“All the modes of story”: Genre and the Gendering of Authorship in the Year 1771

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“All the modes of story”: Genre and the Gendering of Authorship in the Year 1771

Abstract
This essay argues that literary histories organized around a single genre, narratives of national formation, or canonical male authors cannot do justice to the complexities of women's participation in eighteenth-century British genres. Instead, this essay offers an alternative approach based on the reduction of the geotemporal scope to the literary productions of a single year in three cities. Working with the ESTC records for the 2000+ items produced in these cities helped produce a dataset that allowed us to recreate each city's literary and non-literary genre system, print environment, and "historical present" for the target year. This inventory became the basis for a microhistory of women's literary and nonliterary textual production for this year, organized by city, category, and genre. From this project we learned of London's overwhelming commercial dominance for genres both literary (sentimental fiction, semifictional memoirs, religious elegy) and non-literary and "improving" (both Montagus, Macaulay, Talbot). Women in the other two cities contributed largely through salon and coterie activities or didactic/devotional writings. Finally, the temporalized notion of "perplexity" identifies a characteristic pause in action when female characters are forced to place their trust in men of unknown character: this is a scenario that plays out through a variety of genres during this year, from sentimental fiction to pro- and anti-war polemics. Our microhistorical, scaled-down approach to feminist literary history offers a version of "recovery and counter-representation" that can accommodate multiple recovery projects, fresh perspectives, and deeper inquiries into once-neglected or newly available sources.

Keywords
1771, feminist literary history, genre, digital humanities, annuallized literary criticism

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Cover Page Footnote
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This digital humanities is available in ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/abo/vol12/iss1/10
A tattling, lying gossip, called Tradition, did indeed, in her idle fashion, repeat some facts, invent others, and whisper to a new-born generation, in fable, allegory, and all the modes of story, the tale of other times.¹

Introduction: Why study a year?²

I first undertook the 1771 project because I was dissatisfied with the inflexibility of conventional literary histories, which were usually organized around a single genre, a more or less familiar set of writers, and a nationally organized canon. These elements could readily be assembled into a developmental story whose chronological range coincided with an equally conventional epochal and national scope. As Margaret Ezell has pointed out, this linear, evolutionary approach retells literary history as a series of formal causes and effects that advance a single genre over time. The linearity may be crude or misleading for an established (and largely male) canon, but it is particularly damaging for assessing women’s writing and its significance in its own moment, as I hope this essay will help show.³ In cases like these, the sustained chronological range of the developmental narrative—as well as its story-like clarity of actors, actions, objects, and effects against a nationally defined backdrop—helps conceal the patchwork necessary to cobble together a homogeneous narrative bridge across space and time.

Feminist literary historians have long confronted earlier scholarship’s patchwork and gaps by focusing upon specific conjunctures of period, national tradition, and genre. These conjunctures have led generations of scholars towards less familiar women writers and encouraged further investigation into their lives and careers. As part of the feminist critical project of “recovery” and “counter-representation,” such investigations and critical interventions have helped make canon formation in the past and present more transparent.⁴ These investigations are also how feminist critics are now better equipped to discuss specific generic conjunctures like that of the eighteenth-century novel with dramatic writings, letters, or conduct books. Yet as critics like Brant, Ezell, and Staves have argued, focusing on women’s fiction at the expense of other kinds of writing helps produce yet another kind of historical reduction.⁵

Thus, individual feminist literary histories reflecting the full generic range of women’s writing in “the long eighteenth century” across England, Britain, and North America have grown enormously since the publications of, e.g., Doody (1985), Grundy (1992), Ezell (1996), Brant (2000/2006), Backscheider (2005), the Orlando Project (2006), Schellenberg (2009), Staves (2010), and many others. Yet the combined challenges of geographic and chronological scope have also meant that single-authored, multi-generic histories of women’s writing with the
breadth of Ezell or Staves are much harder to envision than studies focusing upon specific writers or genres, particularly when so many details of canonical women’s careers remain unknown.

At the same time, it is also true that contemporary literary scholarship has, until the advent of cultural studies and book history, been more attracted to the major, genre-defining authors of fiction or poetry rather than authors of more period-specific forms like dramas, letters, periodical essays, or operas. These intermediate genres and authors, however, sit above still “humbler,” often unattributed forms, whether didactic, informative, or improving. The “humble” or unassuming genres answered, often collectively or anonymously, men and women’s everyday needs for devotion, instruction, conduct guides, housekeeping, herbal, or receipts, along with their desires for “diversions” or “amusements” like histories, biographies, jests, or songs. Yet as the “humility topos” has long reminded us, authors’ expressions of humility are often determined more by genre and rhetorical address than situation. Hence, the genre markers of the “humble” genres, which include their assignment to specifically named authors, reflect the social positioning of both authors and audiences.

It is probably this broadest tier of non-literary publications, along with the usual government and legal jobs, postal work, newspapers, and printed forms, whose steadiness of demand helped sustain local print shops and households across Britain and British America during this time. Yet all these non-literary genres and writers, I would argue, played some role in the constitution and boundaries of the literary genres and their audiences, not least by bolstering the growth of print infrastructures, textual categories, and their specific audiences. In this respect, the “humble” or unattributed genres resembled the similarly compiled almanacs or periodicals that often abridged or contained literary as well as non-literary genres. These were an important source of vocational or aspirational improvement for the plebeian or newly literate trying to acquire greater literacy, vocational skills, or information, and sources of comfort or relief for those seeking more private or portable forms of worship or diversion.

Given the important historical role of the “non-literary” or other kinds of devalued genres for women’s writing, it seems essential to me that a feminist literary history be able to render more transparent the mixing, interrelations, and boundary shifts of genres, both literary and non-literary, from both synchronic and diachronic points of view.6 To accomplish this, eighteenth-century literary and cultural studies should shift (or perhaps the required move is toggling back and forth), from the developmental narratives of individual genres to their dialogic interrelations, in and across time and space.7 Shifting perspectives in this way would help us track the shape and boundaries of non-literary genres as
carefully as that of literary genres. This is because non-literary genres, whether improving or humble, and whether conventionally attributed or unattributed, served as an important contact zone and resource for the growth, production, and reproduction of specific literary genres.

For all these reasons, I felt that approaching this problem with a much tighter, more intentional focus of time and place could help clarify these issues, by suspending the standard developmental, diachronic narratives and emphasizing instead the social, synchronic relations among genres. I therefore decided to retell a portion of literary history by reducing its temporal and geographic scope to a single, specific year and set of urban locations: the year 1771 in London, Edinburgh, and Philadelphia. Breaking it down this way meant that we could refashion a story not just of authors and texts, but of genres as well, encompassing both the literary and non-literary genres operating within a single complex historical moment, “the year 1771.” Hence, the single-year method would model itself upon existing feminist critical practice by focusing, though with far greater specificity, upon the conjunctures of women’s cultural production within a specific periodization, set of geographic locations, and genres.

Our goal, then, was not to produce a taxonomy of genres but to sketch a terrain upon which we could identify women’s participation in print, locate their sources of material support, and recognize the identities and collectivities fostered by their print communications and shaping of audiences. These women’s participation, however, would need to be elaborated in a reconstructed “historical present” across specific domains of genre and geography.

To capture, organize, and analyze this year’s material, I recruited a research team to assemble an inventory of texts linked to that year and set of locations via ESTC records. We then sorted this inventory into a full dataset organized by city, textual category, and genre. This process transformed the initial 2034+ raw catalogue records into a working dataset sorting items from 66+ named women authors into 10 categories and 100+ genres distributed (quite unequally) across three cities, with London predominating in absolute numbers for both writers and genres. We then compared that reconstituted genre system to some conventional or contested long term critical narratives regarding each city’s writings, namely the national/imperial developmental narrative featuring London, the national formation narrative for Philadelphia, and the progress and diffusion of European Enlightenment for Edinburgh. These reconstructed print environments, from the admittedly partial evidence of ESTC records and corroborating accounts in economic, social, and book history, would allow both vertical and lateral comparisons of women’s resources and access to print at this moment.
Thus, by embedding the literary categories and genres for each city within a larger, explicitly modeled print environment, we created a microhistorical alternative to conventionally narrated and periodized literary and cultural histories (Ginzburg, Phillips). Our delimitation and intensification of scope, however, was only made possible by an increasingly dense and specific corpus of digital texts, which allowed us to extrapolate genre systems within each city’s print environment for the target year. Our alignment of microhistory, Digital Humanities techniques of distant and medium range reading of genres, and the ESTC’s incomplete and unstandardized legacy data is key to our revisionist approach to the ESTC and ultimately this project’s version of “recovery and counter-representation.” After all, the purpose of microhistorical reductions of scope is, in the words of one historian, “combining micro and macro scales, rather than favoring the micro as an article of faith.” In practice, this means maintaining the simultaneity of different scales of historical narration. Microhistory as a genre demands that readers make an inferential leap between the story of Martha Ballard or Martin Guerre to more established, longer term scholarly periodized histories. Microhistory, like distant reading or indeed most bibliographic historical reconstruction, strives to bridge the gap between the different scales and produce alternative perspectives that perplex or impede those longer-term narratives.

Our approach, then, helped us produce a literary history that allowed lateral comparison of the local details of women’s literary and cultural production across regional differences, and in ways that might challenge or complicate longer-range, literary, generic, and cultural histories. These lateral comparisons helped us, in turn, to arrive at certain observations about the vertical hierarchies of gender, class, region, or religion that affected the formation and interactions of genre at this moment.

When viewed this way, the most noteworthy generic boundary collisions or crossings for this year were London’s “female appeal” novels/memoirs, Macaulay’s ongoing project of public history mingled with political commentary, and Wheatley’s reinvention and recirculation of Methodist religious elegy for Whitefield’s transatlantic audience. In Philadelphia it was Jane Hosken’s conversion narrative explaining her development from an artless, rootless serving maid to an experienced itinerant preacher of the gospel. In the realm of coterie writing, Montagu among the English Bluestockings in literary criticism, and Talbot and Carter in devotional writing, along with the Edinburgh salons of women like Alison Cockburn and Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson in Philadelphia similarly shaded the distinction between scribal and print dissemination. Their decision to publish or to circulate works scribally helped these genteel women strategically address a range of audiences with less risk to reputation.
Thus, this year’s set of “boundary crossings” overwrote existing generic conventions by introducing new writers and situations into genres in unexpected ways that could reshape existing audiences. In this manner, writers like the novel/memoirists, Wheatley, or Hoskens created new possibilities for the sentimental novel, the religious elegy, and the conversion narrative, respectively. The very public circulation and dissemination of these texts and genres, moreover, showed how downwardly mobile women and black writers, as well as indigenous and laboring class writers, could enter elite or genteel white male dominated print environments at certain opportune moments and locations. There they could revise default notions of authorship and genre otherwise governed by London’s elite metropolitan and commercial tastes and interests. Though all these boundary-crossing authors and works included “non-fictional” or descriptive elements, they entered the literary marketplace and ultimately the dataset because of their ability to shape their own marginalized circumstances in response to the literary or rhetorical conventions of existing genres. This, again, argues for the importance of using a more expansive, extra-literary notion of genre to recognize potentially overlooked authors and texts.17

Consequently, genre in this study represents not a fixed set of formal features but an outcome of what Ralph Cohen has called the temporalized, collective processes of “grouping” and “distinction and interrelation” of symbols to address specific audiences.18 John Frow has similarly argued that genre plays a key role in organizing the sorting, mixing, and boundary-setting aspects of social communication and discourse. Genre also governs some crucial distinctions in our everyday interactions and discourse.

Genre therefore helps us distinguish between literature and non-literature, and between imaginative writing and what Frow calls discursive statements’ “effects of reality and truth.”19 Cohen and Frow’s Bakhtian emphasis on the dialogic, relational purposes of genre has also meant that established generic and historical literary histories can be aligned with the sociolinguistic and rhetorical models of non-literary genres found in scholars like Carolyn Miller, John Swales, or Vijay Bhatia in rhetoric and sociolinguistics.20 What connects Frow’s approach with this strand of rhetorical and sociolinguistic studies is his assertion that genre is a “form of symbolic action.” As Frow describes genre’s particular role in symbolic action: “the generic organization of language, images, gestures, and sound makes things happen by actively shaping the way we understand the world.”21 (my emphasis)

This kind of active, interventional role for genre might be more visible in hybrid or category-straddling genres like “letters,” “satires,” or “natural histories” but all
these constitute part of the interest of more overtly literary genres like Griffiths’ epistolary novels, Macaulay’s *History of England*, or Montagu’s poems or *Letters*, which in their own way made things happen, too, in the target year. The active, interventional role of “symbolic action” embeds genre not just within existing systems of generic relations, and not just within geographic and material circumstances of communication, but within the temporal continuum of action and reaction, intervention and response, or power projected or put off, in which both literary and non-literary genres engage.

As the class and geographic range of the memoirists, poets, devotional writers, and others suggests, moreover, the local and the regional played a key role in women’s descriptions of their life and labor while shaping their cultural productions. We consequently tried to make a space for the local, regional, or urban in our dataset’s structure, by addressing the centrality of social status, local circumstances, and everyday life in the gendering of the historical present and its genres. Such local circumstances seem to be bound up with the sociological variety of women writers, the hybrid genres they participated in and the mixed audiences they addressed. The compounding of identities, genres, and audiences seems to bring together some of the most interesting examples of generic boundary play for this year.

