“The Poet and Publisher at Variance!”:
Comic Representations of Literary Professionals in Eighteenth-Century Fiction and Drama

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the fictionalization of the eighteenth-century literary marketplace, which is consistently presented through the lens of comedy in the imaginative literature of the period. Illuminating the surprising degree of variation among representations of literary professionals in conversation, my analysis of texts like Henry Fielding’s The Author’s Farce and Tobias Smollett’s The Expedition of Humphry Clinker underlines how seemingly programmatic scenes of the author-character’s oppression by the bookseller-character are complicated and subverted by comedy. I posit that readers are encouraged to construct a paradigm of Literary Professionalism against the unprofessionalism—as well as glimpses of professionalism—among the characters involved in the literary marketplace. Both the conflict and concord among characters accentuate a set of professional standards graspable to individual readers sensitive to the nuances of comedy and power in these negotiations. A lively and persuasive argument for print is ultimately made through the interactive nature of the comedy in these works.
Chapter One examines the conditions of eighteenth-century literary marketplace, surveying developments in professional writing and publishing. I also present an overview of the period’s debate about commercial authorship and introduce the literary stereotypes of the author and the bookseller. In the middle chapters of the dissertation I use outcome power, the ability to affect outcomes, to group and separate the fictional dialogues between literary professionals that appear in eighteenth-century fiction and drama. Chapter Two discusses scenes in which oppressive and exploitative bookseller-characters possess outcome power while Chapter Three analyzes works from the period in which a balance of power is achieved, power being shared in relationships in which neither the author-character nor the bookseller-character fully achieves his goals. In Chapter Four, writer-characters school the fictional booksellers, achieving outcome power as they undermine the perceived authority of their publishers and establish intellectual or ethical superiority. The final chapter is a focused reading of The Adventures of an Author, which contains multiple representations of literary professionals in different kinds of narrative encounters.
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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Eighteenth-Century Literary Professionals

Here lies poor Ned Purdon, from misery freed,
Who was long a bookseller’s hack;
He led such a damnable life in this world,
I don’t think he’ll wish to come back.

-Oliver Goldsmith, “Epitaph on Edward Purdon” (1767)

The eighteenth-century literary marketplace negotiated by Oliver Goldsmith—poet, playwright, novelist, historian, and man-of-all-literary-work—presented challenges that felled authors less adaptable and resilient than himself, including the Irish hack writer Edward Purdon, the subject of the darkly comic epigraph which prefaces this first chapter.1 “Poor” Purdon, as he is concisely sketched by his friend and mentor, was essentially an indentured slave to a bookseller, a business arrangement that merely secured Ned survival, a “damnable life” from which he was “freed.” The relationship between this author and bookseller, as beheld by Goldsmith, seems to evidence a power imbalance conclusively tipped in favour of the bookseller, the forces of commerce marshaled against the author. This particular literary agent has made his dependent’s life such that the hack would prefer death to a miserable earthly existence.2 The worn-out Purdon is a symbol of exploited, powerless authors, a tool for Goldsmith’s authorial polemics, which centre on “the problem…that the republic of letters is also a realm of commerce” (Harkin 327). The dynamic between Ned and his employer fits easily into the

1 I use the term “literary marketplace” as George Justice does, to denote “both the physical locations for printing, selling, and reading printed matter and, in the sense that the phrase is used today, to describe a system of procedures through which human agents understand the transactions and customs regulating the publication of what is known as ‘intellectual property’” (16).

2 The Gentleman’s Magazine reported: “Died on March 27, 1767, Mr. Purdon, suddenly, in Smithfield, famous for his literary abilities” (453).
rhetorically useful binary of oppressed author/oppressive bookseller, seen in the non-fiction prose of James Ralph and some visual representations of the book trade. Yet elsewhere in eighteenth-century literature, the application of this binary would be a misleading distillation of complex power relations into a static image. Comedy can put pressure on this binary, however. Goldsmith’s hyperbolic language nearly moves the condensed tragedy of Ned Purdon in the realm of bathos, where comedy and tragedy intersect. Ned’s situation, as Goldsmith reports it, is difficult to read in isolation from the mock-seriousness of explicitly fictional depictions of literary professionals. Like the historical Ned Purdon, Scroggen, the imagined subject of Goldsmith’s “Description of an Author’s Bed-Chamber” (published in the Public Ledger on 2 May 1760) is a down-at-heels scribbler, discovered by the “Muse” in pitiable lodgings (6). Remarks about the poet-character’s solitude and physical discomfort—he is cold and hungry—are joined by the comic observation that Scroggen, liable to be arrested for debt, roguishly dwells “from bailiffs snug” (5). His appearance, which suggests his social isolation, poverty, and obscurity, also renders Scroggen clownish: “A nightcap deck’d his brows instead of bay/ A cap by night—a stocking all the day!” (19-20). A crown of laurels (symbolizing artistic excellence) and a nightcap (representing material want) are mutually exclusive: both cannot be worn simultaneously. Literary lives like Scroggren’s are portrayed equivocally in Goldsmith’s time, blending the lamentable, blamable, and ridiculous as the professional writer “fashions an existence from the pressures and demands of the trade” (Flint 38). Goldsmith’s humorous depiction of the literary marketplace disempowering authors brings me to the three central concerns of this dissertation: comedy, power—in modernity, “the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable” (Foucault, History 93)—and representation, which Stuart Hall identifies as “one of the central practices which produces culture” (1).
In recent years, literary critics have seized on Samuel Johnson’s conception of his own time as an “Age of Authors,” a period in which authors took up more space in British society than ever before. The phenomenon of commercial authorship specifically became an urgent topic of discussion in the public sphere as some of London’s writers began to think of themselves as a new class within the metropolis: authors by profession. Moreover, in works of prose fiction and drama from this century, “authorship was widely thematized,” concerns about authorial identification almost pathologically reflected and amplified (Griffin, “Professional Author” 135). A few cultural commentators looked back with nostalgia to a time of patronage and more conservative models of authorship, Alvin Kernan observing that “the old image of the gentleman-poet died hard” (81). Many eighteenth-century writers, however, fixated on the “modern author,” as well as the “modern bookseller”—both products of economic and legal change, and fundamental ideological shifts, however uneven. George Justice, examining Pope’s “Epistle to Arbuthnot” and Johnson’s Life of Savage in relation to the rise of literary biography, notes that as the eighteenth century wore on, “writing became about itself” (or at least more so than it had ever been) and metafictionality seeped into many forms and genres of imaginative literature. The published book became about publishing books, professional authors highlighting, rather than obscuring, their participation in the circuit of print. As Christopher Flint observes, “Eighteenth-century literature, in fact, devotes a striking amount of attention to the relation between writing and publishing. Authors often detail their encounters with printers, booksellers, and readers both in the paratext they add to works and in their narrative content” (78). Notwithstanding their variety, these marketplace encounters, as revealed by a comprehensive survey of the fiction and drama published between 1690 and 1790, are noticeably uniform in

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3 According to Dustin Griffin, “there was no rapid or complete changeover during the century from an aristocratic culture to a commercial culture, no sudden change from a patronage economy to a literary marketplace” (“Literary Patronage” 10).
terms of genre and gender: they are almost all comic—serious portraits of writers being limited to non-fiction authorial polemics—and their principal actors, reader-characters excepted, are almost all men.4

These putative literary professionals—to use an umbrella term that includes commercial authors and bookseller-publishers, those intellectually involved in the book trade—appear again and again as comic figures in the cultural imagination.5 I am most interested in how they interact: communicating and miscommunicating, arguing and agreeing, negotiating, evaluating and otherwise exerting power over each other. I will focus on these comic encounters in the fiction and drama of the eighteenth century—rather than the biographies, autobiographies, letters, and memoirs that also say much about how literary professionals viewed themselves and each other. Nonetheless, I will situate my primary texts in their historical and literary contexts, working on the same assumption as Dustin Griffin who, in undertaking a “a responsibly contextualist study of literary patronage in the late eighteenth century” (Literary Patronage 3) argues “that to consider literary texts and writers apart from the complex system of sponsorship, financing, production, and distribution, is arbitrarily and myopically to abstract literature from its living cultural context, and to misconceive its full meaning for its original audiences” (Literary Patronage 1). Geographically speaking, I focus on literary professionals in the imagined “Londons” of the eighteenth-century literary imagination as most bookseller-characters and author-characters are situated in the metropolis, the hub of Britain’s publishing industry; they are often located quite specifically, working and living in St. Paul’s Churchyard, Paternoster-Row—“the engine-room of the literature industry of the second half of the eighteenth century” (Raven

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4 Nonetheless, some eighteenth-century women authors sought male acquaintances to negotiate with booksellers on their behalf. Mary Helen McMurran, for example, points out that Charlotte Lennox “applied to Samuel Richardson as a friend and as a printer to act as an intermediary with the booksellers” (65).

5 My discussion, however, will mainly be about professional authors and their bookseller-publishers.
43)—and other spots known for their high concentration of literary professionals and book trade activity. When details about the historical author’s participation in the print market are relevant to my discussion or inscribed into the texts examined in this dissertation, I will remark upon them, but for the most part, I will include a minimal amount of biographical material. I am not interested in writing a history of writers as they operated within the book trade, but a selective, yet representative, history of writer-characters as they engage with publisher-characters and by extension, how historical authors communicate with their readers vis-à-vis these characters; “books,” Christopher Flint notes, “frequently reveal the interrelatedness of writers, publishers, and readers” (41). Comedy is the medium of this communication, shared evaluative laughter becoming a powerful tool of ideological and social cohesion. While this expansive project is concerned with “historicity” and deeply informed by eighteenth-century book history and print culture, readings of activity among literary literary professionals (embedded in imaginative texts) are at the centre of this dissertation, pursued in lieu of constructing detailed historical portraits of real life literary professionals.

Like other literary scholars invested in exploring the relationship between eighteenth-century print culture and its productions, I am attracted to “how the marketplace speaks through Literature” (6) and, as Deidre Shauna Lynch articulates it, how characters are “tools” in the commercial world of letters, used by writers to forge relationships with their readers within “the impersonal space of the marketplace” (15). My own project is also concerned with the ability of eighteenth-century comedy to simultaneously critique and celebrate print’s potential, authors creatively intervening in cultural conceptions of authorship and the book as it is engendered and realized by print. Concurring with D.F. McKenzie, who stresses the necessity of examining “authorial intention,” I investigate how authors use comedy to illuminate the power dynamics inimical to Literary Professionalism, an ideal most often defined negatively through scenes of
unprofessionalism or amateurism. Though some of the scenes I scrutinize seem digressive or inconclusive, sometimes neither plot nor character moving forward, Michel Foucault would remind us that power relations are productive by definition and by nature: “they have a directly productive role, wherever they come into play” (History 94). Comedy, I propose, is the key to understanding the shifting power relations between authors, booksellers, and readers in this period and the key to determining what they “produce” both inside and outside the text. In the works and scenes I will investigate in the following chapters of this dissertation, the role of comedy is tripartite. Two basic types of comedy operate in/through these texts: internal comedy, which is created within the storyworld of the text (i.e. the characters in the narrative laugh) and external comedy, which is created by the actual author for his audience (i.e. readers laugh at the characters). Comedy underlines varieties of power among literary professionals who wield both material and immaterial powers and helps diagnose ideological issues within the commercial world of letters. Through comic interactions between author-characters and bookseller-characters, the paradigmatic Literary Professional’s qualities can be identified, professionalism constructed against—or by contrast with—the attitudes and procedures of the fictionalized book trade. Readers, in being encouraged to actively respond to these exchanges and pass judgement not only on the text in their hands but the intradiagetic text as well, are motivated to think of themselves as collaborative participants in professionalism and even gate keepers of print. The collusion between individual readers and the historical author obscures, though not completely, the productive interactions which are required to publish an independent author’s works and, indeed, to label the author as “professional.”

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6 McKenzie elaborates that it is fruitful “to establish with analytical rigour the motives which constituted authorial intention, or the historical contexts of printing house and market which affected the formal mediation of that intention” (206).
Though eighteenth-century fiction and drama abounds with author-characters, successful professional authors—talented paid writers who are respected and fairly recompensed for their merit in the literary marketplace—are all but invisible. Yet the historical author, whose work was published and consumed by the eighteenth-century reading public, presumably engaged in successful negotiations with his publisher (successful in the sense that they resulted in publication). Nonetheless, in the works of imaginative literature examined in this dissertation, a case is made for the professional author—despite continuing, but manageable, anxieties about commerce’s influence. These texts demonstrate an important social function of fiction: projecting roles and relationships, both public and private, as they ought to be by showing the problems with these roles and relationships as they are magnified by comedy. Arguably, these works prescribe, though neither directly nor consistently, an ideal professional relationship between Literary Professionals, which is, perversely, not in the historical author’s interests to represent openly.7

Extreme situations (arguments, violence, misunderstanding), overdramatic language, exaggerated characters or caricatures are the norm as literary practices and conventions—specifically comic practices and conventions—within the works analyzed in subsequent chapters. Though comedy, with its stock characters and programmatic interactions, is known for simplifying rather than complicating, it can also accommodate variety through extremes. Within the comic theory of incongruity, there is an argument that humour involves finding “the inappropriate within the appropriate” (Monro 364). I would argue instead that comic scenes involving literary professionals find the appropriate within the inappropriate. In other words, these interactions, many of them unprofessional, inversely construct the paradigmatic literary

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7 “Literary Professional” is capitalized to indicate that I am referring to paradigmatic figures, abstractions rather than embodiments. I do the same with the term “Professional Author.”
professional, particularly the Professional Author. Clifford Siskin, in his persuasive treatment of the emergence of the authorial professional, at one point extends his discussion beyond “professional” as a noun: “the very word professional—as an adjective describing a specific set of behaviours—first appeared at the turn into the nineteenth century, a moment also marked lexically by the debut of terms of difference such as amateur” (21). There are only hints of the professional in the interactions that I have been describing—moments and instances, rather than sustained examples. It is more common for these scenes to gravitate towards interpersonal extremes such as alienation, intimacy, and dependence. The author-bookseller relationships in these works are often tense and largely unstable, the product of unsettled conditions within the literary marketplace; within a single work, if not a single scene, the interests of booksellers may converge and diverge, power in these texts being a process rather than a fixed force. It is more productive, however, to speak of “powers” than “power,” the singular form suggesting that one agent possesses power, rendering the other powerless. Moreover, the types of power that these characters possess are various in type, source and efficacy and to discuss them with precision I keep in mind Foucault’s sophisticated articulation of power:

Power relations are exercised, to an exceedingly important extent, through the production and exchange of signs...Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action...What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions...it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult...Power is exercised only over ‘free’ subjects and only to the extent that they are free....Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social. (“Subject and Power” 338-41)

Some of the powers I refer to are reactionary, coming out of the pressures and opportunities of the print market, and include the power of creative opposition and the power of
material embodiment. Comedy highlights these powers that literary characters possess (or claim to possess) and wield, and can also undermine or affirm these figures as contributing to the improvement of the marketplace of letters. Distinct forms of power are revealed through humorous interactions, a process that can be related to Brenda Goldberg’s Foucaultian treatment of “humour’s capacity to define relations of social conflict, power, and pleasure” (60). Rather than being an anarchical force, stripping away, mocking, and reversing the real, comedy has the potential to order things, to help create a hierarchy of authorship (a rough cataloguing of types of authors) and even a spectrum of professionalization based on these forms of power at play in the author-character’s relationship with the bookseller-characters. Moreover, comedy is part of the consolidation of authorial power, namely the power of forged bonds between the author and the reader. Germene to this point about comedy’s rewards is John J. Richetti’s statement about humour as it operates in Fielding’s novels, specifically Joseph Andrews, and, he would suggest, eighteenth-century fiction at large. Abounding with “facetiously funny” scenes, Fielding’s text “offer[s] attentive readers temporary comic compensation and the satisfaction of moral and intellectual superiority” (125). Readers are given the opportunity to unite with the author in the Hobbesian laughter of superiority and evaluative understanding—of the humour within the text and of literary professionalism as it can be determined through comic author/bookseller exchanges. The contradiction is, of course, that ideal professional relations between author and bookseller, a key aspect of Professional Authorship, are not depicted in a sustained way in literary works that are invested in overturning unideal models of literary production. Yet as each chapter highlights a different power distribution between literary professionals, collectively the works of fiction and drama under my consideration reveal the complexities as well as the possibilities of Literary Professionalism. The close readings within each chapter are illuminated by not only book history, but theories of comedy and power, which together, contribute to a way
of examining comic scenes of literary literary professionals as reacting to and attempting to shape relations within the eighteenth-century print trade.

Authors on Authors: Non-Fiction Prose

Before I consider either the historical eighteenth-century book trade as it has been examined by recent scholars or as it was fictionalized by eighteenth-century authors in imaginative literature, I will first consider how the period’s non-fiction writers discussed authors (themselves, other writers, and the “Author” as a public figure). Circulating ideas about the relationship between literary professionals are constructed by all manner of sources both non-fictional and semifictional (i.e. highly biased)—such literary content includes epitaphs, anecdotes, prefaces, and essays. Ned Purdon’s oppression by the booksellers for whom he toiled is a story echoed with variation in many eighteenth-century texts, some by long-time authors recounting their own experiences and those of their friends and compatriots. Writers speaking for themselves or for other authors pointed accusatory fingers at the power relationships in the book trade that produced conflict and victimized authors who were relegated to poverty and, consequently, to wider society’s scorn and neglect. As there is a wealth of eighteenth-century commentary on the subject of commercial writing, I will limit my discussion to the influential and impassioned views of American-born author James Ralph and then briefly return to Goldsmith, likewise energetic in reflecting on the role of the author. Ralph’s The Case of Authors, by Professions or Trade (1758), an important, anonymously published pamphlet, is a trenchant polemic on commercial letters. This piece begins in an almost allegorical strain, later moving into observations, examples, and a call for change. Like many of his contemporaries, he relies on forceful binaries to strengthen his argument. In the opening lines of this work, Ralph boldly generalizes: “wit and money have always been at war; and always treated one another
with reciprocal contempt” (233). Ralph posits that these hostilities exist “Perhaps for this only reason. That the man of money could acquire every thing but ideas; and the man of wit’s ideas could never acquire him money” (232). “Money” and “Wit,” Ralph explains, are mutually exclusive and therefore resources over which power struggles occur. In his tract, Ralph—who himself spent decades of his life as a Grub Street hack writer—persuasively depicts the literary marketplace as a major battleground upon which this perennial conflict between wit and money is waged. The participants in this war include members of the book industry, particularly authors and their bookseller-publishers; authors stand in for “wit” and booksellers for “money,” intellectual activity and commercial activity conceived by Ralph as being in opposition. As considered by Ralph and other writers engaging in literary polemics, the party with commercial power prevails, wit having little influence in a marketplace of literature that, like other commercial arenas, deals above all in objects. The “reciprocal contempt” Ralph references appears to fuel as well as confirm an antagonism born of ideological difference and the ongoing tensions between art and commerce.

Ralph sees booksellers as holding the reins of power while their toiling authors—impecunious and pitiable—are rendered essentially powerless, dependent and subject to the authority of those tyrants on whom artistic merit has no influence. Dustin Griffin acknowledges that though the “standard complaint is that patronage is a form of enslavement,” eighteenth-century authors essentially made the same complaint about booksellers:

…there is abundant evidence that eighteenth-century writers found that when they turned to the emerging marketplace for support they had simply exchanged one set of chains for another. Goldsmith, Ralph, Lennox, and others at mid-century felt enslaved to the booksellers or to the whims of the tyrannical public, who were no more enlightened in their opinions or standards than the patrons” (*Literary Patronage* 288).
Ralph’s representative authors are victims everywhere in print society, mistreated by the masters for whom they slave, be they theatre managers, booksellers, party men, or the audiences whose tastes they must satisfy. To prove this point, Ralph presents the case of a political writer who for twenty years wrote for one faction. Eventually abandoned by his party, he consequently “died of what is called a broken heart” and even “became indebted to the charity of his very bookseller for a grave” (236). Though this bookseller does not come off quite so badly as many of his brethren in this tract, Ralph’s point is that other people have power over the author—not only in life, but in death too. In this schema, writers are trapped into their social position by their lack of power, money, and respect, each lack reinforcing the others. Ralph illustrates this depressing circularity and goes so far as to posit that if “we had a Shakespeare, a Milton, or a Newton now existing among us, who should come into what is called good company in dirty linen…[he] would hardly be acknowledged” (235). The material shortcomings of the author rob him of influence despite his merit, which is worthless whether it is actualized or unactualized: worthwhile compositions are either penned but unpublished, or are never even written—literary talents being stifled not only by rejection, but by the mechanical work, the bookseller’s tasks that cannot give them expression. While it could be argued that Ralph’s view of the book trade is embittered, his account of the state of authorship exaggerated because of his own disappointments in the literary marketplace, other cultural commentators restate these strong views, producing non-fiction prose which discusses the relationship between authors and booksellers in the same way—as the latter’s exercise of essentially unilateral power over the former.

Ralph’s pamphlet is echoed in a multitude of prose pieces, authorial polemics often the theme of periodical essays, autobiographical prefaces, and other introductory pieces. The state of authorship that Goldsmith presents in his non-fiction contains similar binaries, and, like Ralph’s,
contains portraits ultimately less complex than the fictional scenes of publishing activity that I introduce toward the end of this chapter. Published within a year of Ralph’s important pamphlet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759) is Goldsmith’s exploration of the relationship between contemporary writers and their society. Goldsmith discusses the difficulties professional authors encounter in England and abroad, lamenting the waning of the nation’s literary character, noticing that “lazy compositions supply the place of original thinking” (157). Yet concurrent with this decline is the struggle of writers to maintain their dignity. Authorial prestige, he argues, is a relic of the past, as most writers, however meritorious their compositions, are insufficiently compensated for their efforts.

Like Ralph, Goldsmith is impassioned in arraigning the world’s shabby treatment of impoverished writers. “The poet’s poverty,” he writes, “is a standing topic of contempt. His writing for bread is an unpardonable offence. Perhaps, of all mankind, an author, in these times, is used most hardly. We keep him poor, and yet revile his poverty” (103). In his *Enquiry*, Goldsmith does not hide the fact that he himself is toiling in a “miserable room,” connecting his own unfortunate situation to that of the multitude of writers for whom he speaks. Goldsmith uses the paratext to expose his own pitiable entrapment in what he has experienced as an exploitative system of literary production. His preface to the fictional set of letters *The Citizen of the World* is an authorial complaint, as he finds it “strange” that the letters have made so little noise in the world, and is surprised “that such merit as our Philosopher’s should be forgotten” (*Works* 14). Goldsmith, posing as the collection’s editor, views himself as a captive of the book industry and expresses his unhappiness with this situation: “I resemble,” he grumbles, “one of those solitary animals, that has been forced from its forest to gratify human curiosity. My earliest wish was to escape unheeded through life; but I have been set up, for halfpence, to fret and scamper at the end of my chain.” (*Works* 15). Likening himself to a restless animal, abused, exposed, and out of
its element, Goldsmith highlights his position vis-à-vis the reading public he is tasked to please; he is a passive subject, or one to whom things are done (i.e. “I have been set up”), an argument for understanding print culture’s expansion as dependent on the writer-as-victim. He, like other polemical writers, tries to engage his readers by fostering their pity and guilt, as “complaints of neglect and vocational uncertainty recur throughout Goldsmith’s works” (Kitching 177).

