the public.

*“This new species of mischief”  
Montagu, Johnson, and the quarrel over character*

But to be serious, upon what seems to me the most serious things in human life, the character a Man enjoys and the example he transmits. I look upon the toleration, and indeed encouragement given to Calumny to be one of the worst symptoms of the declining virtue of the age. When I was young (it is a great while ago) character was considered as a serious thing; to attack it was thought the greatest outrage of an enemy; to receive any damage in it, the greatest of injuries, and the worst of misfortunes. Now no one seems interested for his own character or for that of his Friend, & indeed the daily libel has levelled all distinctions. But for want of Attick salt the Libel of Monday, is become too stale for Tuesdays use, & these Calumniators, like the flesh fly, live but a day, & they have only tainted what they have prey'd upon. Indeed if it shall become a fashion for Men of Witt and of distinguish'd situations, to leave behind them malicious libels on their Cotemporaries, this new species of mischief will be more serious and important. (Elizabeth Montagu, [1776])<sup>1</sup>

As I hinted in the conclusion of [Chapter 2](#), the 1770s might be seen as a turning point in the coterie life of Elizabeth Montagu and her closest associates, now widely known for their assemblies in Vesey's and Montagu's London houses. With the deaths of the Earl of Bath in 1764 and of George, Lord Lyttelton in 1773, the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie (of which Vesey had become a central member in the 1760s as well) shifted from a mixed-gender core group to a more feminocentric one. In Bath, Montagu lost above all an intimate friend; in Lyttelton, Montagu suggests to Vesey, she lost someone who had been essential to the construction of her identity and cultural place:

He was my Instructor & my friend, the Guide of my studies, ye corrector of ye result of them. I judged of What I read, & of what I wrote by his opinions. I was always ye wiser & the better for every hour of his conversation. He made my house a school of virtue to young people, & a place of delight to the learned. I provided the dinner, but his conversation made ye

feast. If any young man of genius appeared he encouraged him, praised him, produced him with advantage to the World. I have lost my consequence in Society with him, but you my dear friend will love me still.<sup>2</sup>

Lyttelton's death evokes a strikingly elegiac tone in relation to the coterie itself; almost a year later, Vesey speaks of it in similar terms, as a thing of the past – “you & I my Dear friend were acquainted with the great Lights of the last Age they are all now (I think) extinct” – to which Montagu replies, “You are more than necessary to me, you are all I have left of our incomparable, our excellent Lord Lyttelton. In you I retrieve a thousand graces that distinguish Lord Bath, Your mind gives me back their image, not one feature of their character was lost with you.”<sup>3</sup>

Montagu's formulation, which makes Vesey the ideal receptacle, interpreter, and mirror of the characters of Lyttelton and Bath, anticipates the sharp tensions around the notion of character that would arise almost ten years later with the publication of Samuel Johnson's 1781 “Life of Lyttelton.” This chapter will begin by looking at the detached and commodified public representations of Montagu and her circle that circulated in the aftermath of the coterie period that ended with the death of Lyttelton. While often laudatory, I will show how these representations can be related to a broader pattern of attacks on the coterie model of literary production – particularly on the coterie's control of circulation and its claim to guarantee the truth and quality of its members' productions. Before discussing the most notorious attacks, those of Samuel Johnson in his *Lives of the Poets*, I will suggest further background to this quarrel in the evolving relationship between Montagu and Johnson through the 1760s and 1770s, and in the shared response of Montagu and Philip Yorke, now the second Earl of Hardwicke, to the posthumous publication of the Earl of Chesterfield's manuscript character sketches. Sören Hammerschmidt has claimed that “wherever character was discussed and analyzed” in the eighteenth century, “it arose within the interstices between the media forms that gave it legibility and currency. In other words, the formulation of character always occurred in the contact zones where opinions and arguments in their mediated forms (oral or written, visual or textual, manuscript or print) encountered each other.”<sup>4</sup> This chapter's argument will show that it was indeed around the idea of character – its preservation, formulation, transmission, and use – that the differences between media regimes could become sharply apparent. From this perspective, I will reconsider the disagreement between Johnson on the one hand and Montagu, Hardwicke, Richard Graves, and



their allies on the other as about something much more than what Boswell reports as the "feeble, though shrill outcry" of "prejudice and resentment."<sup>5</sup>

### Montagu and her friends after the coterie

An onlooker might have been forgiven for dismissing Montagu's and Vesey's 1773–74 laments for the end of their ascendancy as mere effusions of grief. If anything, Montagu's cultural power continued to expand its reach. For example, in the summer punctuated by Lyttelton's death, her determined quest to obtain a government pension for the Scottish poet and philosopher James Beattie finally reached fruition. From about 1770, when Montagu received word from Scotland of Beattie's published attack, in his *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism*, on David Hume's skeptical philosophy, Montagu had stimulated and coordinated the efforts of bishops, government ministers, and university dons to serve the relatively unknown Scot. She secured the publication of his poem *The Minstrel* (book one was published in 1771) and the awarding of a pension from the King and a doctorate of laws from Oxford in 1773.<sup>6</sup> In the "Advertisement" to his 1776 *Essays*, a financial success for which Montagu had diligently recruited subscribers, Beattie describes the project in terms that celebrate his patron's cultural power almost as much as his own favor with the elite. He notes that his "Friends" promised him to conduct the entire project outside of the world of commercial exchange, without recourse to booksellers, advertisements, or solicitation; rather, they have succeeded by simply inviting subscriptions from the "many persons of worth and fortune, who wish for such an opportunity, as this will afford them, to testify their approbation of [him] and [his] writings."<sup>7</sup>

Montagu's cultural ascendancy was sustained by a secure social and economic position as through her husband Edward she became the ever-wealthier owner of vast land estates and coalmines in the north of England. Before Edward Montagu's death in 1775, she was already very involved in the management that enhanced the value of the couple's properties, though she had only limited ability to embark on major expenditures; as a widow, she had sole control of significant possessions and annual income. Elizabeth Eger has argued that Montagu's material manifestation of her wealth, particularly through her houses in Hill Street – where she created a chinoiserie dressing room in the early 1750s and engaged the leading architects James Stuart and Robert Adam for a major redecoration of the

reception areas in the 1760s – and then in Portman Square, the mansion she built after the death of her husband, embodied “virtuous magnificence” as “monuments to [the ephemeral culture of] bluestocking philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> Her contemporaries commented frequently on the striking displays of grandeur, the patronage of every branch of the arts, and the gathering of leading talents of Britain and the Continent which combined to create the brilliance of Montagu’s assemblies. With the move to Portman Square in 1781, these assemblies took on a distinctly larger, more formal, and somewhat impersonal scale: they became even more public, and publicly remarked, than before.

Reflecting this role of cultural leadership, Montagu, Carter, and Vesey – the women of the now-dissolved coterie – were experiencing a flowering of public recognition and adulation in the 1770s. In 1770, for example, “a Lady” submitted to *The Gentleman’s Magazine* “A Plan for an unexceptionable Female Coterie” that would be presided over by Montagu, with the assistance of Carter and Chapone. In 1773, Montagu reports to Carter that

a Writer in one of ye Magazines, says ye honour of a Doctors Degree had been more properly conferred on Mrs Eliz Carter & Mrs Montagu, than on a Parcel of Lords, Knights, & Squires, who are unletterd, to Mrs Macaulay Miss Aikin & some others he would bestow a Master of Arts of degree. I ought to have been ashamed to have *been named in a day* with Mrs Carter, but I will confess, I am always delighted with this enourmous flattery. I hope my pleasure does not entirely arise from vanity, but partly from tenderness, which feels inexpressible satisfaction in whatever seems to unite us.

And in 1774, Mary Scott’s *The Female Advocate: A Poem* celebrates Montagu’s “Genius, Learning, . . . [and] Worth,” not merely for her critical essay on Shakespeare, but for her “nobler Fame” of being “Still prone to soften at another’s woe,/Still fond to bless, still ready to bestow.”<sup>9</sup>

There is, nevertheless, an important distinction to be drawn between the group-building and mutual encouragement functions of the poetry produced by the intimate coterie – poems like Carter’s “To Mrs. [Montagu]” and Lyttelton’s “The Vision” discussed in [Chapter 2](#) – and the manifestations of celebrity represented by the “Plan for an unexceptionable Female Coterie” or the imaginary conferral of doctorates. The contrast can be illustrated with a comparison between a publication of the early 1770s – the poem “To the Naiad of Tunbridge Well” – and the *Ladies New and Polite Pocket-Memorandum Book for 1778*, published by Joseph Johnson, with its frontispiece engraving of the “Nine Living Muses of Great Britain”

(Figure 5.1). "To the Naiad," published in the *St. James's Chronicle* dated June 26, 1771, and signed R.M., expresses the hope that Montagu, "justly celebrated for her most ingenious and manly Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear," will find her health re-established by her stay at the resort. It presents itself as an extension of more select modes of sociability, offering the public a glimpse of the coterie and launching a flurry of speculation among its members about who among their close acquaintances might be its author (Stillingfleet and Garrick are suggested). Even *The Female Advocate*, although its author seems to have been unknown to the women she celebrates, maintains the holistic, "embodied" approach of the coterie, presenting the accomplishments of female authors as a sign of a complete, knowable, and admirable character, if only that of a conventionally feminine ideal. The often-discussed engraving of the "Nine Living Muses," on the other hand, makes no attempt to create a sense of intimate access to an embodied group. That the features of Montagu, Carter, and the other figures were indistinguishable even to the engraving's subjects (see below) reflects the fact that Richard Samuel, painter of the original behind the engraving, was unknown to them and did not paint from the life. Moreover, the women represented moved in very different circles from one another and in several cases were not mutually well-disposed.

It is tempting to posit a link between this shift from coterie-centered to print-generated fame and concurrent developments in the print trade. The year 1774 saw the landmark *Donaldson v. Becket* decision definitively abolishing perpetual copyright and opening up the print market to reprint publication. And just after the time when Beattie's "Advertisement" to his *Essays* was describing his subscription publication as the product of word of mouth and pen, neither "committed to booksellers, nor made public by advertisements," there appeared the first volumes of John Bell's *Poets of Great Britain*, followed closely by the rival *Works of the English Poets* for which Johnson wrote his biographical and critical prefaces of 1779–81, events Margaret Ezell has described as definitively establishing "all the mechanisms for the presentation of bulk literature to a consuming public." Such highly commercialized publications promised writing that had been authorized by the best judges; they offered entertainment and utility, and thereby participation in national literary culture, to a broadly inclusive audience. There is no denying that the decade also saw an upswing in sheer numbers of print publications, as Michael Suarez has shown in his bibliometric overview of publishing patterns for the century: even though Suarez's category of "literature, classics and belles-lettres" retains a stable



Figure 5.1 Fashion plate and foldout plate of *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain*, after Richard Samuel, in *The Ladies New and Polite Pocket Memorandum-Book for 1778*.

share of total published titles over the century, that stable share represents a net increase.<sup>10</sup>

My study does not claim, however, that the literary coterie was a significant cultural force by virtue of numerical dominance of literary production. Rather, representation and perception were the wellsprings of its influence. From this perspective, for the coterie centered on Montagu, the 1770s and 1780s could be described as a new period of conflict as the balance of representation shifted: in consigning its fame to the medium of print, the coterie gained broader exposure but lost control over its image. To put it in terms of the "Nine Living Muses" in the *Ladies New and Polite Pocket-Memorandum Book*, on the one hand, as Montagu writes, "it is charming to think how our praises will ride about the World in every bodies pocket. Unless we could all be put into a popular ballad, set to a favourite old English tune, I do not see how we could become more universally celebrated"; on the other, as Carter replies, "to say truth, by the mere testimony of my own eyes, I cannot very exactly tell which is you, and which is I, and which is any body else." In Eger's formulation, consumers were being offered not a handful of individualized characters but an icon, a public representation of feminine achievement that "illustrated the power of Britain as Europe's most highly cultured, proto-imperial power" – a representation to which they could show their allegiance by purchasing a pocket memorandum book.<sup>11</sup>

Paradoxically, both Carter and Montagu seem to have with some self-consciousness ceded control of their public images, at the moment of their greatest influence, by repudiating literary production and publication and increasingly identifying themselves with their patronal and charitable achievements. Guest has examined in detail Carter's "retirement from publishing, and from social visibility, in the mid-1770s";<sup>12</sup> similarly, Montagu articulates to Carter her decision to cease authorship despite all conditions being favorable to further publication:

My health continues admirably good & my eyes are getting better & if I could hope on any subject to say what had not been said before or to say it better I should feel great impatience to set about some work, but beyond my private amusement I have little motive to any undertaking. I often think the World will grow wiser in regard to the affair of Reading, & that such as do read will confine themselves to a few original authors, & not continue to trifle away their lives over the frivolités of their Cotemporaries . . . At present I think my great delight is making rice milk, & rice puddings, & cheap broth. The poor in this Neighborhood [*sic*] are in a state of wretchedness not to be described.<sup>13</sup>

While this decision can be attributed to the personal factors already cited – the death of Lyttelton, Montagu’s increased responsibilities as landowner and coal magnate leading up to and after the death of her husband, her own advancing age (she turned sixty in 1778), and her embarking on the role of hostess on an enlarged scale in Portman Square – it had implications for representations of the cultural significance of her circle, which began at times to display the conventions of anti-aristocratic and misogynist satire. An icon, after all, is an exchangeable symbol, which can be commodified and deployed far beyond the original’s control: in this case, as an ideal of feminized patriotism and refined sociability, or as a derogatory cliché of lascivious tête-à-têtes or silly and quarrelsome pretentiousness.

As a backdrop to specific representations of Montagu’s circle, a series of late 1770s attacks on manuscript exchange as a social phenomenon suggests that at least some print authors felt threatened by its continued cultural power. Often these attacks reflect coterie publication’s relatively recent role as a form of satirical opposition discourse by associating it with the circulation of scandal manuscripts. In Frances Brooke’s 1777 novel *The Excursion*, for example, the representative target is a female writer of scandal, Lady Blast, but the critique is not a specifically gendered one – rather, the narrative portrays the power wielded by what it calls “a certain set” of wealthy, urbanized aristocrats, through the promiscuous circulation and publication in scandal magazines of authorless manuscript narratives designed to destroy the social reputations of unsuspecting individuals. The narrator seeks to persuade the consumers of print to boycott such publications: “It is in your power alone to restrain the growing evil, to turn the envenomed dart from the worthy breast. Cease to read, and the evil dies of itself: cease to purchase, and the venal calumniator will drop his useless pen.” The very urgency of the address affirms the extent to which the periodical press has allowed itself to depend on such copy and readers have become addicted to the voyeuristic thrill of glimpsing manuscript material supposedly meant for restricted circulation. A similar representation is that of the scandal club created by Richard Sheridan in his 1778 comedy *The School for Scandal*, whose “circulate[d] . . . Report[s],” especially when they reach the published papers, are the boasted cause of multiple broken matches, disinherited sons, “forced Elopements,” “close confinements,” “separate maintenances,” and divorces. Within the confines of the play, the club is ultimately exposed and rendered impotent, but the persistent power of coterie scandal writing is affirmed by a framing prologue that mocks the “Young Bard” who “think[s] that He/Can Stop *the full Spring-tide* of Calumny.”<sup>14</sup>

Immediately following Brooke's and Sheridan's works, Frances Burney composed a sharp satire of a literary coterie in her play *The Witlings*, written and then suppressed in 1779. In *The Witlings*, a coterie circle called the "Esprit Club," whose leader Lady Smatter in several respects resembles the Elizabeth Montagu, is less a source of scandal writing than a group with false pretensions to literary production and to leadership in critical taste. The Club plays coy games of scribal circulation – "if you'll promise not to take a Copy, I think I'll venture to trust you with the manuscript, – but you must be sure not to shew it a single Soul" – but is in fact lost in a wilderness of print, struggling to maintain some semblance of originality and authority in a literary field dominated by the poetic reputations of Pope, Swift, and Gay. Thus, the amateur poet Dabler laments, "I shall grow more and more sick of Books every Day, for I can never look into any, but I'm sure of popping upon something of my own." Lady Smatter is ultimately defeated by the threat of the character Censor to propagate a libel against her by printing it. This unthreatening characterization of the coterie is belied, however, not only by the severity of the ridicule but also by Burney's acquiescence in her advisors' decision that the play ought to be suppressed. Even in the late 1770s, it seems, authors fighting for commercial success had to remain alert to the cultural power wielded by the coterie.<sup>15</sup>

One might view these satiric attacks as cheap shots aimed at a weakened and anachronistic target, but I would suggest that in their focus on the control of fame and on power over audiences they rather demonstrate the challenge that commercial authors could experience from the activity of such circles. With the emergence of interconnected groups like the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie in the late 1750s, the patronage power of such coteries may have appeared stronger than ever before, as demonstrated by the example of Beattie above, and paralleled by the support this group marshaled through letter-writing and word-of-mouth for such authors as Sarah Fielding, Anna Williams, James Woodhouse, Hannah More, and Ann Yearsley. Coming to the negative attention of these networked coteries could also have formidable consequences, as I have argued elsewhere in the case of novelist, translator, and critic Charlotte Lennox. This potential threat, focused around the cultural capital of one's public reputation, provides a suggestive backdrop to conflicts Montagu was increasingly engaged in regarding the ownership of public "character," however content she might insist she was to imagine her "praises . . . rid[ing] about the World in every bodies pocket."<sup>16</sup> Specifically, do an individual's image and reputation rightfully belong to her or his coterie, whose responsibility it is both to represent and defend them, or are they the

property of an enquiring public, and therefore in effect fair game for the commercial print trade? This conflict of literary and media value systems came to a head in the confrontation of two culturally powerful individuals, Elizabeth Montagu and Samuel Johnson, over the latter's 1781 "Life of Lyttelton."

### Johnson and the coterie once more

Burney's representation of the "Esprit Party" in *The Witlings*, had it been performed in 1779, would have presented for the public's entertainment a picture of the world of coterie authorship and criticism as a feminized and impotent one. This, in fact, is very much the representation of the coterie author implicit – and often not-so-implicit – in Samuel Johnson's biographical and critical prefaces to the English poets, commonly known as the *Lives of the Poets*, which he was composing in tandem with Burney's drafting of her play. The Johnson of the *Lives*, of course, was no longer the relatively unestablished newcomer of the failed *Rambler* patronage campaign of the early 1750s (see Chapter 2). The period of the *Rambler* was followed closely by the completion of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* and its author's critique of the Earl of Chesterfield as patron. In his much later account of Johnson's famous letter to Chesterfield of 1755, Boswell reports William Warburton as conveying a compliment to Johnson "for his *manly* behaviour in rejecting these condescensions of Lord Chesterfield, and for resenting the treatment he had received from him, with a *proper spirit*." If to be manly, in the eyes of Johnson's author-peers, was to defend one's dignity and independence in the face of an aristocratic patron, the efforts of would-be female patrons, even when fronted by a one-time colleague such as Elizabeth Carter, would have posed an even greater threat to that manly autonomy.<sup>17</sup>

That such gendered terms are prominent in an account transmitted some thirty-five years later illustrates how embodied coterie forms of patronage shared by Chesterfield, Carter, and Talbot – speaking and writing letters to endorse an author's character and work – were increasingly feminized over the course of Johnson's career, while his own writing was seen as articulating an emerging professionalism of the print-based author that came to be figured as "manly." I draw here on the argument of Linda Zionkowski, in *Men's Work: Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Poetry, 1660–1784*, that Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* epitomize the decades-long emergence of a newly feminized model of the poet:



Johnson's assertions about the kind of labour that poetry entails, the cultural status of poets, and the poets' relation to audiences culminate in a professional identity for poets that fundamentally conflicted with the conduct of writers whose rank or gender proscribed engagement in commercial literary culture. In this way, the *Lives* offers an aesthetic complementary to the workings of the marketplace – an aesthetic that devalues other modes of literary production, circulation, and reception by representing them as appropriate only to amateurs – that is aristocrats and women.

Although Zionkowski does not explicitly reference the print trade or a coterie model of authorship here, her study as a whole traces a widening distinction between the two. Thus, it is instructive to consider the relationship between Montagu and Johnson as they interacted in an increasing number of dimensions, as patron and patronage broker, respectively, as mutually valued hostess and guest, as rival authors, and as critics of one another's work.<sup>18</sup>

The implicit terms of Johnson's acceptance of Montagu were that they be figured as equals presiding over literary cultures, however interpenetrating, that were centered in different media and different models of sociability. Johnson's surviving letters to Montagu, dated from 1759 to 1778, show his acknowledgment of her role as patron – respectful, formally worded letters right from the start of their acquaintance recommend to her notice not only such women as the blind poet Anna Williams and "Mrs. Ogle, who kept the Musik room in Soho Square, a woman who struggles with great industry for the support of eight children," but also the bankrupt bookseller Thomas Davies. Johnson further acknowledges Montagu's exemplary fulfillment of the role; on behalf of Williams, for example, he returns "her humble thanks for your favour, which was conferred with all the grace that Elegance can add to Beneficence." He also shows his appreciation for her as hostess and salonnière, combining his request for assistance to Davies with a mock-scolding: "Could You think that I missed the honour of being at your table for any slight reason? But You have too many to miss any one of us, and I am proud to be remembered at last." Not only does Johnson willingly play the part of entertaining guest at the great lady's table, but he is content to represent himself as a pale imitation of the conversational excellence of Montagu, who provides all things as a partner in dialog; as he tells Hester Thrale: "conversing with her You may *find variety in one*."<sup>19</sup>

The situation becomes more complicated, however, when Johnson must acknowledge Montagu's engagement as a literary critic and an author. Unlike his letters addressed to Montagu, which emphasize her benevolence

and gracious hospitality, his correspondence and conversation about her can be more ambiguous in tone, suggesting that she shares the patron's fault of desiring to prove herself the intellectual equal of the authors she hosts. Thus, her dislike of *Evelina* is a result of her "Vanity," which "always upsets a Lady's Judgement." Boswell, in turn, reports Johnson taking on Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, and the narrator himself in maintaining that Montagu's 1769 *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* "does *her* honour, but . . . would do nobody else honour" and contains "not one sentence of true criticism." This rhetorical demarcation of Montagu as admirable female patron and hostess from Montagu as inferior intellectual and author is perhaps most explicitly articulated in the well-known exchange, recorded by Boswell, in which Johnson praises Elizabeth Carter, Hannah More, and Frances Burney as women in a class apart: "Three such women are not to be found: I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all." When offered the name of Montagu for inclusion in the group, Johnson replies, "Sir, Mrs. Montagu does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montagu is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning." Boswell consistently sets up discussions of Montagu's conversation and benevolence by means of a critical comment which elicits opposing praise from Johnson; by contrast, he leads off with praise of Montagu's intellectual work in order to have it qualified or denied by Johnson. In this way Boswell amplifies a distinction between his subject's critical disdain for Montagu's intellect and his praise of her verbal skills and philanthropy. While not every statement involves explicitly gendered language, Boswell's strategies throughout are congruent with the above-noted description of Johnson's letter to Chesterfield as "manly," suggesting that the biographer subscribes to a gendered coloring of the organizational binary that separates the sphere of patronage and amateur, manuscript-based authorship from the public sphere of print professionalism.<sup>20</sup>

This interpretive framework organizes Boswell's description of the response of Montagu and her friends to Johnson's "Life of Lyttelton." The passage illustrates how gender-associated terms can be used to imply the narrow-mindedness and inferiority of a coterie literary culture in contrast to one that appeals to a broad-based print readership:

While the world in general was filled with admiration of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, there were narrow circles in which prejudice and resentment were

fostered, and from which attacks of different sorts issued against him. . . . his expressing with a dignified freedom what he really thought of George, Lord Lyttelton, gave offence to some friends of that nobleman, and particularly produced a declaration of war against him from Mrs. Montagu, the ingenious Essayist on Shakespeare, between whom and his Lordship a commerce of reciprocal compliments had long been carried on . . . These minute inconveniencies gave not the least disturbance to Johnson. He nobly said, when I talked to him of the feeble, though shrill outcry which had been raised, "Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely; let them show where they think me wrong."<sup>21</sup>

Boswell's binary between a feminized sphere of patronage and a manly sphere of professional writing may be heavy-handed, but its terms were becoming general and virtually naturalized in the latter part of the eighteenth century, as indicated by James Barry's fifth mural in his 1777–83 series *The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*, entitled "The Distribution of Premiums in the Society of Arts" (Figure 5.2). The painting features Montagu and Johnson as central actors but, significantly, they are not engaging one another directly. Rather, Montagu, as one of the Society's patrons, presents the prize-winning work of a young girl to the late Duchess of Northumberland and the Earl of Percy. Behind her back, Johnson, in the role of "great master of morality," as Barry terms it, is pointing out Montagu's function as patron to the young Duchesses of Devonshire and Rutland, who are presumably being invited to follow this example. In Isobel Grundy's view, this tableau is a representation of Johnson "patronizing the females of the patronizing classes." I agree that he is indeed depicted as "relating . . . himself to a just-developing tradition of women patronizing women," but the master moralist is speaking from a space outside the social sphere of patronage. Barry elaborates on his "reverence for [Johnson's] consistent, manly and well-spent life" in that, despite his having been "so long a writer, in such a town as London," he assists and furthers the careers of "all his competitors of worth and ability." In other words, Barry's Johnson is a disinterested observer and supporter of the transactions of patronage from his own position as a professional located squarely within the competitive commercial sphere. Johnson, then, was both source and instrument of a gendering process whereby his intellectual powers, authorial achievements, and moral stature in the combative professional realm were balanced against the sociable and charitable accomplishments of women such as Montagu in an ideally non-competitive social world.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 5.2 James Barry, “The Distribution of Premiums in the Society of Arts,” from *A Series of Etchings by James Barry, Esq. from his . . . Paintings in the Great Room of the Society of Arts* (1792). Montagu is just left of center, holding up a draped piece of cloth fabric, with Johnson just to the right at the rear, raising a pointing finger.

This gendering helped to entrench a growing divide between a professionalized print culture and an amateur culture of coterie exchange, obscuring how the latter engaged with the larger public through its own modes of production. But it should not be assumed that women of letters acquiesced in the division of literary culture along these lines. Montagu felt qualified to set her *Essay on Shakespear* alongside Johnson’s edition – at least, once she had determined that her project would be distinguished from his by her focus on generic questions and on a more particular examination of the plays, especially the histories. And even earlier, in 1763, she writes to Lord Bath, after what seems to have been her first tête-à-tête evening with Johnson:

he came early & staid late, so I had much of his conversation, He has a great deal of witt & humour, but the pride of knowledge & the fastidiousness of

witt make him hard to please in books, so that he seems to take pleasure in few authors, for which I pity him. I believe he is not hard to please in conversation, for I hear he expresses himself delighted with the evening he pass'd here, & some of my friends tell me that since Polyphemus was in love there has not been so glorious a conquest as I have made over Mr johnson. He has many virtues, & witt & learning enough to make a dozen agreeable companions, but a pride of talents always hurts & pains me. I do not love to see people use what God has given them as a light to shew the imperfect nature & defective compositions of man . . . <sup>23</sup>

In short, Montagu does not accept Johnson's combatively critical perspective toward authors and their productions as objective commentary; rather, she interprets it as a moral flaw.

### Elizabeth Montagu's concept of character

Like many of her contemporaries, Elizabeth Montagu was an avid reader of the character genre. While still a young woman seeking to secure her place socially and intellectually, she made enthusiastic use of such writings. She did so in precisely the manner intended by the popular seventeenth-century writers of Theophrastan character collections and by memoirists such as the Earl of Clarendon, who developed the art of combining the broad movements of history with sketches of the principal traits of its leading actors. As a newly married woman of twenty-five, for example, she sends to her wealthy patron, the Duchess of Portland, a "Character of the Lady of one of the Antient Earls of Westmorland; written by her Husband." Montagu writes of the lady, "who methinks I see sitting at the upper End of a long table, with the fortification of a Ruff & farthingale," that the Duchess "will rather honour her example than pittie her life." Conversely, three years earlier, Elizabeth had sent her friend a satiric portrait of the late Duchess of Marlborough reportedly composed by Pope (presumably the Atossa lines from *Epistle to a Lady* making the rounds at the time, which Mary Capell copied into her poetry book as well). Although she classifies the portrait as "Entertainment," Elizabeth reflects that "it may seem cruel to reflect on ye memory of ye Dead, but such great offenders should be made examples of Terror to those whom an unbounded prosperity lets lose [*sic*] to their own wills." In 1750, Montagu writes to another friend about the memoirs of the Queen of Sweden that she has been reading: "her character was so extraordinary I had the curiosity to read them, but the historian is a bad writer as to stile, method, & facts . . . It is rather the History of a Savante than a queen, for the writer less

regards her Political & Regal character than her litterary one.” Finally, in 1752, having embarked on an ambitious reading program guided by new associates such as her husband, Lyttelton, and West, Montagu sends a message to the latter:

I have sent you the Archbishop [Tillotson’s] life, I suppose you know that Mr Birch himself [the author] left it for you. I have read it thro’, & am charm’d with ye character, I hope it will make you read his sermons with greater pleasure, for I did not use to think you did intire justice to them. I never read of any Person for whom I had a higher veneration than this Prelate, he was truly a christian, . . . but you will find envy & malice pursued him thro life, & they say calumny & detraction gave him his deaths wound, therein I blame him.<sup>24</sup>

The character of the Tudor lady clearly represents one that the Duchess of Portland and Montagu herself, as young women charged with the governance of large and prominent households, know they must live up to; for all the facetiousness of tone, it serves a monitory and comparative function. Pope’s satiric portrait of the late Duchess is an “example of Terror,” perhaps, but a useful example for precisely that reason. “No fortune or State,” Montagu concludes, “can disfranchise a Person from the Duties of Society.” Montagu’s dislike of the memoirs of the Queen of Sweden is at once that of an experienced critical reader noting a failure to meet genre expectations and that of a female reader fascinated with the case of a woman of extraordinary power. And she knows exactly how to read the character of Archbishop Tillotson as a model both of true Christianity and over-sensitivity to the world’s opinion that cuts across gender lines.

One further pattern is important to my current argument: Montagu’s response as reader is inversely proportional to the selectivity of the sphere within which the character-piece circulates. She is most satisfied with the pieces that originate in an authoritative source – the subject’s husband, a great satirist, or an expert antiquarian – and to which she gains access through private means – whether contained by a sheet of paper enclosed in a letter or obtained directly from the author, as a pre-publication copy from the press. Indeed, in the case of the Pope satire, she cautions that secrecy must be maintained: “I must desire ye Dss & you will keep ye verses merely for yr own Entertainment for such are ye terms on which I obtaind them.” The character of the Queen of Sweden, encountered in a trade publication, proves a case of imperfect communication – what the reader desires is something other than what the hack author provides, and so she “cannot greatly recommend” the work. For Montagu, in other words, the

character genre is inherently social, functioning best in a context of limited and selective circulation. It is a coterie form.

The very notion of "genre" at work here is a social one; in the influential formulation of rhetorician Carolyn Miller, genre is "social action." While Miller's emphasis is on the speaker, her insights can usefully be applied also to the reader as receiver and transmitter of a genre; thus Montagu's confident deployment of the character arises out of "social motive," as a product of her own sense of place and aspiration. The genre, in turn, "acquires meaning from [the] situation and from the social context in which that situation arose," including, in this case, the rules of coterie exchange. Miller argues that studying rhetorical genres therefore reveals more about a cultural or historical period than about an individual rhetor or text. She goes further, citing Kenneth Burke, to suggest that in an age of instability, "typical [generic] patterns are not widely shared," resulting in a "liquid" state of motives within and between individuals for the use of various discursive forms. This, I will suggest, was the fate of the character genre in the 1770s and 1780s.<sup>25</sup>

Montagu in the late 1740s and early 1750s knew very well what a character was, enjoyed and circulated examples for the entertainment and edification of her friends, and saw herself as enough of an expert to pronounce confident critical judgments on various attempts in the form. Yet twenty-four years later, in 1776, we find her writing indignantly to her friend Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, in the letter quoted as this chapter's epigraph, about the character genre as "this new species of mischief." In this case she is referring specifically to the characters written by the late Lord Chesterfield – short, witty sketches of the great men and women whom he had come to know intimately during his life as courtier and politician. The phrase echoes the famous locution of Samuel Richardson and the supporters of Henry Fielding – "this new species of writing" – as they promoted their mid-century innovations in prose fiction. What is for Montagu suddenly so new – and mischievous, apparently – about the character genre?

Several influential critical studies of the last decade have noted the multiple and shifting senses of the term "character" in precisely this period. Foremost among these, Deidre Lynch's study of *The Economy of Character* in the eighteenth century has focused on the development of a novelistic notion of character that ultimately privileges individuality and deep interiority. On the way to this literary sense of the term, Lynch emphasizes the complex, punning amalgam of ideas of the physical mark, or legible sign, and of distinguishing traits invoked by the term "character" in the early

decades of the century. For Lynch, an increasingly “typographical culture” focused on the exigency that readers of signs – whether imprinted on a page or in a face – be able to interpret character with accuracy, first, as a guide to an increasingly commercial society and then as a means of distinguishing themselves as sophisticated consumers. Lisa Freeman, in *Character’s Theatre*, contests Lynch’s claim that a model of unified, interiorized character was the dominant compensatory response to changing socio-economic conditions, emphasizing rather the drama’s explicit embrace of character as multiple, disjunct, and often put on at will, if not downright hypocritical.<sup>26</sup>

Taking into account Lynch’s emphasis on character as a series of marks to be interpreted, as well as Freeman’s insistence that it was above all a construct and a performance, I wish also to ground my understanding of character in the eighteenth century in a broader, mediation-inflected notion of genre. This is because, as I have already noted, Montagu’s fundamentally social response to the character genre seems to be determined above all by issues of source, circulation, access, control, and readership. In this my approach resembles that of Hammerschmidt, cited at the start of this chapter, who argues that “wherever character was formulated and analyzed, it always emerged as an interface between media forms and their users that foregrounded its materiality and mediality.” Hammerschmidt’s emphasis on the inherent intermediality and social embeddedness of the process of character formulation in the familiar letter genre, requiring the participation of both writer and reader (and bookseller, in the case of Pope’s letters), applies equally to the conviction of Montagu and members of her networks that the meaning of a written character could not be understood without consideration of the context of its production and circulation.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, eighteenth-century usages of the term “character” provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* retain a strong flavor of materiality, emphasizing a mark or symbol or code and thereby doubly invoking not only the public typography of a print culture but also the secretive markings of clandestine or selectively circulated writings. Furthermore, both literal and emerging figurative senses are intimately tied up with the notion of character’s circulation as some kind of “text,” whether oral or written. Thus, the genre of the character, as “[t]he sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual . . . viewed as a homogeneous whole” (first record of use 1660) becomes “moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed; . . . character worth speaking of” (first exemplified in the eighteenth century), “an estimate . . . ; reputation,” and



a "description, delineation, or detailed report." All these senses, emergent in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, invoke the idea of a public formulation that can be packaged for transmission or transmediation. In the correspondence of Montagu and her circle, we can trace their experience of this shift in the notion of character – from a distinguishing possession to a media phenomenon that was displayed, spoken of, and passed around – as an effect of an increasingly print-based mode of publicity, one which offered wider dissemination and potential influence but conversely an ever-decreasing control of access and interpretation. In tandem with the shift in Montagu's relation to print publicity noted at the start of this chapter, her response to the use of print to disseminate character, over time, moved through cautious engagement, to embrace and even delight, to disillusionment and repudiation. This experience ultimately exemplifies how a shift of media balance can fundamentally alter the social meaning and function of a genre.

At the time that the young Montagu was privately circulating the characters of aristocratic ladies and archbishops, Elizabeth Carter was engaged in a character-transmission project of her own – the 1758 translation of the works of the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus discussed in [Chapter 2](#). Although the translation began as a coterie discussion of the relation between stoicism and practical Christianity, print dissemination ultimately emerged as the means of most fully achieving the project's goal of capturing stoic philosophy in a plainspoken style that would reach out to a broad audience. By "preserving [Epictetus'] genuine air and character," what Thomas Secker described as "his own homely garb," it was hoped that the translation would draw in "Many persons . . . who scorn to look into the Bible," including "Fine gentlemen," "fine ladies," "critics," and "Shaftsburian Heathens," and thereby "be more attended to and felt, and consequently give more pleasure, as well as do more good, than any thing sprucer."<sup>28</sup> By broadcasting the character and ideas of Epictetus, Carter was of course simultaneously establishing her own public character for learning and virtue, which in turn led Montagu to seek out her friendship. Urging Carter to publish her poems in 1762, as we saw in [Chapter 2](#), Montagu in turn emphasized the moral good that would be achieved through the widespread dissemination of Carter's character – through "the pious, virtuous sentiments that breathe in all [her] verses," the "proofs of genius," and the "wit [that] is [her] own." The efficacy of this strategic use of print is demonstrated in 1771 when Montagu writes to Carter that she will transmit her friend's advice to her protégé Beattie, adding, "Your authority will go far, for he has a proper esteem & Admiration of your character.