Our recognition of the importance of local communities for the print environment led to one further turn for this project. The project took on a new direction when Elizabeth Irvin-Stravoski, our project manager, flagged the small but persistent presence and participation of women printers (as well as authors) in the various cities, categories, and genres we had identified. As a result, the team decided to trace more systematically the women printers across our dataset to see how much we could learn about the gendering of genre from this addition to our tight geotemporal focus. We suspected, moreover, that studying women in both roles could also better accommodate the varied class and vocational status of those women. Casting women’s roles in textual production as *participation* in specific categories and genres (which included a range of producers and audiences) rather than simply “authorship,” also seemed to reflect the most recent scholarship in feminist information science and bibliography, which have both shown the value of strategic “de-differentiation” for surfacing formerly discounted labor by women in the production of knowledge.

Hence, expanding the focus from the individually oriented category of “writer” to the more socially oriented categories of genre and “production” meant studying not just authors’ biographies, careers, and sociological profiles, or even the interrelations of literary genres, but also genres, authors, and printers in and beyond their literary uses. This also entailed using digitized sources like
aggregated title page descriptions, reviews, and booksellers’ catalogs to understand and reconstruct historical genre attributions from a variety of sources.25

In other words, we used the single year approach to examine not just the formal features or sociological profiles of specific texts or authors but the fluid social and cultural contexts that genres must in some sense respond to and act upon.26 By reorienting the ESTC data towards the social and cultural positioning of women participating in the categories and genres of print for this year, we aimed to produce a new dataset and specific new arguments about women writers and printers that constituted a critique, reworking, and extension of the legacy ESTC data for another generation of feminist scholars and their inquiries.27 For this reason, this essay includes a research narrative to help other scholars understand how we produced our unique dataset, how we arrived at our analytical results, and why they matter.28

Creating the dataset: Reconstituting a year by data-cleaning, category and genre formation, city and gender coding

Before we could perform the lateral and vertical comparisons that provided the core motivation for the project, the ESTC data would have to be extracted, collected, standardized, and cleaned so that the items’ geographic and generic groupings could be aligned with those of authors, printers, and genders. Yet what made the restructuring, alignment, and comparisons of this data possible was the reduction of chronological scope to a single year, along with the further reduction of geographic scope to the three cities.

This portion of the essay explains the choices, processes, and interpretive decisions necessary to build the dataset for the target year. Most importantly, given the known inconsistencies and selection biases of the ESTC, it provides the “transparent and open documentation and sharing of the algorithmic methods and workflows” that allow others to see how our data was produced and how it could be further improved in subsequent use and extension.29 Hence, this section of the essay is organized around the multiple scholarly uses of the concept of the “year” and its step-by-step reconstitution through data-cleaning, coding, and labeling, so as to differentiate cities, producers, genders, categories, genres, and subgenres within that formerly empty concept. These processes result in a laterally and vertically organized set of gendered producers, category and genre-systems, all embedded and structured within specific urban-centered print environments for that year.
The year as chronological marker, as generic “blank,” and as site of perplexity

From the perspective of imperial public and political chronology, the year 1771 arrives between the accession of George III (1760) and the American War of Independence (1775-83). In between these two markers lay the successful conclusion of the Seven Years’ War and the political failure of George III’s Scottish favorite Bute (1763), followed by several successive ministries and abortive alliances between feeble Whig grandees, and the eventual introduction of Lord North as head of government. “1771” therefore appears amidst the long running domestic political crises of Wilkite agitation and colonial controversies over the Stamp Act and the Townshend Duties, which were followed by North’s consolidation of a unified cabinet and effective majority in Parliament. By the close of the target year, North had assembled a far more confident and unified English political elite ready to oversee the loss of the North American colonies.

Hence, though important things happened and were published in this far from empty year (indeed, what could even be meant by an “empty year”?), the absence of any obvious master theme or metanarrative, even in retrospect, meant we could have unusual freedom in confronting established scholarly narratives or synthesizing our own account. This seemed to be an advantage while producing a feminist literary history whose contours could be distinct from those of male writers and their well-established timelines, metanarratives, and contexts. At the same time, recent feminist literary histories of major genres like the novel or poetry often treat the early 1770s as a lull between better known canonical figures (e.g., Haywood and Burney or Rowe and Barbauld), and so women writers and their works in less dominant literary or hybrid genres (e.g., periodical essays, conversion narratives, didactic/devotional works) seem more visible here in this dataset than in more conventionally drawn period narratives. Nonetheless, this year accommodates both the partisan interventions of Macaulay and Latter and the otherworldly aspirations of Talbot and Steuart. Hence, our dataset reflected not just an unexpected pause between two better-known events on either side, but an economy of generic choices reflecting the options faced by writers, printers, or readers within the target year. The term we have attached to this ill-defined moment is perplexity, a subject’s confrontation with a field of choices along with the need to commit to a single option. What compounds and spreads a shared sense of “moral perplexity,” however, are rapidly accruing changes in institutions, beliefs, mores, politics, or anything else overtaking an environment. These changes can be large or small, but what matters is the shared perception that
changes are growing and spreading ever more rapidly and unpredictably into the future. Yet as one philosopher has noted, even a general and shared perplexity can lead to multiplying “disagreements,” “conflicts,” and “uncertainties” that lack any ready means of resolution.35

Susan Staves has captured the vertiginous imperial and domestic feeling of this year as well as anyone in her description of 1756-1776:

British victory in the Seven Years’ War, by driving France off the North American continent, reduced the British American colonists’ need for protection from a hostile European power and thus facilitated their revolution. Although women did not play significant military or political roles in these great events, most women of the literate classes knew in 1756-1776 that they were living in times of great historical significance. Patriotic feelings were intense over the rivalry with France and over the prospect of Britain’s becoming an imperial power that might outdo even ancient Rome.36

Staves describes a moment where centers of political authority (London) or cultural authority (Paris) contended for imperial dominance, even while that contention seemed to push Edinburgh closer to London and Philadelphia further away. What made feelings “more intense,” however, was women’s awareness that despite “living in times of great historical significance,” it was unclear what they could do to shape the course of events, whether they lived in London, Edinburgh, or Philadelphia.

In all these ways the perplexities of this moment became self-perpetuating, self-compounding, and increasingly resistant to equilibrium, even as they added a temporal dimension to perception, decision-making, and, most importantly, action, linguistic or otherwise. The temporalizing effects of perplexity are visible in many of the texts found in the dataset, whether we consider the Falkland Island crisis, Wilkite agitation at home, the Methodist movement after Whitefield’s death, or the courtship or “female appeal novels” describing women and their risky marriage choices. But how might the temporal ebb and flow of events and their impact be registered in the literary works of this year? We thought we might find traces of this flow in the specific conjunctures of genres at this moment. But to identify these conjunctures as part of an overall system of genres, we would have to rework the raw ESTC data to make lateral and vertical comparisons possible for producers, texts, and textual categories.
Data-cleaning

Once the geographic and temporal boundaries had been established, the team cleaned and restructured the data to augment existing author, date, and title information, which had been part of the legacy framework of ESTC. This entailed defining, creating, and standardizing categories like author/printer genders, city coding, and hierarchies of categories, genres, and subgenres. All this work required supplementary research to corroborate our understanding of what these items and categories referred to and why they were marked in various ways.

For those who have never attempted it, “data cleaning” may be a misleading term, because it suggests that “data” is a solid, tangible thing that preexists the process of cleaning. What we learned, however, was that the cleaning process itself, which included coding, labeling, and refining the raw data, made it possible to ask and answer certain questions with the dataset and explore its implications. “Cleaning” therefore names the recursive process that allows data to be sorted, measured, or aggregated in new and ever more refined ways. In our case, cleaning meant trying to pose and answer questions about gendering, genre, and location in this year’s texts using ESTC catalog data.

Following discussions with the British Library and the Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research, we were generously provided a partially truncated download of raw data in the form of all ESTC catalog records for the target year.37 This raw data was sorted, filtered, and parsed using a combination of digital tools, which included ESTC’s internal search engine, OpenRefine, Microsoft Excel, and customized word frequency code in R Studio developed by team member Walter Barta.38 This first pass scraped, or extracted, the data of about 2,000-plus exported records to create items for London, Edinburgh, and Philadelphia for the target year’s date in a working dataset. Records without dates or from other cities were not included, though records with publication in multiple cities including our target cities were included, as were records whose composition or publication dates overlapped with our target year. As in the ESTC itself, no distinction was made between reprints and original publications in the records, except for whatever information was included on the title page.

Though we were able to use the existing chronological and authorial structures of ESTC records almost immediately, the labeling protocols for gender, category, and genre classifications had to be generated and refined through RBMS controlled vocabularies, word frequency lists, decision trees and whatever contextual clues we could find in or beyond the records, which were largely title-page descriptions and whatever contextual, qualitative information had been
placed in additional columns by ESTC cataloguers. This meant finding
information sometimes scattered across the catalogue records in ESTC’s often
baffling “Notes” or “Topics” columns, sometimes from information gathered
elsewhere. This information, along with the growing set of texts assigned to
specific categories, allowed us to generate and refine what we called
“organizational schemes” that could be used to sort items into and out of specific
categories. Extracting, gathering, and sorting items this way meant not only
building on ESTC catalog data but also reworking and supplementing it so that
key terms for inclusion or exclusion in a set of items could be assembled from
word frequencies from largest to smallest. As the graph below (Fig. 1) suggests,
this was a recursive process designed to refine each set’s organizing definitions
and boundaries as we went along.39
The metadata records for the new dataset consisted initially of the following fields: “ESTC ID,” “Title,” “Author,” “Printer,” “Location,” “City,” “Subject,” “Notes,” “Misc.” Each row corresponded to what we termed a “record” in the ESTC, which as we explain in further detail in Appendix 3 became the fundamental unit of this study, given the labeling inconsistencies in the ESTC as it was transformed from a printed union catalog to online database.
Coding and labeling: Gendering, categories, genres

The gendering, categorizing, and genre formulation processes, along with our coding and breakdown of these classifications city by city helped identify the issues of classification that arose around the individuals, groups, and objects specific to our study. It also helped show us how their classifications were affected by the institutions of gender, which were importantly local in character and sensitive to intimate distinctions of status and social origin. One of the first insights our classification process produced was how the prevalence of anonymous, uncertain, or corporately produced records made a simple binary breakdown of M/F authors impossible, particularly in non-literary categories and genres. What we found instead was a persistent gender distribution that included a “presently unknown” component that could potentially be reduced with additional information.

Hence, this non-binary breakdown in gender assignments suggested the difference between what Sarah Werner has called a “feminist history of printing” and “the history of women printing.” In the latter, Werner proposes that we not merely count the number of women printers, but also trace the gendering of categories and genres in specific practices, roles, and locations. This more collective and institutional focus, Werner argues, would lead to a more “a structural and process-based account of printing.” I would add, moreover, that this might also provide us with a more “structural and process-based account” of literature, as well, so long as we remember the social and institutional dimensions of genre.

Thus, the anonymous or corporately produced texts were as important for the gendering of the dataset as the records unambiguously marked as female authored or printed. As Clare Brant has observed, “anyone trying to comprehend the variety of women's writing has to reconsider anonymity, pseudonymity, and (un)originality.” For the women writers in this cohort, whether named or unnamed, this has meant that the anonymous or pseudonymous category of authorship has especially in its fiction taken on a definite feminine cast if not definite feminine identity, while other women made their way into print via unnamed, more genre-than author-driven forms such as religious genres (poetry, conversion narratives, hymns, etc.), translations, periodical writing, collections, and so forth.

Gendering. For individually listed authors and printers, gendering was determined by author and printer names, yielding the new fields “Author Gender” and “Printer Gender.” Three gendering categories were created: Male, Female, and Not Known/Applicable (NKA). This meant that gender assignments would generally NOT be assigned to collectively or collaboratively produced work,
unless a definite, named pair or group of differently gendered collaborators could be identified: for these cases we devised the classification M/F. For larger groups with unknown participants, we devised terms like “corporate author” or “corporate printer” and assigned them “NKA” status. Anonymous authors similarly received “NKA” gender status, as did works whose named producer information was absent or too fragmentary (typically, a surname and first initial) to permit some degree of assurance in identification.

Multiple methods were used to identify the gender of individual authors and printers. For one thing, authors whose names were already known almost always had intelligible genders, though anonymous, pseudonymous, or corporate authorship complicated attribution of gender, given inconsistencies between title page information catalog information, reviews, and so on. Printers, however, offered some significant challenges of their own. Surnames, for example, were much more commonly provided with just a first initial, or a full name only given in one of several sources, leaving open the possibility that we were dealing with different individuals rather than variants on a single name. Hence, printer surnames, with special attention to known female printers in our authorities, were checked against VIAF records, published authorities like Plomer or Timperley, along with other online resources. Lists of common/uncommon male and female names in the eighteenth century were also used to text filter and cross-reference ESTC records in OpenRefine.

Each of these cities also produced a certain number of texts we labeled, “NKA,” which we used for texts whose contributing authors’ or printers’ names were either not known or were too partial to be identified with any degree of certainty. This designation included texts collectively produced in real time or through some form of subsequent adaptation with additional participants. It also encompassed texts published altogether anonymously or pseudonymously.

In other words, the texts in the NKA category sat on the border between the known and knowable in our studies of genre and authorship and could potentially expand or clarify our knowledge if additional examples or contexts are discovered and integrated into our understanding. The size of this group and its potentially de- and re-structuring effects is one of the reasons why working concepts like “print environment” and “historical present” are so important to introduce into a concept like “genre system,” which is in our own right necessarily incomplete and open-ended.