Biographies of Goldsmith reveal that early in his career, he was basically chained to “Ralph Griffiths [bookseller] and his wife, who not only had employed him to write without pause from nine in the morning until two in the afternoon, but had also kept him on starvation wages” (Kirk 27). Though he draws on his own Grub Street experiences, throughout Goldsmith’s non-fiction the author adheres to previously-established eighteenth-century cultural conceptions of the London writer-for-hire, a dehumanized, disheartened creature who may only “fret and scamper” in a limited artistic space. Goldsmith is explicit in his critique of the literary marketplace for its mistreatment of authors and of an audience of readers whose “human curiosity” he must indulge and who are complicit in the maintenance of an unhealthy circuit of production and consumption. His preface is brief, but polemical and serious in tone, stressing the extremity of the author’s situation. Nonetheless, the words Goldsmith deploys in his preface—“fret” and “scamper”—have a self-deprecating, comic edge that softens slightly his author-as-victim lament for those implicated readers and which looks to the fictionalization of authorship.

A comic edge can also be detected in another Goldsmith piece on authorship, the first number of The Bee, “Introduction,” published on Saturday, October 6, 1759. Goldsmith self-consciously speaks as “a periodical writer,” in this short metaliterary essay addressing the public (1). He begins by relating the pitfalls of the “first publication,” how authors, for example, are liable to resort to artifice in order to obtain a “favourable hearing” (2). Goldsmith’s persona, too similar to the author’s personality to be deemed an eidolon per se, deliberates about what tactic
he should take in this introductory essay. The speaker receives input on this dilemma from his bookseller, the essayist reporting that “in this debate between fear and ambition, my publisher happening to arrive, interrupted for a while my anxiety” (2-3). Their conversation, “recorded” in this introduction, is a miniature version of the fictional exchanges I scrutinize later in this dissertation—especially those in Chapter Two, which focuses on scenes involving domineering booksellers and naïve authors. Goldsmith’s persona in this short piece is that of an unseasoned writer still finding his voice, the speaker admitting at the beginning of the essay that he has “often even blundered in making my bow,” or, in other words, run into difficulties composing a preface (2). His bookseller is eager to direct the tentative writer—who is not, in the end, morally uncertain, however green he is regarding commercial practices. The speaker reports about the bookseller that, “perceiving my embarrassment about making my first appearance, he instantly offered his assistance and advice,” which is given verbatim (3). Though the bookseller appears to demonstrate a desirable collegiality, his professionalism as it involves literary discernment, is underdeveloped, as he lacks an appreciation of individual authorial talent. In a moment of failed mentorship, he attempts to instruct the author, but is unsuccessful because of their opposing values and ideals. There is a disparity between the author’s and the bookseller’s views regarding how the writer should proceed with this task and how they would define not only the writer’s method, but his purpose and his identity as well. The bookseller proposes a scheme based on the idea, which he takes for granted, that the literary work is cooperatively manufactured and authors are simply the manufacturers of a commodity. Though cultural historians discuss eighteenth-century book production as a “collaborative, collective, frequently anonymous project,” the bookseller, in Goldsmith’s opinion, is overemphasizing the decentralization of authorial authority (Greene 101). The inscribed publisher explains to the writer that “the republic of letters
is at present divided into three classes. One writer, for instance, excels at a plan, or a title-page, another works away at the body of the book, and a third is a dab at an index” (3).

Authors like Goldsmith viewed such schemes—which they may have been involved in at some point in their careers—with suspicion, warning readers, who cannot but recognize it themselves, that these enterprises produce second-rate work. The bookseller-characters who view themselves running a literary mill, an out-and-out commercial institution, actively suppress individual creativity and subjectivity through collective enterprise; Goldsmith’s publisher in this exchange observes: “a Magazine is not the result of a single man’s industry; but goes through as many hands as a new pin, before it is fit for the public” (3). By likening the literary work to pin-making, the bookseller equates the composition process to a kind of mechanical production by which labour is divided between several specialists who are otherwise relatively unskilled, usually having expertise in only one area. The bookseller, with this system in mind, offers to delegate preface-writing to another writer; he can easily “provide an eminent hand...to draw up a promising plan to smooth up our readers a little” (3). The bookseller elevates the proffered hack to an “eminent hand” and emphasizes the “modest terms” on which he can procure this additional pen; he is able to reward these writers “as Colonel Charteris [sic] paid his seraglio, at a rate of three halfpence in hand, and three shillings more in promises” (3). This comparison—linking the prostitute to the hack writer, both exploited bodies—underscores the mercenary nature of the operations of the literary marketplace and gestures towards the extent to which many writers-for-hire existed for the benefit of others. The print merchant’s apparent admiration of Colonel Chartres’ methods does not reflect well on the bookseller, who, boasting of his business sense, also advertises his lack of moral sense. Lord Chesterfield, in Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman (1774), recalls that Chartres is “the most notorious, blasted rascal in the world” (194).The bookseller-character’s amorality—
apparent in his language and practices—is confirmed when he associates himself with a famously duplicitous man who maintained several whores, but “who would not give one farthing for virtue” (194).

To return to the bookseller’s proposal, the narrator is loath to farm out his preface to another writer and to submit to the book trade’s economics as the bookseller presents them. Goldsmith “thought proper to decline” taking the publisher’s advice (3). Gently asserting his independence, the author avers that he “intended to pursue no fixed method,” and decides that he will not write his book by rote, rejecting the plodding, mechanical and financially safe composition favoured by the bookseller. Instead, he will “make industry my amusement,” maintaining writing as a personally-satisfying vocation, as he promises that “wherever pleasure presented, I was resolved to follow” (3). Goldsmith asserts his independence—not from readers, but from the bookseller—and establishes himself as a professional writer, invested in maintaining his authorial integrity—scorning, for example, the use of the preface to boast and to lavish praise on his own work, the tendency of many “labourers in the Magazine trade” (2). The exchange between author and bookseller in The Bee, No. 1 serves to put into focus the qualities of the ideal eighteenth-century professional author; it shows the perceptible gap between the bookseller’s values and expectations and those of a self-respecting author who resents having “his merits…determined by judges who estimate the value of a book from its bulk, or its frontispiece” (5). Goldsmith aims to resist this relentless circle of production and consumption encouraged by commercial publishers who—as this exchange would underscore—view literature from a purely materialist standpoint.

Though Goldsmith and Ralph both present persuasive sketches of the eighteenth-century literary marketplace, representations of authors and booksellers—fictional, quasi-fictional, or non-fictional—must always be examined with an eye to the question posed by Geoffrey
Chaucer’s Wife of Bath: “who painted the lion?” in reference to a painting of a lion attacking a man. The answer to the query as it relates to portraits of authors is that authors paint themselves, fashioning their own portraits, almost inevitably biased, of literary struggle. Therefore, an overview of the eighteenth-century London print market—as it has been objectively, even quantitatively, considered by contemporary book historians—is necessary to shed light on the exchanges like the one Goldsmith inserts in his introductory number of The Bee. Though historical booksellers were often in a financial and legal position to take advantage of the authors in their employ and some did indeed misuse their authority, other realities and other power dynamics prevailed. Goldsmith’s dialogue suggests, as the comic fictions analyzed throughout this dissertation confirm, authors creatively resist booksellers’ materialist agendas, sometimes coming closer to—if not embodying, then pointing readers towards defining—the ideals of professional authorship through, rather than despite, friction with the book trade.

The Historical Book Trade

The image of the passive author-as-victim that works like Ralph’s Case of Authors put forward is complicated by visible applications of oppositional power by male writers in the historical literary marketplace. Public disputes between literary professionals, however sensationalized by observers and the disputants themselves, are still part of the historical timeline of the eighteenth-century book trade. In an oft-recounted incident between Alexander Pope and Edmund Curll, the poet slipped the notorious bookseller an emetic while they drank wine

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8 There are many instances of bookseller-authors publishing polemic pieces vindicating themselves against their detractors. Lisa Maruca points out that “the number of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs of print workers written from the late seventeenth century through the eighteenth century makes it clear that booksellers thought of themselves as important public figures even before the ‘lives and works’ of authors commanded readers’ attention” (62).

9 Terry Belanger summarizes the differences between the London trade and the provincial trade, noting in “Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England” that “neither the colonies nor the provinces ever seriously challenged London as a publishing centre in the eighteenth century” (12).
together. Pope compounds this bodily attack with a prose account of the emetic’s effects, his *Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, on the Body of Edmund Curll, Bookseller* (1716). As Dustin Griffin remarks, “the account is meant to be personally degrading. And it is plainly labelled a ‘Revenge,’ to settle a personal score…Pope announces that he is the proud perpetrator, able to outdo Curll at his own game of printing scandal, lies, alleged ‘full and true’ eyewitness accounts, and last wills” (*Pope and Swift* 41-42). Similarly, though his introductory essay to *The Bee* and the preface to *Citizen of the World* represent one type of resistance (discursive, even passive aggressive) to the power of the bookseller, Goldsmith, the chained animal, had—like Pope—both bark and bite: Alvin Kernan confirms that Goldsmith actually “beat a bookseller named Even for publishing in his newspaper an objectionable paragraph on him” (82). The catalyst of Goldsmith’s conflict with this specific bookseller, Thomas Evans (1739-1803), began with a slanderous piece in the *London Packet*. “Mr. Goldsmith,” an anonymous contributor commanded, “correct your arrogance, reduce your vanity, and endeavour to believe, as a man, you are the plainest sort, and as an author, but a mortal piece of mediocrity.” Goldsmith, undermined in this poisonous newspaper attack, directed his ire against Evans, the bookseller who published this inflammatory piece. Washington Irving, in his 1840 biography of Oliver Goldsmith, quotes in full the defamatory letter which set in motion this event—termed “the Evans Affray.” An irate Goldsmith took it upon himself to “punish” Evans for this affront, physically confronting the bookseller in his Paternoster Row shop. Anecdotes like this one, while keeping the image of the submissive author—wronged and languishing in his garret—at bay, still point to the fundamental oppositionality of the writer/bookseller relationship. The law identified the bookseller as the

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10 Pope later writes a noxious fictional portrait of Curll in *The Dunciad* (1728-1743).

victim, as Goldsmith was charged with assault and fined £50. Though authorial rebellion is clearly subdued—in *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, James Boswell notes Johnson’s remarks on the apology Goldsmith had to pen—power dynamics in the literary marketplace were neither simple nor firmly established. These kinds of uncomfortable situations were not uncommon in the eighteenth-century literary marketplace, Alvin Kernan noting in *Printing Technology, Letters & Samuel Johnson* that “antagonism arose when booksellers printed material severely critiquing an author.” (82) As this notable episode between Goldsmith and Evans illustrates, hostilities between authors and booksellers moved both on and off of the page and into other public venues (bookshops, courthouses, and coffee houses).

Moving from historical anecdote to scholarship and from specific professional and personal conflicts to larger patterns of interaction among members of the literary marketplace, I would like to examine the general conditions of the eighteenth-century book trade, the commercial environment out of which characterizations of booksellers and authors emerged and which in turn influenced relations within this historical milieu. Growth is the word that most aptly characterizes this pivotal century of book history—the incessant fictionalization of literary professionals in this period corresponding to this growth. James Raven, the first contributor to *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, presents a historical overview of the publishing industry as it operated between the 1690s and the early 1800s; early in his essay he identifies the “fundamental story” of the period as “the complex penetration of print through eighteenth-century English society” (1). Scott Hess goes so far as to assert that the century saw “the emergence of the first ‘Print society’ in history” (35). Multiple factors contributed to the creation of this society of print, including London’s financial and population growth, which, particularly exponential in the latter half of the century, translated into a larger purchasing market for print. With more readers to buy and consume printed texts, there were
more aspiring authors and booksellers eager to ply their wares. Though writing was—and remains—an unreliable source of income, and authors were a chronically impecunious set, the eighteenth century nonetheless saw the rise of the professional author and the recognition of writing as a profession. Authors—many astonishingly prolific—were crucial to sustaining this new era of literature, usually publishing in a number of forms and genres, writing prolifically, but creating works of varying degrees of length, quality, and ephemerality. The eighteenth-century print market was diverse in terms of its literary products and consumers. Raven, examining the details and general currents of literary commodification, writes that “book publishers looked to a highly stratified market, where there was certainly overlap between consumer interests, but also great differentiation in the price and quality of products” (97). The dramatic expansion of the English print trade has in recent years been acknowledged and systematically examined by print culture historians like Raven, who plumb the archives to determine the exact trajectory of this significant growth in publishing. Bob Harris remarks that as “figures for newspaper circulation, a fair number of pamphlet and book editions are fairly widely available,” researchers have a reasonable “basis for assessing the expansion of the book trade”—though he also observes that this expansion “is easier to document in the later stages of the century than at the beginning” (289). James Raven uses the English Short Title Catalogue to chart print growth, reporting that “publication rates of individual titles mushroomed between the late 1740s and the end of the century” and ultimately, “before 1700 up to about 1,800 different printed items were produced annually, and by 1800, over 6,000” (Business 131).

Scott Hess notes the diversity of literary products coming out of this milieu and “the growing importance of various forms of periodical literature and journalism, which both expanded the reading public and stimulated the sales of other forms of print” (48). The essay form was made popular by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele’s The Spectator (1711-1712),
which spawned numerous imitators of varying quality throughout the century including Eliza Haywood, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, and Tobias Smollett, among others. Scholars have identified the publication of *The Spectator* as a critical point in the history of “Literature,” which George Justice capitalizes to indicate its definition as “printed writing with ‘literary value’ beyond its original profit-making and social function” (14). The expansion of print involved the rise of newspapers, many owned and managed by booksellers. London’s first daily newspaper the *Daily Courant* was founded in 1702. By 1790, Londoners could choose between “13 morning, one evening, seven tri-weekly and two bi-weekly papers” (Black 10). Though a prose form with less prestige than the literary essay or magazine, newspapers provided many writers with steady, albeit low-paying, piecemeal work, which meant “the lot of the professional author, in his garret or elsewhere, was therefore consistently linked to the newspaper” (Myers and Harris, *Development* 39). The first provincial newspaper, *The Norwich Post*, started in 1701, was one of many print initiatives that took place outside London in the eighteenth century. Though most books were published in the metropolis and sent to the provinces—made easier with infrastructure developments such as the creation and improvement of highways—and shipped even further afield to Britain’s colonies, book historians have traced the growth of provincial publishing, which began in earnest in the mid-eighteenth century.\(^\text{12}\) This expansion was catalyzed by growth in market towns. Nonetheless, Raven and others scholars stress the continuing centrality of London’s publishing industry, which saw pirate publishers in Ireland and America, rather than provincial booksellers, as the real threat to their livelihood.

If “growth” is the first keyword to describing the eighteenth-century literary marketplace, the second is “copyright,” the evolution in copyright law having a significant effect on the

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\(^\text{12}\) Terry Belanger summarizes the differences between the London trade and the provincial trade, noting in “Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England” that “neither the colonies nor the provinces ever seriously challenged London as a publishing centre in the eighteenth century” (12).
operations of the print trade throughout the century. As Brean Hammond articulates it, “The creation of a literary market and the evolution of literary professionalism—writing undertaken by those whose primary means of earning a living it was—occurred in symbiotic relationship with changing conceptions of literary property and the nature of authorship” (22). Many other scholars, including Mark Rose, Martha Woodmansee and Simon Stern, have delved into the history of eighteenth-century copyright law and its direct and indirect effects on the literary marketplace. Woodmansee in “The Genius and the Copyright” explains that Edward Young’s Conjectures on Original Composition (1759) articulated the growing interest in authorial genius, the innately creative, individualized quality out of which the literary work—“an intentional, as opposed to a merely physical object”—emerges (50). Woodmansee tracks this fundamental ideological change to considerations of the author (and the concomitant changes in readerly strategies) in both eighteenth-century Germany and England. She points out that “to ground the author’s claim to ownership of his work, then, it would first be necessary, then to show that this work transcends its physical foundation” (Woodmansee 50). This internal quality (“genius”), however unquantifiable, raises authorship above its material realities. As not simply “a vehicle of ideas” but “an emanation of that intellect at work” the book now had a claim as the intellectual property of the writer. Though very few authors were earning much more than subsistence sums, they were operating at a time when conditions became more favourable to living authors than they were at mid-century, as the issue of perpetual copyright had been decisively put to rest in 1774 by the House of Lords. Mark Rose, weighing in on the situation after this crucial verdict, observes that the immediate consequence was that “[t]he works of Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Bunyan, and others, all the great properties of the trade that the booksellers had been accustomed to treat as private landed estates, were suddenly declared open commons” (47). Booksellers who
had owned the lucrative rights to old, and still very popular, works were consequently encouraged to seek out new bestsellers among contemporary authors.

As Fergus and Thaddeus point out, the choice of bookseller, as well as of publication method (sale of copyright, subscription, etc.), determined the compass of an eighteenth-century author’s success (201). This is particularly the case for authors who sold copy outright and were uninvolved in decisions of printing and publication and, thus, reliant on their booksellers to gauge the demands of the reading public and value the manuscript honestly, as opposed to the more lucrative profit-sharing agreements, which became more common as the century drew to a close and presented an opportunity for greater authorial profit. Bookselling was also a perilous venture, as several scholars of the eighteenth century have noted. Raven states that “The injection of capital (from diverse sources) into the book trades transformed their business activities and potential—as well as encouraging greater risks and inducing greater failures” (“Book Trades” 9-10). The majority of these booksellers were men, though there were some exceptions (i.e. widows who continued their late husbands’ work); gender homogeneity aside, there was a broad spectrum of booksellers in business: from “the humblest operators” to “the grandest book merchants,” differences being in size, output, and financial position (“Book Trades” 10). Some booksellers suffered bankruptcies, while others enjoyed profits, which could be reinvested into publishing. Especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century, booksellers began opening (and filling) circulating libraries, readers subscribing to borrow books from these new repositories of popular print matter. Some mid-to-late century booksellers, as part of an important growth sector, though no longer grouped in powerful congers, still gained in both cultural and social influence as the period also saw “the development of the bookseller as the dominant force in English letters” (Taylor 75). Not all authors saw this change as a good one, however, writers such as Goldsmith nostalgically looking back to the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries and complaining of the decline of patronage. In *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* Dustin Griffin makes a strong case for its continuance, however, arguing that it persisted through the century, but underwent change with the rise of subscription publication, a kind of “collective patronage,” and the rise of powerful booksellers who replaced the aristocratic patrons and the “productive network” of patronage. These trends can be detected within the careers of individual professional writers. Charting Goldsmith’s Grub Street beginnings, Clara M. Kirk discusses the replacement of patrons by booksellers: “Authors were now reliant on the booksellers of St. Paul’s Churchyard rather than on the favour of the great noblemen to whom the poet of an earlier age had addressed his dedication in the hopes, usually justified, of generous support” (26). Aware of the shift away from court culture and towards commercial life, eighteenth-century booksellers thought highly of their importance: “Those within the print trade should be understood as they often viewed themselves, as significant creative agents in the physical production of material commodities and their affiliated values—at least as important as, often even more important than, the writers of the text” (Maruca 127). Booksellers who did well financially and made conscious efforts to build a reputation for fostering literary merit became respected figures in London society. In “The Second Coming of the Book, 1740-1770” Betty A. Schellenberg identifies bookselling as a trade with some cultural cachet, which famous authors conveyed on their publishers. Nonetheless, the self-fashioning bookseller could also (semi-) independently gain a reputation for merit, Schellenberg explaining: “If [Robert] Dodsley brought to bookselling the cultural and economic capital associated with Pope as his mentor and high-profile author-client, the first assets John Newbery invested in the bookselling trade appear to have been those of energy and ambition” (42). The rise of the professional bookseller and the rise of the professional author are two narratives in book history and print culture studies that I will be returning to at different points in the dissertation as I press the issue of literary
professionalism; in doing so, I continually draw on information about the eighteenth-century conditions of authorship and bookselling from studies of book history and print culture.

*The Literary Marketplace in Eighteenth-Century Studies*

Many contemporary scholars are fascinated not only by developments within the eighteenth-century print market, but by the heightened self-consciousness among the period’s writers about their place in the expanding marketplace of letters and their relationships with its other participants. In recent years, academics like the ones I have cited in my overview of the historical book trade have engaged in archival work that has uncovered information about the day-to-day operations in this sphere and have amassed data about literary production and consumption through the century and beyond. This data has enriched the study of eighteenth-century literature, making the twentieth century an especially exciting time for examining Britain’s historical print society. In the last two decades, fascinating scholarly intersections between print history and literary study have been published, the fictionalization of literary professions discussed, but by no means to the point of critical exhaustion. In this part of the introduction, I will briefly discuss a selection of the secondary sources that make up the scholarly foundation of this project and out of which I build my own argument. I have found the critical works of Lisa Maruca, Christopher Flint, Betty Rizzo, Clifford Siskin, Lisa Freeman, George Justice, Deidre Lynch, and Betty Schellenberg particularly relevant to my project.

Betty Rizzo’s “The English Author-Bookseller Dialogue,” a contribution to *The Age of Johnson*, uses many of the same primary sources I deploy to come to very different conclusions about literary professions in imaginative literature. Rizzo, accepting the binaries articulated by Ralph, analyzes a selection of scenes between authors and booksellers as sharp critiques of the book trade. She identifies and discusses the author-bookseller dialogue as a didactic tool for
alerting readers to the threat to art and learning presented by immoral, mercenary booksellers. These dialogues can be in different forms, but according to Rizzo, they all feature “the bookseller’s interference, in the name of lucre, with the author’s pure art,” though she does acknowledge that “on occasion one finds an author…fallen so far as to collude with the bookseller and to vie with him in filthy expedients” (353). Taking a black and white approach to the eighteenth-century book trade, Rizzo views booksellers and authors, as well as art and economics, as diametrically opposed within the texts she examines. Emphasizing oppositionality in these encounters, she explains these scenes, which she reads as ideological allegory, as part of the “Parnassus/Grub Street schema,” in which “booksellers act as the seductive and corrupting force, or as Satan. Money and the lust for money distort morality and art” (354). Rizzo stresses “the evil bookseller” as the antagonist in the encounters she examines, identifying his “sins” as the tactics he uses to forward his mercenary agenda. Though most of the dialogues she scrutinizes are funny, Rizzo does not adequately address the role of comedy, which I argue nuances representation, in the depiction of literary professionals. Therefore, I found it necessary to seek out sources that reflect on the relationship between historical realities and their comic representation. In Character’s Theatre, for example, Lisa Freeman recognizes comedy as “the genre most intimately associated with the representation of social relations,” considers eighteenth-century plays as having a normative role (145). She argues for a reading of the period’s metatheatrical comedies as didactic works, for, “by exposing the contrivances that support the theatrical illusion of character on the stage,” Freeman explains, “plays about plays purported to help the audience to learn to read the illusions of character in everyday life” (86).