We often talkd of you. He wishd much to have seen you. I shewd him your Portrait and even that was a gratification to him.” Thus Montagu, in the days of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie, was not averse to the establishment of a carefully controlled public character that might not only be morally influential for readers of print but could also redound to the credit of the author herself. Her views are tested and modified in the late 1770s and 1780s, however, through the posthumous manuscript circulation and print publication of Lord Chesterfield’s characters, and then the high-profile commercial publication of Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the English Poets*.<sup>29</sup>

### Montagu, Hardwicke, and the threat to character

Montagu was proud of Carter’s demonstration that women could have characters that were, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s terms, “strongly developed or strikingly displayed; . . . worth speaking of,” giving the lie to Pope’s dismissive dictum that they were made of “matter too soft a lasting mark to bear.”<sup>30</sup> The cultural influence of the leading Bluestocking women was undoubtedly broadened through the circulation of such print materials as Carter’s *Poems*, Montagu’s *Essay*, and perhaps even Scott’s *The Female Advocate* and the print of Samuel’s “Nine Living Muses of Great Britain.” As this chapter’s earlier discussion of changing representations of Montagu’s circle specifically, and of coterie sociability in general, has shown, however, when circulated far from its original meaning-making context, the social action performed by a character representation could become various and unstable. Thus, as Montagu grew older, she became increasingly concerned about the circulation of characters: who produced them, and by what means and to whom they were made available. This was much more than a preoccupation with her own reputation, or even with feminine propriety. In fact, her most fully developed discussion of these issues is with Lord Hardwicke, and it focuses on the circulation of the characters of prominent men who were close to them both.<sup>31</sup>

The interlocutor here is significant: as outlined in [Chapter 1](#) of this study, the second Earl of Hardwicke had begun adulthood at the center of a high-profile literary coterie, and throughout his long life, which he devoted primarily to historical and literary pursuits, demonstrated a deeply coterie sensibility.<sup>32</sup> This orientation was not entirely inward-looking: he energetically furthered the preservation of manuscript documents for the public good. Thus, much of his correspondence of the late 1770s and early 1780s details his efforts to obtain the papers of deceased statesmen for the newly founded British Museum, his private publication

and distribution of collections of correspondence and state papers, his adjudication of the claims of various individuals requesting access to the papers held in the Museum, and his private printing and distribution of a new, hundred-copy edition of the *Athenian Letters* in 1781. In Hardwicke's view, the public good merged seamlessly with the protection of his father's reputation, a role he had taken on even before the 1770s. Shortly after the first Earl's death in 1764, his son seems to have submitted a letter signed "Verax" to *The Public Advertiser* challenging the author of a recent "bulky Performance" on the libel law for going out of his way to "introduce *his* character of a very great Person, who is but lately dead, & whose Memory will ever be dear, not only to all that knew him personally, but to all honest & good Men of whatever Denomination." Jemima Grey's correspondence of 1766 reveals her serving as proxy, through Catherine Talbot, in approaching Archbishop Secker to in turn use his influence with the bookseller John Rivington to obtain changes to a life of the first Earl, published in the *Biographia Britannica*, that her husband found "very Unhandsome & Improper." He has this matter, she writes, "seriously at heart," and indeed the Hardwicke correspondence of that summer records extensive negotiations to have the biography altered to the family's liking.<sup>33</sup>

Montagu and Hardwicke were contemporaries in age, and passing references in her correspondence suggest reasonably frequent contact, with even more of a social friendship developing in the later 1770s. Moreover, there was considerable overlap in persons who had been highly influential in the lives of both. Yorke had revered his father, the first Earl and longtime Lord Chancellor, whom Montagu in turn admired as a "steady star" necessary to the health of the state. Lyttelton was a peripheral associate of the Yorke-Grey circle from the late 1740s, as noted in previous chapters, and entertained Philip and Jemima at Hagley in August 1763. As the first earl was dying later that fall, Lyttelton wrote to Montagu, "If I lose him I shall lose not only a dear and honored Friend, but the surest Guide of my Steps through the dark paths of that unpleasing political Labyrinth which lies before me."<sup>34</sup> Despite periods of political disfavor, William Pulteney, Lord Bath had also been an associate of the Hardwicke family until his death. The fates of the characters of these three deceased men became the subject of Montagu and Hardwicke's shared concern. According to Lyttelton's biographer, Hardwicke wrote to the late Lord Lyttelton's brother William shortly after the appearance of the posthumous *Works* in 1774, expressing dismay at the edition's falling short of his hopes for

his friend's memory. Then in late 1776, prompted by news of a set of manuscript characters left in Chesterfield's papers, Hardwicke sent Montagu a list of them, marking those he had read and praising some, but focusing on those of his father as "very imperfect, and . . . dashed with some unjust Strokes of Satire" and of Lord Bath as "an unfair and severe One."<sup>35</sup>

Montagu's letter of response contains the passage that serves as epigraph to this chapter, an extended reflection on what she describes as "[one of] the most serious things in human life, the character a Man enjoys and the example he transmits." Opening the discussion by declaring that this is "a subject in which [she is] interested, both as it respects a particular Friend, and the general interests of humanity," she condemns the practice of circulating characters as discrete works, decontextualized from a full biography against which the attribution of qualities can be tested:

It has long been usual with Historians, after relating the actions of a Mans life, to draw up his character; even in that case, there is room for partiality, the Writer may present us with a flattering resemblance, or a Caracatura, but still the Portrait must be formed on the features of the original, and something of the result of the whole in the general air must be rendered; but in these unconnected, independent Pieces there may be the most unfair, and unjust, and unlike representation, and if the next generation should be as much more idle and lazy than the present, as the present is than that which preceded it, posterity will take its opinions of their Predecessors chiefly from these little works.

As would soon be the case with the undistinguishable features of the "Nine Living Muses" print in the 1778 *Ladies New and Polite Pocket-Memorandum Book*, the character genre, when detached from a meaningful social and textual context through fragmentation, indiscriminate circulation, or historical distance, becomes a travesty.

Of course, Montagu herself enjoyed reading such fragmentary character sketches earlier in her life, as my examples have shown, and Chesterfield's characters continued in that vein. Montagu's reference to increasingly "idle and lazy" generations, however, suggests that she views this phenomenon of genre and mediation as a recently emerged ethical issue for both authors and readers. She goes on to make this explicit:

I look upon the toleration, and indeed encouragement given to Calumny to be one of the worst symptoms of the declining virtue of the age. When I was young (it is a great while ago) character was considered as a serious thing; to attack it was thought the greatest outrage of an enemy; to receive any

damage in it, the greatest of injuries, and the worst of misfortunes. Now no one seems interested for his own character or for that of his Friend, and indeed the daily libel has levelled all distinctions.

The "daily libel" – in other words, that propagated by newspapers – at least disappears from readers' minds "for want of attick salt" – thus "the Libel of Monday, is become too stale for Tuesdays use, and these Calumniators, like the flesh fly, live but a day." The real threat is when persons of wit and elevated social standing such as Chesterfield invest their talents and authority in the genre without ensuring that access remains restricted, thereby enabling the damage done by indiscriminate circulation: "Indeed," Montagu concludes, "if it shall become a fashion for Men of Witt and of distinguish'd situations, to leave behind them malicious libels on their Contemporaries, this new species of mischief will be more serious and important."<sup>36</sup> What Montagu is describing, overall, is a crisis of the character genre as social action, an "instability of motives" (to return to Burke's phrase) which has produced an abuse of the genre by creators and by the heirs and booksellers who transmediate their creations into print.

Montagu's first impulse at such abuse of character is to shut down circulation altogether. Thus, later in the same series of letters, when Hardwicke has sent her a manuscript transcription of the character of his father, she returns it with the avowal: "Mrs Montagu presents her most respectfull compliments to Lord Hardwicke, & assures him, she has never communicated the character to any one, but kept it under lock & key till she could send it by a safe hand, or have an opportunity of delivering it into his Lordships. She wd not venture to send it by her Servants, or had returnd [it] immediately." She declares that this example "renders [her] more than ever averse to this species of writing."<sup>37</sup> Montagu and Hardwicke concur that the character of a great man (or woman) is for the perusal of a highly restricted audience; only those who have had knowledge of the original or who know how to obtain that knowledge can judge the validity of the copy. In the new media regime of print journalism, the genre had better disappear altogether rather than risk indiscriminate circulation and a travesty of its established functions of exemplification and entertainment for the knowing few. In this, Montagu and Hardwicke in fact pre-empted the novelists and playwrights who in a few years would condemn elite coterie writers who allowed their calumnies to be transmitted to the scandal-papers.

Coterie values and Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*

The stage is now set for a consideration of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* as provoking a confrontation between the coterie ideal of character as properly for the "interested" – in other words, as the property of a man and his immediate circle – and the print-based view of character as a public artifact, at once a valuable commodity in the commercial trade and a fit object of observation and judgment for any reader, contemporary or succeeding, who might take an interest in it. In the [previous chapter](#), I discussed the response of Richard Graves, member of William Shenstone's coterie, to Johnson's "Life of Shenstone." Here, I will focus particularly on Montagu's response to Samuel Johnson's "Life of Lyttelton" as representative of the position of a number of individuals invested in the coterie I have been discussing in this study. Montagu again received this life from Hardwicke, in the form of an advance copy, in early 1781. In his cover note, Hardwicke announces, "A more unfair and uncandid account I never read, *and he* (the Dr. [Johnson]), deserves to be severely chastised for it." Hardwicke's assessment of Johnson's motive for "attacking" Lyttelton is that "the man's head is turned from the pay of booksellers, and the puffs of some literary circles." The unmistakable implication that status distinction has been violated is typical of the recorded responses of close adherents of Montagu and Lyttelton, as is Hardwicke's declaration that "Ld L – tons character I will support to the last."<sup>38</sup>

Subsequent readers schooled in the modes of a print literary tradition, particularly in valuing "objective" criticism, have puzzled over the strength of the reaction against the "Life," which Reginald Blunt described in 1923 as "short and by no means scathing." It is helpful to consider Martine Brownley's contextualization of Johnson's *Lives* in relation to the tradition of the character genre, wherein they are a departure for their representation of idiosyncratic, mixed characters, and for their interest in what we would consider psychological depth. In her formulation, Johnson "evolves a form in the *Lives* uniquely suited to convey his own beliefs about human character," including "his lifelong recognition of the contradictions and complexities of men." This notion is in keeping with the model of the self as intricate and individualized that Lynch has identified as increasingly prominent in the latter years of the century, but it is inimical to the investment of Montagu's circle in an older model of character as a "homogeneous [and exemplary] whole." Given the values of the literary coterie, by which literary production cannot be disentangled from the social relations within which it is embedded, and whereby the general

advancement of the group and its members is sought, such print exposure of "contradictions and complexities" was perceived not as objective analysis but rather as petty or even cruel calumny, perpetrated by a coward on a man who could no longer defend himself. That the principal flash point was Johnson's use of the condescending phrase "poor Lyttelton" to describe his subject's humility of address toward the reviewers of his *Dialogues of the Dead* could not be a surprise given the kind of cultural authority wielded and prized by such coterie leaders as Montagu, Hardwicke, and in his day, Lyttelton. The issue is epitomized by William Weller Pepys, defender of Lyttelton against Johnson; he reports to Montagu after the two men's confrontation at Streatham Park that Johnson at one point "observ'd that it was the *duty* of a Biographer to state all the *Failings* of a Respectable Character," at which point Pepys "never long'd to do anything so much as to assume his [Johnson's] Principle, & to go into a *Detail* which I cou'd suppose *his* Biographer might in some future time think necessary." As a gentleman, it is implied, he desisted – just as Johnson would have done had he respected the proprieties of literary sociability.<sup>39</sup>

On the front line for the Montagu party, then, was Pepys (later Sir William), a man of learning and conversation thirty-one years Lyttelton's junior, who had nevertheless become his friend in the 1760s and happened to be at Hagley at the time of its owner's sudden fatal illness in 1773. It was through Lyttelton that Pepys had become acquainted with Montagu, and Lyttelton on his deathbed asked Pepys to inform her of his death. During the 1770s, Pepys and Montagu became correspondents and regular visitors; in her letters to him we at times see a return of the sparkling wit to which she rose in writing to Bath and Lyttelton in the days of that coterie. Pepys felt personally the slight to Lyttelton; he writes to Montagu of his frustration "not that Johnson shou'd go unpunish'd, but that our dear & respectable Friend shou'd go down to Posterity with that artful & studied Contempt thrown upon his character which He so little deserv'd," and that "a Man Who (notwithstanding the little Foibles he might have) was in my Opinion One of the most exalted Patterns of Virtue, Liberality, and Benevolence, not to mention the high Rank which He held in Literature, shou'd be handed down to succeeding Generations under the Appellation of *poor Lyttelton!*"<sup>40</sup> Also a frequent guest at Streatham during this time of Johnson's intimate friendship with its proprietors the Thrales, Pepys was challenged by Johnson to an after-dinner debate which, according to Frances Burney's account in her journal, began over dinner and lasted to tea-time, when Hester Thrale insisted it stop. In Burney's

narrative, the quarrel is carried out as though it were a duel of honor. Johnson cries, “I understand you are offended by my *Life of Lord Lyttelton*, what is it you have to say against it? come forth, Man! Here am I! ready to answer any charge you can bring,” while Pepys is praised for “utter[ing] all that belonged merely to himself with modesty, & all that more immediately related to Lord Lyttelton with spirit.”<sup>41</sup>

But this was only the most dramatic of the Montagu-connected defenses. Robert Potter, a clergyman and translator who was chronically in need of financial support and whom Montagu was assisting at this time with a couple of publishing projects, produced an essay entitled *An Inquiry into Some Passages in Johnson's Lives*, which in a measured tone critiqued Johnson for the “spirit of detraction diffused so universally through these volumes” before focusing on the author’s uninformed and insensitive criticism of lyric poetry in particular. Although Reginald Blunt has argued that Montagu has been unfairly represented as the one who “led the attack” on Johnson, Potter in this case certainly discussed the projected work with his patron, writing in December 1782:

Were [Dr. Johnson] content to be only dull in himself, one might bear with him; but he is the cause also that dullness is in other men, through the undeserved reverence which the public has long been taught to pay to his dictates; nay, what is worse, with a gigantic insolence he pulls down established characters, and suffers no fame to live within his baleful influence.

He later reports, “It is a singular pleasure to me to find that my little publication is so well received; I must think the better of the Public, a sensation agreeable enough, for favouring an attempt to vindicate the injured reputation of persons who were ornaments to their country: I have done an act of justice, I have obliged some persons whom I wish to oblige, I have gratified my own mind, which is the finest thing in the world, and, what weights with me more than all this, I am honoured with your approbation.” And according to his biographer Clarence Tracy, Richard Graves was “spurred into action” by Montagu, in defense of Shenstone against Johnson’s biography of that poet, to write his 1788 *Recollections* (see [Chapter 4](#)).<sup>42</sup>

While Montagu declares to Pepys, in reply to his initial report of the encounter, that “tho I am angry with Dr. Johnson I would be angry and sin not,” and that she has therefore attempted to delay publication of a multi-authored personal satire against the man until after his death, the experience clearly left a deep impression. She returns in her correspondence to



Johnson's approach to biography again and again. Still in 1781, speaking to Pepys of her nephew and adopted heir, she hopes, "May he be worthy of the esteem of such as Mr. Pepys, and the envy, and the malice, and the railing, of such wretches as Dr. Johnson, who bear in their hearts the secret hatred of hypocrites to genuine virtue, and the contempt of Pedants for real genius." She writes to Vesey in the next year, "Pray have you read Dr Wartons 2d Vol on ye Writings &c of Pope, The depth of judgment & learning ye candor of his Observations make this work ye most perfect contraste of johnsons criticism that can be imagined. The Muses guided ye pen of Dr Warton ye furies ye porcupine quill of Johnson." In these comments she consistently interprets Johnson as actuated by personal spite rather than manly truth-telling, as Boswell would have it, or financial gain, as Hardwicke suggested. In a final statement, written upon the occasion of Johnson's death three years later, Montagu returns once more to the same theme: "The news will inform you that Living Poets need not fear Dr. Johnson should write their memoirs after they are no longer able to refute Calumny. I hear he dyed with great piety and resignation; and indeed he had many virtues, and perhaps, ill health and narrow circumstances gave him a peevish censorious turn."<sup>43</sup>

It seems, then, that Johnson's "Life of Lyttelton" came as the culmination of a sequence of events in which Elizabeth Montagu was led to reconsider the use of print to make character public. The problem was not only idle and lazy readers but authors motivated variously by malice, if they were "of distinguish'd situations," and by "envy" or "the pay of booksellers," if they were of more humble rank. All were quick to be exploited by an undistinguishing press ready to "[give] Encouragement . . . to Calumny." In turning away from print as a suitable medium in which to preserve and disseminate character, Montagu was not able to quench the thirst of readers for access to the foibles and contradictions of prominent men and women or the willingness of publishers to provide lives, memoirs, and recollections – as the market in biographical accounts of Johnson himself was soon to demonstrate. But rather than simply instigating the "feeble, . . . shrill outcry" of a "narrow circle[ ] in which prejudice and resentment were fostered," she was deliberately aligning herself with other cultural figures of her day in what they perceived as an ethical, if futile, stand against a commercial print industry only too happy to exploit character to suit degraded tastes. Montagu was an active player in a high-stakes game of media choice and control. Not only that, she was astutely commenting on the instability of a system of literary values undergoing rapid, media-accelerated change.

While we, imbued with beliefs in an unrestricted printing press and in objective criticism, may find distasteful the notion of limiting access to the characters of the elite, for Montagu, whose literary values had been formed in the context of the coterie, it was “a subject in which [she was] interested, both as it respect[ed] a particular Friend, and the general interests of humanity.”<sup>44</sup> Montagu’s concerns over the practice of the character genre, then, bring into sharp focus the questions of status, authority, privacy, audience, access, and even the meaning of a life that swirled around media interface in her time – and continue to do so today.

*Transmediations*  
*Marketing the coterie traveler*

But at KESWICK, you will, on one side of the lake, see a rich and beautiful landskip of cultivated fields, rising to the eye in fine inequalities, with noble groves of oak, happily dispersed; and climbing the adjacent hills, shade above shade, in the most various and picturesque forms. On the opposite shore, you will find rocks and cliffs of stupendous height, hanging broken over the lake in horrible grandeur, some of them a thousand feet high, the woods climbing up their steep and shaggy sides, where mortal foot never yet approached. On these dreadful heights the eagles build their nests: A variety of waterfalls are seen pouring from their summits, and tumbling in vast sheets from rock to rock in rude and terrible magnificence: While on all sides of this immense amphitheatre the lofty mountains rise round, piercing the clouds in shapes as spiry and fantastic, as the very rocks of *Dovedale*.  
(John Brown, [1755])<sup>1</sup>

The mountains, the rocky precipices, the woods and the waters, appeared in various striking situations every mile I travelled on, and formed the most astonishing points of view. Sometimes I was above the clouds, and then crept to enchanting vallies below. Here glins were seen, that looked as if the mountains had been rent asunder, to form the amazing scenes: and there, forests and falling streams covered the sides of the hills. Rivers in many places, in the most beautiful cascades, were tumbling along; and cataracts from the tops of mountains came roaring down . . . From hence (the top of a mountain) I saw several black subjacent clouds big with thunder, and the lightning within them rolled backwards and forwards, like shining bodies of the brightest lustre. One of them went off in the grandest horrors through the vale below, . . .  
(Thomas Amory, 1756)<sup>2</sup>

Chapter 5 examined a form of writing – the genre of the character – around which distinctions sharpened in the late 1770s and early 1780s between the values and allegiances of the literary coterie, on the one hand, and the commercial print trade – with its increasingly professionalized model of authorship and its insistence on “objective” criticism – on the other.

If Johnson's "Life of Lyttelton" represented for Elizabeth Montagu and Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, as former centers of scribal coteries, all that was undesirable in the commodification of literature, the episode also underscored the marketability of copy related to elite circles. In this respect, the quarrel over the posthumous assessment of George Lyttelton's authorial achievements offers a condensed and simplified version of the more tangled and extended debate, outlined in [Chapter 4](#), about the authority of the coterie in relation to that of the appreciative periodical reader or the critic when it came to interpreting Shenstone and his art. But if debates over poetic legacies highlighted differences between media systems, a media-oriented study of the developing genre of domestic travel writing in the second half of the eighteenth century tells quite a different story.

From the mid-1740s to the 1760s, Philip Yorke, Jemima Grey, George Lyttelton, and Elizabeth Montagu wrote lengthy epistolary descriptions of visits to the east coast and the north of England, to Wales and Scotland, and to country estates and related sites throughout the British countryside. At a time when the wealthy and well-connected Grey could playfully boast from Yarmouth to her friend Catherine Talbot that she had now, at the ripe age of twenty-seven, seen the sea for the first time, travel primarily for the sake of observation, with the end goals of pleasure and self-improvement, was still largely the privilege of the leisured male.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the exclusivity of such experiences, accounts of them tended to be produced as set-pieces to be hand-copied, perhaps with minor adaptations geared to different recipients, for reading and circulation in manuscript form among coterie members and even beyond a coterie's confines. The manuscript plan and description of William Shenstone's circuit walk at the Leasowes discussed earlier illustrates the sort of materials that often made their way into the print medium; because of the ongoing association of domestic travel with the landed elites, particularly gentlemen, they carried with them the marks of their coterie origins as guarantees of authenticity and authority.

This chapter will trace the movement of several influential domestic travel texts from script to print, but it will also demonstrate how this story of intermediation is much more than a one-way flow with print as its destination: works originating in the print medium in fact contributed to spur on the coterie traveler-writer and to whet the print reader's appetite for the productions of the coterie. The epigraphs of this chapter offer an example. For readers of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature, the locutions of the picturesque and the tour of the Lakes are

easily recognizable in them, yet they were produced in 1753 and 1756, respectively, fifteen years before William Gilpin's first articulation of the picturesque esthetic and at least two decades before the institutionalization of domestic tourism to the English Lake District in the late 1770s. The first traveler, the Reverend John Brown, is addressing a private letter, available only in manuscript form until 1767, to George, Lord Lyttelton. The second speaker, John Bunclè, Esquire, is a mere fiction, the eponymous hero of a novel whose first part was published anonymously in 1756. Thus, despite their parallel and prescient-sounding invocations of the clichés of the Lakes tour, these texts would at best appear to have been on the margins of what John Brewer has described as the "literary phenomenon" of domestic tourism, "stimulated by travel books and guides, by personal accounts of travels and by verses evoking the beauties of the British countryside."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Brown's private letter and Bunclè's rhapsodic narration set in motion media events that at once stimulated and competed with each other to produce the idea of "the Lakes."

Although the widespread popularity of the Lake District tour in the final decades of the eighteenth century is well recognized, publications associated with the tour have long been examined primarily for their expression of the picturesque esthetic and their influence on the writing of Wordsworth and other so-called Lake Poets.<sup>5</sup> Recent writers such as Brewer, Barbara Korte, and Zoë Kinsley have also identified in the eighteenth-century discourse of British domestic tourism a unifying drive to examine "the present state of the nation" and to establish and celebrate a national identity, however uncertain and multifarious its foundations.<sup>6</sup> Critical analyses of writings associated with the Lakes in particular have further noted tensions between an esthetic ideal and the forces of commodification, democratization, and modernization.<sup>7</sup> However, while all of these studies have necessarily depended on the textual record to examine the historical and ideological significance of domestic tourism, little attention has been focused on the medium itself – that is, on the trajectory of the domestic tour's emergence as a popular and lucrative print commodity.

Brewer's account does note what generally goes unremarked: the role of the London-based print trade in creating the tour of the nation's most farflung regions. He describes the majority of travel books published between 1700 and 1770 as "typical Grub Street products, inaccurate works of pastiche that shamelessly plagiarized one another, cobbled together by aspiring writers who had yet to move from penury to fame." At the same time, he observes that "the guides, feeding off one another, gained weight and gravity as a genre" sometime around the 1770s.<sup>8</sup>

My discussion will show that rather than operating as a closed system of medium and genre that somehow authorized itself, the coalescence of a culturally prestigious discourse of domestic tourism in the 1770s was a phenomenon of intermediation, the collaborative product of both manuscript and popular print cultures. Thus, I will focus less on the substance of the Lakes discourse than on the modes of its circulation, its practitioners, and the way it was represented by those practitioners – in correspondence, published paratexts, and reviews. I will trace how popularly oriented and initially somewhat suspect print products invoked, absorbed, and exploited a coexistent body of coterie writings. In turn, the latter persisted through and shaped the newer modes of the print marketplace, ultimately elevating the prestige of the genre of domestic travel writing and, in the process, determining the cultural meanings of domestic travel. As in the [previous chapter](#), the period of the 1770s and 1780s will prove crucial to this recalibration.

My argument here will illustrate once again the premise of this study that, in the words of David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, no medium is pure or static but is rather “touched by and in turn touch[ing] its neighbors and rivals” and that, therefore, “medium-specific perspectives may limit our understanding of the ways in which media interact, shift and collude with one another.” And again, this argument rests on evidence that coterie cultivating the exchange of literary manuscripts in the mid-eighteenth century were in fact highly visible to their contemporaries. While previous chapters have made clear the central participation of women in the creation and conduct of some of the century’s most prominent literary coterie, and while I will show some of these same women to be involved in manuscript travel writing, the scribal activity discussed in this chapter centers on men: landowning gentlemen primarily, but also university-educated men of gentry or middling status who were part of these gentlemen’s clientage networks as tutors, secretaries, and recipients of livings. This is because the sorts of cultural influence I trace here originate in the elite education, university connections, geographical mobility, and leisure traditionally associated with males of the landowning class. As Susan Lamb has written of the Grand Tour, a gendered tradition was imaginatively dominant in the eighteenth-century literary travel account: “While the tourist population itself was mixed, the Traveller was male.”<sup>9</sup>

To illustrate the interpenetration of print and scribal traditions throughout this period, I will frame my discussion with the publishing history of Daniel Defoe’s *A Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain*,

a remarkably long-lived enterprise originating in 1724 and seeing eight continually revised editions up to 1778. In the course of those eight editions, the English Lake District is transformed from a region dismissed as terrifyingly wild and inhospitable into an object of pleasure – a transformation that demonstrates the ongoing power of manuscript culture in eighteenth-century Britain to define the terms of discourse. Tracing the interface of manuscript and print in the forging of the Lakes as an idea reveals an ongoing struggle for control of that idea between the forces of the commercial and the esthetic, the popular and the exclusive, the cultivated and the natural. The shifting balance between these opposing terms can be surprising; if the early success of Defoe's *Tour* and of writing about the Lakes is generated by London-centered commercial print, this success gives way to an appeal founded on a gentlemanly coterie of correspondents, whose anonymous amateurism in turn evolves into the authority of the author of genius, exploited for his print-based celebrity status. Note that here the amateur ultimately reasserts himself in the newfound authority of the educated local resident, whose dedication to inquiry and accuracy as informant is redefined in print as “modern,” lending him a cultural authority correspondent to that of the leisured traveling gentleman in his own coterie circle. Ironically, by the time the Lakes tour is represented in the 1780s as having a textual tradition of its own, its acknowledged founders are not its original commercial purveyors but the writers who initially restricted the circulation of their travels to the manuscript medium. In this way the story of this chapter counter-balances that of [Chapter 5](#), where the future of literary criticism was asserted to lie in the commercial and professional realm.

### Travel description in the Montagu–Lyttelton correspondence

The Yorke–Grey correspondence records contain several examples of epistolary travel journals kept by Jemima Grey and Philip Yorke. Their preservation as discrete documents, together with internal evidence such as Grey's midstream shift of addressee, in her 1750 account of a journey northward, from Catherine Talbot to “Your Ladyship” (perhaps her sister-in-law Elizabeth Yorke, now Lady Anson) and her conclusion “And thus Ends the History of my Travels. – which I beg may be sent on to Miss Talbot, as the former part d. Taymouth. Monday July 28th,” shows that these journals were copied, reread, and circulated as valued coterie works in their own right. Philip Yorke's travel journal spans twenty years, from 1744 to 1763, including “a tour into the North” (1744), “a journey into

Staffordshire" (1748, with Grey), "a journey through Norfolk" (1750, with Grey), "Oxford" (1750), "Scarborough" (1752), "Portsmouth" (1755), "Scotland" (1755, with Grey), "Salisbury" (1760), and a "Midland tour" (1763, with Grey); Yorke also notes the existence of a separate memorandum book, now disappeared, of his 1749 travels to the Hague and Paris.<sup>10</sup> While their format is rather barren and list-like, these records provide a good indication of what the mid-century gentleman traveler was expected to record: primarily descriptions of country seats, including their situation, any remarkable architectural features of the houses, and their paintings; with additional accounts of principal historical sites and major public works; and rather cursory notes on landscape, weather, roads, and towns.

Elizabeth Montagu embellished the genre with the seriousness she devoted to all her early epistolary performances. In 1747, for example, she sent the Duchess of Portland a detailed description of Lady Fane's grotto, complete with a dramatic, allusive, and humorous account of the party's coach breaking down en route, leaving them stranded overnight. The letter concludes, "& we came Home laughing at our Adventures which we arrogantly compared to those of the Valourous Quixote, or Marvellous Robinson Crusoe, we hope if Dr Pocock (who was of our Party) should add them to his Travels your Grace will buy the new Edition for the sake of so important, interesting, & entertaing an addition." Montagu incorporated this set-piece into a letter to her sister as well, and very possibly sent it to others; such general distribution is a good indication in her correspondence of the value she attaches to an epistolary composition. Montagu's correspondence with her husband in the 1740s and 1750s also indicates a shared pleasure in descriptions of various noble houses visited by one or the other, although here the writing is more informal, with correspondingly blunter judgments about building and landscaping tastes. For example, Montagu responds to her husband's account of a house in an extravagantly chinoiserie style built by a Mr Hart on the property of a neighbor, leased for a mere fifteen years. Edward Montagu disapproves of this as "no more than a whim & so much money flung away," with which his wife concurs vigorously – "Mr Harts scheme of building an expensive bawble on another persons Land was the foolishness I ever heard of" – but also with high appreciation for her husband's literary efforts: "I must have a bad taste if I thought your descriptions too long, for without compliment no one has a more genteel & elegant pen, & I saw Killum with more pleasure in your letter than the finest prospect could give me."<sup>11</sup>



But the fullest flowering of Montagu's manuscript travel writing seems to have come through her relationship with Lyttelton and his friends in the mid-1750s. This study has demonstrated Lyttelton's significance in relation to several scribal coteries of the period, and in [Chapter 7](#) will note the popularity of his poetry in manuscript compilations. Given this prominent position in coterie literary culture, it is not coincidental that Lyttelton's writing and circulation of domestic travel accounts seem to have been one of the most influential forces in the development of the genre in his day. Additionally, as proprietor of Hagley Park from 1751, he attained fame in his own right as an improving estate owner who created one of the showpieces of eighteenth-century landscape gardening. He was also, as we have seen, an important conduit of his neighbor William Shenstone's fame as landscape artist, bringing both aristocratic parties and fellow-artists such as the poet of *The Seasons*, James Thomson, to tour the Leasowes. Thus, the descriptive travel accounts of Lyttelton himself, written when he toured Wales in the summer of 1755, were copied, passed around, and preserved in manuscript collections such as Montagu's as well as finding their way into print; these letters will be discussed further below. Other members of the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie (Benjamin Stillingfleet, for example, reporting on travels in Wales) contributed to the production and exchange of such writings as well.

It is in this context that Montagu honed her own travel-writing skills in letters to Lyttelton especially, where she recounted unusual local travel experiences. One of the most adventurous of these accounts is a romantic set-piece about a journey of forty miles by night, in which she is treated to “the magnificent spectacle” of “the rising of every star till the whole heaven glow[s] with living sapphires” and she “los[es] [her]self in worlds beyond worlds, and system beyond system; till [her] mind [rises] to the great Maker of them all.” Montagu shares this piece with Lyttelton because “the good folks I converse with, care not for any of the glittering host of heaven, but the harvest or hunter's moon.” Her opportunities for travel soon became much more extensive than those of the typical woman of wealth, with her husband's inheritance in 1758 of northern estates and coalmines, in the management of which she engaged actively. From the beginning, Montagu used her travels northward as the basis of descriptive letters to Lyttelton; as she journeys in October of 1760, for example, she “wishe[s] very much to have snatched your Lordship for an hour from Hagley, where every rill has its course directed in the line of beauty, to the banks of a rude, rough, roaring, boisterous river at Weatherby” whose progress she proceeds to describe.<sup>12</sup>

### The gentleman traveler in the print marketplace

The 1724 first edition of Daniel Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, though nominally "By a gentleman," is clearly a commercial undertaking, printed and sold by at least six booksellers and notable for its celebration of the enterprising spirit that has led to a continual "Encrease of Glory" for the nation. For Defoe, the "Jewels . . . in the rich Coronet" of Britain are the "Gentlemen's meer *Summer-Houses*, or Citizen's *Country-Houses*" which line the banks of the Thames between Richmond and London, "whither they retire from the hurries of Business, and from getting Money." In this inauguration of the *Tour*, the individualized imprimatur of an author is not invoked to lend value to the text; rather, the "Authority of the Relation" is founded on the "Eye-witness" report of the hardworking traveler-journalist who has "Travell'd critically" throughout "the North Part of *England*, and the South Part of *Scotland* five several Times over." The *Tour's* thirteen London-originating circuits embody the unified, centralized, and prosperous national identity being forged in the early decades of the century; from this perspective, Westmorland is for the narrator "a Country eminent only for being the wildest, most barren and frightful of any that I have passed over in *England*, or even in *Wales* it self."<sup>13</sup>

Anonymity and claims of inclusivity and completeness meant that the original *Tour* lent itself well to reprinting, revision, and expansion as needed. The third edition was thus advertised on its title page as containing "very great Additions, Improvements, and Corrections; which bring it down to the Year 1742." The editor-authors now were men of the London book trade – principally Samuel Richardson, perhaps also Edward Kimber and others – who remained anonymous, as did Defoe. However, the "Editor" claims on behalf of the "Proprietors," who have "spare[d] no Expence" in improving the work, that he "has been favour'd with . . . ample Materials by several curious Gentlemen" to complete this account of the nation. Apparently, these travelers are interested in what had recently seemed only the "frightful" periphery, and so the preface promises to correct what was "very defective" in the "Description of the Northern Counties of *England*." In addition to fuller descriptions of the region's prosperous towns, the mountains that Defoe's original narrator found "in my thoughts, monstrous high" are now "all, in my Judgment, of a stupendous Height"; where once "nor were these hills high and formidable only, but they had a kind of unhospitable terror in them," now "as these Hills were lofty, so they had an Aspect of Terror." The land is still "of

no Use either to Man or Beast,” as in the first edition, and Westmorland is still “eminent” for its superlative wildness, but there is no doubt that just as the traveling spectator expresses himself more elegantly, he feels a parallel increase of ease among mountains.<sup>14</sup>

This addition of a gentlemanly veneer is triply reinforced in the preface to the 1748 fourth edition, wherein the proprietors “thankfully acknowledge ourselves indebted to several worthy Gentlemen, who have kindly communicated to us many curious Particulars,” then “declare, that we shall always pay a grateful Regard to any such Corrections, Improvements, and Additions, as we may be favoured with.” Finally, they indicate their responsiveness to the wishes of “several Gentlemen, Favourers of this Work, expressing a Desire of having a Set of Maps, of a proper Size, to bind with this Edition”; thus, “the Proprietors (always ready to embrace every Proposal which tended to the rendering this Work more useful) have engaged several eminent Geographers and Engravers to draw and engrave, in a neat Manner, a new Set of Maps.” The maps are accompanied by tables of roads, market days, and distances “for the Benefit of Travellers.” Clearly, the commercially alert proprietors are pitching their text to a group of gentlemen who constitute the knowledgeable, traveling portion of their clientele, and who will pay for such value-added features – as well as to those who will see the involvement of such gentlemen at every stage of production as lending authority to the text.<sup>15</sup>

But just who are these imagined gentlemen of the 1740s? Samuel Richardson’s runaway bestseller about an upstart servant-turned-gentlewoman might seem an unlikely place to look for them. Yet, inspired perhaps by the third edition of Defoe’s *Tour* – which Richardson himself revised and published in that same year – the heroine of the 1742 sequel to *Pamela* becomes a proficient traveler, being conducted by her Mr. B. “over the greatest part of England” as a means of recovering from her frequent childbirths. Nevertheless, the emphasis shifts when the time comes for written instruction in traveling, as part of Pamela’s “little book upon education, which I wrote for Mr. B.’s correction and amendment, on his putting Mr. Locke’s treatise on that subject into my hands, and requiring my observations upon it.” While it is the heroine who underlines the importance, even necessity, of what she calls “*Home Travelling*,” her arguments are entirely geared toward the gentleman’s son and heir. She explains that this son “may with good advantage begin, at fourteen or fifteen, the tour of Great Britain, now-and-then, by excursions, in the summer months, between his other studies, and as a diversion to him.” Amusement is certainly not the only goal, for by gaining first-hand

knowledge of “the situation, conveniences, interests, and constitution of his own country,” the young gentleman “will be able to lay a ground-work for the future government of his thoughts and actions, if the interest he bears in his native country should call him to the public service in either house of parliament.” Even the “noble art of navigation,” to be observed on board ships traveling along the British coasts and between the islands of the periphery, is “a knowledge very far from being insignificant to a gentleman who is an islander, and has a stake in the greatest maritime kingdom in the world.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the democratizing and gender-inclusive effect of having the low-born Pamela herself travel through the island gives way to a reinforcement of the association between the gentleman and domestic tourism by means of Pamela’s extended argument that domestic travel is as important as the Grand Tour to the formation of a British gentleman. A further 1740s elaboration of the gentleman-traveler persona in conjunction with domestic tourism is found in the first known publication of William Gilpin, future writer of travel accounts elaborating his theories of picturesque beauty. Composed while Gilpin was still a university student, the 1748 *Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire* introduces Polyphthon as “a Gentleman engaged in a way of Life, that excused him two Months in the Year from Business; which Time he used generally to spend in visiting what was curious in the several Counties around him.” Polyphthon visits Stowe with a friend, creating the occasion for a dialog about the relationship between ethics and esthetics in response to art in general, and landscape gardening in particular. Although he is not a landed peer, he feels the freedom to discuss at length with his friend Callophilus the proper use of an estate and the social value of a landscape garden, beginning, “Were I a Nobleman, I should endeavour to turn my Estate into a Garden, and make my Tenants my Gardiners.”<sup>17</sup>

This vaguely democratized persona is important as a backdrop to Stowe’s socially broad range of traveler types. For Gilpin, the gardens serve not only to entertain well-educated gentlemen who can appreciate the classical and contemporary allusions but also to offer “Improvement” to “our Country Squires,” who if they would “flock hither two or three times in a Year” would “return Home with new Notions, and begin to see the Absurdity of their clipped Yews, their Box-wood Borders, their flourished Parterres, and their lofty Brick-walls.” Those of all ranks who visit the gardens simply for recreation experience the benefits of esthetic pleasure; although the faces of inarticulate laborers may simply be “marked with the

Passion of gaping Wonder,” for them, “a *Sunday* Evening spent here, adds a new Relish to the Day of Rest and makes the Sabbath appear more chearful . . . after a toilsome Week.” Moreover, Polyphthon’s gentlemanly travels coexist with his recognition of tourism as a profitable industry. As a result of its wide appeal, a significant component of Stowe’s value is “the Money spent in the Neighbourhood by the Company daily crouding hither to satisfy their Curiosity. We have a kind of a continual Fair; and I have heard several of the Inhabitants of the neighbouring Town assert, that it is one of the best Trades they have.”<sup>18</sup>

Economically profitable appreciation of sites such as Stowe, Gilpin implies, is created by writers like Polyphthon, who clearly belongs to the category of “the Man of Taste [who] is seen examining every Beauty with a curious Eye, and discovering his Approbation in an half-formed Smile.” Polyphthon and Callophilus seem to form part of the meritocracy of taste soon to be identified with their contemporary William Shenstone and practiced by businessman Robert Dodsley and Oxford Professor Joseph Spence as they produced their descriptions of the Leasowes. Thus, it is significant that Gilpin chooses to have Polyphthon introduce into the dialog the “northern Counties,” including the author’s native Cumberland, as the locus of the most “elegant natural Views” in the kingdom. Having been “carried” north by “Curiosity indeed, rather than Business,” and having spent his unencumbered time “in hunting after beautiful Objects,” Polyphthon describes the landscape around the Eden River as superior to that of Stowe: “I cannot forbear . . . wishing . . . that his Lordship [Cobham] had such Materials to work with, and it could not be but he would make a most noble Picture.”<sup>19</sup>

### The gentleman traveler as coterie writer

Gilpin’s characters are fictionalized elaborations of the traveling gentleman, designed to appeal to the purchasers he addresses openly in his “Advertisement.” Not long afterward, in 1753, a similar ethos of leisured sociability and gentlemanly exchange – but one more restricted of access – is invoked in the private letter quoted in my first epigraph, written by the young Gilpin’s former tutor and another Cumberland native, the author and clergyman John Brown. Addressed to George Lyttelton, who was Cobham’s nephew, the letter was first published in part only after Brown’s death, as a seven-page pamphlet entitled *A Description of the Lake at Keswick, (and the Adjacent Country) in Cumberland. Communicated in a Letter to a Friend. By a Popular Writer* (1767).