**Categorizing.** To confront the task of sorting the genres of over 2000 items, a preliminary set of 10 broader categories for items was first generated using RBMS controlled vocabularies, Library of Congress classifications, ESTC
metadata, title-word frequencies, and secondary literature of the topic areas, a
method also used for clarifying the categories, genre categories, genres, and
ultimately subgenre hierarchies as well. These schemes, documenting our
significant terms and editorial decisions, became the guiding organizational
principles in our emerging hierarchy of organizational terms. Each level of
organization presupposed an earlier, broader, more comprehensive level of
decision that served as a background permitting finer distinctions and more
precise subdivisions to be made at lower levels. In this process, the perplexity of
genre assignments was reduced and resolved by “path dependence” rather than
external or internal teleology. These emerging sets of items helped create and
then refine the categories in a recursive process, as seen in Fig. 2, below.
The next step in our refinement of the categories and genres came when we realized that items could be suggestively grouped or distinguished through three distinct modes of attachment or “belonging”: by “use,” “container,” or “content,” highlighting whichever aspect seemed most important for identifying and distinguishing the term in relation to an existing item set. In other words, a text’s “use” referred to the practical application or purpose that a given text would have served for the public (or some specific subset of it). “Container” described a text’s form, significant formal features, or format. “Content” referenced the subject
matter addressed within a given text. Individual texts were assigned a category based on whichever characteristics seemed pertinent in identifying the category and the items included in it.

We learned that every item could be attached to a category through the presence of specific, shared terms in the title gathered via these sorting terms of use, container, or content. The priority of these terms for labeling, however, seemed to depend upon the specific category and its salient features and contexts, as in Fig. 3a, below. Coding entries and forming the categories and genres represented a pragmatic process of “lumping and splitting” sets of texts until a certain articulable coherence seemed to obtain within the group.50 The principles underlying that coherence, along with the key terms of sorting, and the specific modes of attachment driven by use, container, or content, helped generate an organizational scheme for each category and genre, and directed further refinement of its members and principles of coherence. Ultimately, these decisions helped reveal and articulate the social connections between producers and audiences of specific genres. (For an example of one of our organizational schemes, see Fig. 3b below, for how we distinguished Instructional/Reference texts from Scientific/Scholarly/Critical ones.)
Scheme development & sorting cycles

- Devise category/genre schemes
- Lump & split schemes by Use, Container, or Content
- Sort or compound schemes or item sets

**Fig. 3a**
Fig. 3b

The sample decision tree shown in Fig. 3b shows how we used a descending order of attachment from Use ⇒ Container ⇒ Content to make finer and finer distinctions between instructional reference works (which were intended for a non-expert or aspiring practitioner audience) and scientific/scholarly/critical works (which were intended for discursive communities of practitioners and others to help devise, propose, or debate new theories, practices, and methods). The kind of elaborate decision-tree pictured here, however, was only necessary for the categories where it was necessary to distinguish among many different texts, formal conventions, and uses. For example, we generated a relatively
simple set of distinctions for advertisements but elaborated the instructional/reference category as much as we could, because we had become interested in seeing its possible relation to the occupational and educational ladders of each city.

Results: Breakdown of categories overall and for each city

Thus, after a complete stage of group coding that assigned all 2000+ records to specific categories, a process overseen and confirmed by my own independent assignment process as PI, we arrived at 10 categories, in the following order of prevalence:

- **legal** texts (512)
- **religious** texts (357)
- **literary** texts (349)
- **instructional/reference** texts (182)
- **scientific/scholarly/critical** texts (163)
- commercial/organizational announcements/advert**isements** (communications from a group or entity) (152)
- **political/organizational/public addresses** (communications to an individual or group) (134)
- **historical** texts (101)
- **periodicals** (63)
- **puzzles/songs/jests** (21)

The absolute counts for each category could be visualized as follows, Fig. 4:

**Absolute Category Counts, by total:**
Once these categories were distributed by city, however, the predominance of London over the other two cities, and of legal, literary, and religious categories over all others appeared very dramatically, as seen in Fig. 5.51
Absolute Category Counts, by city:

Comparison of Cities by Category Counts, by Absolute Numbers and Percentage Relative to Total:

When we compared these cities by their absolute numbers and relative percentages within the entire dataset’s 2000 records, we began to recognize how each city’s category profile contrasted with its counterparts. In London and
Edinburgh especially, the legal and literary categories predominated, along with religious texts. These hinted at the importance of commercial and literary publishing for London’s far-flung trade, and the even more outsized role of legal publishing in Edinburgh. In Philadelphia, however, religious texts and political addresses were most numerous, followed by instructional/reference items, and then a smaller, yet more even distribution of the other categories. These overall distributions seemed suggestive of the contours of genteel, professional, devout, and vocational literacy for each city at this moment and were consistent with category counts relative to population size, as we will argue below.

The rough distribution of categories, however, seemed to pair London with Philadelphia. Those two cities seem to have a more even distribution of categories relative to one another. In contrast, Edinburgh’s local production was overwhelmingly dominated by the legal category, with relatively small representation of the remaining categories, as can be seen in Fig. 6, below.

It is possible that there is an underlying factor about the ESTC database’s history, or in the circumstances surrounding print production in the cities, that could explain the roughly even distribution of categories of London and Philadelphia in comparison with Edinburgh. There might also be a similar story of uneven record accumulation or material circumstances in the resemblance between London and
Edinburgh’s top three categories. At this point in the project, however, we can say that there seem to be comparative differences in each city’s profile that suggest how its local print infrastructures were sustained: literary, legal, and religious texts in London, legal but also literary and religious texts in Edinburgh, and religious texts, addresses, and instructional/reference texts in Philadelphia. The causal factors behind those differences, however, await further research.

Print environments, city by city

The reconstructed print environments of each city, when aligned with existing social histories and histories of the book, revealed important local and regional differences in demographics, economic activities and print and literacy infrastructures. These factors seem to have played a role in the types of writing, especially women’s writing, which they supported.

London

London’s print environment stands unrivalled as the largest, wealthiest, and most elaborated of the three cities, by almost every measure. See fig. 7, below.

(Fig. 7a): Total City/Category/Genre Graph: London and (7b): Women’s contributions
London was by every account the culturally and financially dominant center of the domestic and imperial economy, not least in its role as a center of the

Print Environment and the Boundaries between Literary and Non-Literary Genres. London was by every account the culturally and financially dominant center of the domestic and imperial economy, not least in its role as a center of the
What made this possible was its sheer size, at around 760,000 people in the early 1770s, with continued growth from domestic and international immigration. This made London almost fourteen times larger than Edinburgh, and twenty-eight times the size of Philadelphia. This gargantuan size and metropolitan heft made every aspect of cultural production—numbers of readers, writers, printers, presses, outlets—easier to sustain and grow when compared to smaller cities.

As we saw above, the three largest categories in London attest to its infrastructural importance for legal, religious, and literary publishing throughout Britain and British America, along with its exports to other cities, including the two other cities in our study. Unlike Edinburgh, however, London’s literary and commercial publishing was not dwarfed by its legal publishing. Accordingly, London’s women writers were far more strongly represented in its literary categories than they were in the legal and religious categories that were the only categories publishing women writers in Edinburgh or Philadelphia in this reconstructed year.

Given its size, density, and diversity, London also offered the broadest range from high to low occupations and ranks of any city in England, while being fully capable of reflecting the era’s “minute social distinctions.” The city’s concentration of the nation’s wealthiest families, along with their numerous servants, its centrality for business, professional, and academic life, its numerous schools and tutors, and its ability to sustain a broad range of trades and occupations (clockmakers, printers, etc.) requiring some degree of literacy all meant that London had some of the highest literacy rates in England. So, for example, one historian has observed that in 1750s London 92 percent of central London bridegrooms could sign their names for marriage licenses, along with 74 percent of brides.

Unsurprisingly, the proxies of literacy we have devised for this study (absolute numbers of ESTC items, unique authors and printers, and number of periodicals) far outnumber those for our other two cities, and these are in line with the demographic step down of population numbers from London to the next two cities. Accordingly, we have recorded 1605 total items published in London this year, featuring 597 unique authors, along with 743 unique printers or groups. Our data also shows London supporting 48 periodicals, with 25 magazines and 23 newspapers. The ready availability of comparatively inexpensive periodicals such as newspapers and magazines (along with almanacs for laboring or working-class readers) also appears to have acted as a key multiplier for working class men’s and genteel and working-class women’s literacy. Periodicals and almanacs
represented another, less expensive and sociable avenue for women to acquire and improve their reading habits outside of the usual domains of formal schooling or occupation, which men, depending on their class, were more readily able to take advantage of. The periodical-based dimension of literary production for this year lies outside the scope of this study, and has only recently been incorporated into larger-scale literary histories by scholars like Eve Tavor Bannet, Jennie Batchelor, and Manushag Powell, but our results could readily be aligned with theirs in the future.

In its overwhelming dominance of British publishing, London supported women’s participation in all genres, but was the sole city publishing novels, poetry, and plays by women, encompassing their entire production in the non-religious categories and genres (instructional/reference, historical, puzzles etc., legal, and scientific/scholarly). It also seems to have been the only city capable of supporting women to any degree as commercial or professional authors, most strikingly in the novel and novel/memoir and to a lesser extent in translations or the drama.

As with many other industries, British women seeking to support themselves by writing would need to move to London to find work (interestingly, this seems less true of women working as provincial and colonial printers, as well as itinerant actresses in provincial or touring companies). The lure of ready money and the urgent need for support were especially true of the “female appeal” memoirists and the whole set of literally seduced and abandoned novelists, memoirists, and performers who had to draw upon their own scandals and hardships to stay alive and scramble for any kind of material support.

In London as in other cities, the categories and genres that women participated in can be compared by prevalence, which also helps further reveal the social status and forms of literacy that these producers associated with particular categories or genres. In the case of London, this means moving from the single largest group, the literary and commercial genres (fiction, poems, plays, miscellanies), to the “improving” categories and genres (instructional/reference, historical, periodicals, religious and scientific/scholarly), followed by the forms of diversion offered by puzzles/music/jests.

The single largest category and genre authored by named women in the ESTC dataset is literary fiction, represented by nineteen novels (out of an overall total of 88 published in that year) (cf. fig. 7b). The century’s flexible practices of authorial attribution by writers, publishers, reviewers, and readers, however, suggest that anonymous or pseudonymous titles (by our count, at least six) could
add several more to this list, depending on the certainty of attribution and one’s definition of fiction. The single most striking feature of these texts is their clustered yet indistinct and often overlapping subgenres, an effect heightened by the effects of anonymous or pseudonymous authorship. Epistolary and sentimental novels, for example, shaded into collections of letters, semi-fictionalized memoirs, or essays. We can say that Richardsonian sentiment provides a dominant mode for this year’s fiction by women, to which are added recognizable variations like the courtship/seduction novel. Thus, literary women like Sophia Briscoe offered sentimental novels like Miss Melmoth: or, the New Clarissa while “A Lady of Quality” offered a “moral tale” in The Favourite. Other authors were Mrs Gunning, Elizabeth Griffith, and many anonymous authors. There was also a curious vogue for racy anti-Catholic fiction like the anonymous, mildly erotic semi-gothic novel, Anecdotes of a convent, which featured a young nun falling in love with another nun who turns out to be a cross-dressing young man. The Anecdotes were part of a sub-sub-generic flourish of convent novels.

Most notably, this cluster of sentimental novels included a set of prose narratives retrospectively labeled “female appeal memoirs,” which were semi-fictionalized, first-person accounts of their authors’ fall from gentility or middling status into abuse and hardships from family, suitors, husbands, and society at large. This includes the pseudonymously published Life of Lamenther (pronounced “lament her”), which describes the multiple generations of struggle and loss suffered by the women of her family:

[F]or were we but to give ourselves Time to reflect a single Moment, we should soon be convinced that some unforeseen Accident or sudden Alteration might entirely put a Stop to our gay Schemes of Happiness, and totally destroy our Castle of imaginary Bliss.

This novel/memoir may be the most difficult text of the entire dataset to read, given its sustained focus on the abuse and sufferings of its author, unrelieved by any Richardsonian idealization or Wollstonecraftian clarity regarding her oppression. At one point the narrator is locked in a dark closet without a privy and forced to eat “putrid Kitchen-Stuff” to survive (34). Allied to these hybrid memoir-novels were some theatrical counterparts, including the autobiographical performances of Dorothea Du Bois, who toured regional theaters publicizing her own prolonged history of familial abandonment and bad treatment by her bigamist, lying, rapacious aristocratic father.
As Isobel Grundy has pointed out regarding what seems to have been an entire genre of “abandoned, scandalous women’s performances,” some female authors/stage performers of the mid- to late eighteenth century found themselves in situations similar to Du Bois’s, where she had been forced to market her own scandal in print and on stage to support herself to diminishing effect. Grundy remarks: “The boldness and effrontery of these women [e.g., performers like Philippina Hill, Elizabeth Beverley, or Sarah Gardner] had a certain lustre, yet these qualities went together with flattery, ingratiation, playing for sympathy, and trading on their sex.”

To describe this more neutrally, young women writers could “fall” very quickly from aspirational respectability to hackwork, which in their cases could fix them in hyper-feminized roles of attention-seeking, pathos, and contempt for the rest of their careers. This overlap between scandal, playwrighting, and performance seems comparable to that of the “female appeal memoir,” similarly which exploited these women’s intermingled experience of scandal, fiction, and autobiography.

In this respect, the slender career prospects of women writers followed the same gendered, high-stakes logic as this era’s courtship and seduction plots, in which every step a heroine took towards happiness or free choice also represented a potentially disastrous fall from feminine propriety or physical safety.