Though comedy is not a central concern in The Work of Print, Lisa Maruca’s monograph is more directly relevant than Freeman’s exploration of character on the eighteenth-century stage. Maruca’s study is concerned with literary professionals, presenting a balanced,
historically-informed reading of the place of booksellers and authors, both fictional and otherwise, in eighteenth-century culture.\textsuperscript{13} She focuses on authorship in relation to the print trade, using a variety of sources to show print workers laying claim to creative, authorial identities—a visible place in literary production. She also addresses cultural representations of the bookseller, illuminating the significant changes to how this figure is viewed through the century. Booksellers in autobiographical texts published during the century identify themselves as heroic figures—successful in a trade in which it is difficult to achieve success. Her complication of the binary opposition of author/bookseller is especially valuable; Maruca avers that “while the antagonistic binary of author versus bookseller did sometimes represent a real-life conflict between divergent economic interests, it more importantly personified a nexus of competing ideologies: different ways of imagining the process of textual creation” (61). The *Work of Print* ultimately argues for recognizing a key shift in representations of the book trade, Maruca proving “the renegotiation of the concepts of print worker—from key contributor to the making of books to an invisible body to be written through” (4). Using a variety of “textual sites” from which to draw her conclusions, she observes that increasingly, eighteenth-century texts “privilege only the Author, who controls the text and whose disembodied intellect transcends the physical book” (25). Working with Maruca’s analysis of “the discourse of the immoral bookseller,” I acknowledge in my critical readings how this discourse is exhibited by scenes of author/bookseller interaction, as well as how, to a small extent, this discourse is tempered by hints of professionalism among writers and their publisher or at least balanced by equally problematic authors in the period’s imaginative literature (25). Like Maruca, Richard Sher reads the relationship between authors and booksellers against the grain, and emphasizes not the

\textsuperscript{13} In Chapter Two, I will reflect on Maruca’s observation “that the author-centric model became (and remains) dominant is best emblematized by the prototypical Grub Street Scene of popular imagination: the starving artist scribbling late into the night for the plump, bourgeois bookseller” (61).
conflicts within the literary marketplace, but the congruencies. *The Enlightenment and the Book* considers authors and booksellers (the *de facto* patrons of the eighteenth century) as they worked together; their relationship, as Sher presents it, was one of interdependence rather than dependence, supportive booksellers providing their writers with a “social support system” (198-99).

My understanding of changing cultural ideologies surrounding professional authorship has been deepened by Clifford Siskin, who develops a cogent theory about these shifts, probing the rise of the author in relation to the general rise of the professions, the creation of identity through work rather than birth, and the separation of work from labour. The starting point of Siskin’s *The Work of Writing* is the proliferation of print in the eighteenth century—the changing technologies and ideologies of writing—and the development of literary modernity. He tracks changing conceptions of work (the rise of modern professionalism) and knowledge (disciplinariness). Building on Siskin’s recognition that those engaged in the discipline of writing began to see literature as professional work and themselves as literary professionals, I explore this (self-) identification. For considerations of the relationship between materiality and print, I have consulted Christopher Flint’s recently-published *The Appearance of Print in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. Flint’s monograph presents an appealing interpretation of the relationships between the material book, its producers and its consumers, connecting the modes and genres of prose fiction to the print market out of which these texts emerged. He acknowledges the period’s “fascination with the physical properties of books” and discusses this interest against the development of popular fiction, publicly presented fictions of “private lives” (1); he chalks the paradoxical public/private nature of fiction up to “a coalescence of historical shifts” in authoring, printing and publishing books (2). Flint’s work overlaps with this project in its interest in the book as a manufactured entity which as such, is key to realizing the possibilities of fiction. Like
Flint, I am interested in the relationship between print culture and imaginative literature, as well as how bonds are forged between readers, the consumers of this literature, and authors, who produce this literature with and against the book trade.

An Overview of the Author in Imaginative Literature

More diverse, contentious, and ubiquitous than ever before in British culture, author-characters insistently make their appearance in practically every form and genre of imaginative literature the period produced. Author-characters, the most varied of fictional representatives of literary culture, are staple figures in the discursive urban landscapes of the eighteenth century, often positioned in the background as well as the foreground of countless texts. Writer-characters appear in different diegetic levels and come into view in frame narratives, primary narratives or interpolated stories; they are major characters and minor characters, narrators, protagonists, antagonists, heroes, and anti-heroes. More often than not, however, they are static characters rather than properly dynamic characters, reacting rather than developing within their storyworlds. Though many contain kernels of the künstlerroman, the eighteenth-century texts surveyed in this dissertation focus less on the artistic development of these writer-figures than the humorous attempts of these individuals to make a livelihood through print—seen in constructed dialogues which demonstrate what Foucault would call the “the relational character of power relationships” (*History* 95).

To a certain extent, writer-characters are subjected to divisions based on class, income and education, genre and quality of their writing, attitude towards the book, and strength of their moral principles. Some of these divisions involve the nature of the author’s relationship to the bookseller, which can point to the extent to which theirs is a “hack” identity; they are judged by
their intimacy with the book trade, their acquiescence to the terms of the bookseller and the market, and the sincerity of their rebellion against the bookseller. Variety in authorial presentation is still balanced by sameness—repetition in the types of situations and conversations they experience. Though I would like to avoid a strict taxonomy of putative authors, several stock-characters and stock scenes can be identified, though not always immediately or even comfortably labelled. Significantly, though authorial polemics tend towards a simplification of the author-bookseller relationship as one of victimization and exploitation, many of the comic scenes I scrutinize complicate this view of the author as a powerless sufferer as well as the bookseller as a cipher for a corrupt and corrupting world of commercial publishing. I probe how comedy identifies the powers to which the writer-character can lay claim and those that are beyond his grasp—due to either internal (individual intellectual or moral limitations) or external factors (the bookseller and, more generally, conditions of the book trade).

In this section of the chapter, I present an eighteenth-century author-character, Timothy Spinbrain, who, through his own dismissal of the book trade and his own egregious unprofessionalism, complicates the prevailing notion of bookseller villainy. Through Spinbrain, the ideal Professional Author is perversely established, comic representation of writers whose unprofessionalism generates not only laughter but a consideration of its remedy—of which the reader, trained and led by the real author, is a crucial part. This fictional character is at the centre of a number from the mid-century periodical, *The Adventurer* (1752-1754), started by John Hawkesworth and Samuel Johnson. I have selected this character as a representative but extreme example of authorship situated in an imagined commercial world of letters. Though eighteenth-century writers are invested in modes of self-representation (i.e. as evidenced by autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical figures like the “Goldsmith” who prefaces *The Citizen of the World*), not all author-characters are inscribed versions of historical authors. In
some cases, historical authors strategically fashion writer-characters that obviously subvert their own ideas of Literary Professionalism. Though the narrator is clearly a persona of the historical Hawkesworth, his interlocutor, Timothy Spinbrain, is a fabricated embodiment of compromised authorial ideals, though his full name includes a realistic Christian name as well as a symbolic surname that would peg him as an allegorical character or abstraction. “Spinbrain”—like other names of authors (Mr. Lyric, Mr. Metaphor, etc.) and booksellers (Mr. Folio, Mr. Octavo, etc.)—suggests a single-mindedness, an identity that is “fixed and all-determining” (Barrell 183). John Barrell, discussing naming strategies in *Roderick Random* comments that:

[T]o be thus fixed in an occupational or other determining identity was understood in the writing of the mid-eighteenth century to be a disability: the habit of concentration on one particular activity is inimical to the acquisition of that comprehensive view, to the attainment of that elevated viewpoint from which society can be grasped in terms of relation, and not simply of difference (183).

The tellingly named Spinbrain has neither an “elevated viewpoint” nor a productive “habit of concentration.” His thoughts revolve around print, but without settling on one aspect of commercial literature, his inability to specialize marking him as a literary dabbler. As a close reading of *The Adventurer* No. 6 will confirm, Spinbrain evidences the real author’s ambivalence about the value of print. Spinbrain is helpful for illuminating how writer-characters are rendered transparent—and by extension, culturally useful—through imaginative literature. This short fictional piece, attributed to Hawkesworth, who composed 70 of the 140 published numbers of this periodical, demonstrates how the comic mode sets in motion both the recognition and evaluation of not only the pressures of the marketplace on the author, but the ways in which the opportunities of this marketplace can be exploited. The writer-character Spinbrain interacts with the piece’s narrator, demonstrating that cultural decay goes further than the publishers and
retailers of print. It should be noted, however, that Spinbrain is still the product of a longer
tradition of the “bad poet,” a type character as far back as Roman comedy. This classical stock
character of the “bad poet” re-emerged on the late Elizabethan stage in Ben Jonson’s satiric play
*The Poetaster* (1601) and was spectacularly revitalized in John Dryden’s mock heroic poem *Mac
Flecknoe; or, A satyr upon the True-Blew-Protestant Poet, T.S.* (1682). The “bad poet” sunk to
new lows in the Scriblerian works of the early eighteenth century, notably: Jonathan Swift’s *A
Tale of a Tub* (1704) and Pope’s “Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry” (1727) and *The
Dunciad* (1728-1743). Dustin Griffin speculates on the division of authors into “classes,” which
he posits evolved in tandem with the development of print culture; he notes that “writers as
diverse as Jonson, Milton and Dryden invoked and exemplified the idea that the ‘true poet’ (as
opposed to the mere hack or drudge) has a high calling (to teach, to adorn the language, to record
glorious deeds), and readily took on both lofty and humble tasks—from epic poems to histories,
to dictionaries and grammar books” (“Rise” 133-134). As in the longer texts under scrutiny
throughout this project, power is both labile and diverse, the author possessing power currencies
that may or may not be valued in the commercial world of letters.

Our author-character Mr. Spinbrain is presented through the eyes of a sharp, but genial
narrator—Hawkesworth’s persona, a social and cultural commentator and literary descendent of
Mr. Spectator. This unnamed (intra)diagnostic narrator is woken up by his antic author friend, who
is eager to share his most recent composition, an advertisement. Though the ensuing dialogue is
not between an author and a bookseller, the narrator and “straight man” in this scene is the
putative editor of *The Adventurer*, and therefore part of the marketplace machinery,14 who,
through a deadpan line of questioning, sets in motion the reader’s own questioning of

14 Some eighteenth-century booksellers and bookseller-characters managed periodical papers e.g. Vellum from
Arthur Murphy’s *News from Parnassus* (1776; first published 1786).
Spinbrain’s professionalism. The subtlety of this process is such that a connection is created between eighteenth-century readers and the knowing narrator who mediates our reaction to the author-character; significantly, he does not directly criticize Spinbrain, whose true situation in the world of letters is uncovered through their conversation. The periodical’s eidolon—citing one of his friend’s earlier pieces, a frivolous how-to manual “for making new boards ‘out of shavings’” and knowing the tenor of his friend’s usual productions—“expected nothing less than such another whimsical contrivance” (11). Taking up the paper, however, he reads an advertisement for an impending auction of “A curious and valuable collection of manuscripts (warranted originals) in prose and verse,” consisting of “the entire stock in trade of Timothy Spinbrain, author” who is “Leaving off Business” (11). After the narrator skims this page, he converses with the author of this piece, the excited Spinbrain, who rhetorically him: “don’t you think this will free me from the impertinence of duns, and the servility of suing to those unconscionable vultures the booksellers, for more copy money?” (11). The writer-character thinks he can successfully extricate himself from London’s network of literary merchants, exclaiming: “I shall raise an estate by it [i.e. selling manuscripts wholesale], I have such an infinite number of tracts on political, polemical, philosophical, physiological, economical, religious and miscellaneous subjects” (11). His vendible works are a diverse, ambitious lot, the author-character apparently working in a multitude of forms and genres available in the expanding print market of Hawkesworth’s day. Spinbrain would seem to be banking on an almost superhuman ability to produce pages and pages of writing on any conceivable subject—the quality of the beau ideal hack. The wealth of inferior literary commodities passing through this market is little quality control other than “taste” (of booksellers and consumers) and the nation’s unevenly-enforced laws against sedition and libel. Spinbrain is eager to sell his political pamphlets, declaring that: “In politics, I have an infallible scheme for ruining the French power;
which, I suppose, will be bought up, at any price, by commission from abroad, if our ministry have not spirit enough to outbid them” (11). That he is willing to deny his government access to this potentially crucial—but highly implausible—document suggests the avarice and lack of patriotism often attributed to the bookseller in imaginative literature. He has a multitude of documents to be put to use by those “who are fond of displaying their talents in religious disputes,” and he confidently asserts that they:

will find in my auction, sufficient matter for their various altercations; whether they are Atheists, Deists, or distinguished by the modest appellation of Free thinkers. There is scarce a sect among the many hundred, whom I have not defended or attacked: but it must not be concluded from thence, that I have been byassed [sic] more towards one than another (44-5).

This mercenary writer, unconscious of the comic absurdity of this prodigious catalogue, displays a humorous, albeit disturbing, absence of fixed moral and religious principle as he indicates that he has “pamphlets on the important topics of liberty, bribery, and corruption, written on both sides of the question” (11) Having no personal principles to get in the way of literary (over)production, he assures his audience that “the faith of an author is out of the question; and he only writes pro or con, as the several opinions are more or less embraced or exploded in the world” (45). Spinbrain oddly refers to himself generically in the third person as “the author,” thus erasing his authorial identity, an erasure that allows others to present his creations. Spinbrain makes himself out to be a print-machine, and an outrageously productive one at that, announcing: “I have several new essays in modern wit and humour; and a long string of papers both serious and diverting, for periodical lucubrations: I have, I know not how many original entertaining novels, as well as elegant translations from the French…” (11) Proud of both his impartiality and social irresponsibility, he facilitates idle politicians in their laziness, capitalizing
on their indifference to the state of the nation, having “a most curious collection of speeches adapted to every kind of debate, which will be of admirable use to young members of parliament” (11). With his use of the adjective “curious,” Spinbrain appears to be using the powers of his imagination to exploit and encourage the intellectual, spiritual, and moral weaknesses of his prospective buyers.

Spinbrain’s (alleged) power is derived from an awareness of London’s shifting myriad literary tastes and fashions; he presumes himself devoted and equipped to satisfy the insatiable desires and “needs” of London’s consumers of print and from the very market which has recognized, fostered, or manufactured, these needs. He alleges to possess innumerable pamphlets, plays, poems, and countless examples of other kinds of imaginative writing. His friend, by this point in the monstrous catalogue, is presumably sceptical and tests/gently mocks Spinbrain by asking for extremely specific tracts on obscure topics. The narrator-character inquires whether “he had not something likewise against the Patriarch of the Greek Church; or a serious admonition against the growth of Hottentotism among us” (11). Spinbrain is unfazed however, and “answered very calmly, ‘I should see in the catalogue,’ and proceeded” (45). This request is part of a larger narrative strategy to provide the reader with a layer of commentary that has meaning only outside the dialogue itself: the narrator’s voice breaks in on Spinbrain’s lengthy inventory to subtly highlight the author-character’s foolishness. Spinbrain, after all, is out of touch with reality and unable to reasonably gauge the significance of his “works.” His claims are so outrageous that the narrator is not even required to undermine the author-character’s pretensions. “My manuscripts,” Spinbrain boasts, “are of greater utility, and consequently more valuable, than those in the Vatican or Bodleian libraries” (43). His plan for these ‘valuable’ texts, like his valuation of them, is outrageously ambitious; after “strik[ing] off twenty thousand copies of [his] catalogue” (43), he aims to “circulate a sufficient number among
the Vertuosi in Holland, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and elsewhere” (43). In conveying “the particulars of his plan” to the narrator, Spinbrain “enliven[s] his discourse with many sprightly sallies against the retailers of the works of the learned, those blood-suckers, as he called them, of the literary commonwealth” (43). This whole plan is, in fact, a method of circumventing the booksellers, and making the kind of money that he imagines he deserves, for, according to Spinbrain’s “modest computation,” he predicts that he will “be able to retire into the country...with a pretty fortune in [his] pocket” (12). Addressing the narrator as his “dear friend” he adds: “But before I begin my sale, if you can find any thing that will suit your Adventurer, as you are an old acquaintance, you shall have it for your own price” (12). The narrator is given “first pick” from Spinbrain’s collection, the author-character’s detailed description being simply a long-winded advertisement to con his friend into buying his “goods.” Nonetheless, his “genteeel” offer is politely rejected, as editor of The Adventurer congratulates Spinbrain on his impending financial success, expresses his doubts: “I could not help enquiring, where all these immense stores of literature were lodged, as I never had observed anything but loose scraps of paper scattered about his room, and one book of ‘loci communes,’ or ‘hints,’ as he called them, placed upon the chimney piece” (46-7). This comment is telling, as the work of substandard authors is often enough presented as fragmentary and disorganized. Responding to his friend’s query, the putative writer in The Adventurer, admits that his works “are none quite finished as yet,” and he unconvincingly adds, “but I have got the rough draughts of most somewhere” (12). The aptly named Spinbrain ends up dismissing the question outright with the assertion: “‘I have it all here,’ pointing to his forehead” (12).

15 At one point in Smollett’s Roderick Random, for example, the hero becomes the footman of an amateur female poetess, whose writing is horrifically bad. When he is given the opportunity to examine her study, he discovers “a thousand scraps of her own poetry, consisting of three, four, ten, twelve and twenty lines, on an infinity of subjects, which as whim inspired, she had begun without constancy or capacity to bring to any degree of composition” (223).
Of course, without physical manuscripts, materially realized literary property, Spinbrain has no choice but to abandon this grand scheme, and he must cancel the auction with the feeble excuse that “the maid had inadvertently lighted his fire with the best of his materials” (47). This pretext—a stereotypical plea of the inept and procrastinating hack—is most likely a sham, especially given the “restlessness of [his] chimerical genius” (47). The narrator with this description of Spinbrain deems his friend’s “genius” as illusory and insubstantial as his works. The flighty author neither has the focus, the time, nor the knowledge to pursue even a small fraction of these ambitious schemes. Nonetheless, his imagination is zealously at work on another unfeasible and “mighty project” (47). Spinbrain, undeterred by his unqualified failure, impudently announces his new plan “to open a NEW LITERARY WAREHOUSE, or UNIVERSAL REGISTER OFFICE for WIT and LEARNING” (47). Again, Spinbrain is treating literature solely as a commodity—something to be advertised, stored in a warehouse, and sold. Though Spinbrain promises more (useless) information on this scheme to “monopolize the whole business of scribbling” to the pedestrian realities of the impecunious author, a note of the mundane intervenes with the concluding sentence of the essay. “In the mean time,” The Adventurer’s narrator remarks, the posturing Spinbrain “desires me to advance him a trifle, to buy paper for a poem on the late theatrical disputes” (12). It is comically incongruous that a writer who has just declared his capacity to negotiate the “political, polemical, philosophical, physiological, economical, religious” intends to pen topical verses on stage gossip. In admitting that he cannot even afford the materials with which to produce a throwaway piece, he confirms the extent of his dependence.

For all of his grandiose talk, which is punctuated with “sprightly sallies against the retailers of the works of the learned” (11), Spinbrain is a hack, and an unproductive one at that, barely clinging to the literary marketplace. This short episode from The Adventurer points to the
scepticism with which the reader must approach the insolvent author-character who deems booksellers “unconscionable vultures.” Many bookseller-characters are depicted as stereotypically proud and avaricious, as agents of failure who damn their writers to the poverty and “servility” against which Spinbrain rebels. But, bookseller/author dynamic is oftentimes more complex than the oppressor/victim paradigm, though this is one facet of this relationship. The hopeless author, as in the case of Spinbrain, is his own worst enemy, his own shiftlessness, ignorance, and lack of talent contributing to his inability to succeed in the literary marketplace. Author-characters, as innocents or rogues, are necessary and complex vehicles for critiquing the commercial world of letters—the state of which they, alongside their booksellers, are responsible for either improving or debasing.

An Introduction to Literary Booksellers: Mr. Fudge

In an illuminating reading of the Poet/Player conversation in Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews*, William B. Warner asserts that “this ‘facetious Dialogue’ suggests how everyone in the feedback loop of production and consumption can claim to be a middleman, powerless to influence the general direction or quality of culture” (244). Bookseller-characters and some, though not all, author-characters are guilty of capitalizing on this self-identification as middlemen, expressing their alleged subjugation to popular tastes to justify their suppression of merit. The public, Raven observes in *Judging New Wealth*, may not always have gotten what it wanted, but it got what it was said to want. Confirmed in their inflexibility by the public’s so-called tastes, many booksellers were able to make unethical decisions with only their own

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16 Members of the book trade are not the only historical group that experienced persistent, decontextualized stereotyping in the British fiction. Bruce Robbins in *The Servant’s Hand: English Fiction From Below* (1986) notices the repetition of servant types in nineteenth-century fiction; he is troubled by the “sameness [in]the formal manifestations of literary service,” a sameness that does not properly reflect the noteworthy social changes that occurred over the period of his study (x)
interests in mind. In the same way that Hawksworth’s Spinbrain is representative of a certain kind of hack authorship, those intermediaries between writers and readers—booksellers and other agents of the book trade—are also made visible within fictional narrative itself. Literary historians describe the cultural perceptions of the bookseller as advancing a kind of world of letters out of which Spinbrains came. Critical literary depictions of booksellers can be read as evidence of a larger eighteenth-century phenomenon of scepticism about commerce and upward-mobility, which Catherine Ingrassia discusses in *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England*. Particularized as hostility towards the bookseller, this distrust can be seen in fiction and non-fiction alike: Raven notes that “contemporaries very well understood the financial control of the booksellers,” adding that “from their very inauguration in the mid-eighteenth century, periodical reviewers complained of the exploitation of the writer and of the tyranny of booksellers” (*Business of Books* 6). The bookseller-character in his interactions with writer-characters reveals his preoccupation with acquiring wealth and, in some cases, social climbing. “Both writers and readers” Barbara M. Benedict observes, “frequently viewed [booksellers] as profiteering and immoral. Booksellers, however, blamed audiences for their degraded appetites, portraying themselves merely as servants of the public” (278). The represented bookseller is undeniably a locus for criticism of the eighteenth-century book trade and serves as a tool for both authorial polemics and comedy. Comedy involving a bookseller is entwined with elements of social and cultural criticism, and also can bring about—as I will argue in later chapters—a consolidation of the author’s power by strengthening the bonds between author and reader.

Returning a final time to Oliver Goldsmith, this section moves into an examination of a bookseller-character whose surname, “Fudge”, suggests, like Spinbrain’s, his literary dishonesty.
Goldsmith’s *Letters from a Citizen of the World to his Friends in the East* (1760-1) presents a short, but in many ways representative, study of a bookseller-character in one of the fictional letters that comprise this work. Goldsmith, according to Richard C. Taylor, was composing at a swift pace, “publishing an average of ten Chinese Letters each month for Newbery’s *Public Ledger* (24 January 1760-14 August 1761)” (98). *The Citizen of the World* criticizes many aspects of British society and culture in a style which aims to amuse while it instructs; several of the miscellaneous one hundred and nineteen letters satirize the operations of the literary marketplace, of which Goldsmith, deeply embedded in the world of print, was highly knowledgeable. Goldsmith’s career, according to Frank Donoghue, “epitomizes even at its earliest stages an insightful pragmatism that is driven by a sophisticated understanding of the literary cultures of his day” (86).