However, Donald Eddy has shown that the letter circulated in manuscript from about 1753 onward among members of the Lyttelton family and their friends. Eddy cites as evidence that the description was familiar to Lyttelton's brother Charles and their friend Archibald Bower a 1755 letter from Bower to Charles in which he refers to a walking tour of the Keswick area conducted by Brown, during which they "discovered cascades, woods, bourns, mountains, rocks, vales &c. unknown even to the Columbus of Keswick Dr. Brown."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, although several critical accounts use the 1767 print publication of the prose section of Brown's letter to date the inception of the Lake tour's popularity,<sup>21</sup> by 1755 members of the Lyttelton circle were invoking "the Columbus of Keswick's" travel writing in terms that suggested its already established reputation. The fourteen-year preprint circulation of Brown's letter suggests that his description of the landscape of Keswick exerted an influence well before 1767 among an extended community of travelers who communicated by means other than print. As late as 1776, this mode of "publication" was still functioning. When in that year the original poetic conclusion to Brown's letter was printed for the first time by the playwright Richard Cumberland, he described the poem as taken from "a Manuscript of the late ingenious Dr. Browne," a "valuable specimen of the author" that he had been "favoured with" even after a portion of it had already "got forth into the world, and was in print." For twenty-four years, then, the private exchange of this manuscript was reinforcing the privilege of membership in select coteries of patrons and connoisseurs. As the original recipient and circulation history of this letter indicate, at the center of this network was George, Lord Lyttelton; in fact, Brown's letter begins, "In my way to the north from *Hagley*," recording the author's status as an adherent, if not a regular, of Lyttelton's social circle, to which he had been introduced in turn by Charles Yorke.<sup>22</sup>

Lyttelton's own "discoveries" of picturesque landscapes in Wales are described in two lengthy letters written in the summer of 1755; an examination of the circulation and contents of these letters fills in details of a tradition of domestic travel description originating with the Lyttelton coterie.<sup>23</sup> Manuscript versions of these letters are found in the correspondences of both Montagu and Charles Lyttelton, a leading antiquarian and Dean of Exeter at the time. Lyttelton's two letters as preserved in the Montagu Collection are autographs addressed to Archibald Bower, who is asked by Lyttelton to greet "the Madonna," Lyttelton's current coterie name for Montagu. The manuscript copies of these letters held in the British Library are very similar but are addressed to Charles, who is again

asked to greet the Madonna. As further evidence of this coterie's circulation of travel writings, in closing his second letter Lyttelton writes to Bower, "Thus, My good Father, I have given you a Landschape of all North Wales in return for those you gave me of Cumberland and of Scotland" (Bower had apparently written his own account of his tour of the Lakes with Brown). Finally, although no manuscript of Brown's original letter about Keswick has been located, a comparison of the printed portions discussed above with Lyttelton's letters from Wales reveals a similar preference in the latter for picturesque landscapes in which "agreeable vallies" are "ennoble[d]" by the irregular slopes of Mount Snowden towering above them. In this context, Lyttelton's manuscripts can be described as attaining scribal publication in their own right. They also appeared in print shortly after his death in 1773, among the "never before printed" items in his posthumous 1774 *Works*, edited by his nephew George Edward Ayscough. In 1781, they were appended as a selling feature, advertised on the title-page, of Henry Penruddocke Wyndham's second edition of *A Gentleman's Tour through Monmouthshire and Wales, in the months of June and July, 1774*. Thus, like the private letters of "the Columbus of Keswick," these manuscript descriptions made their way into print to lend authority to a developing print genre of domestic travel descriptions – in this case, becoming influential as what Christine Gerrard calls "one of the earliest Romantic tourist accounts of Wales."<sup>24</sup>

The social life of Brown's text also demonstrates how the descriptive domestic tour was aligned with patterns of patronage and land ownership. In Lyttelton's travel letters, formulations about how a particular landscape might be improved by an estate's proprietor (for example, "There is a Park which would be most beautifull if the Master of it had any Taste") blur into evaluations of wilder prospects as meeting or falling short of a picturesque ideal. By contrast, as we have seen, Gilpin's early account of Stowe models critical appreciation of the landowner's taste while carefully not claiming his subject position. If, as Kim Michasiw has argued, Gilpin's model of the picturesque is designed for "those who are transient presences in the landscape" rather than for the "local improver," the writings of the Lyttelton coterie reflect the existence of a thriving parallel discourse of proprietary domestic tourism dating from at least the middle of the century. These divergent socially and politically inflected paths can be aligned with print versus manuscript dissemination practices. However, any claim that printed domestic tour discourse challenges the cultural supremacy of the property owner is undermined by the trade's increasing exploitation of the elite associations of the coterie to lend cachet to its products.<sup>25</sup>

### Marketing the coterie traveler and the Lakes in the 1750s and 1760s

The appeal of the coterie was in fact used to market descriptions of the Lakes as early as 1755, well before the emergence of such texts as Brown's and Lyttelton's into print in the late 1760s and the following decade. The aura of this world was brought to a commercial audience by the Reverend John Dalton, a Westmorland-educated clergyman who in that year published his *Descriptive Poem Addressed to Two Young Ladies at Their Return from Viewing the Mines near Whitehaven, to which are added, Some Thoughts on Building and Planting, to Sir James Lowther, of Lowther-Hall, Bart.* Dalton's preface introduces the poem as having been written two years earlier to commemorate a return to his native county and invokes the coterie-based trope of reluctance to publish overcome by the encouragement of friends who have read the work. The poem itself recounts the visit of two "Misses Lowther" to the mines developed by their family and includes descriptions of the setting of Lowther-Hall, the Keswick valley, and Derwentwater. Dalton thus uses this occasional poem to acknowledge Westmorland and Cumberland's most powerful landowning family, likely in an attempt to catch the attention of the newly minted, and fabulously wealthy, Sir James Lowther, the fifth baronet. He claims that the occasion of the ladies' tour "gave him (what he valued most) a natural opportunity of expressing his just esteem for a truly respectable family, with whose merit he had long had the happiness of being well acquainted, whose Interest appears to be inseparably connected with That of his native country, and to which It already owes the most considerable advantages." Footnotes to Dalton's text betray its commercial ethos, however, by repeatedly recommending to the reader a set of prints of the scenes described, created by the poet's brother and available for purchase. Other notes containing explanatory descriptions of the mines are contributed by the "kind and friendly design" of a friend and Fellow of the Royal Society, Dr William Brownrigg of Whitehaven. Again opportunity is taken for mutual puffing, with Dalton recommending Brownrigg's out-of-print treatise on *The Art of Making Common Salt* and appending a "Letter to the Author" in which Brownrigg praises the brother's prints, compares Dalton's poem to Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, and hints that the public can "have the pleasure of seeing the sister arts mutually reflecting light upon each other" by purchasing both.<sup>26</sup>

Although we have seen Polyphthon, "Columbus" Brown, and even the Misses Lowther deem the northern counties worth a visit, the first popular publication to feature the Lake counties extensively was the Irishman



Thomas Amory's fictional autobiography *The Life of John Bunclie, Esq.*, published anonymously in two parts in 1756 and 1766. The work was evidently the production of a widely read author, but its motley genre, anonymity, and idiosyncratic blend of Unitarian theology, geological theory, landscape description, and accounts of Bunclie's sequence of seven beautiful wives left its reviewers puzzled as to how to respond. Their reports range from the facetiously tolerant to the damning. Amory's detailed, enthusiastic narrations of Bunclie's travels in a Westmorland that is "the most romantic and the most beautiful solitude in the world" are seen to be of a piece with his theology and amours, what *The Monthly Review* terms "the produce of a genius and imagination overheated and run to seed in the hot-beds of romance and religious controversy." The same publication's generally appreciative account of the earlier 1756 installment sees Bunclie as possessed by "the Arcadian spirit" and "in excellent trim for a fancy-flight" when he begins to describe "the wilds of Stanmore" in Westmorland in a sequence from which the second epigraph to this chapter is taken. *The Critical Review*, on the other hand, sneering at the intellectual pretensions of a hero with the name of "Jack Bunclie," criticizes the book's "flowery stile" and announces that "we could not, on the most careful perusal, meet with any thing that gave us the least pleasure throughout the whole." In 1766, the same journal dismisses the second volume in a single sentence: "This is an irreviewable performance, because the nonsense we encounter in pursuing it, is insufferable."<sup>27</sup>

One might, then, be excused for concluding that this attempt at popularizing an appreciative discourse of the Lakes was a failure. But in her 1810 introduction to *The British Novelists*, Anna Letitia Barbauld speculates that *John Bunclie's* descriptions of "the fells and mountains of Westmoreland," since "the book was much read, have possibly contributed to spread that taste for lake and mountain scenery which has since been so prevalent." We know that Bunclie was a popular enough character to see his story reissued in a second edition in 1770, and to give birth to a 1776 sequel, *John Bunclie, Junior, Gentleman*. The latter led even *The Critical Review* to acknowledge the new hero's father as "John Bunclie, gent. of marvellous memory; who leaped precipices, tumbled through mountains, found wise and good men, beautiful and learned women, 'Where you and I might all day travel,/And meet with nought but sand and gravel.'" And Amory himself signals his alertness to, and helps create, a commercial, competitive tradition of Lake discourse: in the second part of *John Bunclie*, he references the Dalton brothers' depictions of Keswick and Derwentwater in Cumberland, only to claim that these beautiful places are "inferior in

charms to the vale, the lake, the brooks, the shaded sides of the surrounding mountains, and the tuneful falls of water” of Westmorland.<sup>28</sup>

### Commodifying and canonizing the gentleman traveler

By 1767, then, when the Reverend John Brown’s coterie manuscript finally made its print debut, the most widely available material on the domestic tour idealized gentleman travelers of taste and offered highly colored descriptions of Lake Country landscapes – a ground well prepared for the reception of such a text. If Irishmen like John Bunce and servant-girls like Pamela did not qualify as ideal travelers, the soil nevertheless proved fertile for cultivation by professional literary authors, whose progressively increasing cultural status has been observed in the [previous chapter](#). The seventh edition of Defoe’s *Tour*, published in 1769, was the first to be authorized by association with celebrity writers. Here the earlier formulaic “By a Gentleman” was replaced on the title-page with “Originally begun by the celebrated Daniel De Foe, continued by the late Mr. Richardson, Author of *Clarissa*, and brought down to the present Time by a Gentleman of Eminence in the Literary World.”

This commercialized appeal to posthumous reputation prefigures the ultimate public identification of the poet Thomas Gray, who ostentatiously disdained commodified literature, with travel writing. When in 1773, two years after Gray’s death, his friend and literary executor William Mason first privately printed *A Catalogue of the Antiquities, Houses, Parks, Plantations, Scenes, and Situations in England and Wales, Arranged According to the Alphabetical Order of the Several Counties*, he forbore to name Gray as the compiler of “[t]his Catalogue . . . originally drawn up on the blank pages of Kitchen’s English atlas,” referring to him as “a person of too much eminence to be mentioned on so slight an occasion.” Originating as a manuscript supplement to a printed work, the newly printed *Catalogue* occupied a liminal space closer to the restricted circulation of coterie networks than to public print distribution. Mason, as anonymous editor, explains that “as many of [the Cataloguer’s] friends had transcribed it in his life-time, and many more have requested copies since his decease, it was thought best to print it in this pocket form.” Only one hundred copies were printed, as in the case of Hardwicke’s 1781 second edition of the *Athenian Letters*, and these were interleaved with blank pages so that “those, to whom they shall be presented, may at their leisure make such short remarks as their own personal knowledge of the several counties enables them to do; and in these to add or expunge what they may think

proper.” But in this way the limited edition was also situated as a transitional step between the two modes of circulation: Gray’s “catalogue friends” are invited to contribute to the text “not only for their present gratification, but as the most likely means of rendering this little work complete, and of fitting it hereafter for the eye of the public.”<sup>29</sup> Thus those to whom the hundred copies were presented – not sold – would by implication become part of an already existing coterie that had been circulating Gray’s *Catalogue* from the time of his tours in the late 1760s, while contributing to his becoming a celebrated travel writer.

Despite Mason’s reticence, it was quite possible by this time for printed domestic travel writing to accommodate the extremes of explicit commodification and coterie authorship, as two other publications appearing not long after the 1769 seventh edition of Defoe and Richardson’s *Tour* illustrate. Although both Arthur Young, author of agricultural tours of Britain, and Thomas Pennant, naturalist-traveler, were from small land-owning families, their approaches to publicity reflect differing views of authorial identity that parallel the dual print and manuscript traditions I am tracing. Young, as a second son with his way to make in the world, was not university educated but rather apprenticed to a wine merchant, and published his first political pamphlet at the age of seventeen. His initial periodical letters on agriculture appeared merely a year after he took up farming as his mother’s tenant, suggesting at least as much interest in professional authorship as in agricultural tourism. Young’s popular *Tours* through various parts of England were published between 1768 and 1771, and became part of the tradition of domestic travel writing for their combination of agricultural accounts with descriptions of houses, parks, and anything that “contribute[s] to render our country beautiful or convenient.” Discussing Young’s *Six Months’ Tour through the North* in 1770, *The Monthly Review* opines that he has “very properly and agreeably” described both the ornamented estates and the natural embellishments of the rural landscape, supplies lengthy extracts of scenes Young calls “gloriously romantic,” “truly sublime,” and “elegant,” but then abruptly concludes by placing him firmly within an inferior commercial tradition: “All this is very fine, but the painting is certainly too much in the style of John Bunclé.”<sup>30</sup>

Young’s aim at a broad print market is shown in his explicit appeal across class boundaries. He explains that having advertised unsuccessfully in the papers for information to be supplied by “such of the nobility, gentry, landlords, farmers, and others, as possess, or are acquainted with, any particular improvements, experiments, customs, implements, etc. in

the agriculture of the following counties, . . . I compensated the loss of such intelligence as gentlemen alone can give, by applications to many farmers.” At the same time, he finds that farmers lack a broader vision of improvement and experimentation, whereas “In all these points, I have found many gentlemen extremely satisfactory.” Acknowledging his informants in the preface to *A Six Months’ Tour*, Young justifies “joining peers and common farmers in the same page” because “He, who is the BEST FARMER, is with me the GREATEST MAN.” Thus, while highly class conscious, Young establishes for himself a persona that stands outside hierarchies that might define and limit his readership. Similarly, his text follows an epistolary format, but with no attempt to create the impression of an actual familiar exchange; like Defoe’s letters constituting his *Tour*, these are empty conventions, often without date or salutation and with no named or characterized addressee. Although Young asserts his “obligations” and “gratitude” to his informants, he does so in the generalized sense of one seeking to present his textual tours as “a complete view of *British* agriculture,” much as Defoe sought to encompass all of Great Britain in his “tour thro’ the whole island.”<sup>31</sup>

Thomas Pennant’s use of epistolarity, on the other hand, invokes a particular reader, “Sir Roger Mostyn, Bart., of Mostyn, Flintshire,” to whom his 1771 *A Tour in Scotland. MDCCLXIX* is dedicated. First published in Chester, this work presents itself as much closer to the amateur coterie pole of the spectrum than does the work of Young. As the eldest son of an old Welsh family, Pennant had attended Oxford, begun his publishing career with an article in the Royal Society’s *Philosophical Transactions*, established connections with European naturalists such as Carl Linnaeus and the Comte de Buffon, inherited the family estate, and published leading works on zoology by the time he undertook his first domestic tour of Scotland in 1769. Whereas Young attempted to appeal to knowledgeable gentlemen through the public papers, Pennant invented the method of building his tours upon questionnaires circulated in advance to “the Gentlemen and Clergy of *North-Britain*, respecting the Antiquities and Natural History of their respective Parishes,” thereby scaling up the ethos of private correspondence associated with select groups like the Royal Society. In Pennant’s 1774 *Additions* to the *Tour in Scotland*, he explains that this supplement is a tribute to “the liberal spirit of communication among the Gentlemen of the Northern parts of this Kingdom,” which has enabled him to produce an edition “freed from some errors that must unavoidably attend the performance of a rapid traveller, notwithstanding

all his wishes to be accurate.” He politely lists in his “Advertisement” those who provided information but have not been named in the work itself.<sup>32</sup>

Similar acknowledgments become the focus of the “Advertisement” in Pennant’s 1774 *A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides; MDCCLXXII*. In addition to extensive recognition of his two travel companions, the Reverend Mr. John Lightfoot, Lecturer of Uxbridge, and the Reverend Mr. John Stuart of Killin, who not only supplied their knowledge but also “all the comforts that arise from the society of agreeable and worthy companions,” Pennant lists twenty-three gentlemen “who favored [him] at different times with accounts and little histories of the places of their residence, or their environs”; this list includes such figures as John Aikin, Thomas West (see below), Joseph Banks, and Alan Ramsay.<sup>33</sup> I would argue that, paradoxically, one ingredient of the commercial success of Pennant’s publications is his ability to import into them the aura of the coterie; or, more precisely, to suggest that he is making available to the general reading public the efforts of a manuscript-exchanging network of amateur specialists, whose private correspondence and labors are undertaken for the general good of the nation.

Malcolm Andrews has described Thomas West’s 1778 *Guide to the Lakes: Dedicated to the Lovers of Landscape Studies, and to All Who have Visited, or Intend to Visit the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire* as the moment when “the Picturesque tour of the lakes was institutionalized,” presumably through West’s gathering together of the scenes described by previous travelers in the form of viewing stations recommended to future tourists. Himself one of Pennant’s correspondents, West invokes and thereby begins to establish a textual canon of the Lakes tour, referring to the “pleasing accounts” of the Lakes by “persons of genius, taste, and observation,” particularly “Mr. Gray . . . in 1765, and Mr. Pennant . . . in 1772,” which have inspired “the curious of all ranks” to visit the region. Later versions of West’s guide, beginning with the posthumous 1780 second edition edited anonymously by William Cockin, expand on the authorities comprising this tradition. Thus West is said in Cockin’s preface to have “consult[ed] the most esteemed writers on the subject (as Dr. Brown, Messrs. Gray, Young, Pennant, etc.)”; an epigraph quotes Richard Cumberland’s 1776 pronouncement that “in truth a more pleasing tour than these lakes hold out to men of leisure and curiosity cannot be devised”; and “Addenda . . . containing a collection of several valuable miscellaneous pieces which have occasionally appeared respecting the lakes” are appended to the guide. In the second edition, these pieces include excerpts from Dalton, Brown, Gray, and Cumberland.<sup>34</sup>

When Thomas Gray's *Catalogue* finally makes its fully public debut in 1787, under the imprint of a Fleet-Street bookseller, it has become *A Supplement to the Tour through Great-Britain, containing a Catalogue . . . By the Late Mr. Gray, Author of the Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard, etc.* (Figure 6.1). This prominent naming of Gray and his most popular poem is no accident; an addition to Mason's original "Advertisement" observes confidently that

the name of the Compiler will secure to [the publication now offered to the World] a favourable reception. What Mr. Gray thought important enough to engage his attention, those for whose use it is intended will not receive with neglect. Scenes, Situations, Seats, and Antiquities, selected as worthy of notice by the elegant Author of the Church-Yard Elegy, will be visited with a degree of respect unfelt before. To his taste no person will venture to dissent, and to his judgment few but will readily subscribe.

The audience for this *Supplement*, it is clear, is no longer the one hundred elect who were to assist in rendering the *Catalogue* complete according to "their own personal knowledge" and "what they may think proper." Rather, the book is "offered to the World" in response to "[t]he present prevailing passion for viewing and examining the beautiful scenes which abound in our native country." Evidently, many of those smitten by this prevailing passion needed the sanction of a connoisseur whom they could trust, whom they knew as the author of a famous poem, to assure them of what was worthy of their attention.<sup>35</sup>

### The triumph of the coterie

The emergence of this authoritative tradition, however, was not simply a matter of typesetting originary manuscript materials. In his private letters to traveling friends or about his own tour of the Lake counties, Gray refers constantly to previously published "two-shilling prints" and written accounts of the scenes he is describing. The process whereby the producers of such materials are replaced by a canon of largely coterie-based, or at least coterie-claiming, authors as "discoverers" of the Lakes in publications like West's *Guide* is made visible by the acts of elevation performed by Mason in his 1775 edition of Gray's works and memoirs. Mason repeatedly offers Gray's methods and opinions as the guide to his readers' travels: "the advice here given to the curious traveller . . . , and the reasons for it, are so well expressed, and withal so important, that they certainly deserve our notice," or "those who can content themselves with an elegant simplicity of

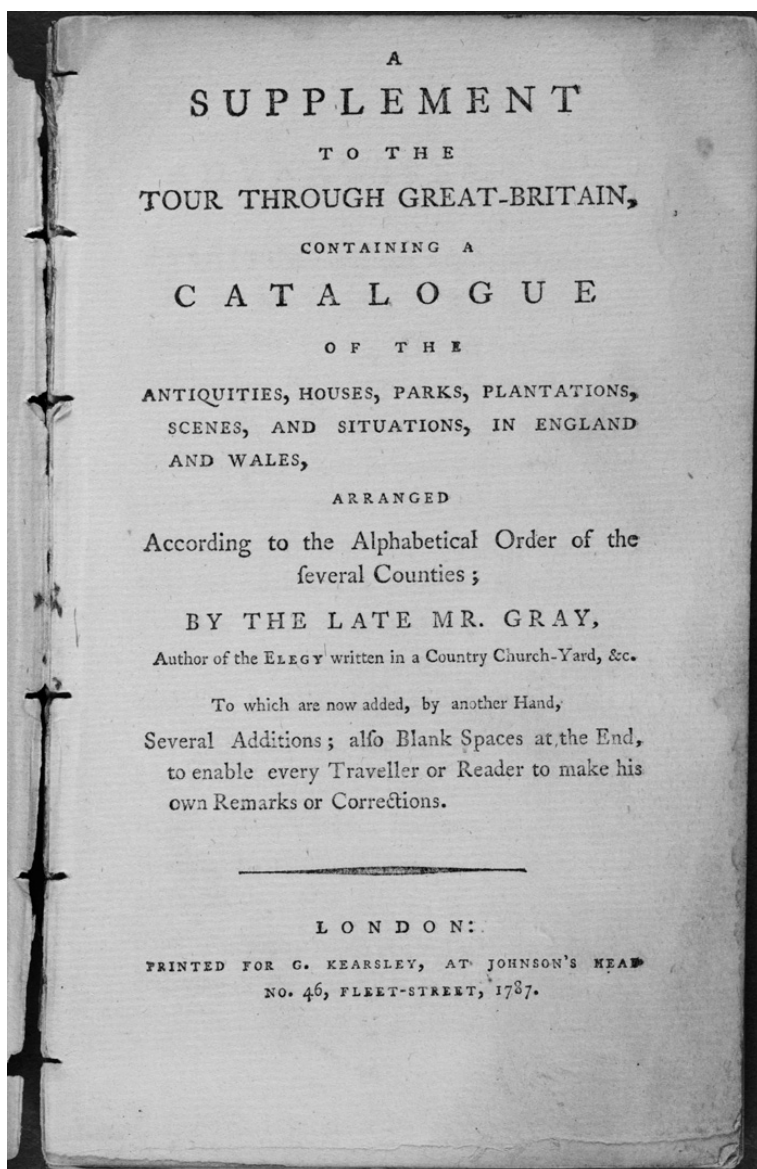


Figure 6.1 Thomas Gray, *A Supplement to the Tour through Great-Britain, containing a Catalogue . . . By the Late Mr. Gray, Author of the Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard, etc.* (1787).

narrative, . . . if they make it their companion when they take the same tour, it will enhance their opinion of its intrinsic excellence.” Despite Gray’s own reliance on printed materials in his own travels, then, Mason acts as a kind of midwife of manuscript travels for the masses, recommending, for example, the “one piece of verbal description which completely satisfies [him], because it is throughout assisted by masterly delineation”: the “*unique*” manuscript “composed by the Rev. Mr. Gilpin, of Cheam in Surry,” which “contains, amongst other places, an account of the very scenes which, in this tour, our author visited.” Mason regrets the fact that this unique, completely satisfying description seems doomed to remain in a manuscript form inaccessible to the general reader, “for would [Gilpin’s] modesty permit him to print it, the great expence of plates would make its publication almost impracticable.”<sup>36</sup> Gilpin’s tour of the Lakes was, of course, published eleven years later.

Thus travelling gentlemen and men of letters like George Lyttelton, John Brown, Thomas Gray, and William Gilpin, endorsed by members of their respective coteries, were absorbed into the production, marketing, and distribution mechanisms of the urban bookseller. In keeping with the cases examined in previous chapters, this is not a simple story of a more primitive amateur, gentlemanly, scribal culture being exploited by a modern commercialized and professionalized print culture. If picturesque tourism after the outbreak of the French Revolution became “the modern form of the flight from modernity,” this flight was defined by an alliance of the gentlemanly with the modern. The increasing authorization of printed accounts of the domestic tour, and specifically of the Lakes tour, by reference to “the informations of gentlemen resident on, or in the neighbourhood of, the spots they have described,” to “travellers of independent fortunes,” and to “[m]any of the first literary characters of the age, at the two universities, and in most capital towns,” is clearly demonstrated in the preface to the 1778 eighth edition of Defoe’s *Tour*. Adopting a fashionably spacious and streamlined typeface and a reduced use of capitals, the preface promises to “[present] to the reader a modern geographical state of *Great Britain*.” What is striking here is the representation of modernity and the independent gentleman traveler as together transforming the meaning of such peripheries as the Lakes:

Modern travellers have enabled us to give a more accurate description of the principality of *Wales*, than could reasonably be expected in the former edition, many gentlemen having, since that time, traversed the *Welsh* mountains, and critically noticed the towns, modes, manners, and customs, of that part of our island . . . The description of every county in the kingdom



has been modernized, and many of their natural beauties, hitherto unnoticed, brought forth to view, particularly those of the northern counties, as *Yorkshire*, *Lancashire*, *Westmorland*, and *Cumberland*. The two last counties were formerly considered as little better than barren and inhospitable deserts, and, being so remote from the metropolis, were seldom visited as the objects of pleasure, till the amazing improvements lately made (and still making) in all the roads through the kingdom, gave a spur to travellers of independent fortunes, who have now made us almost as well acquainted with the northern, as we before were with the southern parts of our island.

The transformation of “barren and inhospitable deserts” into “objects of pleasure” has been the work not merely of modern roads, but also of “travellers of independent fortunes” who have “critically noticed” those objects and thereby shaped the perspective of the reading public.<sup>37</sup>

And what of the likes of Pamela and John Bunclé, those fictional travelers who reached a considerable audience in the middle decades of the century? We have seen that Barbauld, in her 1810 introduction to *The British Novelists*, credits Amory’s creation with promoting “that taste for lake and mountain scenery which has since been so prevalent,” and I have cited evidence of *John Bunclé’s* reach in the form of review references extending to the 1770s. James Mulvihill has drawn a connection between Amory’s style and that of Wordsworth’s *Excursion*.<sup>38</sup> But aside from Barbauld’s passing comment in 1810, turn-of-the-century accounts of the phenomenon of the Lakes tour are silent about this once-popular tourist. In fact, Barbauld’s own memory is blurred: she names John Bunclé as the author, rather than protagonist, of Amory’s work, and appears to associate its Westmorland descriptions with Amory’s 1756 *Memoirs of Several Ladies*, another work altogether. Bunclé/Amory, for all his possible influence on the taste for travel to the Lakes, has faded from view, succeeded by travelers with greater prestige. Like Kitchen’s atlas and the two-shilling prints – those works to which Gray’s original coterie writings were merely a supplement, but which were finally subsumed into the persona of Mr. Gray the poet-traveler – neither John Bunclé nor his creator is ever mentioned along with the acknowledgements paid to Brown, Gray, Pennant, and other gentleman travelers who ostensibly founded the tradition.

It would appear that, if the figure of the gentleman traveler was exploited and commercialized by London-based print professionals to authorize their commercial publications about the Lakes, so too the gentlemanly coterie culture within which the model of the leisured traveler flourished was in effect sustained, authorized, and disseminated by such publications.

The emergence of the tour as a literary phenomenon thus demonstrates “the tenacity of existing technologies . . . [and] their related materials and practices” – in this case, those of the coterie. In the process, the idealized traveler became reified and even clichéd, an overdetermined amalgam of social privilege, elite or specialized education, and artistic genius – not to mention masculinity – that receded increasingly from the reader. While fostering a “prevailing passion” for the Lakes tour, then, booksellers and professional authors were helping to entrench a social and cultural gap between the privileged traveler and the humble tourist, between the coterie writer and the uncultivated reader. Nicola Watson has argued that the opening of such a gap in the late eighteenth century paradoxically served only to heighten readers’ desire “to authenticate the reading experience in a more ‘personal’ way, to reinforce an incompletely intimate and unsatisfactorily vicarious reading experience” by retracing an author’s steps through the landscape.<sup>39</sup> Such a desire can also help explain the attraction of periodical readers to the modest Shenstone and his embodied art at the Leasowes, noted in [Chapter 4](#). In my [final chapter](#), I will approach those humble, or at least unknown, readers in another way, asking if and how they obtained for themselves the experience of coterie sociability.

*Literary sociability in the eighteenth-century personal miscellany*

To a Lady on her Love of Poetry. June 8.1747. Wrote  
by Mr. C. Y—e.

I heard the Sisters of the Sacred Well,  
Complaining near the awful throne of Jove,  
That Men their gracious Influence did repel,  
And in the paths of baneful Pleasure rove;

When Clio said, I see a Virgin fair,  
Fair, as the Swan that swims Cayster's Stream,  
Like India's Gold the tresses of her Hair,  
Her Blush might well the rosy Morn beseem.

With pains unwearied, in her bloom of Age,  
In faithful Volumes She records our Songs;  
Secure from Time & Envy's venom'd Rage,  
Their Sacred Memory and Praise prolongs.

Instant the Nine new string their Vocal Lyres,  
The Sound a nobler Ardour seems to raise:  
The Virgin's Name new Strength, new Grace inspires,  
And the bright Patroness adorns their Lays.

Princes & Ministers no more their Pride,  
On her alone the Laurel they bestow;  
A Wreath, to great Augustus now deny'd:  
And with Macenas' Name no more they glow.

*(from Mary Capell's personal miscellany)<sup>1</sup>*

To this point, I have traced the literary lives of individuals such as the Yorke brothers, Thomas Edwards, Catherine Talbot, Hester Mulso Chapone, Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and George Lyttelton, showing how fluid were the roles of writer and reader – not to mention project instigator, editor, and promoter – in their coterie contexts. For almost all these women and men, print dissemination served at some point

as an extension of coterie circulation. They chose print carefully and deliberately, for productions whose wide circulation might increase their literary reputations and in some cases their financial security, but equally importantly, which might broaden their esthetic, intellectual, social, and moral influence. In the most complex case, that of William Shenstone and the Warwickshire coterie, I have suggested how the poet-landscape gardener constructed and articulated a persona and an esthetic through coterie practices which were simultaneously affirmed in transmediated form through the print entrepreneurship of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands*. After Shenstone's death, the resources of the print trade came into greater play through Dodsley's edition of the *Works*, preserving the representation of the coterie in the form of the printed book, but also providing the basis for a revision of literary sociability away from the embodied coterie to fulfill the needs of a virtual community of readers in the medium of print as represented by the magazines. In this chapter, I will shift the point of view from producers to such reader communities, as reflected by individuals who created personal miscellanies recording the reading material they considered worth circulating, copying, and preserving.

Margaret Ezell has written eloquently of manuscript compilations in bound book form as "invisible" or "messy," as "books that look like 'real' books, that is to say, like printed books, on the outside, but behave entirely differently for the reader and writer once the cover is opened." Ezell focuses on very miscellaneous compilations created through to the end of the seventeenth century, those "that combine accounts of rents collected with copies of verses, alphabet exercises with prayers and diary entries," rather than the beautiful, fair-copy compilations produced by individual authors or scribes.<sup>2</sup> My own study group falls into a later period and comprises materials somewhere between Ezell's miscellaneous compilations and the fair-copy volumes she references. It is comprised of compilations whose content is primarily poetic, in keeping with this study's focus on the literary coterie. Nevertheless, even the belletristic collections I have examined may display conjunctions of the traditional and the contemporary, the national and the local, the public and the private – in addition to filled-in or cut-out sections where an original or later compiler had second thoughts, and even laundry lists or knitting patterns. Ezell's point thus remains well taken: such books baffle our print-based habits of reading and resist our attempts at classification and interpretation. At the same time, the access they offer us to an earlier world of reading and producing the literary invites us to make the attempt.

First, the challenge of classification. All the books discussed in this chapter belong to the general category of the commonplace book. In this I follow Earle Havens, who has disputed the notion of a “zenith” of the commonplace book preceding the entrenchment of a print-based literary culture, preferring to consider the form as a “protean” but persistent genre from antiquity to the twentieth century. Scholarship on the scribal practice of commonplacing has in recent decades emphasized its engagement with print from the latter’s rise as a communications technology. David Allan in *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* has examined a very wide range of such books, setting as a base criterion for a “commonplace book” some form of engagement with reading materials that involves selection and copying. Allan asserts that, despite the range to be found in the conception and uses of such books in the period, they virtually all owe a debt to the venerable rhetorical notion of the commonplace and therefore affirm “the pre-eminent importance of highly structured and analytical approaches to the consumption of texts.” As noted in my introduction, Peter Beal has downplayed the scholarly interest of eighteenth-century commonplace books of all types in comparison to their seventeenth-century predecessors, “perhaps ... because they belong less to a flourishing manuscript culture and because most of what they contain is trivial and ephemeral material copied largely from contemporary printed sources.” But even as such, these books have something historically specific to tell us. Ann Blair and Peter Stallybrass, in “Mediating Information, 1450–1800,” have traced the intertwined practices of print and script in response to what they call a “new cultural attitude” of “info lust,” which increasingly “valued expansive collections of many kinds for long-term storage.” It is not surprising that as reference books and manuscript filing and information retrieval systems proliferated in the long eighteenth century, mundane uses of the commonplace book appear to have diminished, with a remaining emphasis on poems (with the occasional short prose piece) most often copied in their entirety. For many, the commonplace book seems to have become, simply, a “poetry book” or personal anthology.<sup>3</sup>

These are the sorts of books – labelled “personal miscellanies” by Harold Love – on which my chapter will focus. For Love, the term, in distinction to “commonplace book,” indicates “a class of manuscript books into which the compiler entered texts of varying lengths which were either complete units or substantial excerpts.” Following Love, I will generally use the terms “personal miscellany” or “poetry miscellany” even where these books have been classified as commonplace books in a particular collection.<sup>4</sup> In the

books of 1740–1800 that I have examined, attention is paid to fair appearance, with generous spacing of margins, implying that paper is becoming more affordable and its use for such purposes more acceptable. At the same time, the books are more decorated, with title-pages and schemes of underlining and bordering often giving them a unified, fair-copy look. Although title or first-line indices continue to be created for many of them, the emphasis shifts from retrievability of information to creating and preserving a collection with personal meaning. The formulation of a nineteenth-century collector underscores the sameness-in-difference of late eighteenth-century personal miscellanies when he writes in the flyleaf of Bodleian Ms Eng. Poet. e.47 that “this book . . . is the usual poetry book of young people who, at a time when books were dear, copied the poems &c. that pleased them most.” This retrospective view reinforces the continuing principle of selection from reading materials (copying what “pleased them most”) and the practical limitations of access to print that could serve as motivators, while pointing to the narrowly literary character of such collections in the period.