Yet the memoir/novel, as Staves has noted, can also edge toward fabricated, salacious, scandal memoirs like The authentic memoirs of the Countess de Barre, the French king’s mistress, which can function equally well as political journalism, “secret memoir” or opportunistic amatory fiction. There was also overtly didactic fiction, like the anonymously authored “moral tale” from a “Lady of Quality,” The Favourite. Translations were also prominently featured: Mary Collyer’s prose translation of Gessner’s Death of Abel, a popular blend of sentimental fiction, biblical situations, pastoral and Ossianic blank verse was dedicated to the Queen and much read by Catherine Talbot and other Bluestockings around this time. Translations were also featured in this year’s successful staging of Dorothea Celesia’s Almida, a reworking of Voltaire’s Tancrede as blank verse tragedy in Drury Lane. Finally, there was also yet another reprinting of Susannah Centlivre’s comedy The Busy Body (1709), which had been performed for over sixty years on London and provincial stages and helped sustain theater companies even outside London in North America and the Caribbean.

Yet perhaps the most singular fiction by a woman was Mary Latter’s Pro and Con, or The Opinionists, a Shandean political allegory on contemporary politicians and writers that takes the form of an old manuscript “vision” or “fragment” that magically predicts present-day political feuds and quarrels. In
tone and purpose, it is closer to Sterne’s *Political Romance* (1759) or Smollett’s *History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769) than either of those authors’ full-fledged novels. In the opening pages, a fictional critic diagnoses the book in which he appears: “A d---n’d heterogenous Heap of—nobody knows what! The Author runs out of one Thing into another, till she loses her Meaning in a Load of Nonsense, and leaves the Public to find it out. Neither Wit, Humour, Grammar, Rhime, or Reason: A genuine Female Production, I warrant it.”

The literary genre with the second largest number of female contributors was poetry, where seven items written by women appear. Now recognized as one of the most important new poets for this year, Phillis Wheatley Peters reprinted in London “An Elegiac Poem on the Death of that Celebrated Divine . . . Mr George Whitefield,” as a capstone to the October 11, 1770 funeral sermon of Ebenezer Pemberton held in Boston, “Heaven the Residence of the Saints.” Wheatley Peters, by publishing in both Boston and London, spoke to audiences on multiple continents in 1771 and effectively introduced her own version of Methodist aesthetics when she elegized the death of preacher George Whitefield. The extraordinary circumstances of the writer, an enslaved “Servant Girl of Seventeen Years of Age” who “has been but Nine Years in this Country from Africa,” bearing the names of both her enslaver and the ship that carried away from Africa, are noted on the title, but other aspects of this poem align with a white, Dissenting audience’s expectations of poetic genres in this moment: Wheatley’s poem offers a passionately Christian, Methodist “Condolatory Address” to anyone, including Whitefield’s patron the Countess of Huntingdon, who had lost in him a “Father, Friend, and Benefactor.” In this, as in her other elegies, Wheatley Peters memorializes Whitefield, while also aiming to fulfill his role: “Thou didst, in Strains of Eloquence refin’d/Inflame the Soul and Captivate the Mind.”

This is an apt precis of her own aesthetic of Christian exaltation and loss.

In this respect, it is also helpful to contrast her careful self-positioning, balancing the tensions between Wesleyan and Whitefieldian Methodism, with that of Mary Bayly, a Particular Baptist, who offered an elegy for “that laborious minister of the Gospel” and sternly Calvinist theologian John Gill (1697-1771): “These were the truths this noble warrior sought/Arminian tenets he set at nought.” Continuing in this Dissenting vein, Elizabeth Fell, a Quaker born in Saffron Walden, published a collection of *Fables, Odes, and Miscellaneous Poems*. Anne Penny, daughter of a Welsh Vicar and translator, also produced a historically and regionally oriented collection of poems and translations, heavily influenced by Welsh antiquarian/translators like Evans, poets like Ossian, Gray, and Gessner, and critics like Montagu and Johnson, along with a Garrick-inspired dramatic piece.
In a more urbane and (perhaps aspirationally) genteel direction, “Mary Seymour Montague” offers a group of epistles that echo Pope’s title and structure of the *Essay on Man* while appropriating the name of one of Pope’s greatest antagonists. Jael Henrietta Pye, an Anglo-Jewish writer, offered a volume of descriptive poems and epistles “by a Lady” though she was derided by Walpole as “a Jewess, who has married twice and turned Christian, poetess and authoress.” Catherine Jemmat’s *Miscellanies* closely resemble the “Female Appeal Memoirs” published by other women novelists.

This year’s productions also yielded important work in serious, improving prose genres for more genteel, often mixed gender audiences: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (in reprint) and Catherine Macaulay undertook the genres of public letters, travel narrative, and public history, while Elizabeth Montagu, having published her essay on Shakespeare two years earlier, conducted an important epistolary discussion of genre with Lord Kames this year that provided the title and epigraph for this essay. The recently deceased Catherine Talbot’s devotional *Reflections on the Days of the Week* also appeared in Elizabeth Carter’s posthumous edition.

The gendering of the commercial and “improving” genres is especially important to note. In the competition between professional/practitioner and aristocratic/amateur holders of knowledge in, say, literature, law, or medicine, there was a huge demand for books or periodicals that mediated masculinized discourses of religion, art, literature, history, geography, and science to a genteel, feminized or mixed gender audience. This demand helped generate a series of distinctive literary or paraliterary genres like moral essays, critical review essays, historical/biographical essays, serialized fiction, comic fictionalized character sketches, etc., that had become recurring parts of literary and especially periodical culture and practice by the mid-eighteenth century, and firmly established by the target year, as the founding of the *Lady’s Magazine* helps show. Many of the improving texts for women were closely associated with the Bluestocking salons and other coterie networks and activities that also helped writers like Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Carter produce their own didactic/devotional works, religious poetry, and often collaborative acts of literary patronage and criticism.

Yet there is a broader vein of improvement directed more openly towards social advancement, written for and by women in the instructional/reference category, where professional women writers often provided advice for other women’s letter-writing, house-keeping, or good conduct. Three much reprinted works of instruction and advice thus came from well-known women writers: novelist,
playwright, and periodicalist Eliza Haywood’s long-running *Advice to a Serving-Maid*, Du Bois’s (yes, the one mentioned above) *The Lady’s Polite Secretary*, and former housekeeper and businesswoman Elizabeth Raffald’s *The Experienced English House-Keeper*.

The extent and breadth of output in multiple genres by Haywood and Du Bois also suggest another dimension of professional writing in this era and year: the need to publish work in whatever jobs were at hand. Nonetheless, women writers contributed to eight out of ten textual categories in London, a far broader distribution than that found in Edinburgh or Philadelphia in the same year. 84

From the perspective of this dataset’s women printers, the astonishing size, economic activity, and social and religious networks of London also meant that even the most marginalized religious communities were able to sustain their own print establishments, which often employed women of their own sects. Such women are strongly represented in our group of female printers and offer an intriguing sample of non-elite or tradeswomen’s publishing activities. Of the eight women printers, we find 32 ESTC records total, comprising

- Mary Lewis, a “printer to the Moravians”; (17 records: sermons, hist/bio, rel elegy [Mary Bayly’s aforementioned elegy to Gill], controversies)
- Mary Hinde, a Quaker who focused on doctrinal and polemical works, and who had cultivated ties to North American Quakers like Anthony Benezet; 85; (11 records: controversies, did/devot, hist/bio, autobio/bio, conversion narr, rel elegy, eccles hist, sermons)
- Mary Harrison, a woman who had taken over her husband’s print shop after his death, and who continued his trade of printing almanacs and psalms until their son took over the business, which lasted to 1950; 86 (3 records: catalog, psalms, almanac)
- M. (or Mrs) Cooper, who reprinted Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Letters* in this year, and who a) might have worked in the same address and same shop as an earlier Mrs Mary Cooper, who had died in 1761, and/or b) might also be the same Mrs Cooper who published “An Address to the People of Wapping” around 1770; (1 record, Letters of MW Montagu) and finally
- Mary Latter, mentioned above as an author and political/literary commentator, who operated a printing shop in Reading, but appeared in London solely as a writer.
There are also the women who published in partnerships, sometimes as wives, widows, sisters, or daughters of ongoing print businesses and especially family printing dynasties:

- Catherine Ware, in partnership with Richard Ware; (10 records: literary, religious, instr/ref, periodicals)
- Mrs Mary Woodfall, law printer and wife and partner of Henry Sampson Woodfall of the Woodfall clan; (10 records, legal, historical, literary, religious)
- Elizabeth Johnson, pamphleteer and longitude contest participant, who was wife and partner with Richard Johnson, law clerk and editor of their joint edition of the *Baronetage*. 87 (3 records, historical, literary, religious)

The largely religious orientation of the female printers’ generic output reinforces the association already seen between non-elite women authors and religious writing. It is intriguing, however, that a few of the women writers’ texts (e.g., Bayly, Montagu) were published by this group of printers. 88 What this study and the resulting group of women printers makes clear, however, is that it is impossible to discuss women’s contributions to print culture solely through the textual category of literary publications and genres.

London’s infrastructural advantages, however, also provided access to the widest social range of women authors, while also allowing genteel women who kept some distance from the world of commercial publishing to publish themselves or fellow members of their networks and even direct public discussion and tastes. Catherine Macaulay, for example, was sufficiently rich and socially elevated enough to assume a (controversial) role as a public historian and political commentator. London therefore served as an appropriate vehicle for her own ambitions as writer on past and present events as she published her fifth volume of her *History of England* between 1768-1772. Finally, devout women in Anglican or Dissenting communities wrote, discussed, and published (though with great discretion) their works here in London, as they did in Edinburgh and Philadelphia.

Thus, it seems that of the items produced by women in this year, records belonging to the commercial, literary, and improving genres were written by genteel or would-be genteel women with some degree of educational or vocational literacy (often as actresses, governesses, or printers). Among the religious texts, London’s working-class Dissenting women were strongly represented as printers for the sects, with some representation of elite, Anglican
coteries as writers of devotional texts. Hence, in London, the distinction between literary and non-literary women’s writing seems strongly bound up with class and religious identities. Literature and commercial writing serve the purposes of women’s leisured consumption or self-improvement, while religious, periodical, and instructional/reference writing responds not just to genteel women’s interests, but also working-class and Dissenting women’s interests and needs.

**Edinburgh**

Edinburgh presents a drastically different array of genres and women’s participation than London, offering almost the same number of categories (addresses are absent here) but in rather different proportions than either London or Philadelphia. Fig. 8 below shows the radically simplified array of categories and genres found in Edinburgh, and the much fewer print contributions of women authors found there.

(Fig. 8a): Total City/Category/Genre Graph: Edinburgh and (8b) Women’s contributions
Edinburgh

Print Environment and the Boundaries between the literary and the non-literary. Edinburgh in 1771 was conventionally Matt Bramble’s “hot-bed of genius,” a haven for male writers, philosophers, and other literati, though Jery Melford, allowed that “the Scotch ladies . . . are the best and kindest creatures upon earth,” but made little mention of their accomplishments beyond dancing and visiting. Edinburgh was nonetheless in the target year Scotland’s most
populous city with a population around 55,000. It was also home to an influential mixed gender salon and coterie culture whose prime movers were well-born or -connected women who hosted parties, composed verse, corresponded, and who also tended to circulate their writings in manuscript rather than publish, which they sometimes did late in life.

Edinburgh also provided a lively atmosphere for women of different classes to engage in sociable reading and mutual self-improvement, which produced a great deal of intimate conversation, correspondence, or note-taking. For this reason, many elite women’s writings and activities in 1771 Edinburgh and its vicinities were conducted in conversational settings and introduced into print, if at all, decades later. The importance of song and oral culture to Edinburgh’s literary culture, even apart from the continued and patriotically motivated interest in the stylizations of Ossianic verse, also meant that antiquarian collectors and women poets were keenly aware of women both as sources and models of song.

The specific boundaries of literature and non-literature, then, for genteel and elite women in Edinburgh were heavily determined by the specific decorum of print, scribal, and oral production and circulation among specific audiences in tightly controlled though somewhat porous social contexts. Thus, apart from their appearances in the plentiful lawsuits of this year, the named productions of women in the ESTC for this year were represented solely by the collected devotional writings of Lady Steuart, in her commentary and letters on scriptural passages to family members. Yet the intensity of public attention directed towards trials like the recently concluded Douglas cause suggest that these trials served as a form of gladiatorial sport and entertainment for Edinburgh’s readers of both sexes, and the most prominent scandals often featured women prominently in their focus on infidelity, inheritance, family squabbles, or partisan disagreements.

Perhaps more clearly than London, however, Edinburgh’s publications in the dataset reflect the interests of those in male professional occupations (chiefly lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and academics), along with their wives and families, rather than aristocratic tastes. Nonetheless, the historian R.A. Houston has noted the disparity in basic literacy (defined as the ability to sign one’s name) between mid-century Edinburgh men and women, suggesting that even with the usual caveats about assessing early modern literacy, there was a much greater drop-off in literacy rates among non-elite women than men at this time: “by the middle of the eighteenth-century male illiteracy was uncommon but female remained the norm.” So, for example, Houston cites a study showing just 12 percent of men appearing in court between 1662-1760 unable to sign their name, with women unable to sign remaining around 73 percent. This was a much higher rate of
female illiteracy than that found in London around the same time. In Edinburgh, the city’s smaller size and higher density also meant that the professionally educated or trained were in closer contact with the aristocrats and the genteel (and their servants) along with highly literate tradesmen, day laborers, and beggars. Thus, given the high levels of illiteracy outside Edinburgh, gender, occupation, and metropolitan residency had a pronounced effect on the reading or writing abilities of the city’s inhabitants.95

Edinburgh’s popularity as a destination of internal immigration further attested to its wealth relative to the rest of Scotland and its importance as a seat of courts, universities, and academic and professional life generally. This concentration helped make its literacy (at least among men) comparable to London’s, though with far fewer people and a much smaller economy.96 Accordingly, we have recorded 337 ESTC items published in this year (about a quarter of London’s number, though its population size is only about seven percent of London’s), featuring 192 unique authors and 84 printers or groups. We also find six periodicals, represented by four newspapers and two magazines.