In this periodical work, Goldsmith enters into a discussion of the so-called republic of letters via a non-English observer, the putative Chinese narrator, Lien Chi Altangi. “Bred […] a scholar,” Altangi exudes an intelligence and idealism that gives credence to the judgments passed on Britain’s people, customs and institutions. The presence of the outsider produces a dynamic whereby aspects of the literary marketplace, some of which are cultural commonplaces, are comically spotlighted, even defamiliarized—which promotes questioning and re-evaluation. The imagined traveller, “a poor philosophic wanderer” as he calls himself in Letter II, has left his native land of China and sends informative letters to “Fum Hoam, first president of the ceremonial academy at Pekin” [sic] (20). Goldsmith’s comic exchange between the author-character, Altangi, and the bookseller-character, Mr. Fudge, emphasizes the tension between the impulse towards literary merit and the profit motive, as well as the necessity for professionalism as it combines mental labour and ethical commitment. The practices of the fictionalized literary marketplace—as they are “revealed” through the outsider, the non-English narrator—are
identified to the reader as subjects for both ridicule and serious critique, though there is an acceptance of commercialized letters as a permanent, and even potentially redeemable, institution. Throughout the letters that comprise *The Citizen of the World*, English culture is critiqued through largely unflattering comparisons with Chinese cultural practices. Lien Chi Altangi, in Letter LIII, is appalled by the English world of letters; unlike that of his own country, the English marketplace is populated by two unpleasant figures, “Bawdy and Pertness” (221). Altangi discovers to his dismay that there are “none more fashionable; none so sure of admirers” as these two qualities of writing (221). In Letter XLV, he comments on the propensity of Londoners to chase after absurd, monstrous live performances. He remarks that while men and women will freely spend their money on “wonders,” they refuse to open their purses in support of more rational diversions. In this letter an unsuccessful young writer, “a man of good nature and learning,” complains to Altangi about the “misplaced generosity of the times” (193). Using his own case as an example, the disappointed author relates: “I spent part of my youth in attempting to instruct and amuse my fellow creatures, and all my reward has been solitude, poverty, and reproach” (193). Comparing himself against the men in possession of more frivolous skills than writing—a fiddler or a man who can “whistle double”—he exclaims that these sort of entertainers are “rewarded, applauded, and caressed!” (194). These kinds of live performances can be equated to discursive performances within the literary marketplace, the most marketable and the lightest forms and genres being privileged by London booksellers.

Wayne C. Booth remarks on the kind of characters Altangi encounters in his travels: they are “not only ‘humorous’ but ‘humours,’ highly caricatured two-dimensional’ folk who go through the same paces each time they come on stage” (32). The bookseller is one of these comical, though I would add deceptively simple, characters who enters into Goldsmith’s text. In Letter L, a stranger is introduced to Altangi, who is immediately wary of his visitor, who seems
too fawningly amicable. Alive to hypocrisy in those around him, Altangi writes: “I am suspicious of my company, when I find them very civil without any apparent reason”; therefore he “answered the stranger’s caresses at first with reserve” (214). Altangi’s friend indicates the visitor’s occupation by querying “whether he had published any thing new.” This man, a bookseller named Mr. Fudge, replies that he has not, as it is “not the season” to do so (214). All too willingly displaying his expertise on the topic, he elaborates on the seasonal nature of publishing:

[B]ooks have their time as well as cucumbers; I would no more bring out a new work in summer, than I would sell pork in the dog days. Nothing in my way goes off in summer, except very light goods indeed. A review, a magazine, or a sessions paper, may amuse a summer reader; but all of our stock of value we reserve for a spring and winter trade (214).

The comparison between selling new books in the summer and “pork in the dog days” is a crude one. The mercenary bookseller, by crassly likening his wares to groceries, is underscoring his practical understanding of the book as a commodity. Focused on the superficial aspects of marketability, he seems to be uninterested in artistic merit as a factor in his decision-making as a bookseller. Moneymaking being his sole consideration, he publishes exclusively to meet the tastes of the town. This “talkative bookseller” shamelessly reveals his profit-driven strategies, while claiming that “it is not my way to cry up my own goods” (214). Boasting is, however, the typical purview of the bookseller-character; Fudge is no exception, though he purports to speak “without exaggeration” (214). He advertises the novelty of the works he publishes, declaring: “my books have the peculiar advantage of being always new” (214). Having no interest in works no longer fresh from the printer, he reveals that he “clears off my old to the trunkmakers every season” (214). The unsold book—never a vessel of truth for him—becomes just a quantity of
waste paper when it fails to take its place on customers’ bookshelves. Everett Zimmerman recognizes this devaluation in Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub*, which features a similar “figuring [of] modern books as bales of paper, which metonymically constitute two alimentary metaphors: books are a bare livelihood or, ultimately, mere refuse” (108). Like the hack narrator of Swift’s prose satire, Fudge places too much emphasis on paratexts—dedications, illustrations, and the title pages rather than the main texts they frame. One of his self-laudatory claims is that “I have ten new title pages now about me, which only want books to be added to make them the finest things in nature” (214). To Fudge, the most important part of the work is already present and to write a book to fit the title page is a small matter. Presented in its comical extremity, content is immaterial: the matter of the book has not yet been produced; its production is necessary, but at the same time inconsequential.

Frank Donoghue references this encounter between the narrator and Mr. Fudge, observing that Lien Chi presents booksellers “as slavishly responsive to a reading public that they see as driven by vanity” (86). The bookseller does not, like others, “pretend to direct the vulgar” (214). Instead, he unashamedly proclaims: “I always let the vulgar direct me; where ever popular clamour arises, I always echo the million” (214). Namely, he allows the reading public to direct him in artistic and ethical matters, giving an example of this dynamic: “should the people in general say that such a man is a rogue, I instantly give orders to set him down in print as a villain; thus every man buys the book, not to learn new sentiments, but to have the pleasure of seeing his own reflected” (214). Altangi continues questioning Fudge in order to come to a clearer understanding of what appears to him a shockingly wrongheaded approach to truth, literature, and human relations, the bookseller for example promoting unsubstantiated personal attacks. Altangi interrupts this speech to enquire whether he can see any of these works, and the bookseller agrees to show him his “plans,” though he confesses that he is “very cautious of
communicating them to any,” ironically worried about being the victim of the trade’s unscrupulous practices—practices which we suspect he would himself use (214). He prefaces this list of works with the assurance that “they are diamonds of the first water” and begins his catalogue:

Imprimis, A translation of several medical precepts for the use of such physicians as do not understand Latin. Item, the young clergyman’s art of placing patches regularly, with a dissertation on the different manner of smiling without distorting the face. Item, the proper manner of cutting black-lead pencils, and making crayons; by the Right Hon. the Earl of ***. Item, the muster master General, or the review of reviews—. (215)

Fudge’s list is a compilation of “bookseller’s jobs,” hack pieces informed by no real learning or moral truths. Some of these works are devised (like Spinbrain’s projected pieces) to facilitate other kinds of cheating within society: unlearned physicians, for example, can fake an understanding of Latin for the purpose of duping the sick into paying for their (likely incompetent) treatments. Other works Fudge advances are directed at readers desiring a moment’s diversion and little else; these works touch on subjects of limited utility and therefore neither assist in filling gaps in learning or in alleviating ignorance (serving rather to perpetuate it). These frivolous texts are—to the amusement of Goldsmith’s readers—penned by highly inappropriate individuals, people who seem particularly unqualified to write with authority on the subject with which they are charged. These absurd writer/topic combinations do more than suggest that the bookseller is either obtuse or ingenious (if the novelty of these pairings is intentional, meant to spark readers’ interest): undiscerning readers and irresponsible writers might also be indicted here, for instead of composing sermons or other manner of religious texts, the clergyman-author writes of facial adornments, a frivolous skill that readers apparently want to acquire. His proper field is, as Goldsmith’s ideal readers know, religion. Writing for the
bookseller signals the clergyman’s misplaced priorities, his superficiality in an age debased by fashion and print; or, the book trade is satirically targeted for wilfully ignoring the artistic or social consequences of what they publish. As the close readings throughout this dissertation corroborate, details in these exchanges matter; they facilitate the development of a kind of expert reader, who, directed to judge both parties in these exchanges, can consequently identify what ought to be transpiring through the *objective laughter* at these comic scenes.

In mid-recitation, Fudge is again interrupted by Altangi, this time with the cry that “*my curiosity with regard to title pages is satisfied, I should be glad to see some longer manuscript, an history, or an epic poem*” (215). The bookseller, however, replies with “now you speak of an epic poem, you shall see an excellent farce” (215). Though these works lie at opposite ends of the spectrum of genre, the bookseller considers serious epic poetry and the sportive farce as interchangeable: when Altangi asks for the one, Fudge proffers the other. “Here it is,” Fudge says when he offers up the play to the narrator’s inspection, “dip into it where you will, it will be found replete with true modern humour. Strokes, Sir, it is fill’d with strokes of wit and satire in every line” (215). The bookseller is likely dealing in veiled slander, the dashes replacing the names of misbehaving—or supposedly misbehaving—members of high society. Goldsmith does not countenance this kind of pointed, vicious satire; Altangi is unimpressed, commenting “Do you call these dashes of the pen strokes...for I must confess I can see no other” and seeing no artistic merit in the farce (215). Fudge, remarking on the popularity of this style, attempts to vindicate this work, asking “Do you see any thing good now a-days that is not filled with strokes—and dashes?” (215). Yet at the crux of their artistic conflict is their differing ways of defining “good.” Continuing on this subject of the dash-heavy text, the bookseller says:

Sir, a well placed dash makes half the wit of our writers of modern humour. I bought last season, a piece that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five
breaks, seventy-two ha ha’s, three good things and a garter. And yet it play’d off, and bounced, and cracked, and made more sport than a fire-work (215).

This “fire-work” piece did “pay,” according to the bookseller-character. Nonetheless, he complains about the indifferent success of the winter season: “I gain’d by two murders, but then lost by an ill timed charity sermon” (215). His enthusiasm for “murders” and his distaste for the sermon on charity identifies Fudge as unmoored from the basic tenants of Christianity, Mammon being his god. He elaborates on his last successful publication, deeming it “a piece touch’d off by the hand of a master, filled with good things from one end to the other. The author had nothing but jest in view; no dull moral lurking beneath, nor ill-natured satyr to sour the readers [sic] good humour; he wisely considered that moral and humour at the same time were quite over doing the business” (215). Altangi responds with horrified incomprehension, crying “To what purposes was the book then published?” (215). Fudge’s answer to this is succinct, expressing his single-minded philosophy of publishing. “Sir,” he pronounces, “the book was published in order to be sold (215), articulating an economically-centred view similar to that of the bookseller in Joseph Andrews. Fudge adds that “no book sold better, except the criticisms upon it, which came out soon after” (215). He then enters into a discussion of literary criticism, which under his direction, is a mechanical money-making genre, debased by the authors he employs and encourages in their worst tendencies. Fudge describes one author-turned-critic working for him:

I once had an author who never left the least opening for the critics: close was the word, always very right, and very dull, ever on the safe side of an argument; yet, with all his qualifications, incapable of coming into favour. I soon perceived that his bent was for criticism; and he was good for nothing else, supplied him with pens and paper, and planted him at the beginning of every month as a censor on the works of others (216).
Fudge—whose enthusiasm for this particular author-character speaks ill of this man—extols his critic’s abilities while disregarding his degenerate character. “In short,” he raves, “I found him a treasure, no merit could escape him, but what is most remarkable of all, he ever wrote best and bitterest when drunk,” which bespeaks the lack of professionalism on both sides (216). Fudge perversely admires the author’s ability to write under the influence of alcohol and just as perversely equates “best” with “bitterest”—this knowledge pointing to the intimacy of their relationship (216). In the case of the drunken critic, intoxication would indicate a penchant for writing without control and reason, compassion and humanity.

The tendency of the bookseller-character to praise his debauched—and even criminal—authors appears in several other texts I examine in this dissertation. Essentially, the bookseller’s enthusiasm for individual low-life hacks coincides with his enthusiasm for their inferior literary productions. Fudge admires his inebriated writer’s debased method of criticism, his universal application of rancour. Altangi disapproves of this process, interrupting yet again with the question of whether there are “some works [...] that from the very manner of their composition must be exempt from criticism” (216). Fudge, however, claims that “There is no work whatsoever but he can criticise [sic][...] even though you wrote in Chinese he would have a pluck at you” (216). The critic, clearly a bookseller’s hack, is not dissuaded by his unfamiliarity with foreign languages like Chinese, accustomed to the practice of passing judgement on texts he has not read or does not understand—his bookseller only demanding of him imitative competence, the ability to copy what has proved popular and to write by formula.

Mr. Fudge, overstepping the bounds of taste, speculates that if Altangi was interested in professional writing, one of his hireling critics could easily belittle his work. He confidently predicts: “Suppose you should take it in your head to publish a book, let it be a volume of Chinese letters for instance; write how you will, he shall shew the world you could have written
it better” (216). Elaborating on the future of this yet unwritten text, the bookseller informs Altangi:

Should you, with the most local exactness, stick to the manners and customs of the country from whence you come; should you confine yourself to the narrow limits of eastern knowledge, and be perfectly simple, and perfectly natural, he has then the strongest reason to exclaim. He may with a sneer send you back to China for readers” (216).

By this point in the conversation the narrator is irate and cries that “in order to avoid his indignation, and what I should fear more, that of the public, I would in such a case write with all the knowledge I was master of” (216). Rhetorical skill, knowledge, principles and the other weapons in the arsenal of literary merit are useless to repel enemy critics on the warpath. This is a perversion of the genre of the literary review, for as James G. Basker observes, authors like Smollett and Goldsmith “saw the potential of book reviewing as a truly critical and edifying science” (68). Up against this ruthless force, Altangi is adamant in his commitment to literary excellence and honest self-representation, as he modestly lays claim to only a small amount of learning and adds: “I would not suppress what little I had, nor would I appear more stupid than nature made me” (216). The bookseller escalates the argument by highlighting the author-character’s (hypothetical) powerlessness in the face of the trade’s opposition; even if Altangi refuses to play the fool and writes to his abilities, he would nonetheless be damned as “unnatural, uneastern, quite out of character; erroneously sensible would be the whole cry” (216). The imagined letters—regardless of their style or content—are a doomed project in the eyes of the tyrannical bookseller, who simply wants to display his authority. The writer, when targeted as the object of merciless criticism, is likened to a pursued animal, Fudge threatening: “we should then hunt you down like a rat,” his verbal attack taking on a violence of expression that reveals
the amoral brutality of his competitiveness (217). Altangi expresses his anger and frustration with the bookseller’s projections, for Mr. Fudge confidently boasts to his enraged listener that he and the critic can “prove you a dunce in spite of your teeth,” using their libellous creativity to forge a false reputation for Altangi, presumably to divest him of any influence with other booksellers. (217).

After tossing off this nasty threat, the bookseller-character suddenly shifts gears and cuts short the heated argument to “come to business,” finally asking the favour alluded to earlier in the meeting (217). Fudge, not gauging the outraged Altangi’s mood or correctly interpreting the author-character’s questions as criticisms, fails to view the interchange in the same light as either the author-character or the reader of the text. Here he is the “straight man” of the double act within this scene, a bad reader, of people and by extension, of books. Readers are intended to find humour in this misunderstanding, this talking at cross-purposes; moreover, readers are put in a position of moral superiority over the bookseller and informational superiority over Altangi, whose total ignorance of the book trade makes readers experts on this milieu. Bonds, which are created by understanding as well as flattery, are strengthened between the real author and his readers who, recognizing the unprofessionalism mocked in this conversation, attribute this comedy to the historical author’s own professional status—a status that necessitates an understanding of the ethical rules of conduct.

Unconcerned or unaware that the conversation has upset Altangi, Fudge—thinking only of commerce and viewing writers as “its” engaged in “it-making” rather than feeling human beings—quickly moves on from their artistic conflict, eager as he is to resolve a publishing matter. The bookseller, evidencing both boldness and duplicity, asks the narrator whether he would put his name on a work, “a history of China” that he currently has in press. The comically clueless Fudge expects Altangi to accept his offer, though he extends no real recompense for the
writer’s involvement in this ruse, merely saying that he “shall repay the obligation with gratitude” (217). The bookseller, again less concerned about content than with the information on the title page, namely the author’s legitimizing name, is obviously trying to cheat the reading public by claiming a piece of misleading hackery is in fact an informed, scholarly work by a Chinese intellectual. The author-character strenuously objects to this dishonest proposal, promising: “Never while I retain a proper respect for the public and myself” (217). The guiding idea of the “appropriate” coming out of the “inappropriate” is of service here in explaining the twinned comedy and critique of this scene and in appreciating authorial strategies of power consolidation which Goldsmith deploys in *The Citizen of the World*. The formerly loquacious Mr. Fudge is finally chastened somewhat by this last statement, Altangi observing: “The bluntness of my reply quite abated the ardour of the bookseller’s conversation” (217). This concluding observation of Goldsmith’s letter-writer looks forward to Chapter Four, an analysis of author/bookseller exchanges that exhibit power tipped in favour of the author-character; in this later section, two of my textual examples involve the bookseller-character being educated—potentially indicating the openness of the literary merchant to dialogue and a shift away from monologic speechifying and other signals of ideological rigidity.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four each centre on a power dynamic between intradiegetic authors and booksellers observable in eighteenth-century fiction and drama published before 1790. I group those texts and address them by evaluating the final position of the author-characters and bookseller-characters—in essence, determining who possesses the highest degree of “outcome power”—defined by Keith Dowling as “the ability of an actor to bring about or help to bring about outcomes” (5) or more casually, “the ability to get what you want”—when their interactions draw to a close (71). Chapter Two concentrates on literary interactions between naïve authors and manipulative booksellers and begins with a short overview of *amateur* author-
characters in eighteenth-century literature. Mocked as eccentric individuals, sometimes explicitly *gendered* individuals, rather than as ciphers of commercial writing, amateur writers demonstrate the legitimacy of print; they are comic foils to the Professional Author—who is not a character within the narrative, but as an ideal that hovers *above* the narrative. Proceeding into a more involved inquiry into the *aspiring* author-character, I closely read Parson Adams’ conversation with a bookseller in Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* and also discuss Melopoyne’s experiences with the book trade in Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventures of Roderick Random*. Chapter Three fixes on scenes in fiction and drama with knowing writers and obtuse booksellers who are undermined by author-characters. The primary texts I examine in this chapter include Henry Fielding’s comic medley, *The Author’s Farce*, first performed and published in 1730, and an anonymous novel, *The True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body* (1740). I end the chapter by examining a comic duo within *The Patron* (1764) by mid-century playwright, actor, and theatre manager Samuel Foote. In these works, the bookseller-character is unseated from his authoritative position via practical jokes or rational arguments, in both cases the merchant being “schooled” in some way. Chapter Four presents texts in which something of a balance of power is achieved by authors and booksellers’ dynamic relations. The primary texts explored in this chapter include Samuel Foote, *The Author* (1757), Elizabeth Montagu’s *Dialogue XXVIII. Plutarch, Charon, and a Modern Bookseller* (1760), Arthur Murphy’s breezy prelude, *News from Parnassus* (1776; first published 1786), and a novel by Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). Chapter Five is a focused reading of *The Adventures of an Author*, anonymously published in 1767. The novel, a generic hybrid of the picaresque, the “it narrative,” and the novelistic social panorama, features multiple author-characters and bookseller-characters, and is an ideal locus for drawing conclusions about the dynamic relationships between literary professionals in its era.
Chapter 2

Oppressed Authors, Oppressive Booksellers

She oft had heard, that poets chose
To be retired from noise and rout;
And fancied she could now compose,
If she could find a subject out.

By chance she had one pocket on;
Therein a pencil neatly made:
She pulled it out, and sat her down,
And thought she’d more than half her trade.

The back-side of a billet doux
Was ready to receive her notions:
The first thing she resolved to do,
To put in rhyme her morn devotions.

from Sarah Dixon, “The Slattern” (1740)

Mocking Amateurs, Establishing Professionalism

The poem from which this chapter’s epigraph is extracted centers on an amateur female scribbler named Salina who, inspired by love, unsuccessfully tries her hand at versifying only to be rejected by the muses she invokes. This characterization of an aspiring poetess can be read as Sarah Dixon’s poetic entry into the period’s discussion of the figure of the woman writer; Dixon paints a vivid portrait of the defective authoress—unkempt, uninspired, and, as the presence of the love note might imply, unchaste—in order to establish the qualities of the exemplary female writer.17 This satirical author-character is in itself a paradoxical kind of self-representation, her

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17 As I have noted in Chapter One, the majority of female-author characters in eighteenth-century imaginative literature are amateurs, rarely depicted as directly participating in the literary marketplace (other than as consumers). This can be connected to attitudes about femininity and visibility, as Norma Clarke, noting the retreat of women writers from the eighteenth-century public sphere observes that “by the mid century, the mark of female authorship
ability to recognize and effectively mock Salina confirming Dixon’s distance from this type of author. Yet “The Slattern” can also be read as satirizing the presumptuous amateur, as Dixon “makes fun of young women who underestimate the work of the poet” (Hager 86). Bemused readers are guided to consider Salina, remote from the paradigmatic Literary Professional, unqualified to even solipsistically “put in rhyme her morning devotions” (20). Though this phrase suggests prayer, her “devotions” are carnal rather than spiritual, as she wonders “which name to use / Of Damon, Pythias, or Endymion” for her subject, Salina’s lover (25-26). These allusions to Greek mythology point to the authoress’s wantonness as well as to the stereotypical bad poet’s reliance on literary cliché.\textsuperscript{18}

Dixon’s portrait is an example of how writers outside of the print community are sometimes rendered ridiculous in imaginative literature, Salina’s efforts being unaccompanied by talent and taste as well as the professional’s knowledge of the literary marketplace. Like other literary aspirants, her ideas about how poets work are based on hearsay, what “She oft had heard” (9). Salina assumes that by having her writing materials on hand, a piece of paper and a pencil, she has accomplished “more than half her trade” supposing the act of writing to be nearly effortless once she had made the decision to compose (16). “Trade” is used ironically as Salina barely produces anything, which can be contrasted with the frenetic overproduction of the bookseller’s hack. Writer’s block prevents the spontaneous effusions Salina expects to flow from her pencil, the poetess foiled by the muses and her own mental limitations. After crafting two rhyming couplets, she is forced to stop because “no farther had the nymph the power” to

\textsuperscript{18} Miles comments on the saturation of eighteenth-century literature with classical mythology, which was criticized by the likes of Joseph Addison and Lord Chesterfield. These cultural commentators objected to the artificial poetic diction of their contemporaries, “eighteenth-century poetry,” Miles observes, being “cluttered with conventional, fossilized allusions to ‘Jupiter and Junos’” (12). Later in the century, hack writers, imitating neoclassical imitations, could consult dictionaries of Greek myth like John Lemprière’s \textit{Classical Dictionary} (1788) and \textit{Bell’s New Pantheon} (1790).
progress beyond her initial trivial sentiment (37). She calls in vain on the muse of tragedy and
then the muse of comedy and “Just then her petticoat broke a string, / And forced her home to
mend it” (43-44). The words “just then” suggest that Melopoyn and Thalia, the muses
themselves, have prompted this embarrassment, in order to send Salina a veiled message to quit
her amateur endeavours. In the physicality of her representation, the female amateur intersects
with the reproachable among commercial writers. Like stereotypical Grub Street hack writers,
unprofessional professionals whose material circumstances are inseparable from their literary
exertions, Salina’s dress and writing are connected, as she experiences a wardrobe malfunction
precisely as her literary efforts come to naught. This scene of humiliation is loosely repeated
throughout the century—earlier, for example, in the Scriblerian farce Three Hours after
Marriage (1717)—but usually with human witnesses to the amateur’s inept versifying and
human agents to duly clip the fledging writer’s wings. Amateur authors, male and female, are
routinely mocked in eighteenth-century literature, even when they possess money or social
position; through laughter, readers are encouraged to join forces with the actual authors who pen
these unflattering portraits and thereby “close the communicative distance of print” (Siskin 166).
Though overpublished hacks are also lampooned, print nonetheless stands as a legitimizing force
in imaginative literature, being the medium through which individual readers and critics are
obviously engaged; however random the actual process of literary celebrity, print is the means by
which eighteenth-century authors acquired fame and reputation, and built a career.19

Considering London’s growing population of readers, publishing was vital to making a
significant cultural impact through literature; therefore professional writing was, to a certain
extent, taken for granted by the mid eighteenth century. Frank Donoghue talks about the ubiquity

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19 Frank Donoghue’s The Fame Machine examines the changing nature of the literary career in the increasingly commercial book culture of eighteenth-century England.
and acceptance of print culture, observing that “regardless how differently writers like Johnson and Ralph defined their labor and the kind of conduct suitable for their profession, they constructed a model of authorship that assumes participation in a competitive commerce in letters” (130). Authors compete with each other for the support of publishers and patrons and for the attention of their reading audience, individual readers being authorizers of print even as they are collectively implicated in generalized critiques of popular literary tastes. Irony is strategically deployed to obtain this attention, the flattery of irony being the flattery of shared knowledge. Readers and authors often know something the characters do not, the former positioned to interpret comic moments and comic intratexts in a different way than the characters in the story, thereby drawing the reader and the author closer together as collaborators in defining Literary Professionalism.