In his study of the Georgian commonplace book as a record of reading, Allan represents reading as a solitary act, a means of individualistic self-construction. Although I rely on a number of Allan’s generalizations in my discussion below, my goal is rather to suggest a methodology for reading the traces of sociable literary culture in personal miscellanies. As Oliver Pickering, the original cataloguer of the Brotherton Collection of eighteenth-century commonplace books at the University of Leeds, has observed, each book has its own story: it is the record of “a unique act of compilation arising out of a particular set of circumstances” and therefore “always more than the sum of its parts.”<sup>5</sup> The “particular set of circumstances” out of which at least some of these books arise is, undoubtedly, the life of a literary coterie; the books thus offer a material history of the coterie that produced them.

This chapter’s discussion of six such books compiled roughly within the years encompassed by my study, 1740–90, will paint a picture of how coterie literary practices persisted, but adjusted to the forms and quantity of printed materials available. They did so by favoring the affective over the mnemonic and analytical and, increasingly, by using print to mediate literary sociability. In other words, the increasing availability of books and newspapers leads to diminished use of script to create general reference compendia in favor of collections designed primarily for personal entertainment and edification and to record and sustain the private life of a group. Thus, a study of sociable literary

practices as revealed in personal miscellanies also illustrates the strategies by which their compilers negotiated the interface between scribal and print practices in this period. The evidence implies a model of reading directed by the content and formats of print, especially periodical print, which often purports to be selective in itself. Keeping pace with the well-documented increase in numbers and distribution of provincial newspapers and literary magazines in the second half of the century, materials recorded are increasingly copied wholesale from such sources, rather than in organized and digested extracts.<sup>6</sup> It is in this sense that the act of selection and copying can be seen as more affective and appreciative than intellectual and educative. Stephen Colclough has argued that the use of printed materials notwithstanding, “such a book was ‘personal’ in the sense that the compiler created an original editorial arrangement of writings by an array of different authors that had originated in a range of different sources. These compilations reveal that their creators assumed the same right to ‘recompose, reapply, add and reorder’ printed texts as they did with manuscript materials.”<sup>7</sup>

Although his focus is on reading first, Allan further identifies a fundamental link between the commonplace tradition and the practices of imitation and invention.<sup>8</sup> Susan Whyman’s concept of “epistolary literacy” is also useful in this regard. In *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800*, a study of the uses of letter-writing in families below the rank of gentry, Whyman devises this term to denote a level of reading and writing skill beyond the baseline measure of signing one’s name; epistolary literacy, while considered as a spectrum, minimally entails an ability to form coherent sentences, a knowledge of certain formal conventions, and a capacity to narrate or give order to content. Whyman’s meticulous research demonstrates that such skill had, to a degree hitherto unrecognized, penetrated not only the farthest geographical reaches of England but the social orders even below the middling sort. Whyman includes in her discussion “the use of letter-writing to satisfy literary objectives,” providing ample evidence of correspondents for whom epistolary went much beyond the merely functional, achieving creative expression and esthetic pleasure through discussion of literary reading, imitative writing, and exchange of copied or original poetry and stories.<sup>9</sup> Although Whyman does not invoke the concept of the coterie, it is clear from her case studies that the most highly developed instances of such literary expression were inherently social, occurring between individuals with a long-standing relationship of kinship or friendship for whom

literary discussion and exchange were a means of solidifying and developing their common interests.

### Literary coteries and the unknown compiler: a methodology

This chapter extends Allan's observations about the link between copying and invention in the commonplace tradition and Whyman's conclusions about widespread epistolary literacy to the supposition that a certain number of individuals keeping personal miscellanies would have preserved within them the marks of their participation in a coterie – a network that practiced the composition, circulation, and collaborative criticism of literary materials of its own, as well as the interpretive reception of works obtained from outside sources. This does not mean that such evidence is definitive or easy to interpret: the traces of a group can be difficult to decipher in an individual book, which is generally written in a single hand (or a chronological sequence of hands if the book is used over several generations), and it would be a mistake to suppose that all poetry compilations reflect a sociable literary model. However, like the letters and occasional pieces exchanged within the networks I have discussed in previous chapters, there are materials in some of these compendia that represent activities used to solidify ties between members of a coterie. In this, these manuscript books continue not only a tradition of active reading but also that noted by scholars Love, Arthur Marotti, and Colclough wherein scribal circulation was used by groups to exchange political and religious views or potentially libelous and obscene writings, or simply to hone the prestigious arts of criticism and composition. As in those earlier cases, original poetry is created and recorded to mark positions, values, and occasions of importance to group members, and the ensemble bolsters the identity and perhaps also the social standing of the group. The typical subject matter of such materials retains strong elements of political satire, spiritual reflection, assessment of relations between the sexes, and expressions of friendship. The genres favored – such as extempore poems, epigrams, riddles, epitaphs, elegies, and above all, occasional poems – are related to various mnemonic or memorializing gestures and therefore to the generalized functions of much eighteenth-century coterie writing.<sup>10</sup>

The remainder of this chapter will provide a detailed analysis of personal miscellanies which display these marks of a sociable origin in varying degrees. The following are features I have used to identify coterie activity (in ascending order of significance) in the manuscript books I have examined:



- 1) *Materials by multiple authors* – whereas some manuscript compilations given the label of commonplace books nevertheless appear to contain only the compiler’s original compositions, perhaps intended for circulation, this does not show indication of collaborative production and discussion.<sup>11</sup>
- 2) *Contemporary materials* – while all books I have examined contain at least some older poetry, active coterie circulation will involve the production and discussion of new literature as well.
- 3) *Material likely obtained through scribal circulation* – poetry which, even if ultimately printed, plausibly originates in scribal exchanges rather than print sources, as evidenced by its earlier dating, its variants from printed versions, or its authorship by persons who are known to be part of the same social network.
- 4) *A mix of materials copied from print and original writing* – the former are generally easiest to identify, even when not attributed, and often make up the majority of such books’ contents; the latter may be attributed explicitly to the book’s compiler or another coterie member, but more often will be veiled with “By a Lady” or a title invoking persons and places that can be related to the compiler in some way. An instance would be the poem titled “To Eliza’s Portrait,” attributed to “Scriblerus June.1789,” in Eliza Chapman’s book, which is discussed below. When such a mixture demonstrates interaction between the copied and original elements – such as thematic clusters of printed and original poems, or the incorporation or imitation of printed poetry in original poems – it most fully reflects the life of an eighteenth-century literary coterie as I have characterized it, involving both critical response to shared reading and the collaborative production and circulation of writing within the group itself.
- 5) *Material with a clear occasional and local reference* – again signaling originality, but also mapping relations between group members onto a spatio-temporal context; an example would be the date of the Scriblerus signature above, or in Eleanor Peart’s book, the pair of poems titled “To My Sister Mary on her Nuptials with The Right Honorable Lord George Sutton Solemniz’d the 6th of February 1768” and “To Miss Ela: Peart on the marriage of her Sister the Right Honble Lady George Sutton February the 6th 1768 by Miss S: Bate.”
- 6) *External corroborating evidence of coterie activity* – in the case of books attached to named, known individuals or books referred to in extant correspondence.

These features will frame my discussion of three manuscript books from the Brotherton Collection held in the University of Leeds Brotherton Library and three from the Bodleian Library of Oxford. All were compiled by individuals or families about whom we know little – in one case, not even a name. This allows me not only to consider the perspective of the writer as reader but also to shift the focus of this study from writers who are well documented in the historical record, generally by virtue of their participation in some form of public life, to those who are obviously educated and of literary tastes, but who represent the larger, more obscure proportion of participants in contemporary literary culture. In this discussion, the personal miscellany figures as a site of interface between the coterie and print; more broadly, the case studies in this chapter reveal the variable configurations of reader-as-author within a shifting media ecology. Rather than provide an argument about changes in the miscellanies over this period, however, I will offer snapshots of how literary sociability manifested itself in personal poetry compilations of the period. Above all, these examples will serve to demonstrate that despite changes in source materials, the appeal of the literary coterie, whether for aspiring urban professionals or for family and friendship circles in country neighborhoods, appears to have been a constant.

### Mary Capell's "Sacred Book": situating and reading a personal miscellany

My first example serves as a bridge between the well-documented Yorke–Grey coterie discussed in the [first chapter](#) of this book and the unknown literary life of a young woman of the aristocracy in the 1740s and 1750s. The evidence provided by this book thus not only enriches what we know from the correspondence record about this coterie but also suggests how such a coterie's literary influence might spread to those connected in some way to its members. Brotherton manuscript Lt 119 is an octavo-sized, calf-bound volume of eighty-seven poems copied entirely in the hand of Mary Capell, who has written her name on the first folio of the book, created an index, and supplied dates as well as attributions written on the verso side opposite most items. Capell (later Lady Forbes) was the niece of Henry Hyde, Viscount Cornbury, whose attachment to Lord Bolingbroke, and thence to the Opposition to Walpole, brought him into contact with Alexander Pope and Charles Hanbury Williams, chief manuscript satirist of the Whig interest. Thus, Capell seems to have had access to poetry available only through scribal circulation, such as several Cornbury poems

that open the volume,<sup>12</sup> Pope's portrait of Atossa (added to his *Epistle to a Lady* only in 1744), and Williams' satires. Laura Runge notes the political flavor of the collection, what she refers to as "poetry concerning public affairs related through intimate knowledge of the great men in government."<sup>13</sup> Capell's correspondence with Thomas Birch, preserved in the Birch papers in the British Library, indicates indeed that such public interests were also her own, related to her family and its Whig tradition. In 1751, Birch sends her manuscripts regarding the alleged fraud surrounding the birth of the Old Pretender and regarding the report of a committee of the House of Lords investigating her great-grandfather's death; she in turn asks him in 1756 for biographical information related to a set of seventeenth-century portraits she seems to have inherited, perhaps at Cornbury's death in 1753, and thanks him in November of 1756 for his account of "the new Kissing-Hands" (that is, the newly formed Ministry), with which she is not very pleased, except for "the Preferment in the Law, which happened some Little time before The Last *Grand-Change*" (likely a reference to Charles Yorke's recent elevation to Solicitor-General).<sup>14</sup>

The latter comment, moving fluidly between public and private interests, is paralleled in the book's contents. The miscellany's relation to the Yorke–Grey coterie is written into its pages, with poem headings such as "Daniell Wray Esquire. Anagram Is Weary, queer, and ill. 1747 – Wrote by Mr. C—Y—e [Charles Yorke]," "Sonnet wrote at the entrance of a Root-House in W—st [Wrest] Gardens. 1751. Wrote by Mr. E—ds [Edwards]," and "To the M—ss of G—y [Marchioness of Grey]. By the Honble. Miss Margt. Y—ke [Yorke]. 1747" that celebrate the central members of the coterie and its physical heart of Wrest Park. All dates provided for poems in the collection fall between 1740 and 1751, encompassing the period of the Yorke–Grey coterie's most active literary production. The miscellany contains thirteen poems attributed to Charles Yorke, at least three by Thomas Edwards, and others by persons more peripherally connected with the Yorke–Grey circle, such as Isaac Hawkins Browne, George Lyttelton, and Soame Jenyns. Attributions that can be added to Capell's own confirm the Yorke–Grey connection: two of the Edwards sonnets – his poetic attack on Warburton ("Tongue-doughty pedant, . . ."), first printed in 1750, and his reflection on the loss of all his siblings ("When pensive on that Portraiture I gaze, . . ."), published in Dodsley's *Collection* in 1748 – are unattributed in the *Collection* and here, but their origin and circulation can be traced in the Yorke–Grey correspondence.<sup>15</sup> The third last poem in Capell's collection – "Blest Bard! To whom the Muses weeping gave/That Pipe, which erst their

dearest Spencer won” – is the Hester Mulso tribute to Edwards that Thomas Birch sent Capell in the exchange already noted in [Chapter 1](#), and discussed further below. Thus, the multiple authors represented in the volume, while including writers widely known in the period, such as Pope, Thomas Gray, Lyttelton, and Williams, create a networked cluster organized into ever-smaller, denser concentric circles, from the anti-Walpole opposition of the 1730s and early 1740s to which the compiler’s uncle and her brother’s future father-in-law Williams belonged, to the loosely interconnected networks of wits surrounding the Yorke brothers, to the inner circle of Charles Yorke, Jemima Grey, Margaret Yorke, and Thomas Edwards.

This concentric structure of varying densities offers a material record of how a literary coterie might form, in the 1740s, out of a complex set of familial, political, and demographic connections. Epistolary evidence links the Capell sisters with Jemima Grey from the time before her marriage, when Grey mentions them in a note to Talbot; through the 1740s when Mary Capell toured the Duke of Bedford around Wrest in its owners’ absence, and the 1750s when the Capell–Birch letters refer familiarly to the teething of Grey’s daughter Amabel and to Grey paying a debt to Birch on Capell’s behalf; all the way to 1780, when Mary Capell as Lady Forbes introduced the second Yorke daughter to her future husband.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that not only poems by members of the Yorke family, such as one by Charles to his father the Lord Chancellor, but also others on political themes, like the facetious Jenyns poem commiserating with Philip’s relief at having emerged from his latest round of electioneering, came to Capell through direct contact with members of the circle. A 1747 flurry of courtship poems by Charles Yorke – including the one quoted in this chapter’s epigraph, addressed “To a Lady on her Love of Poetry. June 8 1747” ([Figure 7.1](#)), and several praising the fair “M—a” (presumably for “Maria”)<sup>17</sup> – hint that Capell might for a time have been the object of his attentions (Charles’s first marriage, to Catherine Freeman, did not take place until 1755).

It would not be surprising if Capell’s own literary talents extended to composition as well as appreciation. The third poem in the collection, “Care Selve Beate, in Pastor Fido, imitated,” is recorded as “Wrote by a Lady,” as are three other early items, including “A Letter from Abelard to Eloisa Copied from the original Manuscript”; the catalogue of the manuscript suggests that all these poems are the product of Capell’s pen. But whatever the case for original composition, Charles Yorke’s address “To a Lady” who “With pains unwearied, in her bloom of Age,/In faithful

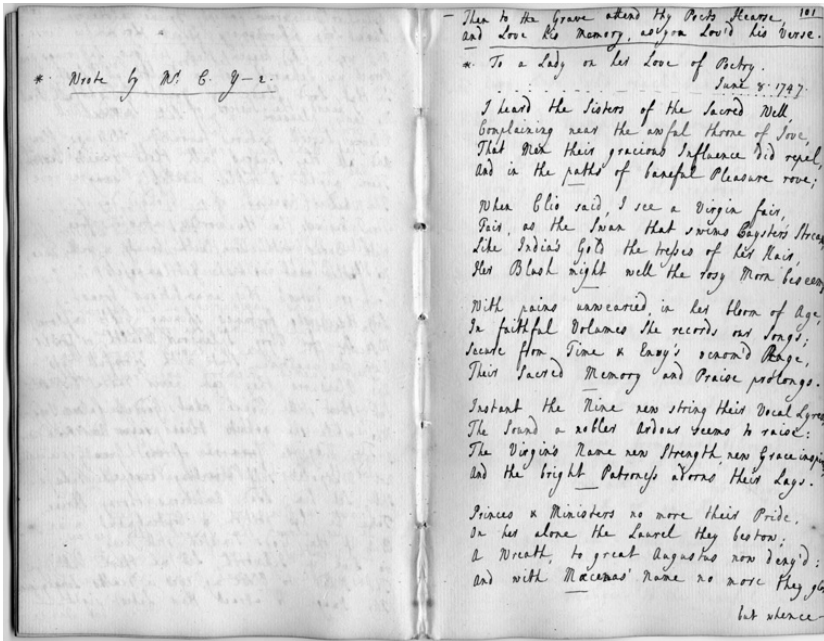


Figure 7.1 From Mary Capell's personal miscellany, "To a Lady on her love of Poetry. June 8, 1747. By Mr. C. Y.—e."

Volumes . . . records our Songs” indicates not only a young woman well known in her circle for her appreciation of poetry but also the role such an individual’s commonplacing could play in a sociable literary network. Birch’s manner of expression in sending her several poems for her “Sacred Book,” first quoted in [Chapter 1](#), further articulates this recording role:

Mrs. Heathcot’s<sup>18</sup> Verses to Lady Grey are accompanied by a very fine Ode, which I mention’d to your Ladyships, of Miss Mulsoe, address’d to Mr. Edwards on Occasion of some of his Sonnets in the Style & Manner of Spenser, particularly one to Mr. Richardson, prefix’d to the last Edition of his *Clarissa*. It was communicated to me under the Restriction, of not multiplying Copies: But I cannot deny it the Honour of a place in Lady Mary’s Quarto, which consigns such pieces to Immortality.

Capell replies that “Miss Mulsoe’s Ode, & that of Mrs. Heathcote, we were much pleased with, & I have copied them into the *Sacred Book*; As also The Report of the Committee, & the Letter to Coll: Southby.”<sup>19</sup> Clearly,

Capell's commonplacing of poetry gleaned from her social networks was endorsed as an integral element of coterie life. As a result, Capell's "Sacred Book" reveals a great deal about the circulation of manuscripts in the Yorke–Grey coterie and the more extended networks with which it overlapped. It provides us with a window into a very active site of literary production and exchange, almost completely separate from the world of print, one in which it is in the power of the reader-compiler to "consign[] such pieces [as Mulso's] to Immortality."<sup>20</sup>

### Thomas Phillibrown's London coterie

A very different sort of coterie from precisely the same time period is reflected in the personal miscellany of Thomas Phillibrown, Jr., held in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University.<sup>21</sup> Of more modest social status than Capell, Phillibrown was a man of business based in London who found it important to contextualize his own life in relation to the public worlds of contemporary politics and the arts. In the former case, he created a book he titled "A chronological & historical Account of material Transactions & Occurrences in my time" which covers the period from March 26, 1720 (apparently his birthdate) to December 5, 1758. According to Phillibrown's own elaborate title-page, he uses "Salmon's Chronological History. Vol. 2d. the 3d ed. publish'd. 1747" to supply a list of events such as Lord Mayors' elections and processions, theater riots, the building of public works, and developments during the 1745 Rebellion into which he inserts his own eyewitness vantage points.<sup>22</sup> Conveniently for the researcher, this book also provides external corroboration of Phillibrown's artistic life. Phillibrown valued his connections with writers, musicians, and other artistic professionals – or aspiring professionals – enough to record their exchanges and productions in a second book he entitled "Miscellanies" and dated March 11, 1740/1 (although its dated entries precede this point by several years and continue into the 1750s). The recurrent attributions – these include John Hawkins (later Sir John), Moses Browne, William Boyce, John Pike, Richard Dyer, Foster Webb, and one or more "Mr. Scotts" – together with the nature of the book's contents create a portrait of an urban coterie of young men perhaps not very different from William Shenstone, who at this time was frequenting London theaters and coffee-houses hoping to meet influential people and overhear discussions of his most recent poem, or Samuel Johnson, who was similarly seeking to make his way in the London print trade.<sup>23</sup> There are copies of verses on "'The Life of a Beau.' Sung by Mrs Clive,"

“On Mr Quin—by Mr Foster Webb,” with a side-note referencing the 1743 theater quarrels between Thomas Sheridan and Theophilus Cibber, and “From ye Daily Advertiser Aug<sup>r</sup>.4:1743” a copy of verses “To Cydonia. An Invitation to Vaux-Hall-Gardens” attributed to R. (Richard) Dyer.

While it is likely that a number of these items were copied straight from the magazines because they appealed to the compiler for some reason, at least some of the entries provide a backstory to their printing, thereby offering a glimpse into the scribal system to which the magazines were linked. Thus, an essay “On Politeness. To the Author of the Westminster Journal . . . By Thomas Touchit, of Spring-Gardens, Esqr” is attributed to “J.H.” (Hawkins) and copied along with the contributor’s cover note and an unsigned acknowledgment from the editor inviting “the Repetition of such Favours” (f. 22); a similar letter signed by Edward Cave and dated December 16, 1740, is headed “To Mr John Hawkins on his having sent severall Dissertations to the Gent: Magazine.” A later item carries the headnote “Horace. Lib.1.r Ode 34 paraphrastically translated By Mr Foster Webb. pub. Gent. Mag. 1742 page 46.” At least one of the several periodical essays attributed to Hawkins notes the price paid to him for the submission. Other paratexts further demonstrate how periodical publication was linked through coterie networks to other commercial artistic enterprises; for example, the entry headed “Daily Adv:<sup>r</sup> Saturday Feb:21:1741. To Mr John Stanley. Occasion’d by looking over some Compositions of his lately published” carries the explanatory note “made by Mr Jn<sup>o</sup> Hawkins” and an identification of the Stanley work in question as “Eight Solo’s for a German Flute.”<sup>24</sup>

But there is more to the coterie–magazine interface than simply the movement of copy from one medium to the other: the two mirror one another as systems of conventions and social practices. An entry I have not found in a magazine source presents the quatrain

Can Man possess a greater Curse  
Than to possess an empty Purse?  
Yes; with abundance to be blest,  
And not enjoy the Power to taste.

as “Spoken extempore” by “J.M.” – reflecting typical coterie appreciation of verbal wit. Yet such an entry is just as likely to originate not from a coterie but from a periodical, as in the case of “From ye Gent: Mag: 1731. The following Verses were found written in ye window of Miss Fanny Braddock at Bath. a Lady of 6000£ Fortune who Hang’d herself in a Girdle Sept 8:1731 haveing met with unlucky Chance at Gameing,” which is

followed by an extempore imitation, also taken from the same article, by a gentleman who addresses “O Dice!” where the unfortunate lady had apostrophized “O Death!” On another occasion, Phillibrown records an epigram titled “Mr. C—y’s Apology for knocking out a News-boy’s Teeth” as by “A.B.” and signed “T. L—an,” a double attribution that miscopies the *Gentleman’s Magazine’s* attribution of the poem to “T. S—an” (that is, Thomas Sheridan), while at the same time hinting at insider knowledge of the poem as composed, or submitted to the magazine, by “A.B.” Print in these cases is not so much a source of the miscellany’s materials as a single element in a complex pattern of circulation.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, such printings, misattributions and all, likely originate themselves in the wide circulation and preservation in the commonplace form of admired poetic performances. Thus, a poem in Phillibrown’s book bringing the twelve signs of the zodiac into the compass of ten lines celebrating “a Zodiack of mirth” does not appear in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* but turns up in sources well into the nineteenth century in association with John Flamsteed (or Flamstead), the seventeenth-century founder of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich; Phillibrown gives it the headnote: “Mr Brown [perhaps an attribution to the legendary Restoration rhymers Thomas Browne] being at an Entertainment at Dr Flamsteads, ye famous Astrologer in Green-wich Park & was desir’d to divert ye Company with something extempore, upon which he pen’d the following Lines.”<sup>26</sup> Intermediation works both ways: manuscript-exchanging networks serve as the origin and site of extempore poetry-making, while print complications such as the *Gentleman’s Magazine* reinforce and propagate such practices. In this way, Phillibrown’s book demonstrates that Ezell’s description of the coterie-periodical equilibrium of the 1690s remains apt fifty years later: “the old shell is not discarded but adapted, permitting the essentially communal and reciprocal principles of coterie, amateur literary practices to flourish in the new commercial medium, giving vitality to the new shape while sustaining the social dynamic of the old.”<sup>27</sup>

Even the direct interactions between members of this urban coterie can be transmediated. In one case, “A Song by Mr John Hawkins Set to Musick by Mr Boyce Organist to the King’s Chappell at St. James’s” is followed by two letters from Boyce responding to the unknown author’s publication of the lyrics he has set. In another case, Phillibrown follows a transcription of the John Donne sonnet “For Godsake hold your Tongue, & let me love” by a pair of imitations attributed to “Mr Foster Webb 1741” and “Mr J. Hawkins 1741,” and then notes that “Mr. Hawkins sent the 2 foregoing Sonnets No 1&2 to Mr Moses Browne (a very



ingenious Author of several Poems, & who won most of ye prices [sic] in ye Gent. Mag. & some time stiles him self under ye Name of Astrophil) desireing his Judgement upon them.” Browne’s relative position in the authorial hierarchy here is signaled by his print-based recognition.<sup>28</sup>

As in the case of Mary Capell’s own poetic impulses and the possible role of Charles Yorke’s romantic interest in her literary life, it is difficult to determine which works, if any, in Phillibrown’s miscellany offer hints of his own literary attempts and the changing profile of his coterie over time. Although no entries are explicitly identified as his compositions, the book takes such pains to provide sources for many of its entries that it is plausible to suppose at least some of the items for which it remains silent are by Phillibrown himself. For example, in the very early folios of the book there is a thematic series on death and the afterlife framed by two accounts of suicide taken from *The Old Whig* and *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (cited above). Within this frame are found a transcription of a birthday prayer of gratitude, “In Diem Natalem – by Miss Carter of Deal,” suggesting access to the poem before its print publication in 1738, and a couple of unattributed poems – “On Purgatory” and a verse translation of the Latin “Ne sis tantus cessatur, ut calcaribus indegeas,” which carries the tag “Done as an Exercise at Trinity-College, Cambridge.” Other tantalizing hints are several items signed “T.F.,” perhaps for “Thomas Phillibrown,” including one dated 1754, more than a decade after the dates of most of the compilation’s items.

A series of generally positive items related to Dissenting preachers and the Dissenting burial ground of Bunhill Fields correlates with the “chronological & historical Account’s” records for the early 1750s of the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield. In one case the miscellany compiler goes to great lengths to bring his personal experience and connections into a headnote that becomes almost a biographical retrospective:

The Fire-Side; by Dr Cotton, of St Albans. Dtor Cotton Married the Elder Sister, of my Old Schoolfellow Mr George Pembrook, of St Albans. She was a Beautifull, fine Young Lady; when I was at School at St. Albans in ye Years 1728, 1729, & 1730. She was highly admired by all our School Boys, & went by the universal Title, of the pritty Miss Pembrook. Happy was he! who was favour’d with being in her Company; which Honour I my self have been favour’d with several times, at the House of my Dancing Master Mr Donvill at St Albans; at whose House we used to prepare for, & keep our Balls. And with which Lady I have had the pleasure to Dance in particular the *Chain-Minuet*; as well as various Country Dances &c. at our several Meetings at the Above Dancing Master’s House.

The following Lines, my Brother Copied in the Study of the Revrd. Mr Folliot, Dissenting Minister of St. Edmonds Bury 1755. Mrs Cotton has been Dead some Years, & left several Children. The Revd. Mr Folliot Died in the Year 1756.

I Copied ye following, from my Brother's. Manuscript; March 21. 1757.<sup>29</sup>

Equally informative with regard to Phillibrown's literary affiliations is the distribution of materials in his collection: the works recorded appear fairly miscellaneous in their attributions until roughly halfway through the entries, when Hawkins first makes his appearance in the above-mentioned letter from Cave, dated December 16, 1740. It is from this point on that Hawkins, Webb, and Pike become regulars in the book, suggesting the formation of a literary coterie. Webb's untimely death in February 1744 at the age of twenty-one is recorded in the form of several notes and a copy of Hawkins' character of his friend, published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*; this event seems to signal the demise of this circle. It is at this point that later entries in the book, after an apparent gap of about five years, include comparisons of, anecdotes about, and poems by Dissenting ministers of the London area. Some of these are in a later, larger hand, often glued over earlier items from the coterie portion of the miscellany, such as "Fritters Misused by Mr. Scott" and "Mr. Scott on ye loss of his Cloaths," whose titles in the index suggest frivolity.

The personal miscellanies of Mary Capell and Thomas Phillibrown, then, record a mid-century coterie culture that was active in both elite and middle-class circles, and in which multiplex social, political/religious, geographical, and literary links reinforced one another. They also demonstrate the facilitating roles played by both material and associational factors, whether country houses, schools, London-based publications such as the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dissenting culture, or Whig alliances, as what Bruno Latour would designate "actors" in the creation and form of social networks.<sup>30</sup> Phillibrown's personal miscellany offers the further confirmation that the world of print was not in tension with coterie networks; rather, printing provided an outlet for the literary productions of coterie members and was a source of pride, suggesting that it was seen to further the standing of the group. This interface with print appears most seamless and direct in the case of periodical forms, however; Phillibrown's manuscript does not appear to include excerpts from any anthologies or books. In my remaining discussion of poetry miscellanies compiled by obscure individuals later in the century, periodical literature will be found to continue in its central role, even in some cases becoming the mediator of coterie culture itself. Whereas in the Phillibrown book the periodical press

functions primarily to extend and enhance the sociable literary exchange of his coterie, in some of the cases discussed below, materials from periodicals serve as the stimulus of coterie production, or even suggest the possibility of a farflung “virtual coterie.” At the same time, anthologies such as Dodsley’s *Collection* or printed volumes by popular poets like John Langhorne take their place alongside the periodicals in influence.

**“Friendship the Artless Song Admir’d”: the Peart-Bate  
coterie records itself**

In 1768, somewhere in the neighborhood of Stamford in Lincolnshire, a young woman named Sally Bate, aged about eighteen years, was invited by her sister Arabella to recount how she became a poet. Responding to “Stella” in the voice of her coterie persona “Hebe,” Sally offers a variation on the story of origin well rehearsed by poets such as Pope (in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*), explaining that in her twelfth year the pastoral beauty around her inspired her to compose verses, but that it was her intimate social connections that nurtured her poetic development:

Parental fondness did the Verse approve,  
E’en trifles please us, when from those we Love:  
To Friendship next I thought twas due to pay  
The Cheerful Tribute of a Well Meant Lay;  
Friendship the Artless Song Admir’d  
And then, a Second, and a third desir’d,  
Thus Imperceptibly one Verse like thought,  
Or Links upon a Chain, another brought.

The chain of Sally Bate’s verses, along with those of Eleanor Peart and Peart’s brother Joshua, is preserved in the Bodleian Library as Ms. Eng. Poet. e.28, titled “A Collection of Poems by various Hands, but chiefly by Mr Peart, and Miss Sally Bate and Copy’d out in this Book by Miss Eleanor Peart in 1768.”<sup>31</sup> Although the kinds of external corroboration available for the Capell and Phillibrown miscellanies do not appear to be available for the Peart–Bate circle, this coterie displays a strong predilection for poetry that is not simply occasional – that is, commemorating privately significant events through titles and headnotes – but downright autobiographical, as represented by the Sally Bate poem cited above. In addition, this group’s writers feel no compunction about displaying their love of versifying, openly acknowledging their own and their addressees’ identities. Even a love of pastoral names can only partially obscure these, given the regular repetition of “Hebe” and “Stella,” already noted, and also

“Damon” (Joshua Peart), “Diane” or “Diana” (another name for Arabella Bate), and “Flora” or “Ellen” (Eleanor Peart).

As a result, much can be learned about the coterie simply from what its members tell us. In addition to their geographical location in the area around Stamford, references in their poetry reveal links to the locally influential Earl of Exeter and Duke of Rutland, and thence to area MPs and landowners. Nevertheless, the poems in the collection begin with hints of tragedy and misfortune: a friend is dangerously ill; a Mrs. Bate, perhaps mother to Sally and Arabella, dies; the Peart siblings (there are five of them: Elizabeth, Anna, Mary, Eleanor, and Joshua) have experienced hardship; several of the sisters seem to be living with an uncle while Joshua is studying the law in Lincoln’s Inn. A joyful change ensues in late 1767 when one of the sisters, Mary, is chosen by Sir George Sutton, third son of the Duke of Rutland, as his future wife, establishing a new center of poetic and sociable pleasures at Kelham, the couple’s home. Much of this information is communicated through the verse epistles the group takes pleasure in composing. The most generically self-conscious of these, “A Versical Letter from Mr Peart to his Sister Miss Eleanor Peart, Written Octo the 29th 1767,” begins:

Since You, my Dear Nelly have got such a Knack  
Of writing Prose Letters, as twere in a Crack,  
Nay so much this agreeable Art you excel in,  
So fluent your language, so true is yr spelling,  
That I really believe, you can write Letters four,  
Whilst others write one, I mean in an Hour;  
I now have a wish for the Sake of a Whim,  
(Since I’ve time on my Hands, and my Muse is in Trim)  
To know, if as ready, and in as small time,  
As you Scribble in prose, you can Scribble in Rhime,  
To give an Example, for want of a better,  
Myself have now sent a Poetical Letter,  
And sure better Manners my Elinor knows,  
Than to answer Versaic Epistles in prose.

The fluid, if not especially refined, versification of this epistle speaks to the ease with which the coterie’s members move into the poetic idiom, and also to the confidence they feel that their audience’s social pleasure will be enhanced by the wit and skill of such metrical communications. A similar effect, presumably, would have been achieved when Eleanor Peart accompanied her gift to Arabella Bate of “an Elegant Book” in which to write her sister’s poems with verses in praise of both sisters, concluding:

Go Thou, then beauteous Emblematic Book,  
And bid thy Lovely Owners, on thee look,  
Go tell my Diana, her Flora sends  
In thee, the Model of her much lov'd Friends,  
Thy fair outside, most beautifully neat,  
In outward form resemble them! Compleat,  
Thy spotless form within, unblemish'd as refin'd  
So Just a faithful Copy of their Mind  
For they in Virtue shine, as elegantly bright  
As Thou in all thy Folds of dazling White  
Tell! Ah Tell the much lov'd pair,  
As Diane thour't pure, as Hebe fair.<sup>32</sup>

Given their confidence and pleasure in celebrating their own coterie life through poetry, members of the Peart–Bate circle initially appear less dependent than Thomas Phillibrown on inspiration from the larger world of print. This impression, however, is somewhat deceiving – what we see here is an ingrained habit of imitation that does not require explicit highlighting. I have already noted the coterie's reliance on pastoral models for conveying poetic inspiration and sentiments of friendship, especially in Sally Bate's case. In a more particular case, her long 1768 heroic-couplet poem "The Butterfly, the Snail, and the Bee," addressed "To Modern Travellers," explicitly invokes Aesop's fables, but also echoes the satire in Book IV of Pope's *Dunciad* of the young man returned from the Grand Tour who has "saunter'd Europe round" and "gather'd ev'ry Vice on Christian ground":

Ought worth your knowledge you reject with scorn,  
Ape foreign Follies, and their Vices learn,  
Then when the stated Tour you've wander'd oer,  
But added nothing unto Wisdom's Store,  
Home ye return our homage to require,  
As if we could our Country's Shame admire.

Bate's butterfly also visits Hagley, the Leasowes, and Stowe, and the author would certainly have been aware of contemporary celebrations of the gardens and poetry of Lyttelton and Shenstone. In fact, one of the relatively few publicly circulated poems Eleanor Peart includes in her book is "The Squirrel's of Hagley Park to Miss Warburtons Squirrel by Lord Littleton. – in 1763," followed by "The Answer," dated May 17, 1763.<sup>33</sup> While a mildly moralizing satire by Lyttelton of his roving son Thomas, now affianced to a Miss Warburton, the poem seems to serve in this collection as a preamble to the next poem but one, "An Epitaph by

Mr Peart on my favrite Squirrel being drown'd in a Tub of Water – 1763,” a similar effort at moralizing that combines the theme of women’s domestication of squirrels with allusions to Gray’s famous caution, in his “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat,” against undisciplined desires in the female sex. In a final example, when Sally and Arabella Bate exchange a series of poems on the subject of the dangers of love for women, Arabella absorbs several lines from a popular contemporary poem by John Langhorne, redirecting to her own interlocutor the lines “With sense enough for half your sex beside,/ With just no more than necessary pride,” addressed by Langhorne to Mrs. Gillman.<sup>34</sup> In other words, this poetic miscellany, like the others discussed in this chapter, preserves acts of poetic creation and exchange that are fully embedded in the broader literary culture of the period, one that is encountered largely through print sources. As noted by Colclough, the coterie’s members make that culture their own through their acts of arrangement, application, and recomposition.