The year’s legal works featuring women could be represented by texts like The deposition of the Rt. Hon. Lady Colvill, in the cause, the Hon. Lieutenant-General Charles Colvill, pursuer, against Dr Walter Farquharson, Mess. Charles Lyel and Walter Ferguson. However, perhaps the most recognizable model of authorship lay in the example of the late Lady Jean Steuart, a remarkably pious and uncomplaining woman from whose “devout works” the Critical Reviewer could “form no favourable idea of the deceased lady, as a writer,” yet he assured his readers that the Meditations were “evidently the overflowings of a heart fraught with benevolence, virtue, and piety.”97

Lady Steuart’s text shows the complex set of affordances and constraints produced by her class status and the devotional genre. Her social prominence and piety licensed her to be presented to the public as an author, at least posthumously, but only to the extent that she demonstrated a measured humility and self-effacement and eschewed any demonstrable style. As her editor notes, her text contains mostly private meditations designed to assuage a lifetime of “afflictions . . . not only from her young and numerous family, but from a very tender and broken state of health,” along with letters to and from family members at moments of severe trial.98 But even beyond these self-exhortations and calls to duty, we can sometimes catch something of the living writer’s powers of observation and reflection:

But there is yet a more trying time happens, which is weather so
excessively severe, that the poor labourers are imprisoned within doors, and their work so marred, that it will not suffer their hand upon it, nor are they able to relieve it, yea they are so dispirited in this confinement, while the subject of their pleasant labour is standing the sport of the envious winds and rain . . . that they find neither heart nor hand for other work in this melancholy retreat, and at times so exceedingly depressed therewith, as scarce to be able to hirple [Scots, “to walk lamely”] to the doors or windows to look if better weather is like to arise.” 99

And so she addresses not just herself, but her family, friends, and God to assert “this one article [of her faith]:” And now, O Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.”100

The two categories of women’s publications included here, legal and religious, situate them in relation to two key male dominated institutions of the city, its legal system and churches. Yet the women who are represented in the legal discourse may have had opportunities to act or speak in indecorous ways that were unavailable to Lady Jean Steuart. Nonetheless, Lady Jean Steuart was able to assemble her own and others’ letters and meditations for the edification of others and present herself as a model of decorous piety. Steuart represents a fine example of the genteel, feminine yet plainspoken stoicism found also in a poet and hostess like Alison Cockburn, who wrote in her “Short account of a long life”: “I can only remember one deep grief I sustain’d in those happy years, it was the death of my Brother’s lamented and beloved Wife, who dyed in child-bed, December 18th, 1737. The only vent I had was a violent bleeding of the nose.”101

**Philadelphia**

Philadelphia’s small size, array of categories, and its sole woman author strongly distinguish it from London. Yet like Edinburgh its sole woman author is also a devotional writer, though her exhortations are delivered through an account of her life as a serving-woman, her spiritual struggles and conversion, and subsequent vocation as preacher. See Fig. 9a and b below:

(Fig. 9a): City/Category/Genre Graph: Philadelphia and (9b) Women’s contributions
Print Environment and the Boundaries between the literary and non-literary.

When viewing Philadelphia’s categories and genre systems, its three most prevalent textual categories, Addresses, Religious, and Instructional/Reference, suggest its regional role as the center of a lively political culture, a site of acknowledged religious diversity welcoming large numbers of immigrants, and an important commercial hub and entrepot for those seeking work. This year’s political addresses largely addressed issues of its commercial and demographic growth, like a pamphlet war about a dealer’s adulterated rum, the regulation of the public watch, the public-spirited campaign for the Library Company of Philadelphia, the aftermath of the Paxton Boys riots, and the Galloways’ role in
the contested elections in Bucks County.

Besides the Hoskens text analyzed below, there were various publications of Quakers and Methodists (including at least one religious periodical, the *Royal Spiritual Magazine* written “by several divines, [and] defend[ing] the doctrines of Calvin”), that may have reflected contributions from their female members. Several of this year’s Dissenting publications warned against the imposition of an Anglican Bishop in North America, an initiative (never completed) that would have discouraged women, the indigenous and the enslaved from participating as warmly as they did in Dissenting “heart religion.” Worth noting, too, that in the popular category of instructional books there was one republished in Philadelphia almost certainly for the educational use of its genteel girls and young women. *The Ladies Friend*, by the French educator and writer Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert. This was a popular conduct book and set of essays designed to inculcate in genteel young ladies “the greatest ornaments to the female sex.” Though much reprinted in the eighteenth century, the impersonality and gravity of its advice, which won it adherents in its own moment, seem to have worked against it retrospectively.102

Philadelphia in 1771 was a busy colonial port city whose textures and rhythms of urban life rendered it rather different from the other two locations, and distinct from other cities in the North American and West Indian colonies as well.103 Philadelphia’s heavy reliance on immigration and settlement for labor and its active role in both local and international trade meant that it experienced levels of demographic churn and religious diversity unlike other, landbound urban centers in the colonies or Britain, apart from metropolitan London.104 Though only about 3.5 percent the size of metropolitan London, Philadelphia offered a comparable degree of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity, while also experiencing significant inflows of immigration along with high mortality rates.105 Evidence for literacy, especially signature literacy, for Philadelphia in the colonial period is quite scanty because of the limitations of the evidence, but Grubb estimated 81.6 percent male literacy for the city between 1773-5, while Monaghan and others continue to cite Lockridge’s findings for New England women that women’s literacy remained substantially below that of men throughout the colonial period.106 Though the precise numbers in this pre-census era remain a matter of some debate, assuming a figure between Salinger et al.’s estimated total of 23,566 for 1769 and their estimated 27,645 for 1772, we arrive at about 27,000 for the target year.107

The size and elaboration of the print environment, then, reflects some of the features of its demographics and working-class literacy. Accordingly, we find 88
ESTC items, featuring 33 unique authors and 19 printers or printers’ groups. Nonetheless, a city about half the size of Edinburgh still supported five newspapers and two magazines, or nearly the same number of newspapers and magazines as its Scottish counterpart. Sher and Raven, along with scholars like Wulf or Hayes, have used the necessarily partial and granular evidence of, e.g., contemporary readers’ purchases, diaries, or auction notices, booksellers’ advertisements, or Customs office import/export ledgers to suggest that London, Edinburgh, or Dublin-printed books supplied a major portion of Philadelphians’ reading, as opposed to the more local, ephemeral, or topical publications found in this year’s city inventory. Yet this distinction might not be as meaningful for plebeian readers whose purchases were largely locally printed almanacs, newspapers, or religious matter. The best we can say is that steadily increasing quantities of books were imported into Philadelphia in the decades preceding the target year and were rising quite dramatically in the period just before the target year because of the breakdown in the colonists’ non-importation movement protesting the Townshend Acts.108

Philadelphia’s prominence as a regional hub disseminating knowledge and news to the rest of the colonies helped it develop an economy based as much on knowledge and information as on manufacturing and trade, a status reflected in the dataset and visualizations of its overall diversity of book categories in spite of its comparatively small size.109 Like Edinburgh, too, its commercial interests in the most up-to-date knowledge, along with its religiosity and mercantile and professional cultures of self- and civic improvement helped foster not just its new universities and medical school, but new public-facing institutions like its Library Company and American Philosophical Society. This set of overlapping merchant, professional, and elite networks was joined by an active, overlapping literary and salon culture organized loosely around figures like the Rev. William Smith and Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, respectively, in the domains of print and periodical publications (Smith) as well as coterie circulation of manuscripts (Fergusson).110

Nonetheless, the single named production by a woman in Philadelphia in the dataset is, like Steuart’s Meditations in Edinburgh, a religious text deeply marked by her social status, in this case as a former servant. Nonetheless, both Hoskens and Steuart assumed some degree of religious authority, even while using the genre of meditations or conversion narrative to assure audiences of their ultimate obedience to God and church.

Hoskens, a Quaker and popular itinerant preacher, was like Steuart published posthumously. Her Life and spiritual sufferings of that faithful servant of Christ Jane Hoskens, a public preacher among the people called Quakers represented
the first spiritual autobiography of a working-class woman published in North America, and it describes her steps toward self-discovery as servant, Quaker, and preacher. Like Steuart’s Meditations, it balances a self-effacing, plain spoken style with certain writerly qualities, though in Hoskens’s case it is her gift for narration, dramatically presented characters and situations, and vivid moments of self-analysis, packed into a briskly paced account of a very eventful life. When compared to the far more decorous writings of Steuart, however, the spiritual energy and ambition of Hoskens seem inseparable from her working-class background and Quaker acceptance of women’s leadership in worship.

Hoskens’s text begins with her birth in London to a devout Anglican family, then moves straight to the thoughtlessness of her teenage years, which were suddenly interrupted by a life-threatening fever. That’s when she pleads in her bed for relief, then hears a mysterious voice: “it was as though it had been spoken to me, if I restore thee, ‘go to Pennsylvania.’ To which the answer of my soul was, wherever thou pleasest.” To follow those divine instructions, Hoskens defies her parents to leave England, and sails to Pennsylvania, where she indentsures herself to a series of Quaker households as a servant. The Life does not hesitate to depict her shyness at participating in or even attending meetings, or her occasional backsliding into sin or laxity, but it also notes her steady advancement in the household to upper servant, along with a growing confidence in her spiritual calling at David Lloyd’s household. That is where another Quaker, Thomas Willson, seeing her speak at table, says, “What young woman is that?— —She is like the little captive maid I have been speaking of this day.” And then she is launched on the preaching career that takes her all over the North American colonies, Barbados, and Britain. The narrative ends with the death of her former mistress Grace Lloyd, along with these reflections:

When I look back and consider how the Lord was pleased to influence the hearts of his people in love towards me, when from all my natural friends, I can but admire his unmerited mercies, and say he is worthy of worship and pure obedience, for who is like to our God.

The Life concludes with Hoskens recommending the kind of obedience and self-regulation that she exhibited as a servant-preacher urged on by generous and religiously attuned masters and mistresses. Hoskens’s first-time readers in 1771 thus encountered a Quaker woman’s early eighteenth-century spiritual journey during the movement’s more established prosperous and worldly moment of the mid-century. Nonetheless, her recognizably Quaker piety can still embody not just the itinerant and prophetic mission of her sect but also the socially prescribed roles of propertied people and their servants. The Life attests that these two roles could
in fact be harmonized, given enough time.\textsuperscript{115}

In Philadelphia, then, for this year the literary/non-literary division, especially for women, seemed to hinge upon the distinction between distant, often London-based and reprinted works of canonical British authors and the local religious, periodical, scientific/scholarly, literary coterie works in which working class or elite women felt comfortable participating.

**Conclusion**

To return to the question raised at the outset, we studied a single year of women’s literary history in this way because our reductions of scope and microhistorical perspective permitted a thoroughgoing reorganization of its genres, print environments, and events allowing vertical and lateral comparisons of producers and texts. This strategy allowed us to analyze three distinct dimensions of genres and their gendering: the relational, the material/infrastructural, and the temporal. Rather than treating these forces hierarchically or sequentially, however, the microhistorical perspective depicts these as contending forces operating simultaneously on genres, people, texts, and events within the target year.

Hence, we can use the dataset to study 1) the formal features and relations of the genres within larger genre systems; 2) the more enduring social, material, and institutional infrastructures shaping local, regional, and urban print environments; 3) the differing forms of “linguistic action” that generic choices make possible for people to respond or intervene in the world around them. Genres in this active or responsive mode, however, are constantly invented or reworked in real time to answer the public’s demand for new topics that could occupy their attention or help them acquire new knowledge.

The insights gathered from this set of results can be summarized in the following ways.

**Genre systems.** The first thing that our multi-generic, relational, and systemic approach helped reveal was the importance of lateral as well as forward expansion of genres in the dataset in real time. An image that captures this kind of outward expansion and elaboration of genres by category and location across the entire dataset has been visualized in our sunburst graph of the dataset’s entire range of categories/genres/cities for all three cities in a single image. See Fig. 10, below.
These changes may not have had a lasting effect past the moment of publication, but they certainly helped shift internal relations of the genre-system at this moment. The best example of such lateral but clustered growth for women writers would be the multiple variations of the sentimental novel that overlapped with a cluster of courtship, seduction, or scandalous subgenres or genres that adjoined other genres like the memoir, “secret history,” or political address. Another productive literary node was the elegy, especially in its convergence with the Dissenting elegy or ode, that was used by Wheatley, along with other Quaker or Methodist women to gain access to transnational, sectarian and Protestant audiences of Britain, British America, and beyond. When viewed this way, one of Wheatley’s accomplishments was taking the usual elegiac topic of personal loss
and calling attention to her mourning as an “African” to the loss of a “saint” (i.e., Whitefield) who uniquely preached an “Impartial Saviour.” Her statement of personal loss, however, also called attention to the loss of freedom she shared with other enslaved people.

Closely associated with this genre of religious elegy was the didactic/devotional mode of biblical commentary or meditation that Protestant women of all denominations and sects engaged in, and which inspired both collaborative productions with other believers and first-person narratives applying deeper scriptural parallels to their personal circumstances and histories. Finally, the active critical conversation and poetic activity of Bluestockings and other coteries gave those women opportunities to shape poetic production and discussion on a broader scale than their immediate circles while still giving them control over the dissemination of their writing via print.