A superficial survey of eighteenth-century fiction and drama reveals victimized author-characters—manipulated, downtrodden, and exploited—and domineering booksellers are at the center of many fictional accounts of book trade relations. This common “type character,” the oppressed professional or would-be professional writer, is sometimes both impoverished and unwell, the result of being overworked, underpaid, or even underfed. Though eighteenth-century writers seem focused on introducing into their works author-characters who find the literary marketplace a disheartening, dehumanizing place, my approach is to provide a balanced reading of negotiations in which author-characters have not secured outcome power—the ability to achieve one’s desired ends—through interactions in the milieu of professional letters. It almost goes without saying that dialogues between members of the commercial literary world, scenes of tension and conflict between authors and booksellers, often critique the commodification of the book. The author-characters’ conversations with antagonistic publishers draw attention, sometimes through comic misunderstanding, to the fundamental ideological conflicts within the
world of commercial letters. As I indicated in my brief discussion of The Case of Authors by Profession or Trade in Chapter One, these conflicts were directly addressed in the non-fiction prose of the period, the figure of the booksellers bearing the brunt of the critique. Shaun Regan explains that “Ralph’s defense of authorial laborers entailed a narrowing of critical focus to the trade’s taskmasters” (291). Yet comic representations of oppressive relations between authors and booksellers do more than censure the values and practices of the book trade, the primary end of the nonfiction authorial polemic. These scenes also humorously confirm, mitigate, and complicate the tropes of author-as-victim and bookseller-as-victimizer. Within the works of imaginative literature addressed in this chapter, the obstacles to professional authorship are revealed to be internal and external, personal and impersonal, complicated by power, or more accurately the powers of the actors involved. Thus, “critical focus” is diffused, extended beyond “the trade’s taskmasters,” as some aspects of professional life are elevated above those of the amateur, whose independence is depicted as equivocal rather than ideal. Representations of the literary marketplace then reflect a “history of authorship,” that as George Justice argues, “becomes a dialectical rather than simply built upon an opposition between independence and dependence” (199).

Even in texts in which intradiegetic authorial status is low, there is an implicit acknowledgment of the positive potential of print, a recognition that is in keeping with J. Paul Hunter’s observation that “the awareness of print as a special phenomenon that offered specific possibilities became very much heightened for writers at the beginning of the eighteenth century” (41). Careful close readings of seemingly predictable stock scenes reveal the paradigm of the Literary Professional constructed out of the ruins of the author-character’s disappointment, the outcome foregrounded and thematized in each of the texts in this chapter. The conversations between characters also establish Literary Professionalism as a concept akin to the modern idea
of a Profession as a moral endeavour within a commercial society. Public service and professionalism were directly linked in Vicesimus Knox’s “On Adorning Life by Some Laudable Exertion.”\(^{20}\) Professional men, according to Knox, should aim “to do good in an effective and extensive manner within the limits of professional influence” (qtd. in Ferris and Keen 47). This chapter, the first of three that uses outcome power as an organizing principle, focuses on oppressed author-characters interacting with equally fictionalized members of the book trade, booksellers, or in the case of Samuel Foote’s *The Author*, a printer’s devil who stands in for his employer. As my analysis of the conversation between Oliver Goldsmith’s Mr. Fudge and the narrator-character Lien Chi Altangi in Chapter One anticipated, the relationships between literary literary professionals explored in this chapter are comically unequal and result in moments of negotiation, misunderstanding, instruction, and conflict that do not finally empower the author-character in the diegetic worlds of these texts.

The historical writers examined in this chapter exploit the openness and ambiguities of comedy, which can be more epistemologically productive than more serious modes like the tragic, the sentimental, and the polemic. Comedy, it has been argued, welcomes ambiguity, coming out of an “acceptance of disparateness” (Heilman 245). In eighteenth-century comic texts like Smollett’s *Roderick Random*, disenfranchised author-characters are not used to create unambiguously pathetic narratives, which would effectively close the discussion of how to view the relationships within the literary marketplace. These fictionalized writers are instead parodic precursors to the idea of suffering genius ushered in by the untimely death and subsequent

\(^{20}\) Paul Keen’s excellent contribution to *Bookish Histories* and to the larger scholarly conversation about the professional author in eighteenth-century culture directed me towards Knox’s writings.
idolization of Thomas Chatterton.¹¹ These thwarted writers are made ridiculous in ways that effectively disarm their potential for tragedy and that complicate interpreting their travail as Chattertonesque.²² Though comedy in one sense simplifies through typifying, stock scenes of book trade transactions—remarkably varied in their rehearsal in the texts I examine—demonstrate the complexities of the power dynamics within the eighteenth-century literary marketplace. Comic characters therefore transcend the neat binaries from which they would seem to emerge.

Nonetheless, the literary marketplace with its “mushrooming population of writers,” to borrow Frank Donoghue’s apt phrase, needed to establish the qualifications of the Professional Writer against other examples of cultural production (1). The discovery of the appropriate through the inappropriate ends up being rhetorically effective, as the paradigmatic Literary Professional (the appropriate) is largely formed through comic magnifications of unprofessional interactions (inappropriate), though readers are intermittently privy to instances of professionalism on both sides of these literary factions. Literary Professionalism, however, is still by and large latent in these texts, not simply because its open representation would be less entertaining, presenting less of an opportunity for humour than the unruly exchanges of its opposite; inscribed professional exchanges would have the potential to uncomfortably close the gap between Professional Authors and booksellers—this alliance being largely the purview of the bookseller’s hack in eighteenth-century fiction. Also, the positioning of these literary professionals together would affect the readers’ place in the commercial literary triad of

¹¹ Near the end of the eighteenth century, the legacy of the young Bristol poet and forger would reshape cultural conceptions of the author. William L. Pressly summarizes this development: “Chatterton quickly became the archetypal romantic poet, of whom the world was not worthy…” (165).

²² Several essays in Nick Groom’s collection Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture discuss Thomas Chatterton and eighteenth-century literary culture, e.g. Claude Rawson’s “Unparodying and Forgery: The Augustan Chatterton.”
Producer-Distributor-Consumer, implicitly shifting the blame for literary decline onto readers. Individual readers are not reprimanded for their place in the circuit of commodified letters, but flattered as knowing arbiters of Literary Professionalism. Mocking author-characters and bookseller-characters creates distance between readers and the ersatz literary professionals, while closing the gap between those individual readers and the real author, the latter cultivating a shared perspective with the former. Both reader and writer recognize the author-character’s similarity to the risible amateur whose failings are implicitly an argument for the professionalization of print culture. Many of the putative writers in the works addressed in this chapter, for example, are would-be professionals who share undesirable characteristics with the amateur, and the typified underprofessional professional, the hack. Ultimately the historical author, who privileges his relationship with the reader, is able to uphold the importance of print while sidestepping the problem of the bookseller, a liability in the minting of literary professionalism.

In the selection of scenes I examine, the verbal exchanges come to a close with the bookseller-characters securing outcome power. Power in these scenes tends toward the unilateral as opposed to bilateral, the bookseller-characters’ heavy-handed treatment of their writers resulting in the control or suppression of the aspirants’ literary productions, exercising as they do various forms of power, including the resource power, the power of coercion, and informational power—knowledge, whether true or false, about the workings of the print market. In this chapter I examine four primary texts from the period which feature exchanges in which author-characters are checked by members of the print trade: Henry Fielding’s Joseph Andrews, Tobias Smollett’s The Adventures of Roderick Random, Thomas Bridges’ The Adventures of a Bank-Note, and

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23 Christopher Flint stresses “the intention to activate readerly participation” that is revealed in eighteenth-century typography (112).
finally, Samuel Foote’s *The Author*. By the end of these scenes, outcome power can be roughly assessed as being on the side of the bookseller or his agent, though humour is incorporated into these dialogues so individual readers do not commiserate too deeply with the author-character and thus dismiss print wholesale as incommensurate with merit. I begin with Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* because of its depiction of an exaggeratedly naïve author-character, Parson Adams, whose literary ambitions are questioned by a former author and cut down by a domineering bookseller. Adams’ innocence about the book trade draws readers’ attention to the ethically problematic attitudes and practices of commercial publishing and the opportunities it presents for the abuse of power. Adams’ revelatory conversations with the bullying Parson Barnabas and the bookseller also uncover his comical similarities to the typified amateur writer, Fielding thus establishing a set of ideals regarding professional authorship through their successful or unsuccessful embodiment. I will also consider professional authorship as it plays a part in Fielding’s interpolated story of George, comparing these two examples of the trials of authorship in the novel. The commercial marketplace is a recurring theme of Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, which features an inset narrative about a beleaguered poet, Melopoyn, whom the novel’s title hero meets in prison. As this interpolated story reveals, Melopoyn’s negotiation of commercial authorship in the metropolis, which involved several meetings with bookseller-characters, has led to his incarceration. From there I turn to *The Adventures of a Bank-Note*, an “it narrative” in which the object-narrator circulates through London, coming into contact with several writer-characters, through stock scenes between an oppressive bookseller and an oppressed author replayed with illumining variations. I will concentrate on the “Literary distress” of Squire Tag-rhime, identified as the “father” of the speaking promissory note, examining two contrasting encounters between this author-character and his publisher (1:16). Concluding this chapter is a reading of Samuel Foote’s *The Author*—a
mid-century comedy that revolves around the title character, Dick Bever, a published writer whose knowledge of the literary marketplace exceeds that of the other author-characters scrutinized in this chapter. Literary Professionalism is established through Bever’s interactions with a series of literary figures, which bring Foote’s audience closer to an understanding of Literary Professionalism. In all four texts, comic dialogues facilitate a critique of—and argument for—the importance of print.

*Joseph Andrews, or The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*

Like many novels structured by adventures on the road, Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) provides readers with a literary social panorama of eighteenth-century life, presented through encounters between the protagonist and type characters drawn from different levels of society and from several professions. In light of this novelistic drive toward comprehensive representation and the period’s preoccupation with literature about literature, the world of professional letters naturally comes to the fore on several occasions in Fielding’s narrative. Unequal power relations are found everywhere within this panoramic fictionalization of society, including, of course, among literary types. One of the novel’s two protagonists, Abraham Adams, is an unworldly parson and an equally unworldly writer. George Justice, comparing authors and clergyman, claims that “Like the clergy, the authors of modern literature have (in popular conception, at least) proclaimed an allegiance to their calling that supposedly transcends the immediate demands of the world that supports them” (209). Yet Adams naturally accepts a holistic idea of writing as commercially viable and personally authentic. He is a stereotypically naïve writer-character, baffled and angered by what seems like uniquely irrational treatment by a bookseller-character, his reactions exposing, but more accurately defamiliarizing,
the wrongs which are commonplace complaints of eighteenth-century writers. Naïve author-characters like Adams, in their echoes of amateurism as well as innate professionalism, reflect the desirable and undesirable qualities of authorship in an irreversibly commercial—but not necessarily intellectually and morally corrosive—culture of printed letters. Significantly, the potentially tragic thrust of authorial suffering in *Joseph Andrews* is blunted by comedy, which diffuses the effect which would conclusively mark the bookseller-character as a villain and the writer-character as a victim—specifically an artist-victim whose mistreatment announces his superiority.

Early in the narrative Adams encounters two other literary men, first another parson/author-character and then a bookseller-character. His comic encounters with each are part of a larger program of fictionalizing and complicating the trope of authorial oppression. Adams’ scene with a prospective publisher largely conforms to the type of exchange with which this chapter is concerned: an exchange in which booksellers secure greater outcome power than authors within the narrative. The episode involving Parson Adams and the bookseller-character falls firmly into this category, Adams’ lack of influence over the outcome of this scene being in no small part because he possesses certain qualities of the period’s stereotypical literary amateur as well as several of the Professional Author.

Parson Adams, who becomes Joseph Andrew’s traveling companion, is a clergyman, and would-be professional writer. He meets the novel’s hero while journeying to London, the center of Britain’s book trade, in hopes of publishing his sermons there. Like Sarah Dixon’s Salina, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Adams is overly sanguine about his literary prospects; but unlike Salina, he has successfully set his thoughts down on paper, having penned an
astonishing nine volumes of sermons. Adams thinks to share his orations more widely when he comes across a bookseller’s notice, as he tells Joseph that he was “encouraged...by an Advertisement lately set forth by a Society of Booksellers, who proposed to purchase any Copies offered to them at a price considered by two people” (53). Most readers—those who possess at least a superficial knowledge of the book trade—would take pause at “any Copies [my italics],” and dismiss this offer as too good to be true; eighteenth-century booksellers were perceived as businessmen first, merchants too prudent to buy manuscripts willy-nilly. Adams, swayed by his inexorable optimism as well his ignorance of the workings of the book trade, believes the advertisement’s lines sufficient evidence to embark on horseback to London to seek his fortune. Like other aspiring writer-characters, the parson primarily turns to commercial letters out of financial necessity. His family (Adams has a wife and six children) has an “urgent need” which he expects to relieve by selling his sermons for “a considerable sum of money,” an unrealistic expectation for an unknown writer in the eighteenth century (53). On the road to the metropolis he stops at an inn where he spends the evening in the society of a doctor, an exciseman, and another parson, Barnabas, who also, at one point in his life, possessed and acted on his own literary ambitions. It should be noted here that in several other works examined in this dissertation, conversations—and power struggles—involving two or more author-characters are often positioned before, after, or even during (as an interruption) encounters between the author and bookseller. Author-bookseller dialogues do not operate in isolation from other connections and communities within the literary world. Thus, author-characters are frequently depicted speaking with former authors or more/less seasoned authors who, like Barnabas, perform some of the rhetorical functions of the bookseller-character, asserting power by doling out advice and

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24 Homer Goldberg notes that Fielding is inconsistent about the number of volumes Adams has written. In the first edition of Joseph Andrews, Adams penned three volumes; in the fourth edition of the novel Fielding changed this to nine, but did not correct the first reference to three volumes (n. 60).
judging the merits of the other writer’s work. Moreover, these conversations echo many of the cultural and ethical issues raised in negotiations between author-characters and bookseller-characters. Power relations in the fictionalized book trade are often replicated within these scenes, and solidarity among author-characters is no more likely than conflict and instability between them.

Fielding gradually reveals this volatility among cultural producers in the discussion that ensues between his two parsons, who begin their conversation civilly and amicably enough over a bowl of punch. The aim of Parson Adams’ journey is brought up and a discussion of the viability of the sermon as a literary commodity follows. Though Barnabas announces that he “will not be vain,” he transparently establishes his superior position in the scene by boasting of his own unpublished sermons. Though he did not succeed in obtaining the legitimacy of print (or aristocratic patronage), he considers his works legitimized by the opinions of men of authority, engaging in the kind of boasting bookseller-characters deploy to awe their interlocutors. Barnabas tells Adams: “to be concise with you, three Bishops said they were the best that ever were writ” (60). The more experienced writer may be exaggerating this pronouncement to make the point that Adams should not hope to succeed where he, lauded by the great, failed. Barnabas reports that his own volume of sermons was never printed, his manuscript rejected by a bookseller who would offer him nothing, the former author recounting that “the Dog refused me a Concordance in Exchange” (60). The literary merchant would not even accept the sermons when they are finally offered for “free,” since the bookseller would have to shoulder the costs of their publication.25 The former author decries the bookseller who “had the Impudence to refuse [Barnabas’] Offer, by which means [he] lost a good Living” (60). Barnabas’ comments on this

25 If the bookseller-character had accepted the manuscript gratis, Barnabas would receive no copy money, but would stand to benefit from dedicating this work to a prospective gentleman patron.
loss suggest that the bookseller frivolously gives the aforementioned Living away “in exchange for a pointer,” hunting trumping religion, as the unsuitability of the clergyman who received the position is implied. The church is not a real concern of the gentleman, who would compromise the spiritual well-being of parishioners on his land in order to obtain either public flattery or a fine dog. Barnabas’ presumably flattering dedication would have falsified the gentleman’s character and facilitated his potential patron’s hypocrisy by connecting him in print to a religious work.

Barnabas’ ill-treatment by the unnamed bookseller, for whom he expresses scorn and derision, does not mark this parson as a suffering writer, unrecognized and unrewarded for his merit. His very attempt to villainize the bookseller (as in the case of John Hawksworth’s Timothy Spinbrain in Chapter One) is a sign of the author-character’s own dubious character. Fielding, often through the narrator, underscores Barnabas’ comic unsuitability as a religious writer, this characterization mitigating the harshness of the readers’ view of the “impudent” bookseller while identifying the writer-character as falling short of Professional Authorship in precise ways. Barnabas also blames his rejection by the bookseller on a more general lack of demand for his genre, confident in a different outcome “if Sermons would have gone down” (60). Readers’ changing buying habits have resulted in an oversaturation of the market, many sermons being published, but “not all sold yet” (60). When the question of how many sermons are currently on the market arises, Barnabas—wielding the power of insider knowledge of the book trade—answers with only some exaggeration according to contemporary scholars—that “a Bookseller told me he believed five thousand Volumes at least” (60). One of the other listeners, the doctor, is, like Adams, astounded by the quantity of religious prose circulating within the nation and wonders what “can be writ about” in all these books (60). The medical man—one of those reader-characters who occasionally interrupt exchanges between literary professionals to
contribute to discussions of literature—nostalgically looks to his youth, a time he perceives as a “golden age” of print; he recalls that “I used to read one of Tillotson's Sermons, and I am sure, if a Man practices half so much as in one of those Sermons, he will go to Heaven” (60). The doctor is identified as a discerning reader through this reference to the widely-read and admired sermons by seventeenth-century man of faith, John Tillotson (1630-1694), Archbishop of Canterbury. The doctor’s interjection suggests that in the past the print market was smaller and hence more selective, with fewer and perhaps better—more carefully conceived and thoughtfully executed—religious works being published. Though the doctor’s view of sermons as a genre is positive, his remarks would suggest that such a quantity of them is superfluous for the maintenance of Britain’s spiritual health, which will not necessarily be improved by a glut of published sermons. In chastising this reader-character, calling him “profane,” Barnabas hypocritically defends this overproduction while really supporting any literary manufacturing from which he stands to benefit, having no spiritual investment in his writing.

Parson Barnabas, as canny and jaded as Adams is ingenuous, generalizes about the reading public of the day, which, according to him, is devoid of individual readers like the doctor. Using his alleged understanding of the literary marketplace to assert his self-importance, Barnabas cynically—and hyperbolically—observes that “The Age was so wicked, that no body [sic] read Sermons,” implying the major reason why his own volume went unpublished (60). The narrator reports that “Barnabas greatly discouraged poor Adams” with his informed pessimism, but despite the former’s depressing “news,” Adams still believes in the value of his own potential contribution to the literary world, modestly calling his sermons not “totally unworthy of being printed” (66). Unlike the true Literary Professional—constructed through and against both parsons—Adams has unrealistic expectations about his sermons’ financial success, as he tells Barnabas: “I have been informed I might procure a very large Sum (indeed an immense one) on
them” (61). Barnabas articulates his doubts about these fair prospects and advises Adams on how to profit from his sermons by availing of unscrupulous publishing tactics—his belief being that one should accept and even capitalize on the vagaries of the print trade rather than resisting them. “If you desire to make some Money of them,” the unethical parson says to Adam, “perhaps you may sell them by advertising the Manuscript Sermons of a Clergyman lately deceased, all warranted Originals, and never printed” (61). The emphasis is here is on marketing and paratexts, rather than the content of the sermons, where the spiritual force—but not economic force—of these texts lies.26 The title yokes the sermons to a mysterious anonymous writer and his “found manuscript,” possibly seized by a wily Curllish bookseller. Yet this title is attractive for more than its suggestion of the interesting fiction of a dead clergyman with his secret stash of manuscripts. Homer Goldberg, recognizing the emphasis on the newness of the sermons, notes that “such a collection,” as Barnabas undoubtedly knows, “would be attractive to parsons unable or unwilling to compose their own sermons” (n. 61). The former author’s moral flexibility and willingness to exploit readers’ weakness and facilitate vice is antithetical to the Literary Professionalism that Adams’ indignation conversely suggests.

Near the end of this conversation, Barnabas demonstrates the kind of misuse of literature he encourages, asking Adams to borrow a funeral sermon, which he needs “this very day,” but of which he has “not penned a Line,” though he has apparently found time for casual conversation over punch. He hopes to avail of Adams’ work in order to shirk his own responsibilities as a man of the cloth. To a “common Sermon” from Adams’ collection, he intends to add “something handsome” on “the Deceased, upon whose Virtues [he] is to harangue, [who] was a little too

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26 This tactic is of a piece with the stratagems of the infamous early eighteenth-century bookseller Edmund Curll. Baines and Rogers write that “Curll became the most visible and unrepentant exponent of a new art of publicity in the early eighteenth century, which for Pope and his circle represented the absence of civilized discrimination between high and low culture, an intrusive interest in the private lives of the famous, and a mechanization of the art of writing” (1).
much addicted to Liquor, and publicly kept a Mistress” (61). Unconcerned about his subject’s immorality, Barnabas will compose anything if suitably recompensed (he will receive “a double Price” for this funeral). Adams in his ignorance and Barnabas in his corruption are comic authorial extremes, their conversation revealing the complexity of power relations in the literary world, but also leading readers closer to the figure of the Professional Author in fragmentary, circuitous ways.