### An Oxford gentleman: print-mediated sociability

From the detailed and explicit self-representations of the Peart–Bate coterie, I turn now to a collection on the opposite end of the spectrum, whose traces of literary sociability are mediated by, and perhaps even exist solely in, printed forms. Brotherton manuscript Lt 99 is somewhat of a tangle, in that it may be the work of at least two unnamed compilers whose hands are not easy to distinguish and whose entries are interwoven. Nevertheless, the materials seem to have been collected in the relatively condensed period of *c.* 1770–89 and are similar in nature, so whether the book was produced by two simultaneous contributors or two in close succession, with the second filling gaps left by the first, I will discuss it as a whole. The book has a title, “Old Songs & other Poems,” which characterizes the main items, and indeed, the collection begins with a series of songs, ballads, and versified psalms, some accompanied by parallel translations into Latin and others entirely in Latin. Elaborate footnotes to the first poem include a discussion of coping with deafness based on “Experience and Reason,” the second and third poems represent old age from two different women’s perspectives, and the speaker in “Advice to Chloe” asserts that love may endure to old age, all together suggesting the compiler’s advanced age. Interspersed with the poems are many miscellaneous epitaphs, riddles, and short prose pieces. The overall impression is of the kinds of word games and themes of interest to a man of some education,

pursuing miscellaneous subjects – good and bad wives, memorials of heroic men, Roman medals, living a good life, and the deaths of humble folk – though none to great depth.

There is, however, a more specific contextual reference point unifying the compilation's otherwise disparate contents: many items are explicitly associated in some way with Oxford University, beginning with "The Admonition" of a college bursar and "A la Doggrel," a facetious Latin response attributed to Herbert Beaver, a mid-century chaplain of Christ Church known for his humorous poetry, and including a parody of Gray's *Elegy*, set at dusk in an Oxford college, ascribed to Thomas Warton but in fact by John Duncombe. Some of these pieces are good candidates, in their occasional and specific referentiality, for traditional practices of manuscript circulation among networks of current and former students. These might include a riddle prefaced by the note "The following Ænigma was sent by Mr Beaver in return to a friend for a barrel of oysters with these lines . . . ," a mock-archaic poem headed "Verses in the Pump-Room at Bath. Said to be written by a Gentleman of Oxford"; the Gray parody (which varies from other versions of the same poem); and a series of six poems dated December 1777 to January 1778 arising out of a recent scandalous ball at Oxford.

In earlier decades, such materials would have signaled an Oxford-based scribal coterie resembling that of the Yorke brothers' Cambridge circle, and there is evidence in the volume to suggest that this is likely the source of some of the materials. One of these is a prose piece entitled "Memoirs of Mr. Edwd. Thwaites" at the end of which is noted "Taken from a Letter of Mr Ballards, by Memory." This Mr. Ballard is presumably George Ballard, the Oxford antiquarian who had died in 1755. Mr. Thwaites is described as a man of great learning and personal attractions, but the main focus is his courage during the amputation of his leg, and the fact that upon hearing of this, Queen Anne made him present of £100, and appointed him Greek Professor. A letter presenting essentially the same information but in altered phrasing and sequence is printed in John Nichols' 1814 *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* as "a few anecdotes, addressed by Mr. Brome to Dr. Charlett soon after [Thwaites's] death" in 1707, suggesting that this material circulated in several variants early in the century and was perhaps rediscovered and recirculated by Ballard.<sup>35</sup> About one-third of the way into the collection, however, the occasional attributions (like those to Beaver and Warton, but also to Dean Swift and Lord Chesterfield – the latter probably spurious) give way to explicitly named magazine sources: *The Christian's Magazine*, *The Lady's Magazine*, *The Critical Review*, *The Reading Paper*, *The London*

*Chronicle* – this compiler was not choosy. Near the end of the book, two anthologies put in an appearance as well – “Fuller’s Worthies London,” presumably the three-volume “History of Worthies of England,” first published in 1662, and “Nicholls Poems Vol 2d,” a 1780–81 anthology from which the compiler copied a 1700 poem, “An Hymn by Mr Chas Hopkins About an hour before his death, when in great pain,” which had been reprinted frequently throughout the century. These attributions cast backward doubt on the apparent scribal provenance of some of the earlier materials, which might have been obtained through anthologies and, especially, periodical publications, of which this compiler appears to have been a diligent reader. As already argued, however, the increasing importance of newspapers and magazines as sources for miscellany entries does not obviate the expressive potential of acts of selection. Thus, in the case of the “Oxford” gentleman copying the Hopkins poem, although he provides “Nicholls Poems Vol 2d” as his source, these verses also appeared in *The Student or the Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany* of 1751. Given the fact that this is the final complete item in the book, it is tempting to imagine that the compiler was recalling the poem from his youth when, on “March 9 1787,” the date he inscribes at the end of the poem, some circumstance of his own led him to retrieve a century-old expression of faith in the face of pain and approaching death.

In this way enigmatic notations such as the dating of a poem can be taken to point to significant events in the compiler’s life. A converse effect of the increasing reliance on periodical sources for commonplace entries, however, is an obscuring of chronology: although the magazine sources cited generally include a date, this appears to serve as a finding aid, rather than as an indicator of the date on which the material was actually read and/or copied. The publication dates provided in Lt 99 proceed in a slow and zigzagging fashion from 1776 to the late 1780s, while interspersed undated material can be traced to publication as late as the time of copying or as early as 1640. Thus, a broader implication of this fundamental shift toward periodicals and anthologies as sources is to put pressure on the very definition of the coterie as a temporally located formation. One might argue that like those readers who came to know and love “Shenstone” through Dodsley and the magazines, discussed in [Chapter 4](#), the unknown compiler(s) of Lt 99 participated in a disembodied and atemporal community, a virtual coterie, mediated by print and loosely linked by an interest in matters pertaining to Oxford university.



### Eliza Chapman and Mrs. C. W—ll: coterie engaging print

If my discussion of the Oxford gentleman implies a historical shift away from the embodied literary sociability that I have used to define the scribal coterie, such a conclusion would be premature. For my final two examples of this chapter, I have chosen compilations from the very end of my study period that paint a much sharper picture of literary sociability, despite the fact that their chief compilers are, again, essentially unknown.<sup>36</sup> Like Mary Capell, Thomas Phillibrown, and Eleanor Peart, Eliza Chapman chose to identify herself with her book, preserved in the Bodleian Library as Ms. Montagu e.14: she entered her name along with a finely drawn device on the flyleaf (Figure 7.2) and gave the volume a title, “Poetry, Selected and Original. 1788 & 1789.” (The book in fact also includes poems dated 1790 and 1793, copied in the same hand, which are written into the opening pages of the volume and to which I will refer below.) Like members of the Peart–Bate circle, Chapman was clearly well read in good poetry; her book records the work of such widely respected eighteenth-century authors as Elizabeth Carter, Charlotte Smith, James Beattie, John Langhorne, Thomas Percy, and Robert Burns. Again, little is known about Chapman except that she (and/or her suitor Scriblerus) had some connection to the Warminster area, since two of the volume’s poems are dated from there. Chapman does indicate magazines and anthologies as sources of some of her copied poems – one item, for example, is headed “A Winter-Piece (Elegant Extracts)” – but these are proportionately far fewer than those in the Oxford gentleman’s book, and the paucity of such references suggests they were not her primary source of reading material; sequences of poems by one writer, such as the opening group of Burns works, point rather to books.

Balancing this “Poetry, Selected” is the “Poetry, . . . Original” of Chapman’s title: items of her own composition and those of “Scriblerus,” the man who may have become her husband at some point during or just after the compiling of the book. Scriblerus (or Scriblerus Secundus) is the most represented poet in its pages, notably in a series of tender and heartfelt poems addressed directly to “Eliza”: in the voices of her pet birds, in the guise of her portrait, and in poems written to her while she sleeps. Some of these poems appeal for their inventive whimsy, as does “To Eliza; From her favorite Robin Found in his Cage. Mar 1789,” in which her pet robin says he has long wished to express his gratitude to her for saving him from death and feeding him, and then concludes:

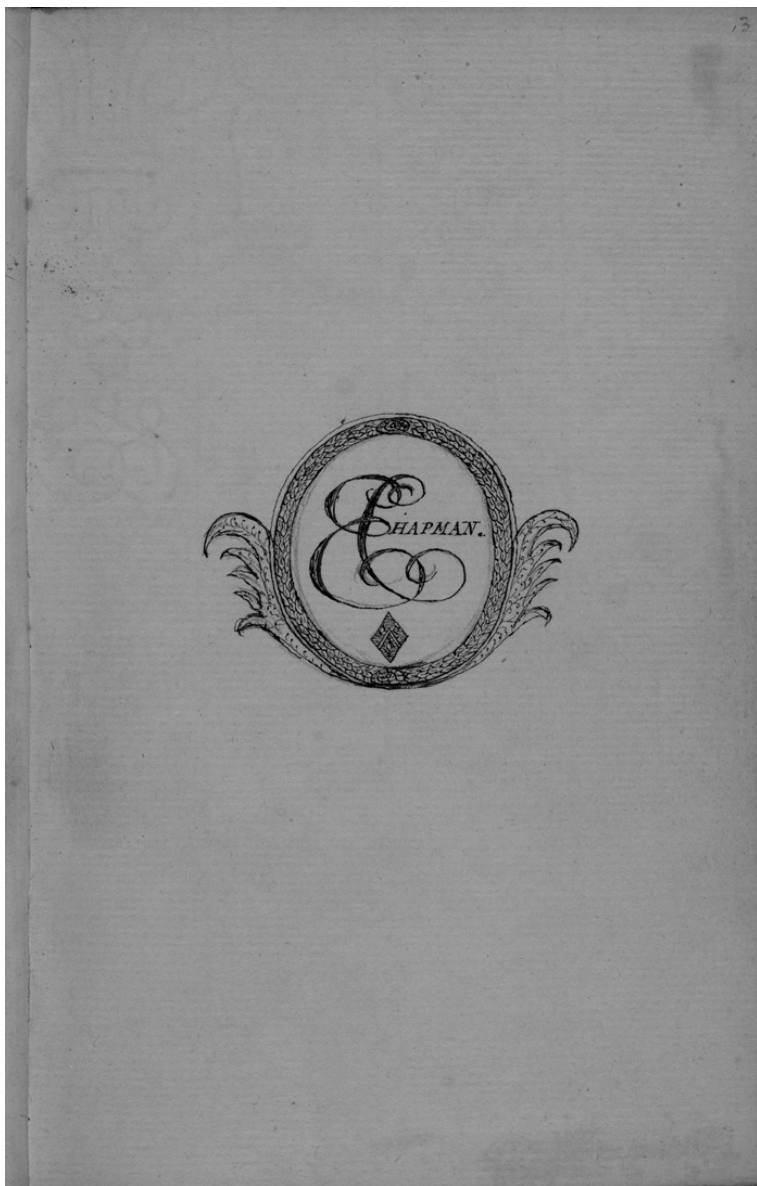


Figure 7.2 Eliza Chapman, "Poetry, Selected & Original. 1788 & 1789," frontispiece.

At length I found a mortal breast  
With kindred Sentiments imprest;  
A breast, tho' human, which can prove  
The force of Gratitude and Love:  
To him I sung; his bosom beat  
With sympathetic thoughts replete;  
He felt, and understood the strain  
I bade him thus my notes explain.  
With joy my orders he obey'd  
But, like a Lawyer, would be paid,  
He's therefore to the Post preferr'd  
Of Secretary to your bird.

The poem is signed “ROBIN. Counter-sign'd Scriblerus Sec.”<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, an undercurrent of sadness and mystery runs through the sequence, in poems like the “Sonnet” depicted in [Figure 7.2](#), as Scriblerus repeatedly complains of endless ills and the need to regulate his passions by reference to Eliza's example of steady virtue. This may well be a lover's poetic hyperbole, but the strain of unhappiness is echoed ominously by the two prefatory poems, dated 1790 and 1793 and both signed “T.E.T.,” which seem written to bolster Eliza's courage in the face of a state of poverty and disenfranchisement. T.E.T. is addressed in the collection proper in a poem by “E.S.T.” dated January 4, 1789 – a birthday poem lamenting the sorrow that has engulfed them. In a book with such a small group of coterie contributors, it is plausible that E.S.T. is Eliza herself before her marriage, addressing a brother. This conjecture would be supported by an interpretation of Scriblerus's headnote to a poem by Langhorne – “A Character/ By Dr. Langhorne/ Now address to E.C./ Whom it suits to a T.” – as a play on Eliza's maiden name, if her married name is Chapman. Eliza herself, though she clearly cherished Scriblerus's poems and proudly recorded her own name as the author of several occasional poems accompanying gifts to godchildren (see [Figure 7.3](#)), copies no poems from herself to Scriblerus into the book. Did she ultimately reject Scriblerus? Did he die shortly before or after their marriage? Did poverty prevent their union or make it unhappy?

Given these unknowns, Eliza and Scriblerus's tantalizing relationship is most clearly transmitted to us through the poetry they wrote, just as it is mediated for themselves by the poetry they exchange and discuss together. Thus, Burns's song beginning “From thee, Eliza, I must go” struck an obvious chord. Scriblerus's just-cited headnote to the Langhorne poem “A Character,” originally titled “To Mrs. Gillman,” is accompanied by an alteration of the poem's tenth line to address “Eliza” rather than

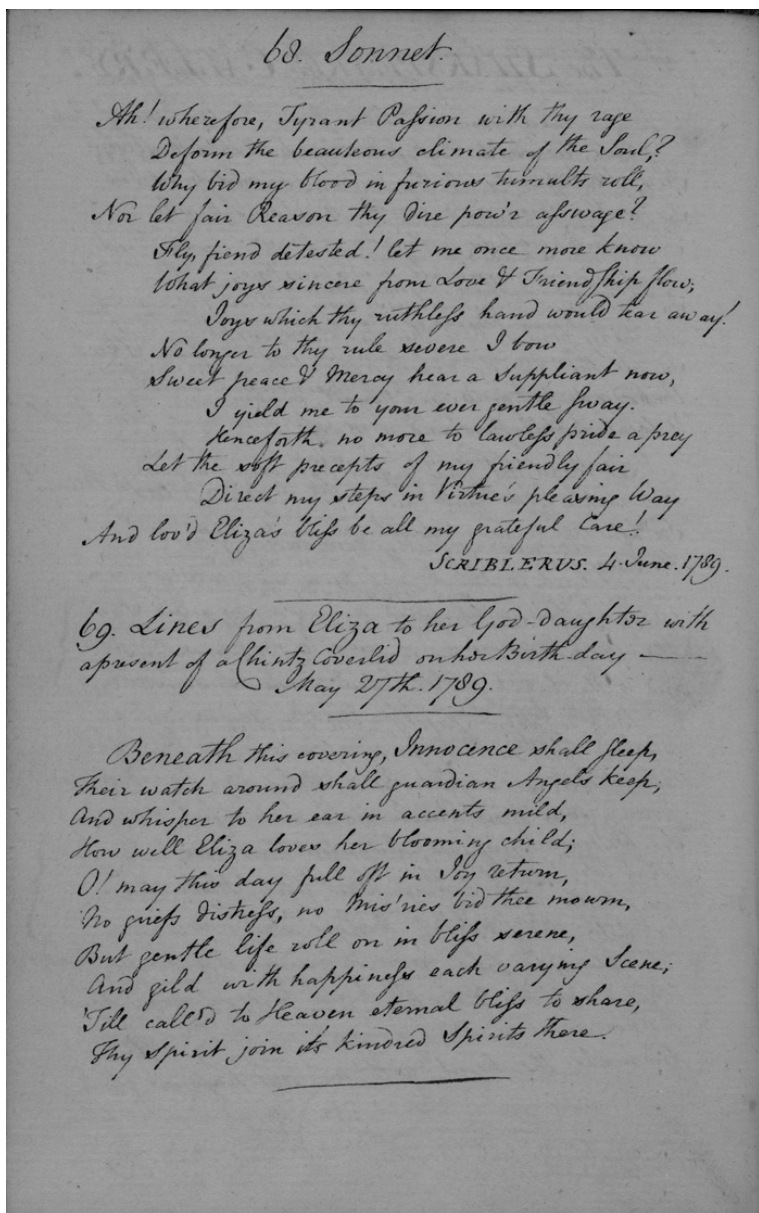


Figure 7.3 From Eliza Chapman's personal miscellany, "Sonnet" by Scriblerus, "Lines from Eliza to her God-daughter," and "The Shakespeare Gallery," by Scriblerus.

70. *The SHAKSPEARE GALLERY.*<sup>50</sup>\*

Rise, honour'd Poet, from thy hallow'd bed,  
 Here Shakspeare, lift thy laurel-crowned head!  
 See, worthy thine, and worthy Britain's praise,  
 The tribute Genius to thy merit pays:  
 Here thy conceptions all to Nature true,  
 In Painters' living colours rise to View;  
 The airy beings here thy fancy wrought  
 In all the daring excellence of thought,  
 Embodied by her Magic pencil, claim  
 "A local habitation and a name"

Let Beaupert just arrest thy wond'ring eyes,  
 Who rack'd with guilt and pain expiring lies;  
 "See how the prangs of death do make him grin!"  
 The busy fiend awakes the worm within;  
 He dies Calentlepe! wad Ambition's fate,  
 Which shoud'ring Nature trembles to relate.  
 Here Reynolds all his wonted pow'rs displays  
 And to the heart the dreadful scene conveys.

But lo! where Fuseli, with sportive grace,  
 Finds his light pencil fairy revels trace,  
 Peace-blossom, blessing, every elf & fay  
 Throng round their Queen all eager to obey!  
 See Bottom's hairy face, and monstrous ears,  
 What life, what Spirit in the whole appears,  
 How gay the mimicry, how free, how well,  
 No numbers Shakspeare, but thine own can tell.

Yet, when bright Fancy's pleasing dream is o'er,  
 What pencil, can like his, assume the pow'r  
 The horror of each Tragic Scene to show,  
 And make the heart with varying passions glow?  
 Lehen

\* Open'd by M. Alderman Boydell, in Pall Mall, May 1789.

Figure 7.3 (cont.)

“Gillman.”<sup>38</sup> Such affective messaging through poetry is founded upon a shared appreciation of both Burns and Langhorne, who feature prominently in the miscellany’s poetry selections. Other transactions are critical or educative: Scriblerus contributes a poem written at Warminster in August of 1788, inspired by Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*, and he adds explanatory notes to others, referencing *The Spectator* in relation to one of his own compositions and James Beattie’s Christianizing revisions as a note to *The Hermit*. Scriblerus’ poem “The Shakespeare Gallery” (Figure 7.3) combines references to Shakespeare plays with a celebration of the newly opened Boydell Shakespeare Gallery in London. Eliza Chapman’s book, then, reflects how coterie literary life might be conducted at the end of the 1780s in a kind of dialog with the poetry issuing from the press through both books and magazines and even with contemporary literary events. Informed and inspired by what is read, seen, and discussed, the coterie on a very private scale continues to produce and exchange original, handwritten poems as the medium best suited to express, enhance, and preserve both the momentous and the quotidian occurrences of domestic life.

At about the same time as Scriblerus’s voice fell silent – in May of 1790 – a woman by the name of “Mrs. C. W—ll” wrote a poem to another “Mrs. W—ll” beginning:

As late in pensive Mood I lonely sat  
Excluded form the World, & social chat,  
Fancy tript in, with Mirror clear to shew  
What two sweet Buds wou’d be when in full blow,<sup>39</sup>

going on to imagine the ideal future qualities of the addressee’s two daughters. This poem, with its occasional title of “Verses Address’d To Mrs. W—ll by A Lady Mrs. C. W—ll May 20<sup>th</sup> 1790,” became the first in a series of eleven poems carefully copied into Brotherton manuscript Lt 100 at its “end” or “heart” – that is, almost halfway through its 119 numbered folios, but at the point where its first incarnation, begun at folio 1, meets its second, turned upside down and begun from the back of the volume, filling the blank pages in sequence from 119v to 48. While entries in distinctly different hands are found scattered throughout the book, the bulk of its contents appear to have been copied in the same hand. Those items that are dated follow no clear chronological sequence, suggesting that many or all of the items, whether from printed or manuscript sources, were compiled at a time later than the recorded dates. (The latest date given is 1810, for an appearance in the *York Chronicle* of the poem “On the Death of

Lord Collingwood,” who died in that year.) Many, however, stem from the late 1780s and the 1790s; the set of eleven poems identified as by Mrs. W—ll and her friends thus sits at the chronological, as well as the physical, center of the book.

As we read this cluster of eleven poems, a picture of the lady and her coterie begins to emerge. She is Mrs. C. Wyvill, as later uses of the name clarify, and the next poem, “Wrote by Miss G—ll upon reading the foregoing Verses,” tells us that she has been ill and is elderly, but that her two nieces, the “sweet Buds” described in the previous poem, will help to cheer her advancing years. Miss G—ll, in turn, is “unus’d to Sing,” but has taken up her pen to pay her debt for the previous poem. Mrs. C. Wyvill writes further poems to the family of her nieces: there is a 1794 poem “To be presented to Miss Wyvill the Day she compleats her sixth Year by her Aunt & Godmother,” and an undated set of verses “Addressd to the Revd. Mr. Wyvill on the Birth of his Son,” evidently a brother for the “lovely Sisters” and son to a man admirable for his “Sterling Patriotic fire,/ (Free from Self interest).” Looking through the lens of the Wyvill set at the rest of the book, scattered poems begin to look as though they have a story to tell. Such cases include the lines headed “August 28. 1787 Miss G—ll” protesting the lowly name of Scrub for a horse; followed by “Verses in favor of *Scrub*” by “Dr. W—rs,” arguing that the “poor, forlorn, dispised” creature “bred up on Moors” be allowed to keep his humble name; and perhaps also that titled “On the Word Last By a lady,” preceded by an epigraph from Helen Maria Williams and sourced from *The York Chronicle* for December 31, 1790. The compiler seems to have been a longtime fan of the now-deceased David Garrick: surrounding these early entries is a series of items related to the actor and playwright, whether his satiric lines on the York assembly rooms, epilogues composed by him, or anecdotes from his career.<sup>40</sup>

But this is not all we learn about Mrs. C. Wyvill and the coterie of which she appears to have been the center or anchor. This was a circle that discussed important life questions. “By a Lady sent to Mrs C. W-y-ll. Is Sensibility Conducive to Happiness” resolves the issue at hand with the conclusion “Who feels too little is a fool;/ Who feels too much runs Mad,” but Mrs. C. Wyvill, in “Verses In Aswer [*sic*] to those On Sensibility,” challenges the Lady to determine further how the ideal point between extremes can be achieved; the solution is “This Rule then take, A Rule which ne’er can fail,/ Let Reason steer the Helm, when Passion blows the Gale.” Other poems in the set underscore the point with fanciful allegories on “Mr. Rule A Watchmaker & Mrs. Wright Mantuamaker” coming

together to further each other's ends, and on "A Watch Compared to Conscience." Wit and humor are clearly appreciated, leading to the recording of an "Extempore The Cream of the Corporation" which reads,

Whence all this boast  
Of Corporate toast  
A Trifle's made of Cream  
What think you then  
Of all those men  
Who but on Triffles dream!

The composer of these extempore lines may also be the writer of two quatrains on the same page, headed "From the Times February 17 – 1794 – On a Drunkard" and signed "L.F.H." – at the very least, the placement of the newspaper item in the midst of the sequence of the group's poems is an endorsement of the sentiment. Mrs. C. Wyvill, her brother and sister-in-law, Miss G—ll, a Lady, L.F.H., and perhaps even Dr. W—rs, then, carried out a scribal conversation in verse on a wide range of topics, from the earnest to the ridiculous, and someone considered the records of that conversation valuable enough to copy them into this book twenty years later.<sup>41</sup>

L.F.H.'s piece from *The Times* also makes it clear that, despite its manifestation in a distinct cluster of occasional poetry in the volume, the Wyvill coterie was not disengaged from the larger cultural context. In fact, the third entry in the eleven-poem set, immediately following the "Verses Address'd To Mrs. W—ll" and Miss G—ll's response, is "To the Memory of Mr. Howard by Mrs. C. W-y-ll," written in commemoration of John Howard, the Quaker prison reformer, who died in 1790. The poem begins with a timeworn gesture of feminine self-deprecation:

Blest Shade of Howard, worthiest once of men,  
Accept the tribute of a Female pen;  
Tho' to record thy Deeds in Druid song,  
Must to A Poet more sublime, belong;  
Yet may the lowly pleasing task be mine,  
To strew some humble Flowrets at thy shrine,  
Which tho' in *Learning*, may deficient be  
Breath the pure Odour of Sincerity—

But the speaker is not shy to declare the "Ardent glow" for Howard's "Vertues" that "throb[s] within [her] Heart," nor to declare the Christlikeness of the reformer's life. Although I have found no evidence that this poem was ever printed, its polish and public style of address clearly



signal a degree of engagement with events of the day. In this context, even such seemingly passive gestures as copying materials from *The York Chronicle*, a frequent occurrence in Lt 100 in and around 1790, uphold Allan's claim that in late Georgian commonplacing, public engagement was enacted through copying from such printed sources as newspapers: "by the later decades of the Georgian era . . . commonplacing, its functions further extended by its suitability for recording public events and allowing reflections upon them both in poetry and in prose, could help frame the intimate relationship between the reader as a private individual and the reader as a literate and engaged member of society."<sup>42</sup>

Together, the late-century volumes of Eliza Chapman and of the Wyvill circle present evidence almost as strong as do the mid-century books of Mary Capell and Thomas Phillibrown, or the 1760s compilation of Eleanor Peart, for an active literary coterie. In all five collections, original poetry is composed and exchanged to commemorate private occasions and is treasured by members of the group. At the same time, each coterie is embedded in some way in its local community and in broader political events. While Phillibrown obviously had a close connection to several London periodicals in the 1740s and early 1750s, there does seem to be a clear shift in the latter decades of the century toward obtaining materials from a wide range of newspapers and magazines, as well as from anthologies and volumes of an individual author's works, and toward documenting that fact. The Oxford gentleman's book goes so far as to suggest that for some, embodied sociability has been displaced by print and the mediated sense of belonging it offers to the one who selects and compiles.

But for compilers such as the creator of Lt 100 recording the Wyvill coterie, print may have reinforced the long-term value assigned to the circulation of materials in script, by reviving the productions of hands like their own. Thus, we come across a pair of items from the *York Chronicle* for July 24, 1794, responding to news of Robespierre's Terror in France – one a "prophetic passage . . . taken from a [1778] letter written by the late Rev.d J W Flechere . . . (who was well known in Leeds)" predicting the imminent fall of popery under the Bourbons, and the other a pasted-in slip of paper, in the main compiler's hand, containing a copy of a 1760 pastoral epistle addressed by Thomas Sherlock, Bishop of London, to the newly ascended George III, with the words: "The above extract from the Kentish Post of Decr 17, 1760, has been handed to us for insertion, on account of its particular application to the present period. It was lately found by a lady, enclosed in a morocco-wallet, among some family papers where it is supposed to have remained nearly from the time it is dated."<sup>43</sup> This is

the same Bishop's letter that Elizabeth Montagu circulated among her acquaintance thirty years earlier with strict instructions to lock it up in a cabinet (see [Chapter 2](#)). These letters' histories and the print vehicle by which they are reintroduced into the public eye and from there re-enter a private compilation are emblematic of the continuous recirculation across porous boundaries that characterized the intermedial climate of the latter decades of the century. Moreover, the circumstantial presentation of these items' origins suggests that the scribal hand of a well-known and respected local clergyman and the morocco wallet preserving a newspaper clipping among family papers are equally capable of bearing the coterie aura of exclusivity and privileged access – an aura that, like the cachet surrounding the gentleman's manuscript travel narrative, only appears heightened at the close of the period of this study.

## Conclusion

Taken altogether, the arguments of the preceding chapters invite the conclusion that intertwined with, embedded in, benefitting from, and also enabling many of the greatest successes of the print-based trade in literature during the eighteenth century was a vigorous, uninterrupted system of scribal production that served its own social, economic, and esthetic ends while influencing and being reflected in literary culture at large. If it was to contemporary coteries that an element of eighteenth-century literary print culture looked for its values, its formal models, and its source materials, then an awareness of these groups and the media system within which they operated is necessary to a full understanding of the history of print publication in the period. Moreover, the close interdependence of several key coteries and the London print trade in the middle decades of the century, enabled by the network links between figures such as Philip Yorke and Thomas Birch, Samuel Richardson and Hester Mulso, and William Shenstone and Robert Dodsley, created a unique moment in relations between these two media systems that is worthy of closer attention.

This book has aimed to take seriously a mode of production and circulation that, following the lead of professional literary critics such as Samuel Johnson, we have tended to consider unproductive and peripheral to the course taken by literary history in the eighteenth century and beyond. In a number of the cases I have discussed in the preceding chapters – the print works of Hester Mulso Chapone published in the 1770s; the final three volumes of Robert Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands*; the tributes to, and imitations of, William Shenstone in the magazines; the guides to domestic tourism – it is print that has appeared parasitic on manuscript form, bringing the esthetic and affective authority of coterie writing into play as a marketing device, often as a manifestation, in Michael McKeon's terms, of "the public-sphere aptitude for turning the secrecy of traditional elites to its own ends."<sup>1</sup> Yet the metaphor of

parasitism implies a gradual weakening of the host, whereas in these instances, print exploitation simultaneously reinforced the identification of good taste with manuscript production and its restricted modes of circulation. This paradoxical interdependence, or symbiosis, is arguably the most characteristic feature of manuscript–print intermediality in the eighteenth century, and as one of its consequences led to a strengthening of certain elements of manuscript culture in the period.

Functioning as sources of authority for upwardly mobile print forms of the second half of the century, specific manuscript practices and genres contributed to a general rejuvenation and elevation of this supposedly “earlier” or obsolete medium. Margaret Ezell has lamented the fact that the designation of manuscript culture as “aristocratic” has resulted in its critical marginalization, but this study has shown, more precisely, that eighteenth-century manuscript-exchanging coterie redefined that social cachet in the more egalitarian terms of good taste, moral authority, sophisticated consumerism, a value for literary tradition, and modernity itself. By “exhibit[ing] a clique yet aim[ing] at a general audience,” in turn, the booksellers who marketed the coterie reinforced a version of its culture. In all of these cases, human actors and their networks were making self-conscious choices, demonstrating Gitelman’s argument that the history of media is “ours” as much as it is the story of “essentialize[d] media.”<sup>2</sup>

I have attempted to show that a recognition of the persistence, mechanisms, and cultural function of manuscript literary creation and circulation in eighteenth-century Britain is necessary if we are to, first, acknowledge literary subcultures that were alive and well and not oriented solely toward print publication, and, second, understand the relative positioning of script and print in the cultural field of the day. There are many questions left open for future study. I have made suggestions about the trajectory of sociable literary culture into modernity, especially in the second half of the book’s discussions of the posthumous reception of Shenstone, the Montagu–Johnson debates over the commodification of a coterie author’s character, the promotion of manuscript travel writing through print-based canon-making, and the permutations of literary sociability detectable in personal miscellanies. These case studies have pointed in several directions without attempting to make any unified claim beyond the assertion that, together with a value for the manuscript as authentic point of origin, some form of script-based literary sociability persisted beyond the period 1740–90, always reconfiguring itself in relation to new realities in the culture of print. I look forward to the contributions of other scholars to these questions. In terms of the coterie groups surveyed in this book,

including those represented by the personal miscellanies of the [final chapter](#), my discussions can offer but a distant overview of their literary activity. Studies examining more closely the range, nature, and artistic achievement of their compositions, their lines of connection or disjunction, or their patterns of interaction with particular print authors or works, for example, remain to be carried out – on these and on other coteries as well. If this book points the way, its primary end will have been achieved.

## Notes

### Introduction: The literary coterie in the eighteenth-century media landscape

1. Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 1.
2. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. R.W. Chapman and intro. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 231; Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 25 [May 1773], mo5940.
3. For an overview of these men's innovations, see Betty A. Schellenberg, "The Second Coming of Book," in *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800*, ed. Laura L. Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2009), pp. 30–52.
4. Moyra Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714–1779: Scriblerians to Bluestockings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 51. I address Haslett's argument, which examines phenomena related to those I study in this book, in more detail below.
5. In my use of the qualifier "literary" to designate the coterie and the field of cultural activity I focus on in this study, I am alluding to the notion of "letters" in the traditional sense of a broad field of humanistic inquiry and writing, while acknowledging the more narrowly belletristic sense of the term that becomes dominant from the eighteenth century. This doubleness is reflected in the breadth of coterie members' own interests and endeavors in the areas of history, antiquarianism, criticism, translation, natural history, theology, etc., combined with a more specific focus that tends to set apart exchanges particular to the life of the coterie – highly accomplished familiar letters, occasional poems, imitations, and criticism of literary works and genres.
6. Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 171–72, 182f; David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 8, 175–78.
7. Johns, *Nature of the Book*, pp. 370–74. More precisely, Johns claims that "Book trade conflicts conditioned the making and content of histories of printing; and historical knowledge in turn conditioned the outcome of book

- trade conflicts” (p. 372); see also Nicholas Barker’s similar claim that book history was founded in the mid-eighteenth century with the celebration of the tercentenary of printing and with subsequent inside accounts of the trade such as John Nichols’ *Literary Anecdotes* (“Reflections on the History of the Book,” in *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book: Selected Essays* [London: British Library, 2003], p. 272). Alvin Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters, and Samuel Johnson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Michael J. Suarez, S.J., “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 5: 1695–1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–35 (at p. 2).
8. Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Margaret J.M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) (at p. 288).
  9. Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 288; Peter Beal, “Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Books,” in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton, NY: Renaissance English Text Society, 1993), pp. 131–47 (at p. 146). Ezell does locate the definitive shift to print with the emergence of the marketed literary series (e.g. Bell’s *British Poets*, 1777–89, and the London-based *The English Poets* with Johnson’s prefaces, 1779–81) in the late 1770s. However, she does not discuss any cases of social authorship beyond the 1730s writings of Alexander Pope.
  10. Justice, for example, in his discussion of the suppression of Frances Burney’s *The Witlings*, applies the term “anachronistic” to the coterie culture Burney is satirizing, though it is not clear whether for him that culture is indeed so, or whether Burney is attempting to make it appear a thing of the past (“Suppression and Censorship in Late Manuscript Culture: Frances Burney’s Unperformed *The Witlings*,” in *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], pp. 201–22); see my brief discussion of *The Witlings* in [Chapter 5](#) of this study.
  11. Nicholas Barker, “In Praise of Manuscripts,” in *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book: Selected Essays* (London: British Library, 2003), p. 27; McKitterick, *Search for Order*, pp. 22–52; Donald H. Reiman, *The Study of Modern Manuscripts: Public, Confidential, and Private* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 38–46.

12. Ezell, *Social Authorship*, p. 16; Kathryn R. King, “Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s Tactical Use of Print and Manuscript,” in Justice and Tinker, eds., pp. 158–81, and “Scribal and Print Publication,” in *The History of British Women’s Writing, 1690–1750*, ed. Ros Ballaster (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 127–44; Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690–1740* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 9–10 (at p. 10), 26–30; Christine Gerrard, *Aaron Hill: The Muses’ Projector 1685–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), ch. 3 and 4; Stephen Karian, *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2; Reiman, *Modern Manuscripts*, p. 24; Christina Lupton, *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 95–121. Love discusses the applicability of Walter Benjamin’s notion of the “aura” of a work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction, drawing also on Walter Ong and Alvin Kernan (*Scribal Publication*, pp. 290–93). Going beyond the period of this study, Michelle Levy has shown, in *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), how common collaborative scribal production was to the production of Romantic-era print works.
13. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, “Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of Transition,” in Thorburn and Jenkins, eds., *Rethinking Media Change* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2004), pp. 11, 2–3; Charles R. Acland, “Introduction,” in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. xxiii; Thorburn and Jenkins, “Introduction,” *Rethinking Media Change*, p. 11; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 122.
14. “Hypermediacy” is the term applied by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999), to a form which combines media to produce a highly self-conscious mediated product.
15. Haslett, *Scriblerians to Bluestockings*, pp. 1–30, esp. p. 25.
16. Catherine Talbot to Montagu, October 29, [1761], mo5139; Talbot to Carter, April 26, 1760, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.322; Montagu to Lyttelton, 9 [June 1771], mo1478; Montagu to Lyttelton, November 8 [1772], mo1490. Lyttelton himself also used the term: when he hasn’t heard from his French correspondent Jean Drumgold regarding his history of Henry the 2nd, Lyttelton writes to Montagu, “I suppose it is not liked by him and his *Coterie*, and [he] does not care to say so” (September 4, 1770, mo1364).
17. Haslett, *Scriblerians to Bluestockings*, pp. 1–30 (at pp. 27, 1).



18. This definition is indebted particularly to Love's *Scribal Production* and to Paul Trolander and Zeynep Tenger's *Sociable Criticism in England 1625–1725* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2007), both of which focus on the seventeenth century; their analyses of the features of coterie writing are discussed further below. His valuable contributions to understanding the workings of literary sociability notwithstanding, Trolander has recently argued that the term "coterie" is "troubled and should be dispensed with," preferring to speak of literary networks. His objections appear to stem primarily from the fact that groups exchanging manuscript writings in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were often not geographically proximate, varied widely in their aims while employing the same methods, and held a primary goal of expansive, print-based influence (pp. 140–48, 217–20 [at p. 217]). While I share many of Trolander's views about the nature of coteries in an age of rapid print expansion, I consider it valuable to retain the term precisely so that historical nuances and variations between groups can come into focus as an object of study.
19. See the valuable work done to date on late eighteenth-century Edinburgh literary coteries by Pam Perkins (*Women Writers and the Edinburgh Enlightenment* [Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010]), on the Aikin-Barbauld circle in the collection *The Dissenting Mind: The Aikin Circle, 1740s–1860s*, ed. Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), and on the Lunar Society of Birmingham by Jennifer Uglow (*The Lunar Men: The Friends Who Made the Future, 1730–1810* [London: Faber, 2002]).
20. Schellenberg, "Second Coming," pp. 33–37.
21. McKitterick, *Search for Order*, pp. 166–67, 188–89 (at p. 167).
22. Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 2; Adriana Craciun, "Oceanic Voyages, Maritime Books, and Eccentric Inscriptions," *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 10 (2013), 170–196; Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
23. Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 2.
24. Clifford Siskin and William Warner, "This Is Enlightenment: An Invitation in the Form of an Argument," in *This Is Enlightenment*, ed. Siskin and Warner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 1–33, especially at pp. 10–12.
25. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken, 1975), p. 23. Williams is arguing against the technological determinism that he observes in media theorist Marshall McLuhan's approach.