Each of these genre-nodes was linked to specific audiences drawn to situations recognizable enough to be explored in discussion or correspondence. These situations included: the young woman’s choice of husband; the loss of one’s children, family members, or friends; a woman’s duty to reconcile obedience to God and family with her own religious feelings and doubts; a genteel woman’s desire to participate in literature, without losing touch either with propriety or her own curiosity.

In other words, one part of feminist recovery and counter-representation entails the excavation and discussion of earlier works by women writers now relegated to the “great forgotten,” but this excavation also entails reconsidering the history of previous critical judgments. As Staves argues, it is important that we learn the parameters and demarcations of literary genres used in the past, but also important to catch the literary or at least writerly qualities found in non-literary or genre-straddling writings like Hoskens and Steuart’s religious writings.

Here I would also argue for the critical value of recognizing variation, intermixing, and elaboration of existing genres in the newly expanded digital corpus that is now coming into view. Recognizing the importance of simultaneous variation and elaboration in a corpus reflects Margaret Cohen’s version of a “modest” form of distant reading, which is “just enough reading”: in other words, “reading across a variety of unconceptualized texts and discerning coherent practices at a collective level.” Variation, rather than serving as an inevitable sign of artistic decline, overproduction, commodification, etc. warrants analysis as a site of emergence for literary production in real time. In this sense, the usual procedure of literary criticism, to value and discuss only the most singular (or
familiar) instances from a set of examples, might be contrasted with a model closer to social history or cultural studies, which assumes that multiple variants of specific cultural forms help demonstrate the significance of the pattern, not its trivialization. Yet the significance of those changes always needs to be spelled out by literary historians along with the insights this kind of evidence makes possible.

**Print environments.** The rather tidy regional, occupational, educational, and class structures of the dataset’s genre systems, however, contribute to a messier, more sprawling, less structured and more spatialized set of local print environments. These contain local print, professional, religious, and educational infrastructures, which interact with larger-scale forces like demography, economic growth, imports/exports, and the vagaries of human migration. All these forces, internal and external, have traditionally been flattened to produce the larger scale, continuous narratives of coherent imperial development (Britain) or national formation (United States), which take, say, the beginning or end of the Seven Years’ War and 1776 or the War of Independence as the decisive points of departure in their chronologies. Our goal here, however, is to reintroduce the microhistorian’s awareness of “place-based knowledge and the expertise based on it,” which increased reliance upon “digital technologies” always risks eliding in “contemporary historical research.”

Thus, instead of the conventional storytelling in which each of these cities is celebrated for its role in larger scale narratives, viewing this history through the comparative lens of the respective print environments retells the target year as a story of London’s metropolitan hegemony and the peripheral status of provinces, colonies, and territories, along with their cities. The dramatic fall-off from London’s burgeoning population, wealth, resources, and infrastructures to the far more modest populations and resources of other cities suggests that part of what helped grow and maintain the cultural centrality of London was the long-term extraction of resources, knowledge, and people from other spaces and territories to the massive cultural, economic, and population nexus of London.

The relative quantity and elaboration of genres in each of these spaces similarly argues for a similar metropolitan/peripheral dynamic in the histories of both literacy and literature as well: this seems to hold for the metropolitan dominance of London-based literary, commercial, and improving genres over other kinds of writing, including women’s writing. Yet the steep falling-off in status and resources visible in the metropolitan/periiphery disparities is also recognizable in the recurring narratives of lost gentility in the sentimental and seduction novel, which often involve the heroine’s unwilling displacement from home, friends, family, security, status, however those are arranged. Precarity therefore shadows
all but the most socially protected women writing or reading texts in this dataset and target year.

Among the most economically secure women, however, we find a crucial refuge and outlet in the gender mixed salon and coterie culture found in each city. So, for example, the women leading these groups encouraged their friends and acquaintances, both male and female, to write, discuss, and exchange verses or correspond in domestic conversational settings, while maintaining close control over the publication of those productions. Hence, because of their access to powerful men in commercial publishing, the London-based or -publishing women could promote their favored authors in ways that more provincial or colonial women could not, whatever their status.

At the same time, the print environments drawn here also clarify the political stakes of various genres as well as women’s participation in print. With the significant exceptions of Macaulay or Latter, women’s forms of named, direct participation in print were far more likely to be addressed to their local print environments rather than the most pressing national debates over British imperial or domestic politics. The establishment ridicule that both women were subjected to says a great deal about the limits placed upon women’s political writing at this moment. The dataset as it stands is therefore largely silent about aristocratic women’s political networking or plebeian women’s role in mob resistance, for example. Such activities seem more likely to be captured directly in scribal or other genres of correspondence or commonplacing, or reflected indirectly in the periodicals and other forms of journalism and scandalous chronicles, rather than the kinds of printed sources that turn up in the ESTC. This is one of the reasons why literary history or histories of the book always need supplementation from the scribal or non-literary sources explored in social history.

Nonetheless, Macaulay and other women’s writing from this year support Staves’s observation quoted earlier that “most women of the literate classes knew in 1756-776 that they were living in times of great historical significance.” Their awareness of Britain’s cultural and military rivalry with France, or its imperial aspirations, seem indeed to have inspired a whole range of “patriotic feelings.” Yet these feelings were importantly deflected or mediated by writers’ local situations and immediate identities.

So, for example, Lord Kames and Mrs Montagu each expressed their “patriotic feelings” regarding the precise genre of Ossian’s poems in an epistolary exchange from this year. Yet one form of patriotism was given reality by the English state and the other was supported by the now stateless historical imagination of
Scotland’s intellectual classes. So Kames and Montagu, in a friendly though vigorous debate, argued over whether Ossian’s poems constituted a “fiction and imposture,” a “true histor[y]” or “the tale of other times.” Kames, unsurprisingly, given his national pride and intellectual roots in Edinburgh’s literary elite, asserted the status of Ossianic poetry as a single, self-sufficient genre of “true history.” Montagu’s equally nationalist and historicist response was that Ossian’s work constituted instead a form of “poetry” demanding confirmation from a more empirical and dialogic “history.” Ossian and the Scots may possess poetry, she argued, yet Shakespeare and his “tales of other times” belong to the English. Some forms of belonging are truer, deeper, more consequential than others. She makes probabilistic arguments against Kames’s claims of Ossian’s “true history,” but her most effective device is a kind of fiction, or fairy tale (or what DeLucia would call a conjectural history) of her own: “A tattling, lying gossip, called Tradition, did indeed, in her idle fashion, repeat some facts, invent others, and whisper to a new-born generation, in fable, allegory, and all the modes of story, the tale of other times.”

In this respect, Montagu upholds the claims of a feminized, dialogic genre (a genre producing “truth effects” as well as products of the imagination) against those of Kames’s monologic, discursive “true history” (historical truth transparently delivered via a frictionless, universalist discourse). As she had written earlier in her Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear (1769), “Every species of poetry has its distinct offices . . . . It has indeed been the common aim of all poetry to please and instruct; but by means as various as the kinds of composition.” In other words, Montagu came to her debate with Kames having defended Shakespeare’s specific national and generic contribution of the historical drama against the universalizing perspective of French neoclassical dramas.

At this specific juncture of 1771, however, Montagu articulated a version of nationalist and professional literary history against Kames’ cultural nationalism that would nonetheless absorb and domesticate her eventually into an aristocratic dilettante, a tyrannical minor critic, and unsuccessful foil to the uncontestable authority of Samuel Johnson. Eventually Montagu was absorbed into an Eliotic “Tradition,” but it took a considerable amount of time before she was regarded an “individual talent” again.

In this episode, Staves’s shrewd observations about Macaulay’s contemporary reputation seem pertinent to Montagu, too. Staves writes:

Three quite different attitudes [towards women and their privilege}
of commenting upon public or masculine matters] seem to have coexisted: first, moralistic insistence that ordinary women of the middling and upper classes embody the virtues of chastity and modesty and that they be psychologically dependent on fathers and husbands for approval and admiration; second, nationalistic celebration of the new literary and cultural achievements of the extraordinary English women, the “British Fair,” celebrated as emblems of British enlightenment; third self-congratulation that polite society now had become more homosocial, that men and women were increasingly improving each other by rational conversation and mutual correction.\footnote{128}

Though Staves describes the reception of Macaulay as a “mix of attitudes,” she also notes how Macaulay experienced this as an array of conflicting genres simultaneously directed at her. These genres included satirical plays and pamphlets, but also panegyric poetry, private gossip, and gallant but ultimately negative acknowledgements from fellow historians like Hume. Yet Montagu, unlike Macaulay, never seriously jeopardized her moral or intellectual reputation in her lifetime, but instead suffered critical neglect when male critics decided she could no longer represent national genius in the manner of Shakespeare or Johnson.

**Historical Present**

Our third and final working concept, the “historical present,” represents one more stage of de-structuring and re-structuring the dataset, because it suspends the retrospective or causal views that were inaccessible to participants in this moment. In other words, delineating a moment where Jane Hoskens shared conceptual space with Lady Steuart and Dorothea Du Bois and Catherine Macaulay and Elizabeth Griffith and “Mary Seymour Montague” is to add an aspect of *regulated surprise* to our description of the year. A list like this is not quite random but not really predictable, either. Each of these authorial names implies a background set of genres producing their latest iterations in the present. Yet this sense of surprise at our discoveries—or recoveries—helps remind us that unpredictability constitutes a crucial part of our temporal experience of “the unfinished present,” which contains an irreducible element of “that which is not yet known.”\footnote{129} In other words, the experience of the present carries an advancing yet unstructured awareness of one’s changing environment, along with an emerging apprehension of the “not-yet-known” becoming known, if only by subsequent events. Most importantly, an account of literary and cultural history
from the perspective of an unfinished historical present offers a sense of variety, simultaneity, and unpredictability that looks and feels very different from what a necessarily retrospective, single genre, developmental narrative could ever offer, even while describing the same texts.

Of course, women’s knowledge and feelings about “living in times of great historical significance,” did not automatically produce foreknowledge or the ability to act—or act prudently—on what is known. Elizabeth Graeme, soon to become Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson in 1772, had no idea in 1771 (the year she contemplated marriage) that accepting a proposal from a good-for-nothing Scottish gentleman named Fergusson would saddle her with a useless last name for the rest of her long life, and leave her abandoned, impoverished, and politically exposed as a Loyalist and traitor. Graeme Fergusson’s chronology seems to slide directly from the moment she decided to marry him in 1772 to their mutual disaster in 1778, when Henry enlisted her in a disastrous scheme to deliver a letter inviting George Washington to defect in mid-campaign against Gen. Howe.130 Washington, though a personal friend of Graeme Fergusson’s, felt obliged to deliver the letter directly to the continental congress and leave Graeme Fergusson and her husband to their fates.131

Like Elizabeth Graeme deliberating upon her marriage to Hugh Henry Fergusson in 1771, the causal chain from this future act, which led to her eventual impoverishment, also gave her moment of decision the focused pathos of a tragic misjudgment, a gamble on the future taken and lost. The historical present contains this simultaneity of texts, authors, genres, and events impinging upon Graeme Fergusson in this moment, but it also carries the weight of the perplexity she faced while deliberating upon her choices. It also represents a culturally and temporally specific form of “not knowing”: an intelligent woman of excellent education but precarious means contemplates marriage to a man of mixed and as yet unknown character. This was a courtship conundrum played and replayed in many novels or plays she might have read or heard about, or even seen friends or relations experience, but now the choice was her own, and she chose to marry her gentleman in the year 1772.

Hence, truncating the dataset’s temporal scope should help restore some of the bewilderment, as well as urgency, of women choosing among alternative genres to read, write, or publish in this year, whether they were responding to new events or contributing to established genres. In this respect, it seemed important to treat the range of genres open to writers and printers at this time as a live set of choices rather than a fixed typology. Perplexity helps make visible the implicit choices, or at least channels and affordances, provided by the genre-system at a particular moment. In this way, viewing the documented generic range of this moment as
perplexity, as something not-yet-known when a text was first written or read, seemed key to understanding the social, institutional, and temporal significance of the texts in the 1771 inventory and dataset as some form of “historical present.” It helps suspend the teleological impulse or retrospective re-structuring latent in any historical account.

Instead, an “historical present” reacquaints us with the notion of “path dependence,” and portrays historical actors immersed in an imperfectly known, undecided present whose consequences may or may not be felt along the way. Generic perplexity, decision-making, action, linguistic or otherwise: all these puzzles of thought or action help produce the temporalization and dispersion of “useful knowledge,” which may or may not be acted upon, felt, or recognized for some time to come. It is this constitutive, and acknowledged, incompleteness of the present that allows it to accommodate multiple chronologies, diverse genres of recovery, scattered geographic locations, and plenty of simultaneous acts of counter-representation.

The 1771 dataset should help provide readers with some concrete sense of the choices faced and perplexities resolved by women writers attempting to publish their texts in these specific places and time, along with the rather different concerns of female printers. As with this year’s periodicals and collections, the single year approach reveals multiple paths towards an unfinished present. By pursuing a geotemporally focused, though “structural and process-based account,” a feminist, single year literary and cultural history of Britain and British America can be detached from, and productively compared with, the triumphalist accounts of established traditions and individual talents, to be narrated from a different, and telling, perspective.\textsuperscript{132}
Appendix 1: On the choice of year and cities

The framework for this DH project came from my monograph in progress, which is a literary and cultural history of this year as it unfolded in four cities (Kingston was omitted from the DH project because of the lack of ESTC evidence from this year). After deciding to narrow the analytic scope down to a single year and three cities, the next consequential choice was that of the specific year, since it effectively determined the project’s historical orientation within the established scholarly field of the “long eighteenth century.”