Fielding’s aspiring author does not in the end take the other parson’s opinions to heart but maintains his belief in his own sermons’ “great Expectations” and chalks Barnabas’ negativity up to “Envy” (62). Moreover, Barnabas, despite his attempt to exert his influence over Adams, lacks the positional power of the bookseller which would add weight to proffered advice and information. Though Adams’ innocence about the book trade emerges relatively unscathed from his conversation with the knowing parson, a subsequent exchange decisively undermines the aspiring writer’s confidence and he becomes “educated in the full rigors of the print market he aspires to enter” (Licensing Entertainment 245). Barnabas introduces Adams to a stranger who alights from a horse at the same inn where Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews are staying. This new character’s appearance—he is described as “a fat, fair, sort of Person”—points to his prosperity, which is stereotypically indicated by corpulence, seen in many visual representations of booksellers from the period.\(^\text{27}\) He and Barnabas “shook one another very lovingly by the Hand,” their unexpected amicability foreshadowing their unity of their views of literature (62); this gesture suggests a degree of intimacy between the author-character and bookseller-character that may be hypocritical on Barnabas’s end, as readers wonder: is this “the Dog” of the bookseller he slandered to Adams? This kind of familiarity recurs in a number of other literary works from the period and usually accompanies the submission of the former, identified as a

\(^{27}\text{See Thomas Rowlandson’s satirical print “The Author and the Bookseller” (1780).}\)
hack rather than a professional, to the latter’s standards and practices. The parson informs Adams that this man is “a Bookseller, and would be as likely to deal with him for his Sermons as any Man whatever” (62). This introduction actually gives Adams false hope, as he misses the cruel joke, which is that nobody, in Barnabas’ opinion, is particularly interested in dealing in sermons.

The meeting itself is possibly a staged encounter, as Barnabas and the bookseller go into a room together, perhaps to collude, before Adams is called up to offer his sermons to the latter on the advice of the former. Barnabas’ encouragement of this meeting is odd considering his pronouncements on the unmarketability of sermons; it seems as if he is setting Adams up for failure. Barnabas’s actions here can be viewed alongside his advice as a parodies of Literary Professionalism, as it is with a false collegiality that he appears to forward Adams’ literary career while pursuing his own agenda. Perhaps the encounter can be regarded as the close pair’s planned entertainment or as the former author’s embittered attempt to recreate his own scene of literary disappointment. When Adams volunteers to “read two or three Discourses as a specimen” (69), Barnabas discourages him because, though he may himself pen sermons, he takes no interest or pleasure in their content, principally considering them as commodities to be sold and consumed by others; they are a means to a monetary end which involves none of the commercial humanism espoused by a number of eighteenth-century contributors to culture.28

Interestingly, it is the narrator who informs readers that Barnabas privately “loved Sermons no better than a Grocer doth Figs” (63). In offering this insight into the former author’s unspoken views, Fielding extends to readers the evaluative role of arbiters of literary culture, additional knowledge creating an ironic distance, and therefore a semblance of objectivity, between actual readers and the fictionalized participants in the print market. Fielding’s reader is meant to laugh

at the equation of figs to sermons, but the incongruity that produces this humour pushes the reader to consider the ways in which the Literary Professional should view literature. Fielding consolidates his own power by forging these connections with his reader; he makes a case for print and the Professional Author in such a way as to privilege the relationship between author and reader, as opposed to author and bookseller.

As disposing of his sermons was his only “Business in the Great City,” Adams is visibly overjoyed to so fortuitously meet with a bookseller on the road to London (62). Assuming that their negotiations will be brief and straightforward, he supposes he will hand over his volumes, take payment, and then return home. The parson does not show a particle of business sense in articulating these hopes and expectations, for, impetuously displaying his eagerness, Adams “snapt [sic] his Fingers (as was usual with him) and took two or three turns about the Room in an Extasy [sic]” and remarks on how “their meeting was extremely lucky to himself” with an amateur author’s unchecked candor (69). Hitherto unexposed to commercial negotiation, Adams places himself in a hilariously poor bargaining position: he reveals that he has “the most pressing Occasion for Money at that time” and because of this “indigent Condition,” desires to make “an immediate Bargain” (63). The parson, childishly emotional and undisciplined, is out of his depth in these negotiations, his failure to achieve his desired ends no great surprise to readers who recognize Adams’ conduct as unprofessional. The parson’s reaction is so over-the-top that conceptions of him as a blameless victim of an oppressive bookseller are mitigated before his hopes are dashed. The fictional publisher does, however, very shortly after sitting down with Adams and Barnabas, dampen Adams’ enthusiasm with the insensitive observation that “Sermons are mere Drugs” (63).29 According to him, these works are commercial liabilities

29 In his reading of Joseph Andrews, George Justice comments that “Fielding’s ridicule of the low market appeal for the country parson’s sermons indicates a cultural security of the novelist. By the numbers, Fielding, like his satirical predecessor Pope, should fear the competition in the literary marketplace provided by sermons” (171).
which he does not “care to touch,” though he gives some exceptions to his personal rule not to
deal in sermons, namely those that “come out with the Name of Whitfield or Wesley, or some
other such great Man, as a Bishop, or those sort of people... or we could say in the Title Page,
published at the earnest Request of the Congregation, or the Inhabitants” (63). His emphasis is
on the title page—which he may be willing to fabricate—rather than the matter of the text.\footnote{Eleanor F. Shevlin recognizes the tensions over titles among eighteenth-century writers and their booksellers. “In some cases,” she writes, “a greater authorial interest in titling practices resulted in more adversarial relationships with publishers in which either party could emerge the victor” (64).}

In order to dismiss Adams, he makes a vague promise, a common way among literary booksellers
to string a supplicant author along and avoid inciting his ire. He says he will “take the
Manuscript with me to Town, and send [Adams] his Opinion of it in a very short time” (63).
Adams is assured by Barnabas and the bookseller that the manuscript will be “safe” in the latter’s
hands. The bookseller-character declares—making a joke at Adams’ expense—that the pages
would be secure even “if it was a Play that had been acted twenty Nights together,” in other
words, a valuable work (63). Again, Adams does not get the joke, the internal comedy within this
scene drawing individual readers and the novelist together in their shared understanding of the
humour of the moment.

Adams, whose ill opinion of the stage separates him from his playwright creator Fielding,
is dismayed by this comparison and says “he was sorry to hear Sermons compared to Plays”
(63). The bookseller-character’s subsequent defense of drama calls to mind Fielding’s views of
the stage, thus encouraging readers to take a more balanced view than Adams himself of the
exchange. The bookseller-character vehemently disagrees with Adams’ comment on sermons
and plays, and adds: “though I don’t know whether the licensing Act may not shortly bring them
to the same footing” (63). He ventriloquizes Fielding’s opposition to this regulatory law, which,
passed in 1737, limited the writer’s career as a playwright. Remarking that he has “formerly
known a hundred guineas given for a Play,” the bookseller looks back to a time before dramatic works were subject to governmental interference and, because they were more popular with audiences, had greater worth to the publishers printing them. Though he may be objecting to the moralizing of the “weeping” comedies now being produced and nostalgic for the former bawdiness of the London stage, the bookseller-character’s position establishes him as mercenary rather than villainous. These comments hence complicate an interpretation of this encounter as a straightforward stock scene of the writer’s rejection by an oppressive bookseller. Fielding’s bookseller-character contributes to a more nuanced reading of book trade relations as they are rendered in imaginative literature, this scene being part of a larger argument for print which is not simply about aligning readers with the author-character against a bookseller-character who solely represents—and acts as scapegoat for—the problematic practices and ideologies of the eighteenth-century book trade; instead, the literary publishers periodically play a more direct part in the making of this argument about the state of the literary marketplace—namely dismay at the Licensing Act. Though the bookseller-character is only referring to market value, the cultural value of theatrical works produced after 1737 was likewise perceived to have declined under Walpole’s measure, political content and topicality replaced by less referential and more sentimental, contrived pieces.

Adams’ disapproval of plays suggests limited cultural knowledge, an ignorance of the social and political potential of the form that Fielding himself demonstrated in comedies he penned and had produced in the 1730s. Though many of Fielding’s readers would disagree with Adams’ stance on theatre, they would nonetheless be able to appreciate the parson’s effort to make distinctions between cultural forms and engage in evaluative literary criticism. “But is there no difference,” Adams exclaims, the conversation becoming heated, “between conveying good or ill instruction to Mankind,” and asks: “would not an honest Mind rather lose Money by
the one, than gain it by the other?” (64) He demonstrates the Literary Professional’s commitment
to moral and aesthetic value and investment in civic duty through what Isaac D’Israeli terms “a
continued exercise of the noblest faculties” (qtd. in Keen 48). Though the bookseller-character is
not of an “honest Mind” as Adams would define, the publisher does not actively discourage
those supporters of the sermon or deliberately thwart those who choose poverty over profit;
unlike the bookseller-character, as scholar Betty Rizzo characterizes him, Fielding’s fictional
publisher is less ruthless villain than ruthless businessman, having nothing more against sermons
than their unprofitability.31 His attitude is simple in its mercenary bent, unconcerned as he is
with merit beyond commercial viability, for he announces: “for my part, the Copy that sells best,
will always be the best Copy in my Opinion,” indicating that he determines literary value,
problematically, by market value alone (64). His use of the phrases “for my part” and “in my
Opinion,” emphasizes that he is expressing his own perspective while also indicating his
awareness of the countering view, that of the ideal Literary Professional; namely, the best copy is
in fact the one with the most literary, and, in the case of religious material, spiritual merit.
Adams possesses an unwavering commitment to informed, morally improving literature. He
comments on the writings of Whitfield while alluding to the quality of his own sermons, which
preach charity, clerical poverty, and the doctrine of good works, and decry luxury and hypocrisy,
particularly among spiritual authorities. Still, the bookseller does not change his mind about
purchasing “a dry Piece of Sermons” and politely repeats, almost verbatim, his initial refusal,
saying he “must beg to be excused, as [his] hands are very full at present,” the bookseller-
character’s civility in his refusal suggesting a superficial level of professionalism (65). Having
now a sense of the spiritual and critical rigour of the clergyman’s views, the bookseller-character
offers a final piece of advice, a warning that Adams’ sermons will be met with reluctance among

31 See Betty Rizzo’s “The Author-Bookseller Dialogue” in The Age of Johnson.
other publishers. “I am afraid,” he tells the parson after wishing him success, “that you will find a Backwardness in the Trade, to engage in a Book which the Clergy would be certain to cry down” (65). Though the bookseller-character is apologetic rather than unkind in his rejection of Adams’ sermons, his predictions speak ill of the book trade, which he portrays as complaisant, even cowardly, in its tendency to refrain from controversial attacks on sin and folly; instead, publishers encourage the flattery of vice, like the dedications Barnabas intended to be published with his volume of sermons. The scene ends with the other author-character, Barnabas, interrupting the conversation between Adams and the publisher and reacting with violent aversion to Adams’ celebration of Bishop Benjamin Hoadley’s *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament*, which the aspiring author lauds as “A Book written...with the Pen of an Angel, and calculated to restore the true Use of Christianity” (65). Perturbed, Barnabas seizes the bell and “fell a ringing with all the Violence imaginable,” to demand the bill and escape from the other author-character’s wholesome celebration of Christianity. The corruptions of one professional sphere (the church) and those of another (authorship) are linked in this scene through the character of Barnabas. Nonetheless, Barnasbas’ gesture of resistance—like the comical vehemence of his exclamations as he decries the parson’s chances in the print market—is less important than the opinion of the professional man; the failed writer cannot sway Adams without the help of the bookseller-character, whose intervention has a lasting effect on Adams’ pride and consequently the events of later chapters. Though this fictional publisher subsequently disappears from Fielding’s narrative, he is nonetheless influential, stymying Adams’ literary career in its early stages. Hence, the fictional publisher possesses outcome power in this scene and beyond, schooling the naïve parson in the ways of the literary marketplace and successfully scaring Adams away from professional authorship.
Near the beginning of Book Two, it comes to light that Adams’ volumes are not stowed in his saddle bag, but accidentally left at home. Though he is principled and learned, he is also absent-minded and bumbling, and would have himself stymied his own publication had the bookseller been genuinely interested in the parson’s sermons. His friend Joseph is more than willing to fetch the sermons and meet Adams in London, but the chastened parson declines the young man’s offer, declaring to Joseph: “as this Accident hath happened, I am resolved to return back to my Cure, together with you; which indeed my Inclination sufficiently leads me to. This Disappointment may, perhaps, be intended for my Good” (72). Considering the bookseller’s remarks on sermons in the print market, Adams makes a sensible decision to discontinue his efforts to become a published author, grasping that his amateurish dreams of fortune are unrealistic and that London will in all likelihood be unfriendly to unknown writers like himself. Though the author-character here does not secure outcome power through his writing within the novel, he gains the power of moral authority through the select approbation of the reader, who is made cognizant of strengths and weaknesses of Adams as a prospective Literary Professional. While motivated in part by financial demands and an innocent vanity to publish his writings, his sermons are also the product of an authentic piety and love of virtue. Though Adams is discouraged from publishing his sermons, they are as good as published in the eyes of readers, giving the author-character extradiegetic power; it is germane to note that it is Adams’—and Fielding’s—ethical Christian vision that prevails, many sections of *Joseph Andrews* reading like novelized sermons. The point is well made in *Licensing Entertainment* that Fielding “sets out to elevate his readers by including the sort of improving sermons on charity or resignation to loss...that Adams himself might have published if a bookseller accepted them” (Warner 245). Fielding sustains and diversifies the conversation within the novel about the literary marketplace in the interpolated story of Mr. Wilson in Book Three. Wilson, who is finally revealed to be
Joseph’s father, was a professional wit in the metropolis before moving to the country to pursue a quiet life with his family. While in London, he pins great hopes on his play, from which he expects—like Adams and other amateur/would-be professional writer-characters—a “plentiful harvest” (169). Unsuccessful in his theatrical endeavours, after the managers refuse to produce his play, Wilson is forced to inhabit London in a state of poverty and dependence and attempts to eke out his living by turning “Hackney writer to the Lawyers” (170). This career is cut short when his name is blackened for writing verse, “an unforgivable folly in the eyes of “the lower Class of the Gentry, and the higher of the mercantile World,” a strata judged by Wilson as “the worst bred part of Mankind” (170). Wilson’s persecution is comically exaggerated, for, when he enters a Coffee-house, “a Whisper ran round the Room, which was constantly attended with a Sneer—That’s Poet Wilson” (168). He teeters on the brink of starvation, “the Reputation of a Poet being [his] bane” (170).

Wilson, during this especially low point in his career, meets a bookseller-character, who tells the poet, observing his situation: “it was a Pity a man of my Learning and Genius should be obliged to such a Method of getting his Livelihood; that he had a Compassion for me, and if I would engage with him, he would provide handsomely for me” (170). The author, aware (unlike Adams) of the nature of the book trade, is not convinced by this show of commiseration and generosity, and warily comments on the bookseller’s offer: “A Man in my Circumstances, as he very well knew, had no Choice” (my italics; 170). Wilson accepts his employment, though the conditions of the proposal “were none of the most favourable” (170). The desperate author cannot turn this offer down and “fell to translating with all [his] might” (170). Writing has an adverse impact on his health, for he “contracted a Distemper by [his] sedentary Life” that injures his right arm and impedes his ability to put quill to paper. This setback is not received kindly by the fictional publisher, who discards him in an unprofessional manner, Wilson reporting: “this
unluckily happening to delay the Publication of a Work, and my last Performance not having
sold well, the Bookseller declined any further Engagement, and aspersed me to his Brethren as a
careless, idle Fellow” (170). The bookseller-character considers product over process to such an
extent that Wilson’s strenuous efforts, when unaccompanied by profit, are worthless in and of
themselves, readily forgotten by his employer. Moreover, because the author-character could not
continue “translating with all [his] might,” Wilson is expendable. The bookseller’s rejection of
the author has nothing to do with the content of the literary works and everything to do with
profits and deadlines. He does not recognize (or does not care to acknowledge) the merit of
Wilson’s productions. Eager to see his former employee punished for his failure as a machine-
like hack, the bookseller-character directs a bailiff to the struggling author’s chamber, where
Wilson is arrested for debts. This betrayal, which includes his slander of Wilson to other men of
his trade, reveals not simply his disapproval and disappointment, but his malice—a quality
absent from the bookseller-character Adams encounters earlier in the novel. Wilson’s ruin is a
mixture of the humorous and the pathetic, however, as the bailiff dresses in women’s clothes to
obtain access to the author’s room. The cross-dressing in this narrated scene indicates that there
is room for comedy in the author-character’s seizure and imprisonment.

Though Mr. Wilson and Parson Adams are treated shabbily by booksellers and other
literary professionals, their interactions with these men, though discouraging to the aspiring
authors, are nevertheless comical and illuminating, albeit in different ways as they are different
sorts of author-characters. The parson’s ignorance about the workings of the trade is combined
with a lack of common sense. Yet his weaknesses, including his overly trusting nature,
foreground the opposite qualities in other characters such as the bookseller. Artistic conflict is
inevitable when differences in personality and experience widen a channel between the book’s
writer and publisher. Assuming those around him to be as interested in the active promotion of
goodness as he is, Adams is surprised to learn that members of the print trade have other priorities. The parson’s ignorance underscores or “makes new” the aspects of commercial publishing that would have been commonplace to the reader through the figure of the prototypical commercial bookseller-character. Wilson, however, already possesses knowledge of the ways of the world of letters when he encounters the bookseller in his inset story. Unlike the incorruptible Adams, Wilson takes on hack work, albeit with reluctance, only accepting the bookseller-character’s inferior literary projects when his own loftier plan flounders. Wilson has the potential to become a genuine Literary Professional, possessing certain key qualities for this role; nonetheless, he is hindered from realizing his potential because of the bookseller-character’s unprofessionalism—or more precisely, a warped sense of professionalism that leads the literary merchant to warn his brethren against Wilson. J. Paul Hunter makes much of Wilson’s movement from an interpolated story into the main action of the narrative, declaring him to have “proved at last to be a central figure in *Joseph Andrews*, emerging from the story-within to take a place among the main characters and to participate crucially in the plot” (49-50). Wilson harbors fewer illusions than Adams about the survival rate of literary merit in the face of individuals who consider the book’s marketable paratexts rather than evaluate content. Yet his knowledge of the book trade still does not secure him outcome power in the literary marketplace as he is still coerced and punished by an actively unsupportive bookseller-character who exerts his influence over his employee and to put an end to Wilson’s career.

*The Adventures of Roderick Random*

Tobias Smollett’s first published novel, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), an episodic and meandering narrative which, like *Joseph Andrews*, follows a protagonist into varied settings, unsurprisingly also includes scenes and characters drawn from the eighteenth-century
world of letters, one part of the social and cultural fabric on which Roderick’s adventures are loosely stitched. Smollett’s roguish title character takes the role of an observer, and at one point participant, in scenes which, like several in Fielding’s novel, appear to centre on authorial oppression. The novelist goes beyond constructing basic stock episodes in which author-characters clash with members of the book trade who ultimately gain the upper hand; though dishonest, domineering bookseller-characters figure prominently, their victims—writer-characters—are not necessarily models of professionalism and this victimization is not always the product of external forces. Possessing elements of the amateur, Smollett’s writer-character is comic, especially insofar as he does not embody the paradigmatic Literary Professional and as he clashes with the bookseller-character. At one of the lowest points in his own narrative trajectory, the hero encounters an author in debtor’s prison, a typical setting for this character considering the real and stereotypical poverty of eighteenth-century writers. Interestingly, Smollett begins the poet-character episode not with a scene of book trade negotiation, but with a scene depicting the consequences of the book trade’s treatment of an author-character. When Roderick is arrested and imprisoned in the Marshalsea, he is introduced to a poet in fantastic dress; this man is “wrapped in a dirty rug, tied about his loins with two pieces of list, of different colours, knotted together; having a black bushy beard, and his head covered with a huge mass of brown periwig, which seemed to have been ravished from the head of some scare-crow” (319). This poet’s sartorial disorder can be likened to Salina’s unruly petticoat in Dixon’s “The Slattern,” though female slovenliness was almost always an indicator of sexual impropriety.32 Yet despite the poet’s unpromising appearance, this strange figure stands up in front of a crowd of other prisoners and “pronounce with great significance of voice and gesture, a very elegant and

32 Parson Adams’ ragged cassock arguably says more about his commitment to Christian charity and clerical poverty than about his social status as a writer.
ingenious discourse upon the difference between genius and taste, illustrating his assertions with apt quotations from the best authors, ancient as well as modern” (319). Smollett’s orator clearly possesses an interest in improving the aesthetic judgment of his listeners, which points to the kind of innate professionalism Adams demonstrated. In conveying Roderick’s judgment of the poet’s oration, Smollett highlights the incongruity between the author-character’s learning and current situation and informs and directs the reader’s assessment of the author-character. The reader and Roderick share information to which most characters within the scene do not have access, thereby rewarding individual readers with the assumption that they are likewise intelligent arbiters of literary merit. Flint recognizes this tendency towards cooperation and partnership, noting that “eighteenth-century fiction consciously stages collaborative reading by directly seeking the consumer’s good will, whether in genuine or mock solicitude” (42).33

Though Smollett’s poet does have a receptive audience amongst the “naked, miserable wretches” who “crowded around” the learned poet, the foundations of their admiration are shaky. Despite the “ceremony” of this scene, the respectful deference the prisoners show is devalued by the fact that “not one of [them],” as Roderick reports, “understood so much as a sentence of what he had uttered” (Smollett 319). The incarcerated group represents a segment of Britain’s public sphere, literate, but untutored, which cannot fully appreciate literary merit (they may be appreciative of the delivery and deliverer of the speech, but not its content), while Roderick symbolizes the individual cultural consumer who is able to recognize the excellence of the poet’s work on several levels. Yet readers may diverge from Roderick in their own assessment of the poet, who can be faulted for not accommodating his thoughts to his audience’s abilities, the use of elevated diction and sophisticated concepts suggesting the pedantry of the solitary amateur

33 Flint elaborates on this forging of author/reader bonds: “This personal hailing of a singular reader at a time when readership was becoming larger and more anonymous partly reflects the growing desire through the century to engage in extensive and social reading, perhaps in direct proportion to print’s seeming impersonality” (42).
writer rather than the accessibility and sociability of professional writing. Nonetheless, clearly—and rather ridiculously—the author-character has secured fame and regard in this milieu, a microcosm of London’s literary marketplace.