26. Cohen, *Networked Wilderness*, p. 2.
27. Deborah Heller and Steven Heller, “A Copernican Shift; or, Remapping the Bluestocking Heavens,” *Bluestockings Now!* ed. Deborah Heller (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 17–54 (at pp. 24–25).
28. Prescott, *Women, Authorship*, pp. 180, 182. While King presents Rowe’s manuscript context as feminine, Prescott has discussed the role of male connections such as Isaac Watts in Rowe’s circles (pp. 178–80).
29. See Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); *Social Authorship*; “The Gentleman’s Journal and the Commercialization of Restoration Coterie Literary Practices,” *Modern Philology* 89 (1992), 323–40.
30. Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 36–39.
31. Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 83.
32. These terms are adopted by Ezell (*Social Authorship*), Love (*Scribal Publication*, ch. 7 only), and Reiman (*Modern Manuscripts*), respectively.
33. Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 199–200, 189, 282; Margaret J.M. Ezell, “The Posthumous Publication of Women’s Manuscripts and the History of Authorship,” in *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550–1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 130.
34. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*, especially ch. 1; Trolander and Tenger, *Sociable Criticism*, pp. 43–63 (at pp. 47, 43).
35. Such analyses have recently been carried out by Anni Sairio, in an examination of shifting language usage by members of Elizabeth Montagu’s circle (*Language and Letters of the Bluestocking Network: Sociolinguistic Issues in Eighteenth-Century Epistolary English* [Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2009]) and by Heller and Heller, in their fascinating analysis of how the influence of the Bluestocking phenomenon was achieved (“A Copernican Shift,” pp. 17–54). My study is indebted to both of these projects, and I would like to see the possibilities of such approaches explored further. However, the conditions that must be met to make such studies statistically valid, and the narrowing of material that could be considered as a result, have made a quantitative approach impractical for my purposes.
36. For a very useful overview of the fundamental concepts of social network analysis, see Charles Kadushin’s *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 64–74.
37. In focusing on the select group clustered around Montagu and Lyttelton in this period, I am deliberately avoiding an absorption of this coterie into the notion of “the Bluestockings,” as I explain in [Chapter 2](#).

## I. Wrest Park and North End

1. The sonnets first appeared in print for public consumption as, respectively, “Sonnet to the Author of *Clarissa*,” *Clarissa. Or, the History of a Young Lady*, 3rd ed. (London, 1750), n.p., and “Sonnet I,” in *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands*, 3 vols., 2nd ed., ed. Robert Dodsley (London, 1748), p. 2.324. In the latter the names were replaced by asterisks.
2. Jemima Campbell’s and Lady Mary Grey’s adolescent correspondence with Catherine Talbot indicates their communal or parallel reading of authors ranging from Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, Cicero, and Socrates to Sir Philip Sydney and Madame de Scudéry. Records from the early years of Grey’s marriage also refer regularly to works of history, philosophy (Locke, for example), and collections of sermons (see, for example, Talbot to Lady Mary Grey, July 17 and 21 August 1736, Add. MS 429I, ff. 254v–255 and 258–59; Campbell to Talbot, n.d., BLARS L 30/21/3/6; Talbot, *Wrest journal*, 1745, BLARS L 30/106, n.p.; Birch to Yorke, 9 June 1744, Add. MS 35396, f. 197v).
3. Joyce Godber, *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park, Vol. 47, The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* (np: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1968), pp. 22–25. Principal biographical sources for Yorke and Grey are Godber and Philip C. Yorke, *The Life and Correspondence of Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913).
4. Lawry to Yorke, November 19, 1742, Add. MS 35605, f. 120v; Lawry to Yorke, June 10, 1743, Add. MS 35605, f. 142; Yorke to Birch, June 5, 1743, Add. MS 35396, f. 101; Lawry to Birch, October 6, 1743, Add. MS 35605, f. 163.
5. Birch’s biographer, A.E. Gunther, reports that the first earl’s patronage began in about 1735; I do not, however, see evidence of what Gunther suggests was “a degree of intimacy” between them, or of Birch acting as informal tutor to the boys (*The Life of the Rev. Thomas Birch D.D., F.R.S., 1705–1766* [Halesworth Suffolk: Halesworth Press, 1984], p. 35); similarly, Gunther consistently misreads the relationship between Birch and the younger Philip, representing the former as chafing under the latter’s patronage. I provide evidence of their friendship below, but the story of the two men’s exchange of portraits alone, recounted by Gunther, suggests otherwise (p. 31). The Edwards correspondence in the Bodleian library contains dated letters to Wray beginning 1722, when the two were young men interested in poetry, plays, dancing, and young women. Wray was likely the means of bringing Edwards into the orbit of Wrest. The best account of Edwards’ life and literary career is found in John A. Dussinger’s “General Introduction” to his recent edition of Edwards’ correspondence with Samuel Richardson (*Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. lv–lxxxi).

6. Grey to Mary Grey, May 8, 1743, BLARS L30/9a/1, f. 4; Talbot to Carter, October 24, 1751, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.57.
7. Talbot, *Wrest Journal*, May 28; May 30; June 1, 1745, BLARS L 30/106, n.p.
8. Besides the *Athenian Letters*, the Grubstreet journal mentioned above, and the projects he suggested to Edwards, discussed below, he, Talbot, and Mary Grey began a collection of African Tales in 1741 that was later abandoned.
9. Edwards to Yorke, August 10, 1745; Edwards to Wray, March 14, 1745/6, Ms. Bodl. 1010, ff. 153, 196–97. “Animae quales neque candidiores/Terra tulit, neque quires me fit devinctior alter” is from Horace’s fifth satire of Book I, lines 41–42, and is translated as “the most candid Gentlemen upon Earth, nor is there any one who has a greater Esteem for them than I” in *The Satires, Epistles, and Art of Poetry of Horace* (London, 1743), pp. 80–81.
10. Talbot, *Wrest Journal*, June 9, 1745, BLARS L 30/106, n.p.; Edwards to N. Paice, August 17, 1745, Ms. Bodl. 1010, f. 157.
11. Lawry to Yorke, May 3, 1740, Add. MS 35605, f. 40.
12. George Lyttelton, an important figure in this study’s account of scribal circles, seems only gradually to have grown closer to the younger generation of Yorkes, although he would write in 1763 of their father as “not only a dear and honor’d Friend, but the surest Guide of my Steps through the dark paths of that unpleasing political Labyrinth which lies before me” (Lyttelton to Montagu, November 8, 1763, m01317). Judging from the Birch and Hardwicke correspondences, Lyttelton was known to them in the early 1740s at second hand as Secretary of State; a closer connection primarily through coterie interests arose in the late 1740s and early 1750s. Grey records her eager interest in Lyttelton’s responses to *Wrest Park* in his first visit there, anxiously hoping that the place “should appear in its best Looks” (to Mary Grey, June 11, 1747, L30/9a/1, f. 142), and expresses admiration for his *Monody* on the death of his wife; Lyttelton in turn invited Philip and Jemima to Hagley in the early 1760s. Rose Mary Davis states in *The Good Lord Lyttelton: A Study in Eighteenth Century Politics and Culture* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing, 1939) that Warburton introduced Lyttelton to Charles Yorke in 1745 (p. 275).
13. Edwards to N. Paice, August 17, 1745, Ms. Bodl. 1010, f. 157; Edwards to Wray, November 22, 1746, Ms. Bodl. 1010, ff. 224–25; on a later occasion, Edwards comments about Melmoth’s recently published translation of Pliny that “I cannot help admiring Lady Grey’s nice discernment, in the justness of the character she gave of it, without reading the original” (Edwards to Wray, August 8, 1747, Ms. Bodl. 1010, f. 260).
14. See entry for May 30, 1745 in Talbot’s *Wrest journal*, BLARS L 30/106, n.p., and L 30/21/3/10 and 12, dated May 22 and July 14, 1743 respectively, from Grey to Talbot.

15. Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks*, pp. 29–30.
16. Although some sources say there were ten copies printed, Birch's letter to Yorke dated October 27, 1741 informs him that a dozen copies are at the bookbinder's (Add. MS 35396, f. 35); there may in fact have been a few more impressions in total, given the apparent distribution of one copy to each contributor.
17. Birch to Yorke, August 18, 1741, Add. MS 35396, f. 8.
18. For the group's views of Birch and his role, see Lawry to Yorke, October 6, 1741, Add. MS 35605, f.113 (discussed below); Yorke to Birch, August 16, 1741, f. 7; Yorke to Birch, August 23, 1741, f. 10.
19. Lawry to Yorke, June 10, 1743, Add. MS 35605, f. 142; the Latin, from Horace's satires, translates loosely as "who are inspired geniuses, that sing in a grand style."
20. An exception is John Heaton, who writes in 1741 of print as abstracted from audience: "I expect shortly to see my sett of all letters compleat, a matter of no small enjoyment, for beside ye: pleasure of perusing many ingenious performances in common with but few; there is ye vanity of looking upon oneself as a small part of an author; for it is being in print that ye self complacency must generally arise from & not ye number of readers" (Heaton to Yorke, March 9, 1741, Add. MS 35605, f. 77).
21. Birch to Yorke, November 23, 1741, Add. MS 35396, f. 42v.
22. Birch to Yorke, September 2, 1742, Add. MS 35396, f. 52v; Yorke and Charles Yorke to Birch, September 5, 1742, Add. MS 35396, ff. 54–55v.
23. Derry to Talbot, January 7, 1742, transcribed by Birch in Add. MS 35396, ff. 83–87. The Bishop, a friend of Birch, insisted the latter was not his informant, although suspicion certainly fell on him in the Warburton instance. Whatever the source here, both Birch and the Bishop clearly saw the possession of manuscript materials as having an exchange value, in Birch's case a value that gave him an entrée into various social circles, as my later discussion of his circulation of Mulso's poetry will indicate.
24. Edwards to Wray, July 9, 1743, Ms. Bodl. 1010, f. 44; M. Capell to Birch, August 31, 1751, Add. MS 4302, f. 44; Talbot journal, August 24–25, 1753, Add. MS 46690, ff. 96v–97.
25. Elizabeth Montagu was given one of these copies, which she loaned to William Waller Pepys (see [Chapter 5](#)).
26. Northumberland to Hardwicke, January 5, 1782, Add. MS 35619, f. 7; Cooper to Hardwicke, June 18, 1782, Add. MS 35619, f. 190.
27. For example, Birch's commonplace book includes a sonnet to Wray dated April 20, 1742 (Add. MS 4456, f. 173) and Salter sends Yorke a Miltonic sonnet "in imitation of some late imitations" in 1743 (Salter to Yorke, June 30, 1743, Add. MS 35605, f. 151v); on April 27, 1744, Edwards

writes to John Clerke, one of the Athenians, who has loaned him a copy of Spenser, that “Much leisure and much reading of Spenser put me upon writing a few sonnets in imitation of his way; as You have a right to be troubled with my extravagances of this sort, I send You a sample which if it has the luck to please you may be followed with two or three more” (Ms. Bodl. 1010, f. 92); while the chronology cannot be established exactly, Edwards’ regular correspondence with Wray, Clerke and others associated with Wrest and his keen interest in that circle make it likely that he had seen some of the sonnets produced there. By the summer of 1745, he sends Yorke his sonnets, at the latter’s request (August 10, 1745, f. 154).

28. See Edwards to Wray, May 1, 1749, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f. 126, in anticipation of Warburton’s next attack: “Is it lawful to be satirical in a Sonnet? If it be, I struck off one yesterday, which I will shew you when we meet, merely from resentment of what You mentiond on this head. It is literally – ‘facit indignatio versum’ but perhaps for that reason fitter to be suppressed than published, even if the provocation should be given.” This sonnet, “Tongue-doughty Pedant; whose ambitious mind” was first printed with the 1750 third edition of Edwards’ *Canons of Criticism*.
29. See Edwards to Yorke, March 9, 1751, Add. MS 35606, ff. 11–12, for the sense that Yorke is attempting to keep Edwards busy and in good spirits, particularly from the year 1750, when Edwards decided he could no longer spend winters in town because of respiratory problems. I return to this function of the coterie for Edwards in [Chapter 3](#).
30. Edwards to Lawry, May 27, 1754, Ms. Bodl. 1012, f. 172; April 11, 1751, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f. 259.
31. In 1741, Yorke writes to Birch, “You cannot imagine what prejudice our learned Friend [Warburton] has done himself, by the acrimony and coarse language, with which He treats his Adversaries: Many Persons, with whom I have conversed, seem to have stuck upon nothing but those sore places; & full of a just detestation, as they think for his Pedantry & self-sufficiency, do justice neither to [the] learning nor the merit of his Argumts” (October 6, 1741, Add. MS 35395, f. 32), but in 1751, shortly after the change of title of Edwards’ work to *Canons of Criticism* with its third edition, Lawry is not only calling for a reform of criticism, but for a set of “Canons” to guide the enterprise: “I have often thought that our Friend Edwards or one of the like Turn who has Learning & Wit with good breeding & candour might make themselves & others good diversion by ranging under proper Canons the quaintnesses & arrogancies of Those who have been or are properly speaking *Criticks by profession* from the Scaligers & Casaubon’s down to those of the present Age. For there breaks out thro’ most of them at times the Rusticitas agrestis et inconcinna – and their manner of puffing off themselves & those of

- their own faction is not less fulsome than their way of setting at naught & triumphing over those who have gone before them in the same trade is too often bearish” (to Yorke, March 31, 1751, Add. MS 35606, f. 13). Edwards’ correspondence with Yorke in the fall of 1747 shows that the latter is urging him to respond to Warburton’s Shakespeare.
32. See *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. lxxviii–lxx for a more detailed account of Edwards’ role in the matter of editing Spenser.
  33. Gray to James Brown, August 8, 1759, *Correspondence of Gray*, pp. 2.632–33.
  34. See Talbot’s apology to Birch, in a letter of July 12, 1753, Add. MS 4319, f. 108: “I am excessively Sorry this Letter is neither two hundred Years Old, nor a State Paper, nor in Cypher, nor very illegible, to make You some amends for the Commissions it makes bold to trouble You with.” Sir Joseph Yorke, a soldier and diplomat, often refers to his two older brothers’ documentary passions, including offering after the Battle of Culloden to send the papers found in the pockets of dead or captured Highland officers (Philip C. Yorke, *Life of Philip Yorke*, p. 1.328).
  35. For an account of these early years, including Yorke’s role, see Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum* (London: André Deutsch, 1973), chs. 2 and 3.
  36. Lawry to Yorke, October 6, 1741, Add. MS 35605, f. 113.
  37. Birch to Yorke, August 29, 1741, Add. MS 35396, f. 13; Yorke to Birch, September 20, 1741, Add. MS 35396, f. 22; Birch to Yorke, November 14, 1741, Add. MS 35396, f. 37; Birch to Yorke, November 23, 1741, Add. MS 35396, f. 42.
  38. Yorke to Birch, May 24, 1748, Add. MS 35397, f. 106v; Add. MS 35400, f. 300v (the Latin phrase translates as “a day I will always remember with grief, and will always honour”).
  39. Edwards to Yorke, October 13, 1747, Add. MS 35605, f. 301; Yorke to Birch, October 11, 1750, Add. MS 35397, f. 303.
  40. Yorke to Birch, November 20, 1741, Add. MS 35396, ff. 40–40v; Birch to Yorke, June 30, 1753, Add. MS 35398, ff. 126–126v.
  41. There are numerous references to this *jeu d’esprit* in the correspondence; Philip C. Yorke, biographer of the first earl, claims that the sheets, “when found later, for long passed as genuine documents and as the earliest examples of the English newspaper, and, when their origin was discovered, brought down upon their innocent perpetrator some severe moral reflections from a former librarian at the British Museum” (*Life of Philip Yorke*, p. 1.212).
  42. The Yorke correspondence follows Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* with interest and critical commentary through the initial proposal, the process of searching for quotations and supervising the

amanuenses, its printing, the puff by Lord Chesterfield, the final push to write the historical preface, and the finished product.

43. Dustin Griffin, *Authorship in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Newark, NJ: Delaware University Press, 2014), p. 152; David Philip Miller, “‘The Hardwicke Circle’: The Whig Supremacy and Its Demise in the Eighteenth-Century Royal Society,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 52 (1998), 73–91 (at 78).
44. Walpole writes, “That family is very powerful; the eldest brother, Lord Royston, is historically curious and political; if, without its appearing too forced, you could at any time send him uncommon letters, papers, manifestoes, and things of that sort, it might do you good service” (qtd by Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Yorke, Philip, second earl of Hardwicke”).
45. See a 1784 note by Hardwicke in which he records Middleton’s request, shortly before his death in 1750, to dedicate a translation of “Tullys Letters to Brutus” to him, “but my Father, when I mentioned it to him dissuaded Me from accepting it, which I acquiesced in, rather from Submission to his Authority than his Reasons” (Add. MS 35623, f. 127).
46. Birch to Yorke, June 30, 1744, Add. MS 35396, f. 213. The teasing threat of the *Magazine of Magazines* is similarly held over Talbot in a letter from Grey cited in [Chapter 3](#).
47. Sarah Fielding, *The History of Ophelia*, ed. Peter Sabor (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2004), p. 37.
48. Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 96, 101.
49. Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 231; Barchas, *Graphic Design*, pp. 105 and 98 (qtd. Richardson to Carter, December 18, 1747). Indeed, Richardson’s use of the poem with good intentions of honouring “the sex,” yet without permission (and without knowledge, initially, of its authorship) suggests that he was presuming on the extension of coterie practices to print; Carter’s complaint highlights the differing protocols which governed “publication” and attribution in the two media systems.
50. See Schellenberg, “Second Coming,” pp. 37–39, which draws on the work of Barchas and of Leah Price, in ch. 1 of *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
51. Richardson to Aaron Hill, January 5, 1747, *The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson I. Correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill Family*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 236.
52. Despite T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel’s challenge to this characterization of Richardson “as the happy centre of a group of admiring



- (and rather silly) women” as “over-emphasized” in light of the equality of his relationships with Garrick, Fielding, Johnson, Edwards, Spence, and others (*Samuel Richardson: A Biography* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1971], pp. 537–39), the generalization has proven persistent; see, for example, Haslett’s recent discussion of the centrality of coterie groups and networks to the production of print literature of this period, in which she writes dismissively of Richardson’s “circle of lady advisers” varied only by “the many women writers, with whom he met and worked” (*Pope to Burney*, p. 12). For the masculinization of professional literary culture in the period, see Raymond Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit: Male Creativity and Sexuality, 1650–1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), on Pope as “a public icon exemplifying male genius, literary fame and wealth, and the cultural status of the new professional author” (p. 19); Linda Zionkowski, *Men’s Work Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Poetry, 1660–1784* (Basingstoke and NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) links the emerging discourse of authorial professionalization to an increasingly gendered dichotomy between the male professional and the female amateur author (see [Chapter 5](#) below).
53. Yorke to Richardson, December 1, 1748, Victoria and Albert Museum, Forster Collection, FM XV.2, f 14; Birch to Yorke, September 29, 1750, Add. MS 35397, f. 299v.
  54. Edwards to Richardson, December 2, 1748, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f. 76; Edwards to Wray, 16 January 1748/49, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f. 95; Edwards to Yorke, January 29, 1748/49, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f. 97.
  55. Talbot to Richardson, [early March 1750], *Correspondence on Grandison*, p. 8.
  56. Richardson also published his sonnet with the third edition of *Clarissa* in 1751.
  57. *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. lxxii.
  58. Rhoda Zuk, “Introduction” to the Hester Chapone section of *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738–1785, Vol. 3: Catherine Talbot & Hester Chapone*, ed. Rhoda Zuk (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), p. 183. Works cited from this edition are noted as by “Chapone” even if composed before Mulso’s marriage.
  59. Richardson to Sarah Chapone, August 30, 1758, *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), p. 340; Talbot to Carter, December 17, 1750, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 1.370–71.
  60. Carter to Talbot, May 13, 1753, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.114.
  61. Trolander and Tenger, *Sociable Criticism*, pp. 15, 63, 43. According to Trolander and Tenger, in such a system, work is circulated only as initiated by the author; the author seeks response in the form of “amendment criticism” that at once approves and corrects; and approbation of works, or

- “vouching,” is practiced “in order to acquire for the writer, the individual [doing the] vouching, and the group, cultural and literary prestige that could in turn be used to gain other political, economic, or literary benefits” (p. 51).
62. Richardson to Edwards, March 19, 1751, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 204–8.
63. Edwards to Richardson, March 30, 1751, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 208–14. The quotation is from Joseph Thurston’s 1730 poem *The Toilette*.
64. Edwards to Richardson, February 15, 1753, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 275–78; Richardson to Edwards, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 278–81.
65. Richardson to Edwards, February 21, 1752, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 244; Edwards to Richardson, February 28, 1752, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 246; Richardson to Edwards, July 25, 1754, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 337. In the end, Edwards couldn’t resist the bait, writing to Richardson on March 20, 1752, “I send you a sample by obeying in part the commands of your last letter; for I exhort instead of chiding, and address the advice to the sex in general, since a particular application, if the accident has left marks behind it, might make the lady ridiculous, whom I am really concerned for. I commend it to your candour to do with it what you please, with absolute power of life and death” (*Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 251; the poem is printed pp. 255–56).
66. Richardson to Edwards, February 20, 1753, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 279; Duncombe as qtd in Richardson to Edwards, July 25, 1754, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 338; Edwards to Richardson, December 15, 1752, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 270–71 (see also Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson*, p. 350 and n. 134). John Duncombe’s *The Feminiad; or, Female Genius: A Poem* (London, 1754) celebrated the compositions of the young ladies of this coterie (though without naming them) in the hope that “Should the public Curiosity be hereby rais’d,” “the Diffidence of the fair Authors [would] be so far remov’d as to gratify it” (“Advertisement,” n.p.).
67. Quoted in the “General Introduction” of *Correspondence with Edwards* (p. lv). Dussinger suggests that it was the “continual refrain” of criticism of Warburton and the “intimate feelings . . . about illness, suffering and religious patience” shared by the two men that made Richardson desire to keep the correspondence private.
68. For the typical phrasings and name substitutions of the Richardson–Carter letters, see June 9, 1753, June 12, 1753, June 22, 1753, July 4, 1753, and September 29, 1753, *Correspondence on Grandison*, pp. 80–85, 87–92, 142–44.
69. Discussing John Duncombe’s recently published *Feminiad*, Edwards exclaims to Richardson, “What pity it is that Mr. Duncombe was not acquainted with Miss Talbot?” (May 29, 1754, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 327–29).

70. John Mulso to White, December 13, 1750, *Letters to White*, p. 45; he adds, “My Sister & Pressy [Mary Prescott] & my Brothers are much with Him, & have spent some Days at his Country House.”
71. Richardson to Edwards, June 12, 1754, and Edwards to Richardson, July 18, 1754, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 329–34 and 335–36; Duncombe to Richardson, August 16, 1754 and Richardson to Duncombe, August 24, 1754, *Correspondence of Richardson*, pp. 2.294 and 2.297; Edwards to Richardson, July 18, 1754, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 337 (insertion in edition); Edwards to Richardson, January 15, 1755, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 354; Richardson to Dewes, December 15, 1756, quoted in Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson*, p. 347.
72. Chapone, “A Matrimonial Creed,” in *Talbot and Chapone*, p. 251.
73. Tom Keymer, *Richardson’s “Clarissa” and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 97.
74. Chapone, “Letters on Filial Obedience,” *The Posthumous Works of Mrs Chapone*, 2 vols. (London: 1807), pp. 2.30, 37, 142.
75. Mulso to Carter, March 25, 1750 and May 18, 1750, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, pp. 1.26–27, 32 (it is not clear whether the reference is to Duncombe senior or junior); see also John Mulso’s report, in the letter quoted above, that the “great men” who have seen the exchange “think Mr R— hard pressed” (December 15, 1750, *Letters to White*, p. 45).
76. Keymer, *Richardson’s “Clarissa,”* p. 121.
77. Susan Staves, “Church of England Clergy and Women Writers,” *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, ed. Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 2003), pp. 251–55 (at p. 103).
78. John Mulso to White, January 11, 1750, *Letters to White*, p. 26; November 4, 1751, *Letters to White*, p. 55.
79. Johnson to Hester Thrale, April 18, 1780, *Letters of Johnson*, p. 3.240.
80. Richardson to Mulso, August 21, 1754, *Correspondence of Richardson*, pp. 3.209–10.
81. Carter to Talbot, April 22, 1752, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.75. This may reflect also Carter’s somewhat ambiguous status in Richardson’s coterie, as discussed above.
82. Margaret Yorke, Philip’s younger sister, married Sir Gilbert Heathcote in 1749.
83. Birch to M. Capell, August 24, 1751, Add. MS 4302, f. 43; M. Capell to Birch, August 31, 1751, Add. MS 4302, f. 44.
84. Brotherton Lt 119, ff. 176–77; the ode is placed between “Sonnet wrote at the entrance of a Root-House in W—st Gardens. 1751. Wrote by Mr. E—ds” and “To the M—ss of G—y. By the Honble. Miss Margt. Y—ke. 1747.” I discuss this manuscript book in greater detail in the [final chapter](#) of this study.

85. Add. MS 4456, ff. 71 and 79. There are several manuscript copies of early Chapone poems preserved in the Montagu Collection (mo926, mo6892). Not only do we find there the poems eventually printed in the *Miscellanies* as “Ode to Peace. Written during the Late Rebellion. 1745,” “Ode to Health,” addressed to Elizabeth Carter in 1751, and “Ode Occasion’d by Reading Sonnets in the Style and Manner of Spenser, written by T. Edwards Esq<sup>r</sup> 1749,” but there are two copies of the latter ode to Edwards, appearing to stem from different periods of circulation. In one, the name of “Richardson” is disguised as “Reynoldson”; this is presumably the earliest circulated version; one of the copies in Birch’s collection begins with “Ry” at this point, which is then altered to read “Richardson.” The shift of Mulso’s poems from scribal circulation to print is discussed in [Chapter 3](#) below.
86. Delany to Dewes, November 16, 1751, *Correspondence of Delany*, p. 3.60; John Mulso to White, December 13, 1750, *Letters to White*, p. 45. On August 17, 1753, Richardson writes to Carter, “But what say you, Madam, to the Marriage-Act? Miss Mulso, who you know, has very great Reasoning-Powers, some time ago, set up for such an Advocate for Children, and argued so strenuously against the Parental Authority . . . that I the less Wonder, that (ingenious and excellent as she is) if the Debate got Wind, that it obtained the Notice of those, who brought in, and carried thro’ a Bill, which should by a National Law establish the Parental Authority, so violently attacked by a young Lady who is admired by all that know her. Things done in private have some times, and when least thought of, been proclaimed on the House-top” (*Correspondence on Grandison*, pp. 134–35). While Richardson is not making a confident cause-and-effect claim here, he certainly hints that the epistolary debate has circulated among the politically powerful.
87. Introductions to like-minded individuals, discussions of mutual reading, encouragement to compose, and exchanges of original poetry characterize the correspondence records of these friendships.
88. Carter describes him to Talbot as someone who “very kindly often gives me accounts of the clever people that fall in his way . . . he has quite an enthusiastic fondness for merit” (December 28, 1750, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 1.374). Sylvia Harkstarck Myers presents the two women as meeting when HM was visiting her aunt Mrs. Donne (*The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1990], p. 78).
89. Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 2 vols. (London, 1773), pp. 1.140–41.
90. Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited,” *Social Structure and Network Analysis*, ed. Peter V. Marsden and Nan Lin (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 105–30.

91. In an undated letter of July 1752, Talbot writes to Carter of Mulso, “I hope she has made you a perfect convert to a worthy man [i.e. Richardson] that you was too angry with, and who has the highest regard for you” (*Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.84).

## 2. Formation, fame, and patronage

1. Elizabeth Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1762), pp. 73–75.
2. The young Duchess of Portland was connected to the Yorke circle in that her mother-in-law, the Dowager Duchess, was also the mother of the Duke of Kent’s second wife, and therefore step-grandmother to Jemima Marchioness Grey. The Dowager Duchess seems to have been close to Grey and her circle at least until the death of her daughter, the Duke’s widow, in 1748. The younger Duchess of Portland and the Marchioness Grey were not intimates, however.
3. Similar questions of nomenclature have been raised recently by Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation, 1712–1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 81–83, and by Deborah Heller and Stephen Heller on pp. 17–24 of “A Copernican Shift; or, Remapping the Bluestocking Heavens.” Heller and Heller abstract the term “Bluestocking” from any distinct group of individuals, using it to designate a social and cultural function.
4. Relatively early in the first intense period of this coterie, Lyttelton writes to Montagu inquiring about the truth of an “ugly rumour” from Bristol about Carter’s death, which since Montagu has said nothing, he assumes is false; if true, he adds, “it would have given me a sensible Pain” (Lyttelton to Montagu [October 1760], mo1292). This suggests he does not yet consider himself directly connected to Carter, whereas in less than a year’s time he is addressing poetry to her.
5. Clare Barlow, in “Virtue, Patriotism and Female Scholarship in Bluestocking Portraiture,” in *Bluestockings Display’d: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730–1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 60–80, has discussed the Montagu and Carter portraits in detail with respect to their common themes of a woman combining sociable ease with scholarship – qualities that, of course, embody coterie values. The Ramsay portrait of Montagu is reproduced in *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings*, ed. Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2008), p. 49. It is tempting to connect Montagu’s rose-colored dress in this portrait with Talbot’s description of her, echoing reports from Tunbridge, as “the Lady of the Rose colour’d Gown” (see below). In other words, the choice of dress for this portrait may reflect the

significance of the Tunbridge summer to the coterie; Barlow notes the echo as well (p. 69).

6. Dustin Griffin's *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) demonstrates the persistence of patronage in the period; for its complexity as well as ubiquity in eighteenth-century Britain, see Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millenium Hall, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30 (2005), 25–55, and Elaine Chalus, "To Serve my friends': Women and Political Patronage in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Amanda Vickery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 57–88. Throughout this chapter, I will invoke the term "patron" to include "patronage brokers," intermediaries with "access to information and individuals, sound personal and political judgment, and a reputation for getting results" (Chalus, p. 76) who brought candidates for patronage to the attention of those who actually had the control over pensions, positions, book printing, and marketing. It is in this sense, of course, that both Carter and Montagu can be called patrons, though with differing degrees of power. Although my argument is indebted to Bannet's useful overview of Scott and Montagu's combined patronage, I am not here invoking her distinction between philanthropic patronage and more traditional forms, since I do not see such a separation in the practice of this coterie.
7. Talbot to Carter, December 28, 1747, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 1.243–44; Richardson to Highmore, June 4, 1750, *Correspondence of Richardson*, pp. 2.236–37; Carter to Highmore, July 9, 1750, *Carter Unpublished Letters*, p. 140. That there could be two perspectives on the legitimacy of printing a circulating manuscript poem is illustrated by Thomas Edwards' view of Carter's behavior in the episode: he writes in 1753, "You please me much with the character you give of Miss C. I was angry with her about that affair of the Ode, but from your account of her it must procede from a mistake, and therefore I forget it" (March 31, 1753, *Correspondence with Edwards*, p. 287).
8. Melanie Bigold, *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation, and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century: Elizabeth Rowe, Catherine Cockburn, and Elizabeth Carter* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 170–201, 238; Carter to Mrs. Underdown, March 2, 1738; December 8, 1738; Carter to Cave, July 31, 1739, *Carter Unpublished Letters*, pp. 38, 56, 72. As I will do below, Bigold also contrasts Carter's successful retention of adherence to an older, scribally based intellectual tradition, despite her engagement in periodical and book publication, with Samuel Johnson's more complete acquiescence to the role of booksellers' hack (*Women of Letters*, pp. 185–91).

9. Carter to Highmore, June 8, 1748 and June 4, 1750, *Carter Unpublished Letters*, pp. 136–38.
10. Paul J. Korshin, “Johnson, the Essay, and *The Rambler*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*, ed. Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 51. Korshin has counted “more than twenty reprintings of the entire work by 1800” (p. 52). Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, vols. III–V of *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, gen. eds. A.T. Hazen and J.H. Middendorf, 16 vols., 1958 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), Nos. 1–3. Johnson’s notion of the durable, transcendent literary classic may well be less about visionary thinking than the reactive strategy of the hack, struggling to bridge the chasm between his precarious socioeconomic position and his desire to establish a wide and loyal readership. In No. 14, the Rambler refuses to reveal his identity as Johnson, pursuing a “policy” of avoiding conversation with his contemporary readers, that they might not see “a man [who] writes much better than he lives” (No. 14).
11. Talbot to Carter, May 28, 1750, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 1. 349–50 (although the assigned date of this letter precedes Jemima Grey’s complaint to Talbot that the paper’s “hard Words . . . really break my Teeth to speak them” [June 21, 1750, BLARS L 30/9a/5, f. 168], Talbot does seem to be passing on Grey’s message here); Carter to Talbot, March 30, 1752, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 2.72; 1.349–50). Interestingly, when Johnson was awarded a royal pension in 1762, Grey asked Talbot if she was the one who had obtained it for her “Old Friend” (August 22, 1762, BLARS L30/9a/8, f. 53).
12. Grey to Talbot, June 28, 1750, BLARS L 30/9a/5, f. 170; Talbot to Carter, 22 April 1752 and Carter to Talbot, 9 May 1752, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 2.73–74 and 77.
13. David S. Kaufer and Kathleen M. Carley, *Communication at a Distance: The Influence of Print on Sociological Organization and Change* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1993), pp. 66, 61, 127. The authors define “reach” as “the trail of people that have been touched by a communication” (p. 125).
14. Secker to Carter, September 13, 1749, *Memoirs of Carter*, p. 114.
15. Carter to Talbot, March 31, 1753, *Memoirs of Carter*, p. 123; Talbot to Carter, January 8, 1757, *Memoirs of Carter*, p. 139; Pennington, *Memoirs of Carter*, p. 140. I discuss the implications of this translation further in [Chapter 5](#), in relation to Carter’s establishing of a public “character.”
16. See Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, p. 26; the Duchess of Portland’s copy of her friend’s letters is preserved as British Library Add. MS 70493; Donnellan to Montagu, July 11 [1745], mo778; Gilbert West to Montagu, November 18, 1754, mo6667.

17. Markman Ellis, “Reading Practices in Elizabeth Montagu’s Epistolary Network of the 1750s,” in *Bluestockings Display’d: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730–1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 213–32 (at pp. 214–16); Montagu to Vesey, September 21, 1773, mo6432; Davis, *Good Lord Lyttelton*, p. 390.
18. Birch to Yorke, October 24, 1747, Add. MS 35397, f. 96v. It was at this time that Lyttelton seems to have attracted the attention of the Yorke–Grey coterie, as noted in [Chapter 1](#).
19. Montagu to Duchess of Portland, [December 15, 1745], mo397; Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 14 [1746], mo2186; Montagu to Miss Anstey, [July 4, 1752], mo115; Montagu to Carter, 28 [December 1758], mo3023.
20. Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 5 [1746], mo2184; Montagu to Catherine West [+ Gilbert West], [December 1752], mo6628. The two publications are, respectively, *A Treatise on the Roman Senate* (1747) and *The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (1752). Ellis’s discussion of the circle’s use of book exchange as part of its economy of gift and obligation (“Reading Practices,” p. 217) is pertinent here as well.
21. Duncombe, *The Femiinad*, p. 22.
22. Montagu to Carter, June 6, 1758, *Letters of Montagu*, pp. 4.75–76.
23. Frances Burney, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, 3 vols. (London, 1832), pp. 2. 270–71.
24. Bath to Montagu, [c. 1762], mo4304 (Montagu supplied Bath with the requested key in mo4557).
25. A case of a letter explicitly presented as confidential is Montagu’s to Lyttelton wherein she expresses disappointment at the narrow-mindedness of Bath’s will (August 25, 1764, mo1434), despite her more public defense of his character and her consistent statements of respect for his memory. In this Montagu displays the loyalty expected of coterie members and her belief that “good fame is the virtue of the dead, by that they are still usefull to the World,” positions which become relevant in the quarrel over characters discussed in [Chapter 5](#).
26. Montagu to Scott, [c. 1760], mo5783; Montagu to Bath, [1760], mo4502; see also mo numbers 4227–29, 4503, and 433 as belonging to this episode.
27. Lyttelton to Montagu, December 5, 1758, mo1568 (the copy of Monsey’s poem is incomplete, so the poem is in fact longer); Montagu to Vesey, [February 22, 1766], mo6388.
28. The strongly nationalist flavour of Montagu’s circle has been discussed by Nicole Pohl (pp. 87–89) in “Cosmopolitan Bluestockings,” in Heller, ed., pp. 71–89.
29. Bath to Montagu, [c. 1760], mo4229.