I should also note that while the “long eighteenth century” on its face designates a chronological span of time, it serves in fact as a geotemporal and political marker. As a periodization, the “long eighteenth century” simply overwrites Scottish, Irish, and other colonial or indigenous timelines within English dynastic and political continuity, even where that continuity is demonstrably disrupted and rebuilt. It is an expression of hegemony and power. Narrowing the “period” to a single year, then, helped suspend the usual teleologies of nation and reopened the question of geographic span beyond the national story.

I therefore chose the target year not for its status as an anniversary, benchmark, or dynastic transition, but instead as an arbitrary year designed to counter teleology and show the temporal flux and complexity arising in an under-discussed moment in the century’s longer arc. This way I could assess the significance of the year’s interplay of writing, events, and actors across domains, honoring “path dependence” rather than teleology, and without preemptively settling upon some familiar event or date as destination or organizing principle (e.g., 1660, 1688, 1776, 1789, etc.).

Furthermore, to counter the usual default narratives of national formation for this apparently “empty year,” I also selected London, Edinburgh, and Philadelphia for the geographic focus. This was based on these cities’ regional and cultural centrality in established scholarly narratives and periodizations. Each city played important roles in eighteenth-century national or imperial development, in intellectual history, in the history of immigration and emigration between Britain and British America, and specifically in this era’s circuits of the transnational book trade. These factors helped make the differences among the cities qualitative as well as quantitative: London, the expansive metropolitan center of finance, trade, commerce, shipping and all other forms of business, including publishing, and one of the most powerful engines of imperial power in the West. Edinburgh, at that time Scotland’s largest city and one of its legal, cultural, and
political centers. Philadelphia, one of the largest North American port cities, international hub of commerce and point of entry for immigration into North America. The choice of cities, like our treatment of authorship, was therefore structured as an inquiry into a range of city sizes and types.

Appendix 2: Overview of results

We began by cleaning our ESTC-provided raw data, assigning gender to authors and printers, formulating our categories and genres, and constructing print environments for each city. This process transformed the initial 2034-plus raw catalogue records into a working dataset sorting items into 10 categories and 100+ genres distributed across three cities. Out of that total, London (or texts printed in London and Edinburgh) offered 44 texts in eight categories and 13 genres by named women (texts whose authors were unknown or unnamed are discussed below, under the NKA label). If we include named women collaborating in the production of books as authors or printers, we end up with something like 48 female-authored texts, along with eight women printers, printed in London. If we similarly count anonymous participation in Edinburgh (or texts printed in both London and Edinburgh), we end up with 21 texts by 19 women in two genres, legal pleadings (20) and didactic and devotional texts (1). Philadelphia records one named woman author, genre, and text: a working-class woman’s conversion narrative.

Appendix 3: A note on counting ESTC records, cross sectional analysis, and the limits of bibliometrics

The bibliometric challenges of counting records in the ESTC have dictated that we have taken a cross sectional approach to genre. “Cross sectional” means here that we are concerned with recurring types of texts and their comparative prevalence rather than precise numbers. When looking at our numerical results, it is important to keep in mind that the ESTC’s organization, because of its origins and cumulative history as a union catalogue, makes its basic unit the “record,” which applies indifferently to books, pamphlets, a run of periodicals, broadsides, or printed tables of weights and measures. As Hugh Amory similarly noted of the NAIP, (another union catalogue): “Entries (i.e., records) cannot be equated with books, since a single book may have more than one record, and a single record may cover more than one book; and any consistent treatment of books and ephemera is impractical, given the haphazard formation of the library collections on which NAIP is based.” We have therefore treated the basic unit of our study the ESTC “record,” which as Stephen Karian explains, is “a unit created by the...
ESTC and having no meaning outside the ESTC,“ because “the ESTC does not rely in a consistent manner on [terms like edition, issue, or title] for its unit of classification,” 140

In other words, our numerical analyses, coming from such varied, un-standardized, or inconsistent sources, cannot be used to weigh causality, but can help direct attention towards the relevant existing qualitative (cultural, historical, literary, and bibliographic) scholarship regarding those textual types, producers and potential audiences. 141 Our decision reflects the field’s increasing recognition of the bibliographic gaps and limitations of the ESTC’s data. Hence, we use our results primarily to introduce and build new questions into the legacy data structures of the ESTC regarding the generic participation of women at that time and in those places. 142

1 Montagu to Kames, 3/10/1771, in Lord Henry Home Kames, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of ... Henry Home of Kames [by A.F. Tytler], ed. Alexander Fraser Tytler (lord Woodhouselee.), vol. 2; 2 vols. (Printed for William Creech, 1807), 93.
2 1771 Team Contributions: David Mazella, Principal Investigator: writing, data management, visualizations; Claude Willan, DRC Director: digital methods, writing, data management, visualizations; Elizabeth Irvin-Stravoski, DRC Project Manager and data management; David Bishop, Walter Barta, Max James, 1771 data team: data collection and cleaning, visualizations, writing; Reid Boehm, Rohit Kumar, Keith Komos: visualizations.
See the important reflections of Susan Staves regarding the aesthetic judgment of the historicist feminist critic, and her disagreements with Sharon Harris about literary genres, in *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660–1789* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2, and Sharon M. Harris, *American Women Writers to 1800* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1996).


The initial choices seen here (focusing upon a single year in three Anglophone cities, studying their discrete and combined genre systems and reading environments) are modeled upon a number of other single-year studies. See Hans Gumbrecht and James Chandler’s studies of 1926 and 1816, respectively. See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In 1926: Living on the Edge of Time* (Harvard University Press, 1998) and James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (University Of Chicago Press, 1999). These are perhaps the best-known examples in English of what Chandler terms “annualized” histories (76), but see also Maureen N. McLane, “Dating Orality, Thinking Balladry: Of Milkmaids and Minstrels in 1771,” *The Eighteenth Century* 47, no. 2 (2006): 131–49, which is focused primarily on the Scottish contexts of this year’s productions. For more information about this project’s choice of year and cities, which are derived from David Mazella’s monograph in progress on this year, see this essay’s Appendix 1.


The “historical present” is our working concept for a chronologically delimited, synchronic dimension of simultaneous texts, events, genres etc. impinging on cultural production at a particular moment. It is derived from Gumbrecht’s “historical simultaneity,” (xii) and its discussion in Michael North, “Virtual Histories: The Year as Literary Period,” *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2001): 407–24.

11 The 1771 DH team included: David Mazella, Claude Willan, Elizabeth Irvin-Stravoski, David Bishop, Walter Barta, Max James, Reid Boehm, Rohit Kumar, Keith Komos. More specific contributions will be noted in the footnotes and at the end.

12 See Appendix 2 for an overview and initial breakdown of results.

13 The abstracting concept of the “print environment,” especially in relation to women writers, printers, and readers at multiple times and places, deserves all the evidentiary cautions described by Hayes regarding the fragmentary nature of signatures, wills, inventories, letters, diaries and memoirs etc. for the history of reading in *Bookshelf*, 1-27. Nevertheless, an explicitly microhistorical framework and explicit attention to the role of genre as responsive to extant social groupings and divisions (which Hayes, reconstructing the “colonial woman” as a unitary category of reader, does not do), should address this issue more effectively. For a critique of Hayes along these lines, see, for example, Susan Stabile’s review of *A Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, by Kevin J. Hayes, *South Central Review* 15, no. 2 (1998): 61–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/3190332.

Distance,” New Literary History 34, no. 2 (2003): 211–29. Feminist historians like Davidson (see above), Natalie Zemon Davis and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich have all produced their own versions of microhistory, but their focus was rather different from the one here. For a trenchant critique of “circulation” (in relation to global histories) see John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian*,” Past & Present 242, no. Supplement_14 (November 1, 2019): 1–22, esp. 5-10, https://doi.org/10.1093/pasti/gtz046. I am indebted to Claude Willan for emphasizing the inferential nature of microhistories and their importance to this kind of analysis.


17 For an argument along similar lines for the fiction/history divide in eighteenth-century women’s writing and genres, see Devoney Looser, British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820 (JHU Press, 2005), 1-27, esp. 21-27.


19 Frow insists that genre, far from being a mere literary or “stylistic device,” is indispensable for creating “effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility, which are central to the different ways the world is understood in the writing of history or of philosophy or of science, or in painting, or in everyday talk,” Genre, 4.


21 Frow, Genre, 2.

22 Rachel Scarborough King’s fine new essay on genre arrived too late for me to fully integrate into this study, but it seems to be fully aligned with the kind of analysis offered here. See, for example, “Demonstrating the work of genre . . . can specify transitions and trends often nebulously summed up as “emergence,” “development,” or “rise,” In “The Scale of Genre,” New Literary History 52, no. 2 (2021): 280, https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2021.0012.

23 This notion of the interventional and responsive nature of genre in the real time of events is inspired by Edward Said’s discussion of “occasional writing,” in “Swift’s Tory Anarchy,” in The World, the Text, and the Critic, 1983, 57-8.


26 For a similarly constructed cohort study organized around a single year, see Allen Riddell and Troy Bassett, “The Class of 1838: A Social History of the First Victorian Novelists,” Mémoires Du Livre / Studies in Book Culture 11, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.7202/1070272ar. It is worth...
noting, however, that Riddell and Bassett’s study, in its revisions of Raymond Williams and Gaye Tuchman’s analyses of the Victorian novel, address a single genre without attending to geographic differences.


28 In this respect, we are pursuing some of the ideas of the reuse and “collectivity” of scholarly documentation offered by Paige Morgan in her blog post and related talks found here: http://blog.paigemorgan.net/articles/21/further-thoughts.html. Yet see also the pathbreaking analysis of Richard Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

29 For this quote and bibliometric argument for data transparency, see Makela et al., “Wrangling with Non-Standard Data,” 88.


34 The OED defines “perplexity” as the state, object, or situation wherein people find themselves unable “to decide what to think or how to act owing to the involved, intricate, or complicated condition of circumstances or of the matters to be dealt with, generally also involving mental perturbation or anxiety; (a state of) puzzlement, distraction, or bewilderment.”


36 Staves, “Terminus a quo,” 100-01.

37 Virginia Schilling at the Center for Bibliographic Studies & Research, UC-Riverside was extremely helpful in providing this export, which occurred 5/18/2018. We were also informed that the North American records held in other digitized collections were also included within the ESTC data we received.

38 “To parse” is literally “to analyze.” In this context, it means transforming unstructured into structured data. E.g., “In its simplest form, parsing data transforms unstructured and sometimes unreadable data into structured and easily readable data,” from Susanne Morris, “What Is Data Parsing?,” accessed August 9, 2021, https://coresignal.com/blog/what-is-data-parsing/. OpenRefine is an enhanced spreadsheet-like program that allows individual data records to be aggregated, compared and “cleaned” (or standardized) for further analysis. This phase was overseen by Claude Willan.

39 The visualizations of process in this section were collaboratively produced by DM and Reid Boehm.
Because most eighteenth-century title pages lacked full specification or information about the respective roles of printers, publishers, or booksellers on title pages, we have uniformly described those in book production as “printers,” since differing regional and business arrangements could dictate distinctions among “printers” and “publishers” and “booksellers,” but at other moments could allow the same individual or business to play multiple roles. A similar simplification occurred in our coding of locations as “belonging” to London, Edinburgh, or Philadelphia. We retained title page printer location metadata for future elaboration of this aspect of the project.

See Appendix 3 for more discussion of the bibliometric challenges produced by the ESTC. The fact that the ESTC in its earlier stages of aggregation assigned records both to individual, discrete texts as well as periodicals and collections meant that the varied contents of those recurring (periodicals) or compounded (collections) forms remained outside the scope of the present project. They will therefore be treated as single, unitary items as in the ESTC. It is worth noting, though, how large a share they take of the overall numbers of items. For this reason, we may pursue a more focused exploration of this category of collections within the 1771 dataset.

See, for example, C.M. Sperberg-Mcqueen, “Classification and Its Structures,” in A Companion to Digital Humanities, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 161–76.


Elizabeth Irvin-Stravoski oversaw much of the initial round of coding of authors and printers.