Smollett’s poet-character, however, supporting himself through intellectual labour, can be aligned with the paradigmatic Literary Professional; though confined to the Marshalsea, he obtains the financial remuneration that Parson Adams, for example, is unable to secure. Roderick notes that the prisoners “manifested, however, their admiration and esteem by voluntary contribution, which Jackson told me, one week with another, amounted to eighteen pence” (319). The poet subsists through this spontaneous collective patronage, having lost access to more illustrious patrons and booksellers. Roderick explains: “This moderate stipend, together with some small presents that he received for making up differences, and deciding causes among the prisoners, just enabled him to breathe and walk about in the grotesque figure I have described” (374). Readers are to consider his payments the just earnings of a deserving producer of culture and figure of authority, his gifts as an author-orator qualifying him to act as legislator, “making up differences, and deciding causes” for which he receives recompense. This more practical role of ethical authority is in keeping with the professional author’s polemical expressions, many writers being engaged in “insisting on their unrivaled social importance” (Keen 44). Roderick assures us, drawing individual readers up to his level of knowingness: “I understood also, that he was an excellent poet, and had composed a tragedy, which was allowed by every body [sic] who had seen it, to be a performance of great merit; that his learning was infinite, his morals unexceptional; and his modesty invincible” (319). Roderick is fascinated and bewildered by this fallen genius—aptly named Melopoyn, a derivative of Melpomene, the muse of tragedy—and wonders how Melopoyn, possessing such talents, could have sunk so low. Roderick’s ignorance of the vagaries of the literary world, like that of Adams in Joseph Andrews, is designed to
defamiliarize the problematic aspects of eighteenth-century print culture, which defy expectations based on the privileging of merit over other considerations like financial returns.

In one of the longest interpolated stories in the novel, Melopoyn obliges the hero’s desire to hear his life story, a comically fictive tale of beleaguered authorship echoing Johnson’s *Life of Savage* and prefiguring Isaac D’Israeli’s *Calamities of Authors* (1812). The poet’s truncated autobiography begins with his education and his earliest endeavours as a writer, his qualifications securely establishing him as a future producer of meritorious literature. He relates that his father undertook his schooling, discovering in his son “an inclination for poetry [...] in cultivation of which he assisted [him] with paternal zeal, and uncommon erudition” (323). Satisfying Johnson’s demand in *Rambler* No. 115 that professional authors should have “carefully perused the best authors,” young Melopoyn reads the best of the ancients and moderns, the study of which Smollett also deems the apposite foundation of authorship. “About the age of eighteen,” Melopoyn narrates, “I grew ambitious of undertaking a work of some consequence; and with my father’s approbation, actually planned the tragedy you have read; but before I had finished four acts, that indulgent parent died, and left my mother and me in very indigent circumstances” (323). Taken in by a relative, he finishes the play, and, following his mother’s death, he “resolved to set out for London, and offer my play to the stage, where I did not doubt of acquiring a large share of fame as well as fortune,” expressing the same unrealistic expectations as Fielding’s Parson Adams about impending critical and commercial success as an author (323).

After taking a wagon to London, Melopoyn “hired an apartment in a garret,” this reference to his abode foreshadowing his descent into hack authorship (324). When the theatrical season passes without the playwright having made any headway with stage managers in the city, his literary agent, Mr. O’Varnish, who affects intimate knowledge of the literary marketplace,
suggests that Melopoyn either contribute to a weekly paper or turn to poetry. His foray into print is, like his theatrical efforts, a sad affair. Melopoyn is given the hope that if he might “write something in the poetical way,” he could “dispose of [it] to a bookseller for a pretty sum of ready money” (326). He spends three weeks composing a series of eclogues, presumably inspired by Pope’s success with this genre, and approaches several booksellers with these verses in hand. The first “eminent bookseller,” whom Melopoyn visits returns the poems after two days with the vague response that “they would not answer his purpose” (326). The rejected author notes that this member of the trade “sweetened his refusal by saying there were some good clever lines in them” (326). The reader, however—though not necessarily Melopyn himself—recognizes this as a characteristically vague statement indicative of the fact that the bookseller has not actually read the manuscript. Melopoyn proceeds to meet with a second bookseller—a regular churchgoer who looks “like a senator” and sports a “reverend periwig” (326). The bookseller-character’s conservative dress and regular habits are a front for questionable professional practices incongruous with his staid appearance. In his interaction with the poet, we discover, though with less shock than the poet, that he is a hypocritical purveyor of pornography. He advises the aspiring author “to write something satirical or luscious, such as the *Button Hole, Shocky and Towzer, The Leaky Vessel*, etc.” (383). Melopoyn, surprised and appalled by this suggestion, tells Roderick that he “scorned to prostitute [his] pen in the manner he proposed” (326). The virtuous poet unsuccessfully solicited by the depraved bookseller is, like Fielding’s Parson Adams, comical in part because of his extreme innocence. The poet can be likened to the heroes and heroines of works from this period, who “are all somehow strangers, at least in a moral sense, to the scenes of wickedness and corruption they encounter” (Bloom 150). Despite this blow to his ideals, Melopoyn perseveres and “carried [his] papers to a third” bookseller (Smollett 381). Again, Melopoyn’s material is deemed unsuitable, as the fictional publisher assures Melopoyn
“that poetry was entirely out of his way” (381). Seeking out much lighter, more populist fare, he
“asked, if [Melopoyn] had got never a piece of secret history, thrown into a series of letter, or a
volume of adventures, such as those of Robinson Crusoe, and colonel Jack, or a collection of
conundrums, wherewith to entertain the plantations” (326). The interchangeability of Defoe’s
Robinson Crusoe (1719) and “a collection of conundrums” in the bookseller’s mind is
symptomatic of his disregard for content. He does not seem to acknowledge distinctions between
middlebrow and low genres of literature. Quality does not seem to be a concern for the
bookseller-character either, as he would be more than pleased to obtain a piece “thrown into a
series of letters,” the verb “thrown” suggesting the haste so conducive to mediocrity. Instead, he
is focused on the marketability of texts, his goal being simply “to entertain the plantations,”
instruction, moral or otherwise, being irrelevant to such a consummate businessman. Melopoyn
is “quite unfurnished for this dealer” and therefore approaches yet another bookseller, with
whom he meets “as little success” (326). Consequently, this discouraged author comes to “verily
believe he was rejected by the whole trade,” as he groups these individual transactions together,
and interprets them as a general dismissal of his serious literary efforts (326).

Melopoyn does not wholly despair of turning his quill to good use, namely earning his
bread, though abandons any hope of writing anything worthwhile. He describes his shameful
descent to hack work, “offering [his] talents to the printers of halfpenny ballads, and other such
occasional essays as are hawked about the streets” (327). He offers himself to one of these
printers, whom Melopoyn sees treating a group of hack writers with “gin, bread and cheese”
(327), and he is employed because “one of his poets had lost his senses and was confined in
Bedlam, and the other was become dozed with drinking drams” (327). Unlike other talented
writers in fiction who cannot adapt to hack work—like Primrose’s son in The Vicar of
Wakefield—Melopoyn excels at it, admitting: “I studied the Grub-street manner with great
diligence, and at length became such a proficient, that my works were in great request among the
most polite of the chairmen, draymen, hackney-coachmen, footmen and servant-maids” (327).
The nature of his productions aside, he is nonetheless adhering to Johnson’s injunction to authors
to engage in “attentive practice,” the devotion of time and energy to the craft of writing (Rambler
No. 115). Despite his aptitude and his hard work, financial failure is close at hand for Melopoyn,
who does not find composing songs, even bestselling ones, to be profitable in the exploitative
world of Grub Street. The popularity of his pieces does not secure sufficient recompense, as he
admits “I found myself in danger of starving in the midst of all my fame.” Consequently, he
“turned [his] thoughts to prose.” He ironically declares that he “published an apparition, on the
substance of which I subsisted very comfortably a whole month: I have made many good meal
upon a monster; a rape has often afforded me great satisfaction; but a murder well-timed, was my
never-failing resource” (327). Though it is not entirely fair to deem this a moral compromise,
Melopoyn’s reliance on supernatural, grotesque, and violent tropes indicates that he is aiming—
like the bookseller who wanted stories simply to entertain by superficial titillation. Yet his
literary ideals have not been totally extinguished and he is displeased with this career, not only
because of the way he is treated by the demanding members of the book trade with whom he
deals but because of the what he produces and how. Given insight into the author-character’s
views of his own productions, Smollett’s readers have the opportunity to construct Literary
Professionalism as it is unrealized in the novel, and thus take on an evaluative role as not only
responsible consumers, but knowing cultural critics. Melopoyn confesses that at the nadir of this
existence: “I was a most miserable slave to my employers, who expected to be furnished at a
moment’s warning with prose and verse, just as they thought that the circumstances of the times
required, whether the inclination was absent or present” (327-328). His total lack of
independence as a scribbler indicates the extent to which the bookseller-character has secured
outcome power in their relationship, disenfranchising Melopoyn so totally that the poet bemoans that “life had become a burden,” his personal and professional unhappiness complete (328).

Roderick, digesting Melopoyn’s woeful narrative, compares it to his own plight:

“Notwithstanding all I had suffered from the knavery and selfishness of mankind, I was amazed and incensed at the base indifference which suffered such uncommon merit as he possessed, to languish in obscurity […]” (337). He concludes that he will let the events in the poet’s story stand for themselves, declaring that he “shall not make any reflections on this story, in the course of which the reader must perceive how egregiously the simplicity and milky disposition of this worthy man, had been duped and abused by a set of scoundrels” (337). Though he trusts “the reader” who “must perceive” the extent to which Melopoyn is oppressed, Roderick is unaware of how his hyperbolic language in fact mitigates the tragedy of Melopoyn’s interpolated story. He dismisses the booksellers the poet encountered as “scoundrels,” and sanctifies Melopoyn and his “milky disposition.” Individual readers, recognizing notes of exaggeration, the source of so much humour in Smollett’s fictional caricatures, construct the figure of the Professional Author not simply against members of the book trade who use their powers to oppress, but against the author-character himself.

The Adventures of a Bank-Note

Unlike Smollett’s Melopoyn, a serious writer-turned-hack, the apparently oppressed author-character in Thomas Bridges’ The Adventures of a Bank-Note (1770-71) is an unprofessional professional already hardened in the ways of Grub Street when he is introduced early in the first volume.34 The appearance of this subculture of hackney authorship in the “it-

34 Thomas Bridges is an English dramatist, parodist, and novelist, though The Adventures of a Bank-Note was Bridges’ only novel. He wrote several parodic works spoofing Homer and Milton and two plays with James Hook (who wrote the music): Dido (1770), a comic opera, and The Dutchman (1775).
narrative” has been noted by several literary scholars. Discussing the visibility of commercial authorship in this commercially successful genre of the late eighteenth century, Christina Luptin observes that in most it narratives, “the non-human narrator encounters a hack writer buried in his papers” (53). *The Adventures of a Bank-Note* begins with the object-narrator’s account of his entrance into the world and his “pedigree” (1). He reveals that he was “begot” (or as he immediately corrects himself, “got”) by a poet, who exchanges cash for the promissory note. The narrator imagines his readers’ surprise at his patriarch’s profession, recognizing that authors, viewed in eighteenth-century culture as chronically poor, do not, as a rule acquire bank-notes; the bank-note assures the reader of his honesty as a narrator, which has been questioned because he has chosen to relate “so unlikely a tale as a poet’s carrying twenty pounds to the Bank” (6-7).

The object narrator, with “as solemn a face as if I was going to bribe a great man,” declares that his father “received thirty guineas for a copy of verses” (7). This payment enables the poet to purchase a quantity of humble goods after paying rent: “small-beer, red herrings, farthing candles [...] cow-heel and pig’s-liver [...] halfpenny rolls” (7). The details of homely fare are comical, distinguishing the author-character as a common man with common needs and wants rather than a rarefied genius feeding on air as he loses himself in the heights of poetic composition. The poet-character is appropriately named Tag-rhime, which suggests that he is producing light verse of minimal literary value, as a “rhyme-tag” is a word primarily used in poem to forcibly and artificially produce a rhyme. Sense is sacrificed for sound as well as convenience, an imperative of the bookseller’s hack. This writer-character is rendered ridiculous in the way in which his poetry translates into a collection of these consumables and an exact sum of “twenty-one pounds six shillings and ninepence three farthings left” (8). He cannot sleep for considering over the course of nine hours what to do with this unexpected windfall, “how to lay it out to the best advantage for his future emolument (8). His scheme for acquiring a title is too
silly to be reprehensible, though it is dishonest, misleading the intradiegetic booksellers and readers with this pose of gentleman-author. The scheme is also blatantly self-serving for “a title would be of infinite service to help him to a good price for his future labours” (8). He justifies this deception by explaining that other authors’ assumed titles are even more groundless, having neither the birth nor the wealth associated with the titled nobility. Unlike him, these pretenders have never had a bank-note of their own.

Tag-rhime’s plan is full of “roguery” (5), a strangely durable quality which the narrator discusses as hereditary, passed from father to son (and which points to the bank-note’s own unreliability as a narrator). The narrator does, however, distinguish his progenitor from the kinds of men who commonly acquire bank-notes, namely: “The fathers of the generality of bank notes are gentlemen’s stewards, placemen’s gentlemen, city usurers, knowing stock-jobbers, bankers’ clerks, and bishops’ toll-gathers,” all of whom have a reputation for dishonesty and greed as well as a knack for making dirty money (5). The narrator assures readers that “[his] father was another kind of animal to what any of these creatures were” (6). Nevertheless, the difference does not necessarily have a moral basis. The poet is singular because “he was the first of his profession that ever entered the bank to carry money, and I verily believe he will be the last” (6).

The author is impractical about financial and social matters, composing a petition for knighthood, a wildly unrealistic goal for someone in his position. The poet-character absentmindedly scratches himself (perhaps suggesting he is, like other London garret-dwellers, lousy) while considering his illustrious fate, humour generated by the incongruity between present circumstances and future plans. Physical and mental states are linked here in an undignified way, an indicator that this is a satirical portrait of a hack writer. Hacks are close to the business of keeping body and soul together and therefore they have a distinctly physical, sometimes even crude, presence in the literary work. The narrator, spying on the Lockean...
interactions between the poet’s mind and body, reports that the difficulties of the hack’s first plan “set him a scratching, that being a kind of involuntary motion with him, whenever a train of ideas kept whirling in his brain with such velocity that he could not fix on any single one to stick by” (10) In the midst of these speculations, he gets a visit from another embodied abstraction, as “an old acquaintance of his called Hunger” calls on him; Tag-rhime responds by going downstairs to fetch breakfast from “the mistress of the milk cellar” (11). The hack’s overdetermined physicality becomes compounded by his comical disconnection from the present moment and immediate surroundings. Absorbed in thought, he forgets to put on his breeches, which he discovers when he lifts up his shirts and begins “rummaging his naked thigh” for money (11-12). The old maid, witness to this perceived insult, throws the vessel of milk “at the part that offended her eye sight the most” (12). The slapstick comedy of this scene disqualifies either the poet or the maid as the injured party, both inciting laughter rather than sympathy from the audience. He is startled out of his poetic reverie by his body: “The coldness of the milk, and the pain occasioned by the edge of the bason [sic] hitting where it should not, soon broke off his conversation with the Muses, and restored him to, what inspired people would call, his sober senses” (12). Once Tag-rhime has recovered from this accident, he returns to the matter of his thirty guineas. “Muses” are apparently the party responsible for the idea of exchanging this money for a bank-note: they give him “a thought how to raise his dignity, and save his money in the bargain,” having both social and financial goals in mind (14). The bank-note, “payable to Timonthy Taggrhime, Esquire” would give him a more attractive name to put on his title page, the “Esquire” suggesting gentility and by extension, its advantages like greater opportunities for education and travel (14). Clio reassures him that “after the Bank has dubb’d you an esquire, no man will dare to say a word against you”. Moreover, this “esquire” is a marketing strategy, for
she proposes “you may then boldly add the title esquire to your name the very next work you publish” (14-15).

The interference of “the Muses, with whom he was a sort of favourite” shifts the responsibility for the hack’s title page posturing onto the shoulders of imaginary classical beings rather than himself or his publisher (14). As a “Bank-dubb’d esquire” he has the opportunity to “look on those self-dubbed esquires with as much contempt as my lord’s pimp, when he first gets into his coach, doth on the honest stable-keeper that help’d him to his position” (15). The comedy of these pretensions identifies the poet-character’s social climbing and snobbery as qualities of the unprofessional professional author. Tag-rhime is convinced and goes to the bank where he acquires the bank-note which is now narrating the story. As the poet-character’s remaining money dwindles after this exchange, he is forced to earn ready money to support himself, the narrator anticipating the surprise of readers—likely unsurprised by his laziness—who might wonder “that a man so favoured by the Muses has not produced something in full six weeks to reinforce his pocket” (17). But the bank-note does say that he has “a piece ready” (17), Tag-rhime waiting until his money has almost run out before bringing it to his bookseller because he is so “certain of its answering” (18). Though the poet is confident it will be accepted, he does not expect this hasty production would “fetch the enormous sum his first laboured piece had done” (18). Nevertheless, he is disappointed in his expectations, this “experience” teaching the bank-note, if not also his father, “that a ready-money author’s works do not succeed according to their merit, but according to the lucky or unlucky moment in which they are presented” (19). The author-character’s oppression comes in the form of his publisher’s unprofessional inconsistency in his treatment of the hack. Tag-rhime finds literary payment a gamble in the literary marketplace, members of the book trade being comically subjective in their decision-making; the narrator informs readers: “When my father carried his first piece to
the bookseller, he found him full of cash” (19) and therefore friendly and open to accepting the poet’s manuscript, the mood of the publisher determining his treatment of the author. The bookseller-character, aptly named Mr. Catch-Penny, is easy here in his dealings with the writer, as there is minimal conflict and negotiation when they briefly meet, the narrator reporting that “the bargain was soon struck, and the money paid” (19).

When the bank-note’s progenitor visits Mr. Catch-Penny again, the bookseller “was not only out of cash, and out of consequence quite out of spirits,” and therefore the poet receives very different treatment (20). As well, the bookseller is also grumpy because his wife has been berating him with accusations of infidelity, a likely charge in light of cultural understandings of booksellers as more amoral, if not immoral, than men of other trades. The intrusion of personal affairs into the scene reflects the underlying lack of professionalism in the relationship between these fictionalized literary figures. The ensuing conversation confirms Tag-rhime’s oppression by the bookseller, comically influenced by Catch-Penny’s domestic strife. The narrator pauses to bring his audience into the scene with the comment that “even a reader of very slender talents, may easily conceive, the discord that rumbled in our bookseller’s brain-pan had left little room to admit the harmony of flowing numbers” (20). As the literary merchant’s marital woes undermine his tolerance for poetry, Catch-Penny makes a decision about the verses in question “before he heard four pages,” tactlessly declaring the work “d—’d stuff” (20). Even if the poems may very well be bad, the bookseller-character is too distracted to properly evaluate these lines. Catch-

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35 In Samuel Foote’s *The Trial of Samuel Foote, Esq. for a Libel on Peter Paragraph* (1763), the bookseller-character Peter Paragraph (based on the real Irish bookseller George Faulkner) admits to his wandering eye when speaking as a witness in the libel trial at the centre of the play. When asked by the Judge what he was doing in England, Paragraph owns: “Hem—a little love affair” (173). When the Counsel inquires, “A wife, I suppose,” Paragraph does not answer unambiguously in the affirmative, replying: “Something tending that way” (173). He explains: “even so long ago as January, 1739-40, there past amorous glances between us...but at the time I stifled my passion, Mrs. Paragraph being then in the land of the living” (173). This morally-questionable extramarital “passion” contributes to the idea of Paragraph as a philanderer and booksellers as an ethically-challenged group. Paragraph admits that his late wife was “a little apt to be jealous,” to which the counsel responds, “No wonder” (173).
Penny is rude and unprofessional in his rejection of the manuscript, which the narrator, biased toward the poet-character, informs readers has some value. The author’s expectation of “five guineas” are disappointed, for the bookseller, who possesses outcome power at the scene’s close, pronounces that he would not pay even five farthings for it. The narrator makes readers understand that “the piece had twice the merit of that which [the bookseller] had given thirty for, and cleared above a hundred by” (20-21). Though Catch-Penny has earned a handsome profit from the poet’s other piece, the bookseller-character feels no additional responsibility to Tag-rhime, who leaves empty-handed and dejected, “so much out of love with [his manuscript], that on his arrival at his lofty tenement, he thrust it into the fire; (I mean the fire-place) for though the weather was as cold as an easterly wind could make it, yet had he not seen a spark of fire for near a week,” obviously because he has no fuel (21). Though he wishes to burn his manuscript, which the bookseller has so totally devalued, Tag-rhime is thwarted in this desire by the muses who do not want “a copy of verses of real merit [...] reduced to ashes, and lost to the world for ever” (23). The narrator, sometimes unreliable in his assessments, is also partial to these lines, telling readers that “they were really good ones” (23).

The exchange between Tag-rhime and Catch-Penny underlines the need for regularized interactions between literary professionals, the codes and standards of conduct that professionalization entails. The bookseller-character is an unreliable arbiter of literary worth, for, it takes the intervention of the “the nine Sisters, who knew the value of his productions,” to prevent the destruction sparked, so to speak, by the bookseller’s insensitivity (23). Tag-rhime is struck with a “sudden fit of repentance for his rashness” (23) and acts quickly “to recover his
brat out of the fire” (24). The author-character—the narrator comparing the poet to “a blundering statesman” (24) in his haste—is rendered ridiculous rather than heroic in his rescue effort as his head violently “saluted the brick chimney-piece with such fury, that he not only displaced two bricks, but measured his own length backwards on the floor” (25). The entrance of a concerned mantua maker sustains the physical comedy of the scene, which ends with her flight from the garret after witnessing the seemingly crazed poet’s antics: he jumped up “as nimbly as he went down, and his dear poem floating uppermost in his thoughts [...] snatch’d the rest out of the grate, and fell to blowing and trampling them under foot” (27-28). After this adventure, he spends the evening with chilled extremities “in spite all the aid Muses could lend him” (29). The poet crawls into bed, the warmest place in his lodgings where he can “converse with the Nine into the bargain,” Tag-rhime’s attempt to commune with the muses despite the cold under his rugs more amusing than pathetic (30). But the insistent materiality of the poet’s suffering, which colours the literary with the non-literary, affects how seriously readers can take his suffering. The material again encroaches on the immaterial when his dialogue with the muses is cut short, for “he had hardly fixed on a subject worthy of consulting their ladyships about,” reports the bank-note, “when he was suddenly alarmed with a cry of fire” (30). This disaster presents additional opportunities for comedy, Tag-rhime described as taking “care to put on his breeches” because of his earlier embarrassing oversight and “ramming his stocking into his pocket, and buckling his shoes on his bare feet” (30). The bank-note reports that his father escaped from catastrophe because of a habit that the narrator explains: “[his] father, instead of taking his air, like those extravagant tradesmen-now-a-days too often do, used to amuse himself frequently in

36 The manuscript-as-child metaphor, used elsewhere in eighteenth-century imaginative literature, is one of the central conceits in Mary Leapor’s poems “To a Gentleman with a Manuscript Play” (1748) and “Upon her Play being returned to Her Stained with Claret” (1751).