30. August 3, 1761, *Memoirs of Carter*, p. 153; Pennington gives a date of 1806 for the letter, but this is an obvious error.
31. Carter, "To Mrs. [Montagu]," *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1762), pp. 73–75.
32. Montagu to Carter, [November 6, 1761], mo3060.
33. Bath to Montagu, July 30, 1762, mo4264; Montagu to Bath, August 3, 1762, mo4531; Lyttelton to Montagu, August 4, 1773, mo1376.
34. These are found in the Montagu collection as mo 1505, mo1314 (Lyttelton to Montagu, [c. October 15, 1763], mo6882, mo6855, and mo6859, respectively).
35. JoEllen DeLucia, "Bluestocking Salons and the 'Bower of Malvina,'" *Eighteenth-Century Scotland* 23 (2009), 10–13.
36. Montagu to Scott, September 16, 1760, mo5781; Lyttelton to Montagu, October 18, 1763, mo1315.
37. Chapone to Carter, July 6, 1762, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, p. 1.146.
38. Montagu to Scott, [October] 20, 1762, mo5797 in response to mo5298. Myers states Chapone spent the summer of 1762 at Sandleford (*Bluestocking Circle*, p. 119), but this is contradicted by Montagu's report to Scott about Chapone's summer at Kensington. The claim is likely based on an undated letter of Chapone to Montagu referring to how she misses the latter after "the feast I have revell'd in the whole Summer" (mo705); Chapone's letter, tentatively dated 1762 in the Montagu Collection, actually belongs to a later year, probably 1763.
39. Lyttelton to Montagu, October 25, 1762, mo1303; Montagu quotes this passage to Carter on October 29 (mo3086); her reply to Lyttelton is also dated October 29 (mo1423); Lyttelton to Montagu, June 21 [1770], mo1361; Montagu to Lyttelton, July 30, [1770], mo1474.
40. Unlike a separate copy of the sonnet to Edwards, which is in an unknown hand and may date from the 1750s, when Montagu would first have been hearing of Chapone from her new friend Carter, the poems in this booklet are copied in what seems to be Chapone's hand. In addition, the poems are titled retrospectively, giving the dates of their first composition, and noting the poet's age of seventeen when the first was composed.
41. Chapone to Carter, August 19, 1770, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, pp. 1.152–53; Chapone to Montagu, [October 23, 1772], mo706 (emphasis added).
42. Montagu to Carter, July 11, 1770, mo3275.
43. Chapone, "To Mrs. Montagu," *Improvement of the Mind*, 2 vols. (London, 1773), pp. 1. iii–vi.
44. Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, p. 231, quoted and supported with numbers of editions and reprints by Zuk, *Talbot and Chapone*, p. 257.
45. Carter to Talbot, December 28, 1750, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 1.373; E.J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England*:

- Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 153–54.
46. Talbot to Carter, December 23, 1751, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 2. 63–64; Talbot to Carter, November 13, 1752, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.98 (Talbot is pleading with Carter to spend the winter in London); Talbot to Carter, 26 April 1760, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.321; Grey to Mary Grey, July 17, 1754, BLARS L30/9a/2, f. 98. Myers claims that “the warmth of . . . Talbot’s attachment to her girlhood friends, especially Lady Grey, did not alter” (*Bluestocking Circle*, p. 67), but I believe this should be modified to account for Talbot’s distaste of frivolity, and for the pull of an ascetic life which made the Richardsonian ideal of femininity so appealing to her. As early as 1745, Grey is attempting to tease her out of the “Anti-Diluvian Hours” of early rising that she is intending to bring to town from the country (Grey to Talbot, January 1745, f. 27).
  47. Through her friend Henrietta Knight (Lady Luxborough), the Duchess was also currently the prospective patron of William Shenstone (see [Chapter 4](#)).
  48. Somers to Talbot, May 5, 1754, Add. MS 19689, f. 14.
  49. Talbot to Carter, December 28, 1747, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 1.243–44.
  50. Clery, *Feminization Debate*, pp. 143, 145.
  51. Eaves and Kimpel comment that “one hopes she never knew how many ladies he had consulted” (*Samuel Richardson*, p. 360).
  52. Talbot, journal entries for January 18, 1752 and October 23, 1752, Add. MS 46690, f. 48v, 73; Edwards to Richardson, July 9, 1752 and July 6, 1753, *Correspondence with Edwards*, pp. 261 and 293; Carter to Talbot, September 21, 1753, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 2.141–42.
  53. In her journal entry for December 19, 1753, Talbot reports with satisfaction that “On Monday M [Mama] & I made three friendly Visits, in every one Sir Charles was a chief Subject, & indeed will do great good by giving the Conversations of this Town a more Rational turn” (Add. MS 46688, ff. 32–32v).
  54. Talbot to A. Berkeley, August 9, 1756, Add. MS 39311, ff. 83–84.
  55. Delany to Dewes, November 16, 1751, *Correspondence of Delany*, p. 3.266; Talbot to Carter, [May or June 1758], *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.270 (although Pennington dates this letter December 10, 1758, Carter’s reply is written June 16, 1758, and the contents indicate that the date must be early summer); Carter to Talbot, November 3, 1758, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.289.
  56. See, for example, Montagu to Carter, 1 [or 6] May [1760], m03035: “Miss Talbot has done me a great favour in getting me a benefaction for a poor Clergymans daughter to whom I wish’d well with great earnestness.”

57. Talbot to Montagu, October 29, [1761], mo5139.
58. Grey to Talbot, August 2, 1750, BLARS L 30/21/3/8, f. 10; Duchess of Somerset to Talbot, May 5, 1754, Add. MS 19689, ff. 11–15.
59. Talbot, *Wrest Journal*, June 11, 1745, BLARS L 30/106, n.p.
60. Add. MS 4291, ff. 271–72; Talbot to E. Berkeley, n.d. [after 1761], Add. MS 39312, ff. 319–20; Zuk, *Talbot and Chapone*, p. 167.
61. Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 38.
62. Carter, “Advertisement” to *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week* by Catherine Talbot (London, 1770), n.p.; Zuk, *Talbot and Chapone*, p. 19; Montagu Pennington, Carter’s nephew and biographer, notes that the profits from the *Reflections* “eventually were not inconsiderable” (*Memoirs of Carter*, p. 281); Pennington’s 1807 *Memoirs of Carter* contained letters between the two women related to *Epictetus* and other important junctures in Carter’s life; this was followed in 1809 by an edition of their remaining correspondence. It should be noted also that Montagu may have contributed to posthumous hagiography of Talbot. As the latter was dying in late 1769, Montagu was already writing to Carter about her friend in the past tense, as one whom she “venerat’d” as “the most pure, holy, & righteous” person she had ever known, who could now be called, “without presumption,” “our Angel” (Montagu to Carter, October 31, [1769], mo3261). The Montagu collection contains at least two letters of thanks to Montagu for gifts of the *Reflections* (Countess of Shelburne to Montagu, June 27, 1770, mo4093; Hester Pitt to Montagu, July 26, 1770, mo5069).
63. This was a task apparently assigned by the tutor Edmund Wilson to the young John Pitt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Chatham, probably in about 1768; see the manuscript separate mo6780, also discussed by Harriet Guest in *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 100–01.
64. John MacPherson to Montagu, October 15, 1772, mo1506.

### 3. Identity and influence from coterie to print

1. Thomas Edwards to Lewis Crusius, July 12, 1734, Ms. Bodl. 1008, ff. 14–16.
2. Catherine Talbot, journal entry for June 26, 1751, Add. MS 46690, f. 22v.
3. William Shenstone, “On Politicks,” in *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.*, 2 vols., ed. Robert Dodsley (London, 1764), p. 2.149.
4. See Edwards’ report to Yorke, March 9, 1751, Add. MS 35606, ff. 11–12, explaining his lack of progress on these tasks (Edwards dates his letter “1750” in the old style).
5. Edwards to Lawry, May 27, 1754, Ms. Bodl. 1012, f. 172.

6. Talbot to unidentified correspondent, n.d., Add. MS 39312, ff. 304–5. Talbot's reference to having a volume of Carter's *Poems* to pass on to her correspondent suggests a date in 1762, the year of their publication.
7. I am not suggesting that Talbot did not struggle with unique personal circumstances that exacerbated her sense of frustration and uselessness. As her editor Rhoda Zuk has summarized it, "Subjected as she was to a vaguely defined paternal governance, and therefore expectations – beyond propriety, amiability, and reverence for learning – that were ambiguous, she had a propensity for obsessive self-monitoring that left her depressed and doubtful of her worth." (*Talbot and Chapone*, p. 5). It is telling that her two closest friends, Jemima Grey and Elizabeth Carter, far from frivolous themselves, can be seen regularly warning Talbot against gloom and even "prescribing" light reading and other pleasurable amusements. On one occasion, Grey notes that she and Talbot have often "quarrelled" over "this Disposition," which Grey insists "is the Effect of Spirits not of Reason" (October 19, 1745, BLARS L30/9a/4, f.71), while Carter some years later gently scolds her for being too "scrupulously cautious (may I not venture to say, in some instances so superstitiously cautious) not to misemploy the least moment" (October 21, 1751, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, p. 2.54). Siskin and Warner, "This Is Enlightenment," pp. 1–21. Ruth Perry, in her introduction to *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748–1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) has summarized the demographic and economic pressures on younger siblings and daughters in particular.
8. Talbot to Carter, September 27, 1751, *Letters between Carter and Talbot*, pp. 2. 51–52; Talbot journal, May 13, 1751, Add. MS 46690, f. 7v. See also Birch's comment on Talbot's "laudable . . . Zeal" in "patroniz[ing]" the Cockburn subscription (Birch to Grey, September 16, 1749, Add. MS 35397, f. 215). Melanie Bigold has detailed the role of Birch, with the assistance of patrons such as Talbot and others of the Yorke circle, in placing the manuscript works of Cockburn "at the epicentre of contemporary scholarly interest" (*Women of Letters*, pp. 94–98; 150–56 [at p. 150]).
9. After the publication of the first edition of the *Dialogues* in 1759, Lyttelton and Montagu circulated further dialogues in manuscript to appreciative readers.
10. Montagu to Carter, [October 14, 1761], m03057. The Latin, from Virgil's *Aeneid*, in Dryden's translation reads "commit not thy prophetic mind/ To flitting leaves, the sport of ev'ry wind" (John Dryden, trans., *Virgil's Aeneid*, ed. Charles W. Eliot [New York: Collier, 1909], pp. 6. 116–17).
11. Carter to Highmore, April 28, 1752, *Carter Unpublished Letters*, p. 142; Bigold, *Women of Letters*, pp. 170, 171; Ezell, "The Posthumous Publication," pp. 121–36; Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-*

- Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 56–67 (at p. 60).
12. John Mulso to White, *Letters to White*, p. 284; Chapone, *Letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1773), pp. i.iii–iv, 1–2. Although the first edition of *Letters* was anonymous (the address to Mrs. Montagu as patron notwithstanding), the second edition, published in the same year, appeared as “By Mrs. Chapone,” and the *Miscellaneous Prose and Verse* was identified in the same way.
  13. Chapone to Carter, July 20, 1773, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, pp. i.162–63.
  14. Chapone to Carter, December 11, 1763, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, p. i.149; Chapone to Carter, June 15, 1777, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, pp. i.171–72. Chapone is quoting from Milton’s famous sonnet “When I consider how my light is spent,” which in turn references the biblical parable of the talents, Matt. 25:14–30.
  15. Guest, *Small Change*, p. 116.
  16. Chapone to Carter, July 20, 1773, *Posthumous Works of Chapone*, p. i.163. John Mulso reports with glee that “She made her Bargain for this, & it is as good as the former was bad; She secures £250. So that, calculating the 3 Voll: at £100 each, She is well off. We all abuse her this Time for cheating the Public; when her Work was inestimable, She was ill-used. However, the Work has not ye Merit indeed of general Use, yet there is Merit in it.” (January 31, 1775, *Letters to White*, p. 254).
  17. These examples are taken from two letters of Shenstone to Graves, dated December 23, 1743 and 1743, respectively, in *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 78–82.
  18. A typical early example, from Shenstone to Graves, begins “I have your poem by me, which I have read often with the greatest pleasure. I have many observations to make.” Shenstone goes on to suggest “the most *polite* and *suitable* title,” and then writes, “Your preface has a pretty thought towards the close; otherwise is on no account to be admitted. Pardon my freedom; but, I think, there is no manner of occasion for a preface; and those strokes, which I *know* to be real modesty in *you*, the world will undoubtedly impute to affectation” (December 23, 1743, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 79).
  19. For Shenstone as patron and mentor, see the work of Sandro Jung: “‘Mentorship’ and ‘Patronage’ in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England: William Shenstone Reconsidered,” *Bulletin de la Société d’Études Anglo-américaines des XVIIes et XVIIIes Siècles* 54 (2002), 187–98 and “Shenstone, Woodhouse, and Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poetics: Genre and the Elegiac-Pastoral Landscape,” *Philological Quarterly* 88 (2009), 127–49.
  20. Luxborough to Shenstone, June 24, 1749, *Letters written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough, to William Shenstone, Esq.*, ed. John Hodgetts (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), p. 106.

21. Shenstone to Jago, March 23, 1747–48, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 129.
22. James G. Turner, “The Sexual Politics of Landscape: Images of Venus in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry and Landscape Gardening,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982), 360–61, italics in original.
23. Shenstone to Graves, [July 1743], *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 70. Since the majority of Shenstone’s letters up to 1745, unlike his later ones, can be dated only on the basis of internal evidence, the sequence of shifting attitudes and priorities presented here must remain somewhat speculative.
24. John Riely, “Shenstone’s Walks: The Genesis of the Leasowes,” *Apollo* 110 (September 1979), 202–9.
25. Shenstone to Jago, [1744], *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 92; Shenstone to Luxborough, June 27, 1750, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 282.
26. See Turner; also Michel Baridon, “The Gentleman as Gardener: Pope, Shenstone, Mason,” in *The Crisis of Courtesy: Studies in the Conduct-book in Britain, 1600–1900*, ed. Jacque Carré (Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 129–41.
27. This statement is Shenstone’s conclusion to a description of how he has been spending his time: “If then, Industry be a Virtue, I am possessed of it very remarkably: Not a Moment of my Time passes, but I am employed, either in overseeing Labourers; reading Robinson’s *History of Scotland*; writing in my Paper Books, (’tis not material *what*, but writing;) perplexing the *Birmingham Artists* with Sketches for Improvements in their Manufactures, which they *will* not understand; and last, and finally, feeding my Poultry, my Ducks, my Pigeons, and my Swans” (to Dodsley, March 31, 1759, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 507–8).
28. Shenstone to Jago, September 17, 1747, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 109; Shenstone to Graves, [November 1744], *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 90–91; Shenstone to Lady Luxborough, October 21, 1751, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 321; Shenstone to Jago, June 16, 1754, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 400; Shenstone to Graves, September 21, 1747, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 116. For examples of Shenstone articulating alternative hierarchies of taste, see Shenstone to Graves, c. 1757, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 473 (“A young painter of my acquaintance is advised to go to Bath; has a recommendation to the Bishop of B—, who will introduce him to the Duke of N—. And though I cannot so easily bring him acquainted with nobles or prime-ministers, I can give him directions to my friend, who, in point of taste, is their superior”), and Shenstone to Graves, May 2, 1761, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 579 (“Mr. S — is agreeable, not void of learning, has some smartness, but little taste.—Mrs. S — has *much* of the latter; and perhaps imagination, which makes a part of taste, may have had no small share in converting her to Popery”).
29. David Hill Radcliffe, “Genre and Social Order in Country House Poems of the Eighteenth Century: Four Views of Percy Lodge,” *Studies in English*

- Literature, 1500–1900* 30 (1990), 445–65 (at 447); “Rural Elegance,” in *The Works in Verse and Prose, of William Shenstone, Esq; in Two Volumes*, ed. Robert Dodsley, vol. 1, stanza XVII, lines 7–13.
30. Sandro Jung, “William Shenstone’s Poetry, The Leasowes and the Intermediality of Reading and Architectural Design,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37 (2014), 53–77 (at 55); Shenstone to Lady Luxborough, June 3, 1749, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 196; Jung, “William Shenstone’s Poetry,” p. 53; Shenstone to Jago, June 16, 1754, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 400.
  31. Jung, “William Shenstone’s Poetry,” pp. 54–58.
  32. Shenstone to Graves, November 25, 1758, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 494; for examples of dedications or unsolicited works sent to him for advice or simply in homage, see Shenstone to Percy, December 1, 1758 (rec’d) and November 23, 1759, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 499, 533; Shenstone to Graves, September 14, 1761, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 588–89; Shenstone to J.C., September 17, 1761, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 593. It should be noted that Shenstone’s rhetoric of taste is very much of its time; he was an enthusiastic reader and commentator on the esthetic theories of Goldsmith, Burke, and Alexander Gerard, writing in response to the latter’s *Essay on Taste*, “the book is learned, and on a pleasing subject – I may perhaps add a very *important* one – for surely it is altogether unquestionable that taste *naturally* leads to virtue” (Shenstone to Thomas Percy, November 23, 1759, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 528–29).
  33. David Fairer, “Shenstone, Sensibility, and the Ethics of Looking,” *Age of Johnson* 19 (2009), 129–47 (at 133, 130, 136).
  34. Dodsley, as one of Shenstone’s literary executors, appears not to have been aware of this manuscript, which posthumously became part of Percy’s library. Ian A. Gordon’s account, in his 1952 edition, of its compilation, composition, and reception by Percy illustrates the typical scribal-culture features of the project (*Shenstone’s Miscellany 1759–1763* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1952], pp. xii–xix). Gordon does not distinguish between the nature of this “publication” and Shenstone’s participation in Dodsley’s *Collection*; however, given Shenstone’s comment of January 6, 1759 to Jago that “I have thoughts of amusing myself with the publication of a small Miscellany from neighbour Baskerville’s press, if I can save myself harmless as to expense,” I believe he conceived of this as a much more private work, to be circulated only as a selective extension of the coterie (*Letters of Shenstone*, p. 503).
  35. Trolander and Tenger, *Sociable Criticism*, p. 51; Shenstone to Jago, February 14, 1747–48 and [1744], *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 122 and 92.
  36. Helen Sard Hughes’s article “Shenstone and the Countess of Hertford,” *PMLA* 46 (1931), 1113–27 gives an account of this lengthy process. The Duchess, incidentally, asks permission to show Shenstone’s verses to

- “the discerning Miss Talbot,” just as Talbot had introduced the Duchess to Edwards’ work. This raises the tantalizing possibility of connecting bridges between coteries, a possibility cut short by the Duchess’s death in July 1754 (Hughes 1123, qtg Hull p. 1.195).
37. Turner, “Sexual Politics of Landscape,” p. 360. This observation does not deny the popularity of representations of such gardens in paintings, descriptions, plans, and engravings, all of which promised to expand access to those who could not physically travel to the actual sites.
  38. Another consequence was that poems at times escaped Shenstone’s control before he considered them perfected; for an example, see F.D.A. Burns’s account of the early publishing history of the poet’s very popular “Pastoral Ballad,” “The First Published Version of Shenstone’s ‘Pastoral Ballad,’” *The Review of English Studies* XXIV 93(1973), 182–85.
  39. Shenstone to Jago, [1744], *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 92; Shenstone to Percy, April 24, 1761, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 578.
  40. Shenstone to Percy, May 16, 1762, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 626; Shenstone to B[innell?], October 1755, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 451–52.
  41. Shenstone to Luxborough, September 11, 1748 and August 30, 1749, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 168–69; 215.
  42. Randall L. Calhoun, “William Shenstone’s Aesthetic Theory and Poetry,” unpublished dissertation (Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 1985), p. 136.
  43. This passage is quoted by Alan D. McKillop from a Shenstone memorandum published in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for April 1800, in “Thomson’s Visit to Shenstone,” *Philological Quarterly* 23 (1944), 283–86 (at 284).
  44. Shenstone, *Works*, p. 2.142.
  45. Samuel Johnson, “Life of Shenstone,” in *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), pp. 4.126–31 (at p. 127). These allegations, reported by Johnson, were denied by the friends of both Shenstone and Lyttelton; see [Chapters 4](#) and [6](#) for further discussions of this debate.
  46. Riely, “Shenstone’s Walks,” 209.
  47. Riely, “Shenstone’s Walks,” 203.
  48. Shenstone to Hull, January 7, 1761, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 565–66.
  49. Johnson, “Life of Shenstone,” pp. 129–31.
  50. Shenstone to Percy, June 6, 1759 and November 10, 1760, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 513 and 564.
  51. A.R. Humphreys, *William Shenstone: An Eighteenth Century Portrait* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 86.
  52. See Riely, “Shenstone’s Walks,” 209 n37; Spence’s description, probably originating in a 1758 visit with Dodsley, is preserved in the Huntington Library, HM 30312, along with the plan reproduced here, apparently



- traced from a survey plan made by William Lowe. Descriptions such as this one and another by Thomas Hull preserved in the Osborn Collection at Yale University contributed to the body of manuscript travel writings that fuelled the rise of a literature of domestic tourism, as discussed in [Chapter 6](#). For a list of social elites touring the Leasowes in the summer of 1762 and, in some cases, inviting Shenstone to their own seats, see Shenstone to Graves, November 20, 1762, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 638–41; the list includes the Bath and Montagu party visiting Hagley in June 1762 (see [Chapter 2](#)).
53. Shenstone first reports a request from Dodsley for verses in a letter to Graves of October 24, 1753, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 379, and writes about Dodsley's first visit in 1754.
  54. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. (New York: Free, 1995), pp. 26–27. For a fuller discussion of Dodsley as innovator in book forms see Schellenberg, “Second Coming,” pp. 39–42, and Harry M. Solomon, *The Rise of Robert Dodsley: Creating the New Age of Print* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), who considers Dodsley to be “the most influential bookseller of his age” (p. 262). James Tierney's introduction to *Correspondence of Dodsley* provides a thorough overview of Dodsley's career that emphasizes the characteristics summarized here.
  55. Michael F. Suarez, S.J., “Trafficking in the Muse: Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* and the Question of Canon,” in *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts and the Eighteenth-Century Canon*, ed. Alvaro Ribiero, SJ, and James G. Basker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 297–313 (at p. 306); Suarez includes in his count those who subsequently succeeded to their titles.
  56. Gray to Walpole, January/February 1748, *Correspondence of Gray*, pp. 1.294–303; Edwards to Wray, July 25, 1748, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f. 37.
  57. Suarez, “Trafficking,” 302–3; Edwards to Wray, July 25, 1748, Ms. Bodl. 1011, ff. 37–38; Dodsley to Shenstone, November 10, 1753, *Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 162; Shenstone to Graves, October 24, 1753, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 379; Dodsley, “Advertisement” to *A Collection of Poems. By Several Hands In Three Volumes* (London, 1748), p. v; Suarez, “Trafficking,” 312; Barbara Benedict, “The Paradox of the Anthology: Collecting and *Différence* in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *New Literary History* 34 (2003), 231–56 (at 234). Benedict elects to treat the anthology and the miscellany as one form, arguing that distinctions between the former's focus on previously published material “selected for consistency and quality” and the latter's compilation of new and more heterogeneous material were at the time not only blurred, but insignificant from the

- perspective of the reader who turned to these for “dip, sip, and skip’ reading” (231–32). From the perspective of production rather than reception, however, the miscellany’s association with a more informal gathering of scattered materials is a genealogically important one linking it to a culture of scribal circulation.
58. Robert Dodsley to Joseph Spence, October 22, 1748, *Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 125.
  59. Shenstone to Jago, June 16, 1754, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 401; see also Shenstone to Christopher Wren, July 6, 1754, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 403 and Shenstone to Graves, July 27, 1756, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 455. That Shenstone had some prejudices to overcome is indicated by his initial wavering about whether to entrust his poems to Dodsley’s new volumes, or whether he ought to “print them in a more advantageous manner, both with regard to *Reputation & Profit*,” as his friends recommended (to Luxborough, December 12, 1753, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 387).
  60. There are multiple references in both the Shenstone and Dodsley correspondences to the circulation and revision of Dodsley’s tragedy *Cleone* and his poem *Melpomene: or the Regions of Terror and Pity*. Just after the publication of *Melpomene* in 1757, Dodsley writes to Graves, “I am sensible . . . it owes much of its correctness to Yours and Mr. Shenstone’s judicious criticisms, of which You will easily perceive the effects” (October 24, [1757], *Correspondence of Dodsley*, pp. 296–97). Both Graves and Shenstone also contributed to Dodsley’s 1761 *Select Fables of Aesop*.
  61. Gordon, *Shenstone’s Miscellany*, p. xii; Suarez comments on this over-estimation in the Introduction to his 1997 facsimile edition of the *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1997), pp. 33–34.
  62. With the exception of two interjected poems “to which,” Shenstone acknowledged, “I am a Stranger”: they were the work of Charles Parrott (Shenstone to Graves, March 21, 1755, *Letters of Shenstone*, pp. 433 and 434 n2).
  63. Indeed, faced with the unexpected recurrence of his name further in the volume, in “Verses by Mrs. Bennet to Mr. Richardson, upon an Alcove now at Parson’s Green,” regretting not having further revised his poems, and dismayed at the fact that his name had been attached to them all counter to his instructions, Shenstone writes to Graves, “All this is against me; as a thing in itself invidious to have one’s name recur so often, and as my *own lines contradict* the merit which my friends so liberally allow me” (Shenstone to Graves, May 30, 1758, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 482).
  64. Shenstone to Jago, January 29, 1754, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 393; Dodsley to Shenstone, August 27, [1754], *Correspondence of Dodsley*, pp. 171–72; Graves to Dodsley, October 26, 1754, *Correspondence of Dodsley*, pp. 180–81; Dodsley to Shenstone, February 15, 1755, *Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 192. It should be

- noted also that Dodsley is able to supply only nine of fifteen names when Shenstone asks to know the authors of a number of poems in the *Collection*'s fourth volume, indicating how general was the practice of circulating poetry without attribution at the time (*Correspondence of Dodsley*, pp. 198–99).
65. Jago to Dodsley, October 25, 1757, *Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 298; Dodsley to Jago, October 29, [1757], *Correspondence of Dodsley*, pp. 301–2; Shenstone to Graves, April 4, 1755, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 441.
  66. In this respect, it is of interest that David Hill Radcliffe, for example, has identified a strain of “Dodsley Spenserianism” represented in the *Collection*, with Shenstone as its most influential contributor among a group of mid-century Oxonians including Lyttelton, Gilbert West, Percy, and Joseph Warton. According to Hill, the Spenserian imitations on the subject of education published by Dodsley, beginning with Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, propagated the influential new idea of “culture” as attained by means of education, and particularly by the study of literature, so that, “‘nurs'd with skill,’ a country lad might become a judge, a chancellor, or a bard sublime” (“The Poetry Professors: Eighteenth-Century Spenserianism and Romantic Concepts of Culture,” *1650–1850: Ideas, Aesthetics and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 5 [2000], 121–50; at 129). Dussinger has written of the Richardson coterie at North End as neo-Spenserian and therefore naturally attracted to Edwards' poetry (*Correspondence with Edwards*, p. lxx).
  67. Graves's response to Shenstone's thoughts of having Baskerville print a volume of his own elegies articulates a more print-culture-oriented view: “I told him It would give him the Air of a *local* Author – & that for my part, I should not have so high an opinion of any Production, that did not make its first appearance in the Metropolis – And I believe there are many people that have the same prejudice – It puts one in mind of one Doughty's *country* Sermon – preach'd in a *country* Church – & published at ye request of a *Country* Congregation” (*Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 408).
  68. Shenstone to Jago, January 6, 1759, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 503. For a fuller discussion of Shenstone's careful production of this manuscript, see Gordon's introduction to his edition of the miscellany.
  69. Relevant here is J.G.A. Pocock's account of a shift in the defining components of a gentleman's identity from property, leisure, and public engagement to commerce, leisure, and cultivation (“The Mobility of Property and the Rise of Eighteenth-Century Sociology,” in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], pp. 103–23).
  70. Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 288–97.
  71. Dodsley to Shenstone, January 21, [1758], *Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 334; Marjorie Williams, *William Shenstone and His Friends* (London: The English

Association, 1933), p. 9; see also Gordon, *Shenstone's Miscellany*, pp. xi–xii, xvii–xviii.

72. Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 290–92.

73. I am not suggesting that Shenstone proceeded along a developmental trajectory from manuscript to print: in fact, as I have already indicated, while communicating with Dodsley late in his life about publishing his elegies, he was simultaneously preparing a manuscript miscellany of about ninety poems principally by authors of his coterie but also sourced from print and from Percy's collection of ballads.

#### 4. Memorializing a coterie life in print

1. Thomas Gray to Norton Nicholls, June 24, 1769, *Correspondence of Gray*, p. 3.1067.
2. "A.F.," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 82 (March 1812), 216.
3. Montagu to Carter, October 10, 1769, m03258. Gray was proud to keep company with Shenstone's *School-Mistress* in the first edition of Dodsley's *Collection* (to Walpole, [January or February 1748], *Correspondence of Gray*, p. 1.295), but was critical of the poems in Volumes 5 and 6 (to Warton, March 8, 1758, *Correspondence of Gray*, p. 2.566). Johnson for his part stated that "Shenstone was a man whose correspondence was an honour" (*The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (London, 1785), p. 331. Boswell also records Johnson's recitation "with great emotion" of the final stanza of Shenstone's poem "Written at an Inn at Henley" (*Life of Johnson*, pp. 697–98).
4. Johnson, "Life of Shenstone," *Lives*, pp. 4.126–31. Lonsdale has concluded that Johnson did not take the opportunity to obtain more direct information about Shenstone from Richard Graves, and also "made little use" of Shenstone's published letters (*Lives*, pp. 4.418, 417).
5. Shenstone's complete correspondence details the visits and friendships of Scottish noblemen and intellectuals; a French admirer erected an urn to him in his garden, and the discussion below demonstrates the popularity of Shenstone in North American magazines.
6. "The Sequestered Bard. An Elegy," by "Philander," *The Scots Magazine* 25 (February 1763), 110. "Cotswauldia" was Elizabeth Amherst Thomas (1716–1779), whose manuscript book of her original compositions, preserved in the Bodleian Library as Ms. Eng. Poet. e.109, contains a copy of this poem in her hand (ff. 60–61). One of the most notable cases of Shenstone's mentorship is that of Robert Burns, who acknowledges Shenstone's implied encouragement, through the statement that "humility has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame," in the preface to his debut

- collection of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Kilmarnock, 1786), pp. iv–v. In keeping with the argument of this chapter, this mentorship was not personal but was mediated by Dodsley’s edition, which Burns references through this quotation from the essay “On Allowing Merit in Others” and through a reference to the elegies, first published in the *Works*.
7. After the publication of the 1755 volume of Dodsley’s *Collection*, Shenstone inquires of the bookseller about the possibility of publishing a “12 penny pamphlett” of a few of his poems that spring (Shenstone to Dodsley, March 23, 1755, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 435; Shenstone to Graves, April 4, 1755, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 441), but he abandons that plan and a few years later is putting together a miscellany volume, including the poems of members of his circle, selected older poems, and a few poems from contemporary magazines (see [Chapter 3](#)).
  8. Robert Dodsley, “Preface,” in *The Works in Verse and Prose, of William Shenstone, Esq; Most of Which Were Never before Printed. In Two Volumes, with Decorations*, 2 Vols. (London, 1764), pp. i–viii.
  9. David Fairer has discussed the image of the halcyon in Shenstone’s letters and poems, as well as on his planned coat of arms, as representing the pleasure and importance of clarity of vision (“Fishes in His Water,” pp. 140–41).
  10. Pixell to R. Dodsley, April 16, 1764, *Correspondence of Dodsley*, p. 487. Pixell’s response illustrates Margaret Ezell’s observation that posthumous publications tended to claim that the author’s friends would recognize the printed text’s fidelity to the author, indicating that such publications were viewed as extensions of manuscript culture, rather than repudiations of it (“The Posthumous Publication,” pp. 128–29).
  11. John Riely has reviewed evidence for the “Description” being the collaborative composition of several of Shenstone’s coterie friends, including Hylton, Percy, and Jago (“Shenstone’s Walks,” 202–9, at 209, n9). The plan is based on the drawing reproduced as [Figure 3.1](#) in the [previous chapter](#).
  12. “Arcadio,” “Verses Written at the Gardens of William Shenstone, Esquire, near Birmingham, 1756,” *Works of Shenstone*, pp. 2.383–86; Dodsley, “Verses by Mr. Dodsley on His First Arrival at the Leasowes, 1754,” *Works of Shenstone*, pp. 2.380–82. At least five of these poems appeared earlier in magazines, one (Luxborough’s) also in volume 4 of Dodsley’s *Collection*.
  13. *Correspondence of Dodsley*, pp. 486 n1; 15; Michael F. Suarez, S.J., “Publishing Contemporary English Literature, 1695–1774,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume V, 1695–1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 657–58. The *Monthly* and *Critical* reviews of the edition largely concurred

- with Dodsley in appreciating Shenstone's elegance, natural simplicity, appreciation for the picturesque, and justice of sentiment, but suggested that the editor should have suppressed some of the lesser works and that he had overstated somewhat the genius of the poet.
14. This account of the editions is based on findings from the *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* database – there appears to be no bibliographical account of Shenstone's *Works*. It should be noted also that Shenstone's songs had a parallel life as lyrics, frequently being set to music in separate publications or song magazines.
  15. I have found seven such poems and one prose extract; one of the poems is a piece from Shenstone's privately printed 1737 *Poems*, and the others, of dubious provenance and quality, could nevertheless possibly be scraps of juvenile and/or occasional poetry taken from Shenstone's correspondence or manuscript notebooks.
  16. One short Shenstone piece on the brevity of life, entitled "A Solemn Meditation" but included in a section of the *Works* titled "Levities" and ending with the line "Surely, said I – life is a f—t!" appears to have drawn criticism; it was removed from the 1768 and subsequent Dodsley editions, then disappeared from a series of "Poetical Works" editions beginning in 1778, but was reinstated in a 1788 Dilly edition of the poetry.
  17. Ann Messenger has discussed this conjunction and compared the pastoral vision of the two poets in "'Like – but oh, how different!': William Shenstone and Mary Whateley Darwall," in *Gender at Work: Four Women Writers of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Ann Messenger (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), pp. 15–33.
  18. Thomas Percy, ed., *Reliques of English Poetry*, 3 vols. (London, 1765), p. ix. As Shenstone's correspondence makes clear, he played an essential role in encouraging Percy to continue with the project and in developing its editorial principles and selection criteria.
  19. Richard Jago, *Edge-Hill, or, the Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized. A Poem in Four Books* (London, 1767), pp. 103–4; Richard Jago, *Labour and Genius: or, the Mill-Stream, and the Cascade* (London, 1768), pp. 2, 18. Jago's final publication with James Dodsley was his posthumous *Poems, Moral and Descriptive*, "prepared for the press, and improved by the author, before his death," which appeared in 1784 and featured not only these two poems but also the verses "To William Shenstone, Esq; On receiving a Gilt Pocket-Book. 1751" and others that had first appeared in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* in 1755 and 1758.
  20. David Oakleaf, "Richard Graves, s.v." *ODNB*; Clarence Tracy, *A Portrait of Richard Graves* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. III.
  21. The cabbage-garden teasing is implied in Shenstone's reply to Graves, March 28, 1753: "Cabbage-garden ornee is very high burlesque, and affects

- the improvements of your friend too nearly” (*Letters*, p. 355); Richard Graves, *The Love of Order: A Poetical Essay* (London, 1773), pp. ix, 23–24.
22. *The Monthly Review* (September 1775), 191.
  23. An engraving of Shenstone included in the *Recollections* is labeled as being from the original in possession of Mr. Thomas Hull, and is marked as printed in London, July 1778; it would therefore seem to be associated with Hull’s edition of the letters, but I have not found it in the 1778 Dodsley edition.
  24. Richard Graves, *Recollection of Some Particulars in the Life of the Late William Shenstone, Esq. In a Series of Letters from an Intimate Friend of His* (London, 1788), pp. vii–viii, vi, 1.
  25. Graves, *Recollections of Shenstone*, pp. 9, 8, 35, 52, 134. Although I do not treat them here, there were also tributes to Shenstone issuing from other booksellers, such as Thomas Nicholls’ *Shenstone; or the Force of Benevolence: A Poem*, published by Newbery in 1776.
  26. Calhoun, “William Shenstone’s Aesthetic Theory and Poetry,” p. 21.
  27. In a vestigial way, then, the magazine ethos of the later eighteenth century still reflects Ezell’s statement about the coterie features of the 1692–94 *Gentleman’s Journal*, that “the essentially communal and reciprocal principles” of the coterie can “flourish in the new commercial medium” (“*The Gentleman’s Journal*,” p. 340).
  28. These numbers were augmented slightly by four “hits” in *Nineteenth-Century Collections Online*.
  29. In this respect, my search results are in themselves biased toward a periodical culture organized around authorial attribution.
  30. See James Tierney, “Periodicals and the Trade, 1695–1780,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume V, 1695–1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and Michael L. Turner, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 492.
  31. Shenstone to Percy, July 5, 1761, *Letters of Shenstone*, p. 583.
  32. A good example of how Shenstone was absorbed into the emotional landscape of everyday life is captured in a journal entry by Frances Burney which quotes from the “Pastoral Ballad” to convey to her sister Susan her emotional state after Susan’s marriage and departure for Ireland: “Ah my Susy – how I miss you already! – how I want you by my side – I have been repeating, internally, all Day long these heart-felt lines –

I priz’d ev’ry Hour that past by  
 Beyond all that had pleas’d me before,  
 But now they are gone!–& I sigh  
 And I grieve that I priz’d them no more—

- Frances Burney, October 3, 1783, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney Volume V, 1782–1783*, ed. Lars E. Troide and Stewart J. Cook (Toronto and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), pp. 396–97.
33. See, for example, "Sent to a Lady, with a Copy of Shenstone's Works," *The Weekly Entertainer: or, Agreeable and Instructive Repository* (August 16, 1802).
34. Mr. Nott of Cambridge, "Lines Written in Shenstone's Leasowes," *Monthly Magazine and British Register* (January 1, 1797).
35. Dodsley, *Works of Shenstone*, p. 1.iv; Montagu to Lyttelton, October 14, 1772, mo1480; "To a Young Lady, with the Works of Mr. Shenstone," signed "Herbert," *Moral and Entertaining Magazine* (June 1779), 383.
36. Dodsley, *Works of Shenstone*, p. 1.iii; Shenstone to Hull, October 18, 1761, *Select Letters between the late Duchess of Somerset, Lady Luxborough, Miss Dolman, Mr. R. Whistler, Mr. R. Dodsley, William Shenstone Esq. and others*, 2 vols. (London, 1778), p. 2.120.
37. "An Original Anecdote of Shenstone," *The Westminster Magazine* (May 1774), 224.
38. E. W. Pitcher, "On the 'Original Anecdote' and Source for *Shenstone; Or the Force of Benevolence, A Poem* (1776)," *Notes and Queries* 45, 243, 4 (1998), 472–73 (at 473).
39. Radcliffe, "Genre and Social Order in Country House Poems of the Eighteenth Century," 457–58. James G. Turner too has described, although with skepticism as to its ideological credibility, Shenstone's contribution to Augustan landscape ideology as the explicit introduction of careful accounting: "Shenstone attempts to reconcile frugality and display, and shows a concern for 'cost' as well as effect, base as well as superstructure; he tries to integrate garden finances into the familiar Augustan pattern of moderation, concealment and heightening" ("The Sexual Politics of Landscape," 358).
40. Jung, "Shenstone, Woodhouse," pp. 138–39.
41. Walter Scott, *Autobiography of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (Philadelphia, PA: Carey & Lea, 1831), pp. 59–60.
42. Riely, "Shenstone's Walks," 209.
43. Richard Terry, "Lamb, Shenstone and the Icon of Personality," *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* 76 (1991), 124–32, at 128, 126.
44. Joining the chorus is Horace Walpole, who in a April 27, 1773, letter to the Rev. William Cole comments that he avoids participating in the mutual exchange of compliments between "mediocre" authors, as it would make them "appear like those puny conceited witlings in Shenstone's and Hughes' 'correspondence' who give themselves airs from being in possession of the soil of Parnassus for the time being" (Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole Fourth Earl of Oxford, in Nine Volumes* [London: Richard Bentley



- & Son, 1891], p. 5.457). Humphreys' 1937 study of Shenstone, which cites this letter (pp. 108–9), is a curious vestige of this critical tradition, blending insight into the poet-gardener's influential cultivation of “an independent life of self-determined development” with caveats about his mid-eighteenth-century mediocrity and “unconscious decorum,” and his “spiritually inadequate” way of life (pp. 36, 6).
45. One of the oddest applications of Johnson's narrative that I have found was printed in *The American Museum* of January 1792, as part of a collection of “Letters to a young lady. By the rev. John Bennet.” The first letter illustrates the dangers of “a passion for poetry” in a woman by citing the example of Shenstone as someone “whose works, though not of the first magnitude, are exceedingly agreeable; but [whose] poetical enthusiasm was a source of perpetual irritation and misfortune. Having cultivated his taste, more than his prudence, his feelings, more than his fortitude, and his imagination, more than his judgment, his life was one unvaried train of inquietudes.” Having established this Johnsonian series of alternatives, the writer goes on to build on two of the “Life's” inaccuracies – the claims that Shenstone's imprudent “enthusiasm” for improvements made him the victim of “merciless creditors” who “awoke him with an iron grasp, from his delicious entrancement,” and that he was eaten up by frustration and envy toward his neighbor George Lyttelton – to arrive at the conclusion, not supported by Johnson, that the two causes led to the poet's death.
  46. *Gentleman's Magazine* 76 (March 1806), 226; “A Shenstonian,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 76 (May 1806); “Arcadio,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 76 (June 1806), 492.
  47. “A.F.,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 82 (March 1812), 216.
  48. “W.A.L.,” *The Analyst* 5 (June 1836), 238–40; H.T. Tuckerman, “Shenstone,” *Sartain's Union Magazine* 4.6 (June 1849), 353–57.
  49. Tuckerman, “Shenstone,” 357; “A Batch of Books,” *The Leader* 5.244 (November 24, 1854), 1124; Edward Jesse, “Shenstone and the Leasowes,” *Once a Week* 6.156 (1862), 722–23 (at 723).