OpenRefine is an enhanced spreadsheet-like program that allows individual data records to be aggregated, compared and “cleaned” (or standardized) for analysis. In this case, we were able to isolate and compare authors’ first names; the multiple names and irregularities of printer IDs, however, meant we could only compare printer ID information item by item by hand count. Records with first names were checked by hand count and consultation with printed/online
authorities (see above) to ID gender, while those providing only first initials or surname only were
cross-checked against multiple authorities, and either IDed or placed into our NKA category.
48 “RBMS >> Committees >> Bibliographic Standards Committee,” accessed June 8, 2021,
49 For “path dependence,” see, for example, William H. Sewell, Jr, Logics of History: Social
Theory and Social Transformation (University of Chicago Press, 2009): “events are normally path
dependent, that is, that what has happened at an earlier point in time will affect the
possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time” (100-1).
50 Eviatar Zerubavel, “Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification,” Sociological
51 Contributors to these breakdown visualizations: Walter Barta, Claude Willan, Helen Mazella,
Rohit Kumar, Reid Boehm, Keith Komos
52 For the pivotal role of legal publishing for Edinburgh’s printers and booksellers, as well as the
Court of Sessions’ reliance on printed filings rather than oral testimony (as practiced in English
History of the Book in Scotland: Enlightenment and Expansion 1707-1800 v. 2 (Edinburgh
University Press, 2011), 2: 5, 15, 20; Ian Simpson Ross, Lord Kames and the Scotland of His Day
53 James Raven, Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England (Boydell & Brewer Ltd,
2014); and “London and the central sites of the English book trade,” in Michael F. Suarez and
Michael L. Turner, eds., The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, vol. 5 (Cambridge, UK ;
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 293-308.
54 London’s population in the early 1770s lay somewhere between 675,000 (for 1750) and 900,000
(1801). For our purposes, then, we have assumed a number just over 760,000 for the year. Figures
from E. A. Wrigley, “A Simple Model of London’s Importance in Changing English Society and
Economy 1650–1750,” Past and Present 37, no. 1 (1967): 44–70,
https://doi.org/10.1093/past/37.1.44.
55 For legal and religious publishing in London, see the essays by Isabel Rivers and Wilfrid Prest
in Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner, eds., The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain,
vol. 5 (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 579-600; 791-806.
56 P. J. Corfield, “Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain*,” History 72, no. 234
London Life In The Eighteenth Century, 1925,
http://archive.org/details/LondonLifeInTheEighteenthCentury. 159. This range is corroborated by
the relative quantities of instructional/reference texts per city, which seemed to track with the
known occupational ladder of each city.
57 Robert Allan Houston, Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800
(Longman, 2002), 150.
58 James Tierney, “Periodicals and the Trade 1695-1780,” in The Cambridge History of the Book in
Britain , .479–97, esp. 483-4.
59 Eve Tavor Bannet, Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810: Migrant
Fictions (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jennie Batchelor and Manushag N. Powell, eds.,
Women’s Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1690-1820s; Manushag N. Powell, Performing
Authorship in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals, Transits (Transits) (Lewisburg, PA:
Bucknell UP, 2012). For an example of what this might look like, see Jenny DiPlacidi, “The
Mighty Pie Chart and Generic Evolutions | The Lady’s Magazine (1770-1818): Understanding the
As mentioned earlier, an exclusive focus on women’s contributions to the novel in this year tacitly omits provincial and colonial writings in non-fictional or hybridized publications or scribally produced or disseminated genres. Yet these are precisely the types of writing that Brant, Staves, and Schellenberg, among others, have tried to incorporate into their own revisionist literary histories.

Because of the extremely low compensation for writers throughout the century, which would make it unlikely that anyone could survive solely on their earnings from writing, Orr defines “professional writer” as “professional in the sense that they are producing works meant to be sold and are earning money from their fiction writing.” Orr, *Novel Ventures*, 87-8. See also Schellenberg, *Professionalization*, 111-17, for the difficulties of managing authorship, subscriptions, and publication residing anywhere but London.

Ezell, Schellenberg, Staves, Brant, and most recently Orr have noted the limits of novel-centric or more generally evolutionary and unilinear feminist literary histories, and have argued instead for a multi-generic, or sub-generically, organized approach to feminist literary history. This shift has been mirrored by, e.g., Hunter’s *Before Novels* and comprehensive collections like Garside/O’Brien’s volume. A similarly anti-evolutionary approach can be found in J. A. J. Downie, *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford University Press, 2016). One way to recognize this difference is to compare the critical impact of J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England: 1770-1800* (University of Nebraska Press, 1967), with the numerous feminist revisions of Ian Watt. Tompkins highlights the novel’s subgenres rather than its most familiar authors, while Watt reverses Tompkins’s priorities. Apart from Burney (who at 19 in the target year had already begun her journal and composed her first unpublished novel), the women novelists of the 1770s get relatively scant attention outside the recent work of Binhammer and Green.


For the shading of women’s genres or subgenres across the domains of fact and fiction, see especially Brant, “‘Variettes,’” 294-7, a feature that also helps to explain the absent, vague, contradictory, or inconsistent practices of attribution and generic nomenclature in eighteenth-century novels’ title-pages noted by Orr and Raven. See also Nicola J. Watson, “Epistolary Fiction,” in *English and British Fiction, 1750-1820*, ed. Peter Garside and Karen O’Brien, The Oxford History of the Novel in English 2 (Oxford, United Kingdom; Oxford University Press, 2015), 370–84.


For an interesting discussion of the Minifie sisters (one of whom became Mrs Gunning) and their joint and solo productions, see Schellenberg, *Professionalization*, 126-45.

peculiarly female distresses and appeals to the public for sympathy or aid” (608), but the difficulty of distinguishing largely fictional from largely autobiographical narratives of distress meant the boundaries would always remain difficult to establish.

68 [Anne Wall], The Life of Lamenther: A True History. Written by Herself. In Five Parts. Containing a Just Account of the Many Misfortunes She Underwent, Occasioned by the Ill Treatment of an Unnatural Father (London: printed for the proprietor, 1771), 4.

69 Du Bois’s father, the sixth Earl of Anglesey, had also disinherited and kidnapped his nephew James to serve as an indentured servant in Jamaica, a story that had been fictionalized by Haywood in Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman (1743) and Tobias Smollett’s Peregrine Pickle (1751), though most famously by Robert Louis Stevenson in Kidnapped (1886). Cf. ODNB entry, “Du Bois [née Annesley], Lady Dorothea (1728–1774),” as well as her entry in DBAWW.


71 Breashears plausibly claims that the whore’s biography and the appeal memoir stand as genre and counter-genre to one another in some kind of relation of negation and inversion), but genuine scandal or tendentious self-vindication seem equally plausible judgments for some of these narratives. “Female Appeal,” 608.


73 For Gessner’s popularity, beginning with the Collyer translation, see Bertha Reed, The Influence of Solomon Gessner Upon English Literature (Americana Germanica Press, 1905). Eve Tavor Bannet describes Talbot and the others’ work on behalf of Collyer in “The Bluestocking Sisters: Women’s Patronage, Millenium Hall, and ‘The Visible Providence of a Country,’” Eighteenth-Century Life 30, no. 1 (2006): 47. Gessner’s popularity seems intertwined with the religious genre of poetic paraphrase of biblical episodes that Backscheider has identified with Rowe and others. See Paula R. Backscheider, Eighteenth-Century Women Poets, 157-67. Hayes notes that Gessner’s text was one of the most widely read German texts in early America, Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf, 9.

74 Mary Latter, Pro & Con; or, the Opinionists: An Ancient Fragment. Published for the Amusement of the Curious in Antiquity. By Mrs. Latter. (London, 1771), ii-iii.

75 See Backscheider, Eighteenth-Century Women Poets, 299-315.


Sarah Prescott, “Anglophone Welsh Women’s Poetry 1750–84: Jane Cave and Anne Penny,” in The History of British Women’s Writing, 1750–1830, ed. Jacqueline M. Labbe, The History of British Women’s Writing (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 102–24, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230297012_6. Prescott argues that Welsh strains of predestinarian Methodism (Cave) and antiquarian researches (Penny) mark these two women’s poetry. Cave had in fact included an elegy on Whitefield’s death in her her Poems on Various Subjects (1783) that suggested some familiarity with Wheatley: “There [in America], like an Herald for the bleeding Lamb,/[Whitefield] went, and did the Negroes souls inflame/Shew’d Ethiopians their Redeemer nigh/To cleanse their spotted souls from deepest dye.”


Cf. ODNB entry, “Pye [née Mendez, other married name Campbell], Jael Henrietta (1737?–1782), writer.”


These groupings and their relative quantities roughly follow those found in Stanton’s statistical study of 913 women writers between 1660-1800. See Judith Phillips Stanton, “Statistical Profile of Women Writing in English from 1660 to 1800,” in Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts, ed. Frederick M. Keener and Michael L. Turner, Contributions in Women’s Studies, Number 98. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 247–54, esp. 250-1. Stanton’s pioneering work, done without the benefits of the digital databases, catalogs, and metadata currently available to scholars now. Even without the benefit of geographic or year by year comparisons (it is organized by decades), it is groundbreaking piece of research for its scope and comprehensiveness.


All information here taken and synthesized from Plomer, BBTI, WPHP, VIAF, WorldCat Identities, Exeter Working Papers in Book History, and Timperley.

William St. Clair has an ingenious theory that the prevalence of widows and daughters in the pre-1774, cartelized English publishing industry reflected their attractiveness as inheritors of guild-controlled intellectual property rights. Yet the rather small size and religious orientation of most of these women printers’ businesses makes it unclear that such factors were important to
their rather niche-like success, or whether their numbers really did see a decline. See The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 96.


90 See, for example, Pamela Ann Perkins, Women Writers and the Edinburgh Enlightenment, Scottish Cultural Review of Language and Literature; Volume 15. (Amsterdam ; Rodopi, 2010), 13-53.


93 “Illiteracy was much more prevalent among male servants and journeymen—employees—than among independent merchants and artisans,” Houston, “Literacy,” 375.


95 For the Douglas Cause, see Ian Simpson Ross, Lord Kames, 35-40.


98 Jean Steuart, Meditations upon Several Texts of Scripture: By the Late Mrs Jean Steuart (London: printed for G. Keith, and E. and C. Dilly. And sold by A. Kincaid and J. Bell; J. Dickson, and the other booksellers, Edinburgh, 1771), vi.

99 Steuart, 478. Also: to move with a gait somewhere between walking and crawling. For hirple definition, see https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hirple#Scots.

100 Steuart, 486.

101 Alison Cockburn, Letters and Memoir of Her Own Life, ed. Thomas Craig-Brown and Robert Douglas (David Douglas, 1900), 5. This was written on 10 May 1784, and published posthumously in 1900. Cockburn was perhaps best known in her long lifetime as the composer of the song, “Flowers of the Forest,” but her correspondence is a joy to read and indispensable for understanding the intellectual social circles of Edinburgh between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.


104 See Hein and Schubert: “Port and city actors had to create local institutional, legal, and organizational frameworks in order to facilitate global trade, and specifically to transship growing flows of goods between sea and land. Over time, port city actors have used a range of governance structures—whether private or public; elected or nominated; democratically legitimized, appointed, or deployed—to adapt to local needs—specific urban forms, political, economic, or social conditions” in Carola Hein and Dirk Schubert, “Resilience and Path Dependence: A Comparative Study of the Port Cities of London, Hamburg, and Philadelphia,” Journal of Urban History, June 11, 2020, 0096144220925098, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144220925098, 2.
Sharon V. Salinger et al., “Notes and Documents: A Note on the Population of Pre-


Cf. Salinger et al., “Notes,” 382, Table 5.


For Fergusson, see Anne M. Ousterhout, The Most Learned Woman in America: A Life of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (Penn State Press, 2004) and David S. Shields, Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America (UNC Press Books, 1997), 99-140.


Hoskens, 4.

Hoskens, 24.

Hoskens, 31.


Staves, Literary History, 4-5; Schellenberg, Professionalization, 167-85.

Cohen, “Narratology,” 60.


For these exchanges, and Montagu and her circle’s embrace of Ossianic poetry (apart from its claims to historical authenticity), see JoEllen M. DeLucia, “‘Far Other Times Are These’: The Bluestockings in the Time of Ossian,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 27, no. 1 (2008): 39–62; Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries,* 77–81. Even Montagu’s phrase, the “tale of other times” is taken from *Fingal,* in the “War of Caros” when the ghostly king Trenmor appears: “Many were [Trenmor’s] words to Oscar: but they only came by halves to our ears: they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light of the song arose. He slowly vanished, like a mist that melts on the sunny hill.” [emphasis mine] See JoEllen M. DeLucia, “‘Tales of Other Times’: Scotland’s Past and Women’s Future in Eighteenth-Century British Writing” (Ph.D., United States -- Indiana, Indiana University, 2007), 84. DeLucia, like McLane and myself, makes use of Chandler’s argument about Scottish Enlightenment theories of history, but to rather different ends than I am taking them.


Elizabth Robinson Montagu, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear,* 2nd ed. (London, 1770), 12. In another passage of the Essay, Montagu extends her contrast of history and poetry: “The Poet collects, as it were, into a focus those truths, which lie scattered in the diffuse volumes of the Historian, and kindles the flame of virtue, while he shews the miseries and calamities of vice” (57). In other words, Poetry collects and focuses the truths that History merely collects into its volumes. She asserts the generic difference between Poetry and History’s respective “uses” that Kames would erase.

See, for example, Norma Clarke, *Dr. Johnson’s Women* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2003).


Nonetheless, as one of this essay’s reviewers reminded me, the ESTC, with its origins and provenance in the British Library’s collections, remains an artifact of metropolitan, Anglocentric scholarship that requires considerable work to be elaborated and adapted to other ends.
Gumbrecht’s *In 1926* similarly frames his choice of year as arbitrary and therefore open to definition, while allowing that there might have been some family history that drove him to select what seemed at the time to be a “random” date. North, who has written his own single-year book, discusses the importance of arbitrariness in the chosen date in Gumbrecht and Kittler in “Virtual Histories.”

For “path dependence,” see, for example, William H. Sewell, Jr, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University of Chicago Press, 2009): “events are normally path dependent, that is, that what has happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time” (100-1).

The city of Edinburgh’s importance for metanarratives of the European Enlightenment dates back to the movement’s earliest historiography, which Silvia Sebastiani surveys to explore Enlightenment discourses of race and gender through figures like Kames. See Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (Springer, 2013), 1-21. For an impressive treatment of Edinburgh’s role diffusing Enlightenment through the transnational book trade, see also Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, esp. 115-16. For Philadelphia’s role in diffusing Enlightenment, see also Sher, 503-40.

Since typically the only evidence for women’s authorship or printing was a surname on the title page, with either a first name or initial, these figures summarize named authors and printers unless other evidence is available. Anonymous and corporate authors and printers have been placed in a different category, “Not Known/Applicable” or NKA.

See, for example, this definition: “A *cross-sectional* study is one that takes place at a single point in time. In effect, we are taking a ‘slice’ or cross-section of whatever it is we’re observing or measuring.” William Trochim, “Time in Research,” Conjoint.ly, accessed August 31, 2021, [https://conjointly.com/kb/time-in-research/](https://conjointly.com/kb/time-in-research/). I am indebted to Claude Willan for linking the single year approach to cross-sectional analysis.


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