### 5. “This new species of mischief”

1. Montagu to Yorke, December 21, [1776], mo 6816.
2. Montagu to Vesey, September 21, 1773, mo6432.
3. Vesey to Montagu, July 6, [1774], mo6298; Montagu to Vesey, July 18, [1774], mo6438 (emphasis added). The immediate context is the recent publication of the late Earl of Chesterfield's letters.
4. Sören Hammerschmidt, “Pope, Curll, and the Intermediality of Eighteenth-Century Character,” *Word & Image* 28 (2012), 273–86 (at 274).

5. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, p. III4.
6. Montagu's papers contain a manuscript copy of Beattie's poem "The Hermit" (mo6870), first written in 1766 but not printed until it appeared in his 1776 collection of *Poems on Several Occasions*.
7. James Beattie, "Advertisement," *Essays* (Edinburgh, 1776), n.p. Montagu's correspondence also includes exchanges with Carter about their active editing and negotiations with the London bookseller Dilly for the publication of Beattie's *The Minstrel, with a Few Other Poems* in 1777 (see mo2996 and mo3438).
8. Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 62–76 (at p. 70).
9. *The Gentleman's Magazine* 40 (1770), 263–64; Montagu to Carter, August 6, 1773, mo 3317; Mary Scott, *The Female Advocate; A Poem. Occasioned by Reading Mr. Duncombe's Feminead* (London, 1774), pp. 30–31. Several scholars have reviewed contemporary praise of Bluestocking women in this period; see especially Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, pp. 271–89 and Guest, *Small Change*, pp. 95–110.
10. Ezell, *Social Authorship*, pp. 131–35 (at p. 131). For the culture of the anthology, see Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Anthologies* (Princeton University Press, 1996), and Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially ch. 2, "Cultures of the Commonplace." Michael F. Suarez, S.J., "Towards a Bibliometric Analysis of the Surviving Record, 1701–1800," *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 5, 1695–1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S.J., and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 39–65.
11. Montagu to Carter, November 24, 1777, mo3435 (as qtd in Eger, *Women of Reason*, p. 59); Carter to Montagu, November 23, 1777, *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, pp. 3.47–48; Eger, *Women of Reason*, pp. 32–43 (at p. 43).
12. Guest, *Small Change*, p. 113.
13. Montagu to Carter, August 4, [1772], mo3301.
14. George Justice, in his discussion of Burney's *The Witlings*, observes the association of later eighteenth-century coterie writing with scandal (pp. 217–20), extrapolating from Love's emphasis on scribal publication as the vehicle of lampoons and oppositional writing (Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 209–10, 279–81); the contents of Mary Capell's book, discussed in Chapters 1 and 7, bear out this link; Frances Brooke, *The Excursion*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Hope D. Cotton (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), pp. 19–20, 118 (it should be noted that Brooke's novel concludes with the heroine's return to a select country coterie that will

- mount productions of her manuscript tragedies for its own pleasure. It would seem that, as a peripheral member of Shenstone's social network, Brooke was prepared to endorse his social mode of authorship as a way out of the danger that could arise when a limited coterie readership was replaced by an uninformed and debased urban audience); Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The School for Scandal* in Vol. 1 of *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 2 vols, ed. Cecil Price (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), pp. 359, 356; emphasis in original.
15. Frances Burney, *The Wiltlings* in Vol. 1 of *The Complete Plays of Frances Burney*, 2 vols, ed. Peter Sabor, contributing editor Geoffrey M. Sill (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), Act 2, pp. ll. 323–25, 187, 190–93. As one indication of that power, when Burney needed to maximize her profits from the sale of her 1796 novel *Camilla*, she turned to her Bluestocking contacts for assistance, resulting in the largest English novel subscription to that date (see Peter Sabor, Introduction to *The Subscription List to Frances Burney's "Camilla"* (Montreal: Burney Centre and Burney Society, 2003), pp. 12–13).
  16. Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 166–70; 173–74; Montagu to Carter, November 24, 1777, mo3435, as quoted in Eger, *Women of Reason*, at p. 59.
  17. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, p. 186, emphasis mine. Johnson acknowledges the role of patronage broker played by Carter in a letter of January 14, 1756 wherein he writes, "I am soliciting a benefit for Miss Williams, and beg that if you can by letters influence any in her favour, and who is there whom you cannot influence? You will be pleased to patronize her on this occasion" (Johnson to Carter, *Letters of Johnson*, p. 1.126).
  18. Zionkowski, *Men's Work*, p. 23. Dustin Griffin's argument that Johnson became increasingly supportive of the patronage system in the course of his career (*Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800*, pp. 222–30) can be reconciled with Zionkowski's reading of the *Lives* in that the role of patron was acceptable as long as it was separated out from the identity of the professional author (who might, however, act as a broker). Indeed, Zionkowski argues that "By repeatedly insisting on the distinctions between gentlemen and men of letters, Johnson in the *Lives* draws boundaries between categories that had traditionally been merged" (p. 187). In light of this artificial separation, Isobel Grundy's discussion of the parallels between Johnson and Montagu, particularly their mutual involvement in numerous subscription projects, is noteworthy ("Samuel Johnson as Patron of Women," *The Age of Johnson* 1 (1987), 59–77 [at 70]).

19. Johnson to Montagu, December 17, 1759, *Letters of Johnson* p. 1.189; June 9, 1759, *Letters of Johnson*, p. 1.186; March 5, 1778, *Letters of Johnson*, pp. 3.110–11; Johnson to Thrale, May 1, 1780, *Letters of Johnson*, p. 3.249.
20. Johnson to Thrale, October 24, 1778, *Letters of Johnson*, p. 3.131; Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, pp. 413–14, 1278.
21. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, p. 1114.
22. James Barry, *An Account of a Series of Pictures in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce at the Adelphi* (London, 1783), p. 74; Grundy, “Johnson as Patron,” p. 75; Barry, *Series of Pictures*, p. 75. In making this claim I am not denying Johnson’s active support of professional women writers, whom he seems to have placed in a separate category, as in his above-quoted grouping of women who “make a trade of [their] wit.”
23. Montagu to Bath, [May? 1763], mo4586.
24. Montagu to Duchess of Portland, [March 1748], mo428 and [c. 1745], mo399; Montagu to Mary Anstey, November 23 [1751], mo114; Montagu to Catherine West (quotation an inserted address to Gilbert West), [December 1752], mo6628.
25. Carolyn R. Miller, “Genre as Social Action,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984), 151–67 (at pp. 158, 163, 158, 158; citing Burke, *Permanence and Change*, pp. 32–33).
26. Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 24–28; Lisa Freeman, *Character’s Theatre: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 27.
27. Hammerschmidt, “Intermediality of Character,” 274, 275. By “media-inflected,” I mean something almost opposite to Lynch’s view of character in the eighteenth century as “transmedia,” which asserts the inherently multi-media aspect of characteristic writing in the period (*Economy of Character*, pp. 39–40).
28. Letters exchanged between Carter, Secker, and Talbot, qtd. in *Memoirs of Carter*, pp. 113–14, 132, 114.
29. Montagu, *Letters of Montagu*, p. 4.350; Montagu to Carter, [c. October 6, 1771], mo3292.
30. Alexander Pope, “Epistle to a Lady,” in *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations*, ed. John Butt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 560.
31. This is not to say that Montagu did not have her own investment in the posthumous fate of characters. In a 1786 letter, her cousin Richard Robinson,

- Baron Rokeby responds to an apparent threat that materials about her private life will be published, writing, “The worst that can happen, in my view, is a publication of some of your Original Letters, for Scandalous anecdotes, such as are alluded to by Junius Junior, will gain no credit, even in this Age, which is disposed to love all characters. Pope’s Letters were published by Curll, from the Originals that had been restored to him by the Executors of his Correspondents, I always expected and I suppose you are prepared in your own mind for an event of this kind. Copies of your letters are in the hands of many Persons and a Bookseller, as such, will print any thing that will sell” (July 7, 1786, mo4887).
32. Reggie Allen, “The Sonnets of William Hayley and Gift Exchange,” *European Romantic Review* 13 (2002), 383–92, cites a cycle of exchanges between the poet Hayley and Hardwicke which included the address of a 1779 sonnet (beginning “Hardwicke! Whose bright applause a poet crown’d”) in gratitude for compliments the latter had paid to Hayley’s 1778 *Epistle on Painting* (384–85) – a sequence which recalls the roles of sonneteer and patron played by Thomas Edwards and Philip Yorke, respectively, several decades before.
  33. “To the Printer of the Public Advertiser,” December 18, 1764, Add. MS 35607, ff. 150, 152; Grey to Talbot, July 13, 1766, BLARS L30/9a/8, f. 279.
  34. Montagu to Bath, October 25, 1763, mo4593; Lyttelton to Montagu, November 8, 1763, mo1317. For a fuller account of the Lyttelton–Hardwicke relationship, see Davis, *Good Lord Lyttelton*.
  35. Davis, *Good Lord Lyttelton*, p. 396; Hardwicke to Montagu, December 20, [17]76, mo6811.
  36. Hardwicke further offered his own implied condemnation of Chesterfield’s approach in his 1783 *Walpoliana*, a privately printed collection of anecdotes about Sir Robert Walpole, which he introduced with the words: “These Anecdotes of Sir Robert Walpole are not complete or digested enough for the perusal of more than a few friends; there is besides a delicacy in publishing characters of eminent persons, whilst their immediate descendants are living. Every thing I have inserted is on good authority, and from Sir Robert’s Friends rather than his Enemies” (“Introduction,” *Walpoliana* [n.p., 1783], p. 3).
  37. Montagu to Hardwicke, n.d., Add. MS 35616, ff. 160–61.
  38. Hardwicke to Montagu, February 20, 1781, mo6813. In this context, it is worth noting that in 1876 a surviving receipt for one of Johnson’s government pension payments, dated December 17, 1783, was quoted as reading “Of the Lord Hardwicke, one of the four Tellers of His Majesty’s Receipt of Exchequer; 75*l.* for three months’ pension, due October 10th, 1783. I say, received by me Sam. Johnson. – Witness, Tho. Gibbons” (“The Father of

- a Fashion,” *Temple Bar* 47 [1876], 89–104, [at 99]). Hardwicke’s own post as teller of the exchequer was, of course, a sinecure obtained through his father. Thus in one sense, both men were pensioners of the king, but Hardwicke’s annual salary from his post was £7000 (*ODNB*) and, unlike Johnson’s £200, included nominal duties, as this receipt indicates.
39. Reginald Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu “Queen of the Blues”: Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, 2 vols. (New York: Joughton, 1923), p. 2.156; Martine Watson Brownley, “Johnson’s *Lives of the English Poets* and Earlier Traditions of the Character Sketch in England,” in *Johnson and His Age*, ed. James Engell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 31, 52; Pepys to Montagu, August 4, 1781, mo4027.
  40. Pepys to Montagu, October 5, 1781, mo4028.
  41. Frances Burney, *Early Letters and Journals*, pp. 4.366–70 (at p. 367).
  42. Robert Potter, *An Inquiry into Some Passages in Dr. Johnson’s Lives of the Poets* (London, 1783), p. 9; Blunt, “*Queen of the Blues*,” pp. 2.160, 164; Potter to Montagu, December 12, 1782, mo4164 and July 1, 1783, mo4165; Tracy, *Richard Graves*, p. 112.
  43. Montagu to Pepys, August 14, 1781, mo4069; Montagu to Pepys, November 3, 1781, mo4070; Montagu to Vesey, March 18 & 20, 1782, mo6572; Blunt, “*Queen of the Blues*,” p. 2.165.
  44. Montagu to Hardwicke, December 21, [1776], mo6816.

## 6. Transmediations

1. John Brown, *A Description of the Lake at Keswick (and the Adjacent Country) in Cumberland* (Newcastle, 1767). I am quoting from the earliest printed version of the letter, as transcribed by Donald D. Eddy in “John Brown: ‘The Columbus of Keswick,’” in “A Supplement to Honor Arthur Friedman,” *Modern Philology* 73, no. 4, pt. 2 (1976), S74–84 (at S80), because the original manuscript has disappeared.
2. Thomas Amory, *The Life of John Bunclie, Esq.*, 2 vols. (London, 1756 and 1766), pp. 1.164–65.
3. Grey’s mode of announcing her arrival at Yarmouth, while playful, illustrates the relative uniqueness of this experience for women, even of the aristocracy, at the time: “For I too Madam have seen the Sea, I have been within Eight hours sail of Holland, & could not possibly suffer you any longer to boast of your Travels & despise your Ignorant Inland Acquaintance, upon the strength of having view’d that narrow Canal that parts Dover & Calais” (August 2, 1750, BLARS L 30/21/3/8, f. 3). Earlier correspondence reveals Grey staying home while her husband travels to the North or to the Continent.

4. John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 633.
5. See, for example, Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar, 1989), pp. 153–95; John Whale, “Romantics, Explorers, and Picturesque Travellers,” in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 174–95; Ian Ousby, *The Englishman’s England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 4.
6. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 630–33, 658–61; Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, trans. Catherine Mathias (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), pp. 70–80; Zoë Kinsley, *Women Writing the Home Tour, 1682–1812* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), part 3.
7. See James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 651–61.
8. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 633–34.
9. Thorburn and Jenkins, “Introduction,” *Rethinking Media Change*, p. 11; Susan Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home to England: Tourism, Gender, and Imaginative Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2009), p. 12. Kinsley’s *Women Writing the Home Tour* is notable for its extensive discussions of manuscript travel writing by women.
10. Grey, August 2, 1750, BLARS L 30/21/3/9, p. 27; Yorke’s domestic travel journals are included in Godber, *The Marchioness Grey*, pp. 125–63.
11. Montagu to Portland, August 23, [1747], mo423; see also Sarah Scott to Montagu, August 19, [1747], in *The Letters of Sarah Scott*, ed. Nicole Pohl (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), pp. 1.86–90, obviously responding to an account of the same incident (she makes similar use of descriptions of a journey to Wilton in the fall of 1747 and to Sheeps Leas in the summer of 1755); Edward Montagu to Montagu, [c. July 30, 1757], mo1887; Montagu to Edward Montagu, [c. July 30, 1757], mo2334.
12. Montagu to Lyttelton, July 14, [1757], mo1382 (transcription taken from Montagu, *Letters of Montagu*, pp. 4.265–66, where the letter is mistakenly dated 1760); Montagu to Lyttelton, October 3, 1760, mo1401 (transcription taken from *Letters of Montagu*, pp. 4.304–5).
13. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great-Britain*, ed. G. D. H. Cole, 2 vols. (London: Peter Davies, 1927), title-page, pp. 1.1, 1.4, 1.168–69, 1.3, 2.679.
14. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour*, 3rd ed. (London, 1742), pp. 1. iii–iv, 3.228, 3.231; see also 1st ed., pp. 2.678–79.

15. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour*, 4th ed. (London, 1748), pp. 1.v–vi.
16. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1962), pp. 2.419, 2.435–37. Lamb argues that Pamela's tourism, far from democratizing in its import, "illustrates how fundamental [Richardson] believed [tourism] was to the British elite" (pp. 2.306).
17. William Gilpin, *Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham, at Stowe in Buckinghamshire* (London, 1748), pp. 1, 45. Gilpin's first aesthetic treatise on picturesque beauty was the anonymous *Essay on Prints*, published in 1768; in 1781 his authorship of the *Essay* was revealed in its third edition, and he went on in 1782 to publish his *Observations on the River Wye . . . Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*, followed by a series of such travel books, including one on Cumberland and Westmorland in 1786.
18. Gilpin, *Dialogue*, pp. 48–51.
19. Gilpin, *Dialogue*, pp. 51, 24–25.
20. Bower to Charles Lyttelton, August 26, 1755, Hagley MS, 2, fol. 263<sup>f</sup>, as quoted in Eddy, S78.
21. See, for example, Esther Moir, *The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourists, 1540–1840* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 139, and Ousby, *Englishman's England*, p. 143; Andrews, following Eddy, notes the earlier composition and circulation of the letter, but focuses on its print publication and content (*Search for the Picturesque*, pp. 158–59, 177–80).
22. Richard Cumberland, *Odes* (London, 1776), pp. 4–6; see James E. Crimmins, "John Brown, s.v." *ODNB*, for a helpful account of Brown's networks, including the Yorke introduction to Lyttelton.
23. In speaking of the "Lyttelton coterie" I wish to distinguish the Hagley-centred family group, which centrally included Lyttelton's brother Charles, from the Montagu–Lyttelton coterie. Charles was peripherally associated with the latter and in 1757 not only visited Montagu at her country estate of Sandleford, but would, according to his brother George, have proposed to her if Mr. Montagu had been dead (Lyttelton to Montagu, October 28, [1757], mo1274). Ultimately, however, Charles's primary social allegiances seem to have been to his own antiquarian circles.
24. Lyttelton to Bower, July 14, 1755, mo1266. The 1774 printed version differs from both the manuscripts I have looked at in ways that suggest it was produced either as an amalgam of several copies or from an entirely different manuscript. Wyndham's 1781 title page announces "To which is added, an account of a journey into Wales, by George, Lord Lyttelton"; the letter texts seem to have been taken from the *Works*. Christine Gerrard, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Lyttelton, George, 1st Baron Lyttelton (1709–1773)."



25. Lyttelton to Bower, July 6, 1755, mo1267; Kim Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” *Representations* 38 (1992), 76–100 (at 82–83). For Michasiw, the outcome is a mode of discourse attractive to a very specific audience – “a class sufficiently affluent to travel but unlikely to possess lands sufficient to the acting out of improving fantasies” (94). For Michasiw, this is the lower gentry, but I would include as well prosperous urbanites such as Robert Dodsley, as well as those who could afford to read but not to travel.
26. John Dalton, *A Descriptive Poem Addressed to Two Young Ladies at Their Return from Viewing the Mines Near Whitehaven* (London, 1755), pp. iv–v, 16–17n, 22n, 25n, 26. Dalton had already proven adept at gaining patronage by the time of the *Descriptive Poem*; he had in fact been tutor to the only son of the Duchess of Hertford, later Duchess of Somerset, and was scandalously associated with Shenstone’s friend Lady Luxborough, leading to her exile at Barrels.
27. Amory, *Life of John Buncl*, p. 2.267; *The Monthly Review* 35 (July 1766), 34; *The Monthly Review* 15 (December 1756), 585–86; *The Critical Review* 2 (October 1756), 219; *The Critical Review* 21 (June 1766), 470.
28. Anna Letitia Barbauld, “The Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing,” in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2002), pp. 402–3; *The Critical Review* 42 (October 1776), 319; Amory, *Life of John Buncl*, p. 2.213. Amory’s status as an outsider to elite circles is indicated by his error in referring to the Misses Lowther of Dalton’s poem as “the late excellent Lord Lonsdale’s charming daughters”; the 3rd Viscount Lonsdale had died unmarried.
29. “Advertisement” to *A Catalogue of the Antiquities, Houses, Parks, Plantations, Scenes, and Situations in England and Wales, Arranged According to the Alphabetical Order of the Several Counties*, by Thomas Gray ([London] [1773]), pp. iii–iv. The 120-page booklet is in fact simply a list, alphabetized by county, of the sorts of attractions named in the title – an even more skeletal travel record than those of Philip Yorke discussed above.
30. Arthur Young, *A Six Months’ Tour through the North of England* (London, 1770), p. xi; *The Monthly Review* 42 (April 1770), 257–63.
31. Young, *A Six Months’ Tour*, pp. iv–vii, xv, xxiv–xxv.
32. Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland*. MDCCLXIX (Chester, 1771), p. 287; Pennant, *Additions to the Quarto Edition of the Tour in Scotland, MDCCLXIX* (London, 1774), pp. iii–v.
33. Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides; MDCCLXXII* (Chester, 1774), pp. iii–v.
34. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, p. 158; Thomas West, *A Guide to the Lakes: Dedicated to the Lovers of Landscape Studies, and to All Who have Visited,*

or *Intend to Visit the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire* (London and Kendal, 1778), pp. 1–2; [William Cockin], preface to *A Guide to the Lakes: Dedicated to the Lovers of Landscape Studies, and to All Who have Visited, or Intend to Visit the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire*, by Thomas West, 2nd ed. (London and Kendal, 1780), pp. v, n.p., iii. West's own primary credential was his status as a well-known local antiquarian; this "local knowledge" allows him to "verif[y] by repeated observations" everything noticed by previous travellers, and therefore to correct their writings while "reliev[ing] the traveller from the burthen of dull and tedious information on the road, or at the inn, that frequently embarasses, and often misguides" (p. 3). The increasing authority of such specialized knowledge is reflected in Pennant's 1772 *Tour*, already noted, and in the 1778 eighth edition of Defoe's *Tour*, discussed below.

35. "Advertisement" to *A Supplement to the Tour through Great-Britain, containing a Catalogue . . . By the Late Mr. Gray, Author of the Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard, etc., by Thomas Gray* (London, 1787), pp. iv–v.
36. Thomas Gray, *The Poems of Mr. Gray. To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of His Life and Writings by W. Mason, M. A.* (York, 1775), pp. 271, 359, 376, 272, 351, 377.
37. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 653; "Preface" to *A Tour through the Island of Great Britain*, 8th ed. (London, 1778), n.p.
38. James Mulvihill, "Amory's *John Buncl*e and Wordsworth's *Excursion*," *Notes and Queries* 235 (1990), 25–26.
39. Acland, "Introduction," p. xxiii; Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 13; Watson is referring broadly to acts of homage to dead authors.

## 7. Literary sociability in the eighteenth-century personal miscellany

1. Brotherton Lt 119, ff. 101–2. In this chapter's discussion of manuscript miscellanies, only quotations from poems and remarkable headnotes will be cited with specific reference to folio numbers; general descriptions of contents, such as poem titles, will be referenced only by manuscript number.
2. Margaret J.M., Ezell "Invisible Books," in *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800*, ed. Laura L. Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2009), pp. 53–69 (at p. 55).
3. Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, 2001), p. 9; David Allan,

- Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 25–34 (at p. 34); Peter Beal, “Notions in Garrison,” p. 146; Ann Blair and Peter Stallybrass, “Mediating Information, 1450–1800,” in *This is Enlightenment*, ed. Clifford Siskin and William Warner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 139–63 (at p. 139).
4. Harold Love, “How Personal is a Personal Miscellany? Sarah Cowper, Martin Clifford and ‘the Buckingham Commonplace Book,’” in *Order and Connexion: Studies in Bibliography and Book History*, ed. R.C. Alston (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), pp. 111–26 (at 112).
  5. In this my study parallels the approach of Stephen Colclough, who has examined the 1715–16 diary of Dudley Ryder for what it reveals about his communal reading practices (*Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1697–1890* [Houndmills and NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007], pp. 68–74); Oliver Pickering, “The BCMSV Database: A Progress Report and a Case Story,” *Library Review* 44.3 (1995), 24–31 (at 25).
  6. The model of the monthly “magazine,” established by Edward Cave with *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1731, was that of offering extracts of the best of the past month’s publications, although, as Tierney points out, many “magazines” of the later eighteenth-century were literary miscellanies or special-interest publications more than selections from a wide range of sources and types of information (“Periodicals and the Trade, 1695–1780,” pp. 479–97). For the increase in newspapers and magazines, see Tierney and also C.Y. Ferdinand, “Newspapers and the Sale of Books in the Provinces” in the same volume, pp. 434–47.
  7. Colclough, *Consuming Texts*, p. 34 (qtg. Love, “Personal Miscellany,” p. 126). Laura Runge, in “From Manuscript to Print and Back Again: Two Verse Miscellanies by Eighteenth-century Women,” *Literary Manuscripts: 17th and 18th Century Poetry from the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds*, [www.literarymanuscriptsleeds.amdigital.co.uk](http://www.literarymanuscriptsleeds.amdigital.co.uk), n.p. also takes an interest in how literary sociability is reflected in verse miscellanies (her preferred term). In a comparison of the Mary Capell book with a later miscellany, Runge notes the development of a reliance on previously printed materials, but emphasizes anthologies rather than periodical publications as the source of poems.
  8. Allan, “Sonnets of Hayley,” 159–80.
  9. Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 9–11, 6, 10, 161–217.
  10. For discussions of the social contexts and settings that tended to foster the production of manuscript poetry, see Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995),

chs. 1 and 2; Love, *Scribal Publication*, ch. 5; and Colclough, *Consuming Texts*, pp. 68–74. These contexts may explain the tendency of personal miscellanies to favor poetry that has disappeared from even most specialists' knowledge – such as Lyttelton's 1747 monody on the death of his wife, Sarah Lewis's 1752 "Advice to a Young Lady lately married," *The Jesuit's Creed*, a clever piece which allows for alternative Church of England or Roman Catholic readings, and six anonymous lines on the Duchess of Marlborough's offer of £500 for an elogium on her late husband the Duke—*pace* Allan's claims about commonplace books as records of canon-making (p. 212). Runge has similarly noted the minority representation of canonical poets in the Capell collection, as well as the fact that such poems as do represent Pope and Gray, for example, are what are considered minor works (np).

11. Although it might at first glance seem odd that I have not included multiple writing hands as a sign of coterie activity, a single compiling hand is much more common, even in cases where the productions of several members of a group are being recorded. Multiple hands, by contrast, occur most often in sequence, indicating the takeover of the book by another compiler, or in the form of interjections among the entries by a main hand, indicating a subsequent writer's use of a leftover half-page to enter material of their own. In other words, they tend to indicate sequential inscription rather than contemporaneity. This is not to say, however, that hands are always easily distinguishable or that intermingled hands do not, in some cases, indicate a book's simultaneous use by more than one individual. In Brotherton Lt 99, discussed below, the two hands seem to be contemporaneous and display very similar interests in their selections; the book has therefore been discussed as one act of compilation.
12. Although these poems are catalogued as anonymous, Capell attributes them to "Ld C—y."
13. Runge, n.p.
14. Capell to Birch, November 25, 1756, Add. MS 4302, f. 58.
15. See Edwards to Yorke, August 10, 1745, sending his sonnets to date, Add. MS 35605, f. 239, and Edwards to Wray, May 1, 1749, Ms. Bodl. 1011, f.126, referring to the Warburton sonnet; the former appears also in Birch's commonplace collection, in Add. MS 4457, f. 144.
16. See Grey to Talbot, n.d., BLARS L 30/21/3/4; Charlotte Capell to Grey, October 4, 1748, BLARS L30/9/21/1; Capell to Birch, August 31, 1751 and September 7, 1756, Add. MS 4302, ff. 44–46; Godber, *The Marchioness Grey*, pp. 105–6.
17. Brotherton Lt 119, ff. 103 and 106.
18. Margaret Yorke, Philip's younger sister, married Sir Gilbert Heathcote in 1749.

19. Birch to Mary Capell, August 24, 1751 and Mary Capell to Birch, August 31, 1751, Add. MS 4302, ff. 43–44. Capell's volume in the Brotherton Collection does not, in fact, contain the prose items she refers to, suggesting that the original book into which the manuscripts sent by Birch were copied was an intermediate collection of more miscellaneous materials that were then culled or sorted, perhaps by genre. Nevertheless, there is a direct connection between the book spoken of here and the surviving volume; for example, the three penultimate items (before the Lady Mary Montagu poem which ends the volume) are the Edwards sonnet to Lady Grey, dated 1751, the "Ode. By Miss M—soe," also dated 1751, and the poem of Margaret Yorke Heathcote. Follow-up correspondence with Brotherton Library staff has confirmed that the chain lines of Lt 119 are horizontal, as they would be for a true quarto volume, but that the book is in fact compiled from "a collection of unbound parts," suggesting a flexibility of contents over time (Karen Mee, private correspondence, July 29, 2014).
20. The chronological gap between manuscript circulation and print publication in Mulso's case, discussed in the first chapters of this study, is typical for items in Capell's miscellany. For further discussion of this temporal separation, see Runge, "Manuscript and Print," n.p.
21. Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet c.9. A search of the *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* database turns up a Thomas Phillibrown who subscribed to George Brown's *The History of the First Planting the Christian Religion* (1735) and to Henry Groves' *A System of Moral Philosophy* in 1749 (to which John Hawkins also subscribed). The Prerogative Court of Canterbury records the proving of the will of a Thomas Phillibrown, cooper, of Saint Botolph without Bishopsgate, London, on June 15, 1764, and the birth registry of dissenters begun in 1743 lists the 1751 London birth of a Thomas Phillibrown, perhaps the son of our compiler (Thomas Phillibrown, Esq., of Hackney subscribed to the Protestant Dissenters' Charity School in 1788). It should be noted also that dating in the volume, as well as its index, indicates that the recto-side (odd-numbered) pages were filled in sequence first, and then the verso pages, beginning again at the front of the volume. Thus folio 249 precedes folio 80, for example.
22. The first event marked by Phillibrown's own presence offers a good example. It is an account of the death of George I in Germany, followed by his report on the proclamation of the new king George II on June 14, 1727: "I my Self went to ye Royal Exchange that Night thinking his Majesty would have been proclaim'd but with many other were disappointed." When the proclamation is made at Leicester-House, Charing Cross, Temple-Bar, Cheapside, and the Royal Exchange on the 15th, "This Day I being to return in ye Afternoon to my Boarding School at Mrs Waters's, had not an opportunity to see the

- Proclamation” (Bodl. Ms. Eng. Hist. c.50, f.39). Colclough discusses a parallel example of a London excise man and staymaker, John Dawson, who uses the second edition of Salmon’s chronology in similar fashion (*Consuming Texts*, pp. 83–86).
23. For a perspective on this period from a position much like that of Phillibrown, see ch. 2 of John Hawkins’ *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* and the author’s accompanying notes, which include brief accounts of Browne and Webb (Ed. Bertram H. Davis [London: Jonathan Cape, 1962]).
  24. Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet. c.9, ff. 22; 249; 80; 69; Beyond such puffing of Stanley’s instrumental music, John Hawkins wrote the texts for many of the famous organist and composer’s songs and cantatas.
  25. Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet. c.9, ff. 81; 13 (the article is “Of the unhappy Self-Murder of Mrs. Fanny Braddock at Bath,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 1 [September 1081731], 397). Insider knowledge in the Sheridan case is suggested by the fact that the magazine heads the page of poetry with an apology to “Mr. Bardus” for not being able to print more out of its “Store” of poems from Dublin (*Gentleman’s Magazine* 5 [January 1735], 48).
  26. Ms. Bodl. Eng. Poet. c.9, f. 107.
  27. Ezell, “The *Gentleman’s Journal*,” 340.
  28. Ms. Bodl. Eng. Poet. c.9, f. 12. Phillibrown also records Browne’s diplomatic conclusion that both poems are “Improvements of the Drs [i.e. of Donne’s].”
  29. Ms. Bodl. Eng. Poet. c.9, f. 230.
  30. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
  31. Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet. e.28, “To Miss Arabella Bate – 1768 by Miss S Bate,” ff. 191–92. Although the latter portion of the book contains poems copied in different hands and extending beyond 1768, the first few poems in this second section continue the explicit Peart connection, being attributed to Joshua. My discussion will focus on the identifiable Peart-Bate materials in the book, comprising just over 300 folio pages.
  32. Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet. e.28, ff. 141; 250.
  33. This pair of poems is found in Lyttelton’s hand in the Montagu Collection, as mo1264.
  34. Bodl. Ms. Eng. Poet. e.48, f. 82. This same poem is applied by Scriblerus to Eliza Chapman, as discussed below.
  35. Brotherton Lt 99, ff. 82v–83; John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 6 vols. (London, 1812), pp. 4.148–49. Another item strongly suggesting direct access to a non-print source is the Latin epitaph of George Lyttelton to his first wife Lucy, erected at Hagley soon after her death in 1747, which is entered with the note “Extract apud Hagley Iulii Die 12<sup>mo</sup> 1765,” presumably the date that the compiler visited Hagley and recorded the epitaph as a souvenir (f. 65).

36. The books are Bodl. Ms. Montagu e.14, belonging to Eliza Chapman, and Brotherton Lt 100.
37. Bodl. Ms. Montagu e.14, ff. 46v–47.
38. Ms. Bodl. Mont. e.14, f. 47v.
39. Brotherton Lt 100, f. 57v; because of the mode of entry described in this paragraph, the folio numbering as continued from the start of the volume means that for the second half of the volume the span of folios for individual poems runs in descending order.
40. Brotherton Lt 100, ff. 56v; ff. 50–49v; f. 14.
41. Brotherton Lt 100, f. 53v; f. 52v; f. 51.
42. Brotherton Lt 100, f. 55; Allan, *Commonplace Books*, pp. 226–36 (at p. 236).
43. Brotherton Lt. 100, ff. 34–34v.

### Conclusion

1. Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 64.
2. Ezell, *Social Authorship*, p. 17; Benedict, “The Paradox,” p. 234; Gitelman, *Always Already New*, p. 2.

# Bibliography

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*This bibliography lists only primary sources cited; it is not a full bibliography of publications of the writers discussed in the book. Citations of articles from contemporary periodical publications are also not included.*

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