37 This interrupted conversation with the muses can be compared to the moment in Sarah Dixon’s “The Slattern” when Salina’s petticoat string breaks after she calls on the muses of comedy and tragedy.
taking the air with his head out of his garret-window, and sometimes walking on the leads of the house” (31). The bank-note’s dig at the merchant class suggests that the poet’s habits are born of economy, but readers extrapolate that he limits his perambulations because he would be arrested on the street for unpaid debts. Having few possessions, he simply strolls out of the burning building, leaving only a “ragged nightgown,” actually saving money because he will not be paying his rent (32). Soon the poet finds “a comfortable, convenient, warm, snug cheap garret” in Mutton-Lane, staying at a rooming house in the three days he spends looking for a home (31). He schemes to dodge payment for these accommodations using his old chestnut of an excuse for not paying, that he has nothing smaller than a bank note for twenty pound to change. He promises to call on the woman to whom he owes this sum the following day when he has ready money, an appointment which he will obviously avoid. Wise to his scheme, she grabs the bill to have her neighbour, a grocer named Mr. Raisin-stone, change it, thus ending the narrator’s account of Tag-rhime’s adventures. Though the poet-character, seen through the eyes of a partisan narrator, is depicted as victimized by the conditions of the literary marketplace, the scenes that bookend the conversation between Tag-rhime and Catch-Penny complicate the characterization of the author-character as a sympathetic sufferer.

*The Author*

From Tag-rhime I will move to Young Cape, the eponymous hero of *The Author*, a comedy in two acts by playwright, actor, and theatre manager Samuel Foote. This formulaic yet commercially viable play contains one of Foote’s most sustained critiques of the marketplace of letters in his oeuvre, though passing references to bookselling and writing abound in his dramatic works. Producers of literature surface in *The Minor* (1760), *The Lyar* (1762), *The Orators* (1762), *The Trial of Samuel Foote, Esq. for a Libel on Peter Paragraph* (1763), *The Bankrupt* (1773), *The Capuchin* (1776) and *The Patron* (1764), which I discuss in Chapter Three. Opening
at the Drury Lane on February 5, 1757, *The Author* centers on the plight of a hardworking young author, the most professional author-character among the oppressed writers I have examined in this chapter. Secondary to this main plot is the mockery of a patron figure Cadwallader, played by Foote himself. As a published play, *The Author* generally adheres to mid-century dramatic conventions. In his Introduction to Foote and Murphy’s *Plays*, George Taylor comments not only on Foote’s dramatic works, but those of his contemporaries Garrick and Coleman, discussing this group’s plays as “all tend[ing] towards situational comedy; the same set of social conflicts are worked through time and again. The attitudes, and most of the characters, remain the same, only the intrigues, the tricks and the ‘affecting scenes’ of reconciliation, recognition, and reformation are changed or rearranged...” (3). This evaluation applies to many of the exchanges between literary professionals in eighteenth-century fiction and drama, scenes and characters I examine throughout this dissertation relying on the repetition and reworking of scenes and characters from other literary works. *The Author* depicts several types of author-bookseller relationships:

the Grub Street hack’s problematically close association with his employer and the more reluctant hack’s tumultuous opposition to his publisher. Young Cape is working as a professional writer in London when his father returns from the West Indies with a fortune to potentially bestow on him. Through the Governor Cape, we are put into the position of the outsider, who—because of his extended stay outside of England—is ignorant of the present state of the print market. The prologue, written and spoken by Foote, alludes to the demands of professional authorship which are subsequently depicted in the ensuing acts. Foote speaks of the difficulty of

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38 Though at one point suppressed, *The Author* was initially a success. Its popularity continued for several decades, “performed eighty-four times on London stages in the period between 1769-1776” (Trefman 89).

39 Foote used his talent for mimicry to ape John Apreece, an eccentric literary patron. The playwright’s blatant attack on Apreece did not go unpunished, as the *The Author* was eventually banned by the Lord Chamberlain.

40 The main plot involves a disguised father testing his son before enriching him, a plot point that is repeated in Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s *School for Scandal*, a comedy of manners performed and published in 1777.
satisfying the critics and all parts of the audience: “To please, at once, the gallery, box, and pit, / Requires at least—no common share of wit” (182). This sentiment, a commonplace in the prologues of eighteenth-century comedy, nonetheless works as a fitting preface to the introduction of an author-character into the play. Young Cape is subject to several audiences, whom he must—knowingly or unbeknownst to him—please. As a writer he must placate his bookseller and his readers and as a son he must appease his disguised father, who, like an anonymous literary critic, has set himself up to critique Young Cape, whose values he attempts to ascertain.

The first scene of the first acts opens to a conversation between Governor Cape, newly arrived in London, and Robin, a servant, who gives the returning Englishman information about his son, Young Cape. The governor has already put his plan—to sound Young Cape’s character—into motion, as he is assured that his son believes he is dead and has “no intimation that his fortunes might mend” (185). Apparently divested of both filial and financial ties, Young Cape is placed in a position whereby his true character is most transparent. Yet even in the first scene of the play, we are informed that Young Cape demonstrates virtue in adversity. In the first scene of the play, the young man’s servant Robin, who disapproves of this unnecessary procedure, relates to the governor that Young Cape has lived “Poorly, but honestly. To his pen he owes all his subsistence” (185). The servant admits, “I am sure my heart bleeds for him” and asks the Governor to “consider, sir, to what temptations you expose him” (185). The Governor, however, insists on this precautionary measure, declaring “The severer his trial the greater his triumph” (185). He wants to prevent “the fruits of [his] honest industry” (185) from being “lavished on a lazy luxurious booby” (186). There are higher expectations for this learned young writer, however, than for the stereotypically ignorant hack, as Governor Cape refers to the formal education that he has bestowed upon his son. The Governor feels that his son cannot but succeed
in life because of this expansive (and expensive) education, but the cynical Robin comments that
“As the world goes, [education is] the worst you could have given him. Lack-a-day, learning, learning, sir, is no commodity for this market; nothing makes money here, sir, but money; or some certain fashionable qualities that you would not wish your son to possess” (186). Governor Cape, who has been in the colonies for some time, is out of touch, as he replies with confusion: “learning useless? impossible!—Where are the Oxfords, and Halifaxes, the great protectors and patrons of the liberal arts?” (186). Foote, through the governor, is expressing the commonly held idea that there was, in England’s recent past, a golden age of patronage which has been supplanted by an era of commercialism. Griffin’s study of patronage in the eighteenth century reveals a more balanced view of the period as being “characterized by overlapping ‘economies’ of patronage and marketplace” (“Literary Patronage” 10). Yet the end of patronage, however fictional, was a refrain in the literature of Foote’s time. Robin, gesturing toward the democratic effects of literature’s commodification, exclaims:

Patron! –The word has lost its use; a guinea subscription at the request of a lady, whose chambermaid is acquainted with the author, may now and then be picked up—Protectors!

–Why, I dare believe there’s more money laid out upon Islington turnpike-road in a month, than upon all the learned men in Great Britain in seven years” (186).

In this schema of literary production and consumption the author, once properly supported by a patron, is now inadequately and uncertainly recompensed. Governor Cape wonders at this state of affairs: “And yet the press groans with their productions. How do they all exist?” Robin answers: “In garrets, sir; as, if you will step to your son’s apartment, in the next street you will see” (186).

An excuse for the visit is fabricated by Robin who instructs the Governor to tell his son: “That you want the aid of his profession; a well-penned address, now, from the subjects of your
late government, with your gracious reply, to put in the newspapers” (186-7). The Governor responds with “Aye! does that make part of his practice?” The Governor and the audience will find out soon enough whether this is the case. The next scene sees Young Cape with the Printer’s Devil, an obnoxious agent of the book trade. The printer, though this minion, hovers about the author like an evil spirit and exerts his tyrannical influence over the author-character. Cape attempts to dismiss his visitor with “Pr’ythee go about thy business—Vanish, dear Devil” (167), but the servant continues to badger the author to submit his proofs. The Printer’s Devil is armed with threats with which to prod the author if he proves uncooperative; by insulting the young man with the observation that “but you are always so lazy. I have more plague with you—” and then unfavorably compares him to another—though oft intoxicated—writer: “There’s Mr. Guzzle, the translator, never keeps me a minute, unless he happens to be fuddled” (187). This judgment necessarily enrages the sober Young Cape, who rejoins this with: “Why, you little sooty, sniveling, diabolical puppy, is it not sufficient to be plagued with the stupidity of your absurd master, but I must also be petered with your impertinence?” (187). The Printer’s Devil interprets this as snobbery and proclaims: “I keep as good company as your worship every day in the year. —There’s master Clench, in Little Britain, does not think it beneath him to take part of a pot of porter with me, tho’ he has written two volumes of lives in quarto, and has a folio a coming out in numbers” (187). Like Mr. Guzzle, Clench appeases with his prompt, prolific output and interacts familiarly with agents of the book trade, which signals his capitulation to commercialized hack production. Cape responds with a threat, declaring that if he does not “quit the room this instant, I’ll show you a shorter way into the street than the stairs” (187). When the Printer’s Devil asks for “the French book that you took the story from for the last journal,” Cape says “Take it” and throws the tome at the insolent Printer’s Devil who beats a hasty retreat.
When the Devil leaves, the beleaguered writer exclaims: “’Sdeath! a pretty situation I am in! And these are the fruits I am to reap from a long, laborious, and expensive—”. He is interrupted by the return of the Printer’s Devil, but it would seem like “education” is the word with which he would have finished this thought. In his occupation, learning is obviously undervalued, members of the book trade considering. The servant has remembered to give the writer his “week’s pay for the newspaper, five and five-pence which, with the two-and-penny master passed his word for Mrs. Suds, your washer-woman, makes the three half crown,” coins from this paltry sum to settle the author’s debts (188). His employer’s involvement in his domestic affairs, paying his washer-woman out of his paltry payments seems yet another insult given by way of the Printer’s Devil. Cape is reminded of his pecuniary embarrassments, the low material realities of his situation as a writer-for-hire. This intrusion of domestic concerns into the author’s workspace draws the writer even further from the ideals of professional life; he is put in his place by this representative of the book trade, who exerts resource power over the author-character and reminds him of the minutiae of hack life.

The conversation between Cape and the Printer’s Devil is succeeded by another dialogue that illuminates how the relationship between literary professionals is depicted on the stage. The Printer’s Devil informs the author-character that another visitor—who, “by the sheepishness of his looks, and the shabbiness of his dress, he’s either a pick-pocket, or poet”—desires to speak with Cape (188). The Devil’s stage direction, “surveys the figure, laughs, and exit,” suggests that this secondary author-character is subject to the material indignities of poverty (188). The poet enters and states to Cape his “case,” and refers to risibly shabby dress: “I, like you [Cape], have long been a retainer of the muses, as you may see by their livery” (188). Cape, expressing the Literary Professional’s respect for artistic inspiration and poetic excellence, responds with the hope that “they,” meaning the muses, “have not discarded [him]” (188). The visiting poet replies
in the negative, but complains that by “their upper servants, the booksellers, have,” explaining that he has been overlooked by these literary merchants since he “printed a collection of Jests upon [his] own account, and they have ever since refused to employ [him]” (188). He has obviously been punished for a show of independence by members of a group that values authorial subservience. The visiting poet, getting to the business of his request, addresses Cape: “you, sir, I hear, are in their graces: now I have brought you, sir, three Imitations of Juvenal in prose; Tully’s Oration for Milo, in blank verse [...] which, if you will dispose of them, in your own name, we will divide the proceeds” (188-9). Cape, admitting to his own lack of power, sympathizes with his visitor and politely declines the offer: “I am really, sir, sorry for your distress, but I have a larger cargo of my own manufacturing than they choose to engage in” (189). This disappointed author-character then asks Young Cape if he has any work to farm out to him, offering to “do it at half price” (189). The best he can do is offer the poet a charitable donation, a small “trifle,” an indicator of Cape’s professionalism as it involves an ethical obligation to treat one’s colleagues with sympathetic and practical consideration (189).

When this desperate poet leaves, Young Cape wonders “how far am I removed from his condition?” with implication that because of the uncertainties of the literary marketplace, these men are not so differently circumstanced. The instabilities of commercial authorship are such that Cape’s modest degree of success is precariously maintained, as he lacks the network of professional support which would prevent him from ever resorting to begging like the visiting poet. Consequently, he nostalgically harkens back to a golden age of patronage he situates in the classical period: “Virgil had his Pollio; Horace his Mæcenas; Martial his Pliny” (189). Foote portrays the modern author as disenfranchised, the respectful, mutually-beneficial partnership between artist and patron apparently replaced by a humiliating dynamic of dependence on commercial publishers. With this historically remote, mythologized vision of patronage in mind,
Cape complains how he is less idyllically situated in this present age of print: “my protectors are Title-page, the publisher; Vamp, the bookseller; and Index, the printer” (189). He sarcastically terms this group “A most noble triumvirate; and the rascals are as proscriptive and arbitrary, as the famous Roman one, into the bargain” (189). In the last part of this statement, political tyranny (of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus) is linked to tyranny—aesthetic and economic—within the book trade.

In a conversation between Sprightly and Young Cape, the latter admits to his friend that his “disposition has, at present, very little of the vis comica” [i.e. comic force] a statement suggestive of the frustrating disconnect between an author’s frame of mind and the material he is compelled to produce regardless of his inclinations or abilities (190). Cape’s imperiled situation puts him in no mood to compose the frolics so foreign to his day-to-day struggle for bread. He gestures towards the coins on the table and sarcastically pronounces that this “wealth” has been “delivered to me, too, with all the soft civility of Billingsgate, by a printer’s prime minister, called a devil” (190). Sprightly wonders at this mistreatment thinking “those midwives to the muses [printers and publishers] were the idolizers of you, their favourite son” (190). Cape corrects Sprightly’s assumption that he is the subject of the booksellers’ admiration, calling them “our tyrants” rather than his friends. In the same breath he also calls them “slaves,” meaning slaves to popular taste and the lure of profit. He bitterly observes: “Had I, indeed, a posthumous piece of infidelity, or an amorous novel, decorated with luscious copper-plates, the slaves would be civil enough” (190). Despite his circumstances, he refuses to produce pornographic works, his moral qualms preventing him from viewing books solely as pleasure objects to be unthinkingly duplicated and distributed.
Cape’s general depiction of the booksellers of his age is followed by the entrance of a particular man of this trade, Mr. Vamp, on the stage.41 The bookseller-character named Vamp makes an appearance in the play in a humorous scene of negotiation with the writer-hero. In this dialogue, Young Cape recommends his friend Sprightly, who is described as an author both “Voluminous” and “Universal,” in a blatant appeal to the bookseller’s tastes for hacks (192). Cape praises Sprightly as “an admirable theologian” who can supply the bookseller with “ten or a dozen manuscript sermons by a deceased clergyman,... Warranted originals” (192). But Vamp, like the publisher in Joseph Andrews, is left cold by this offer, protesting: “No, no, I don’t deal in the sermon way, now; I lost money by the last I printed, for all ‘twas written by a Methodist. But, I believe, sir, if they ben’t long, and have a good deal of Latin in ‘em, I can get you a chap” (192). Vamp tells Sprightly that he need not worry about being prosecuted, for “I’ll keep counsel.... Why, in the year forty-five, when I was in the treasonable way, I never squeaked; I never gave up but one author in my life, and he was dying of a consumption, so it never came to a trial” (193). The bookseller-character, unprofessional in his disregard for the judicial authority, complains that “the laws are very hard, very severe upon us” and says that his author was charged for “nothing in the world but an innocent book of bawdy” (193). Yet, we are to interpret the yoking of “innocent” and “book of bawdy” as oxymoronic, symptomatic of the bookseller’s troubling amorality. Vamp then talks business with Cape himself, instructing the young writer in the superficial use of classical learning: “provide me with three taking titles for these pamphlets, and if you can think of a pat Latin motto for the largest—” (193). Cape agrees to this and then Vamp proceeds to offer his advice: “Books are like women, Master Cape; to strike, they must be well dressed. Fine feathers make fine birds; a good paper, an elegant type, a handsome motto,

41 “Vamp” suggests the stereotypical ability of booksellers to refurbish old texts by cleverly repackaging them (i.e. printing a new title page without changing the content of the work it advertises).
and a catching title, has drove many a dull treatise through three editions—” (193). Like other bookseller-characters, he overemphasizes materials of book production and the book’s paratexts and underemphasizes the main text, the quality of which is less important than how it is superficially embellished.

Vamp brings up a past favourite of his, “Harry Handy,” with whom he once was friendly; the friendliness of the relationship between the bookseller and his late author marks Handy as an underprofessional professional, a hack through and through. Vamp fondly recalls Handy’s ability to spruce up texts with morsels of Latin; he declares: “he was as great a loss to the trade as any within my memory” (194). Cape asks about Handy’s demise and Vamp answers that his fate was “A halter; hanged for clipping and coining,” the illegal practice of shaving the edges off gold and silver coins (194). Despite the fact that this writer degenerated into a criminal, Vamp perversely deems him “a pretty fellow” (194). Like Vamp’s comment about the “innocent book of bawdy,” the bookseller’s contradictory language here is revealing, pointing to his lack of moral awareness. Readers, presumably sensitive the comedy of Vamp’s diction, are set up as the appropriate arbiters of print, able to recognize humour and immorality where the bookseller-character sees only a saleable good. Vamp’s appreciation of Handy proves shallower than his fond words would suggest, for, when Sprightly asks him if he was “a great loser by his death,” the bookseller-character confesses it was a lucrative tragedy as “his execution made a noise” and resulted in the sale of many copies of the criminal’s memoirs. Returning to the output of his living author, he is concerned with the format and the time of publication, for when Cape asks the bookseller if he has “farther commands,” Vamp responds that he will be asking him for “a couple of volumes in octavo” (cheap to produce and popular with readers) for the “Spring”. Obviously experienced in the trade—and knowing what will sell, when, and where, he advises: “novels are a pretty summer reading, and do very well at Tunbridge, Bristol, and other watering
places: no bad commodity for the West-India trade, neither; let ‘em be novels, Master Cape,”
considering only how to procure his readers, more importantly his buyers, light entertainment
(194). The bookseller-character also tells Cape of his plan to start a newspaper with Index, a plan
that fell through for “want of a politician,” a writer who will discuss current political issues.
Though Cape volunteers his services, Vamp declines them as he has someone else in mind. “In
half a Year’s Time,” he confides, “I have a Grandson of my own that will come in; he’s now in
training as a Waiter at the Cocoa-Tree Coffee-house; I intend to give him the Run of Jonathan’s
for three Months, to understand the Trade and the Funds” (195). The issue of nepotism aside, his
idea of training for this profession in the news industry is problematically (and comically)
unprofessional, involving no reading or writing, but simply directing his grandson to listen to the
political gossip and debate in several public places. When he exits this scene, Vamp possesses
outcome power, making decisions that will shape Cape’s career, dictating what the author-
character will produce and when he will do so. Nevertheless, Vamp’s monopoly over power is
by no means permanent, as the author-character finds a way to escape from the literary
marketplace.

Though stage comedy is actually one of Cape’s contemplated avenues to financial
success, the hero, like the shrewd bookseller, has another plot that will allow him to obtain
financial security: wedding a woman of means (whom he happens to love). Young Cape and his
chosen bride-to-be Arabella, Cadwallader’s sister, discuss how to gain her hand in marriage by
securing the approbation of her relatives. When he asks her for advice she replies wittily: “Poetry
is your profession, you know; so that plots, contrivances, and all the powers of imagination, are

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42 Though coffee-houses were associated with civilized conversation in the Restoration and eighteenth century, they
were also associated with less desirable forms of sociability such as newsmongering, class-mixing, and displays of
empty wit. Brian William Cowan in *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of The British Coffeehouse* reflects
that “a powerful tension between accessibility and exclusivity runs throughout the history of the coffeehouse” (255);
the same can be said for the history of professional authorship.
more particularly in your province” (200). In this line, a connection between art (writing) and art (deception) is made, the poet’s creative powers being repurposed, as they are in The Adventures of a Bank-Note, for survival. Yet that the poet must resort to duplicity is a criticism of the ways of the world, the social and economic milieu that threatens the author-character with poverty and obscurity. Nonetheless, Young Cape, is innately honest, a trait revealed in a comic moment of miscommunication with his servant when Robin presents Governor Cape’s request. “In a word then, this gentleman,” the servant announces, referring to Cape’s disguised father, “having a good deal of wealth, is desirous of a little honour”; Cape asks “How can I confer it?” Robin tells him “Your pen may,” but Cape still replies: “I don’t understand you,” his perplexity in fact the preface to a more direct proof of his integrity, an essential quality of the paradigmatic Literary Professional. Finally, Robin is more explicit, declaring: “Why touch him up a handsome complementary address from his colony, by way of praising the prudence of his administration, his justice, valour, benevolence, and—” (203). Cape interrupts Robin, however, with a refusal, as he declares that “Your friend, sir, has been a little mistaken, in recommending me as a person fit for your purpose” (203). Foote’s author-character, out of both pride and his principles, refuses to flatter a man about whom he knows nothing, and who may deserve nothing but scorn. Though he capitulates to Vamp when his conscience allows it, Cape is able to distinguish himself from the multitude of hack writers who would unblinkingly take this job. Cape stubbornly declines breaking the rules of literary production he has set down for himself, rules which establish him as a prototype of the Literary Professional. His concern for truth triumphs over other less abstract considerations and Cape is able to assert himself in establishing boundaries of authorial decency within a literary marketplace in which panegyric is bought and sold. It is the unspoken truth that the “person fit for your purpose” is a hack. Cape, who would disclaim this appellation, elaborates on why he refuses to take this commission: “Letters have been always my passion, and indeed
are now my profession: but, although I am the servant of the public, I am not the prostitute of particulars. As my pen has never been tinged with gall, to gratify popular resentment, or private pique, so it shall never sacrifice its integrity to flatter pride, impose falsehood, or palliate guilt. Your merit may be great; but let those, sir, be the heralds of your worth, who are better acquainted with it” (204). This upright declaration—a manifesto of Literary Professionalism—impresses Governor Cape who pronounces: “I like your principles and spirit; your manly refusal gives me more pleasure, than any honours your paper could have procured for me” (204). This manly refusal is an implicit argument for print, for Professional Authorship as it demands both personal integrity and a degree of independence from both booksellers and patrons.

The patron figure in the play, Cadwallader, is comically obsessed with pedigree and refuses to let his sister marry Cape, on whom he heaps abuse. As the writer-character’s pompous detractor is ridiculous, evident even without the aid of Foote’s mimicry, comedy undermines the force of his opposition. He is appalled by the idea of “mix[ing] the blood of the Cadwalladers with the puddle of a poet” (219). The stream of insults continues, as he, “a petty, paltry, ragged, rhiming [sic]--; “a scribbling...Garretteer! that has no more clothes than backs, no more heads than hats, and no shoes to his feet.. The offspring of a dunghill! Born in a cellar...and living in a garret; a fungus, a mushroom” (219). The gross stereotypes he imposes on Young Cape conversely act to strengthen readers’ own positive conceptions of professional authorship. Readers thus fashion their own argument for print by privately vindicating the young writer who bears no resemblance to the hack figure Cadwallader conjures up. Governor Cape intervenes in this scene to declare that he is the author’s father and to evaluate his son’s character: “I have ventured far to fix thy fortune, George; but find thee worthy of it more than overpays my toil” (222). The final lines spoken by Governor Cape further establish Young Cape as the paradigmatic Literary Professional whose private virtue will translate into public utility: “if
George remains as untainted by affluence as he has been untempted by distress, I have given the poor a protector, his country an advocate, and the world a friend” (223). *The Author* ends with the impoverished writer being lifted from poverty and ignominy by a revelation about his birth, a *deus ex machina* which represents the ideal reward for authorial integrity and triumph over, rather than simply a retreat from, the galling realities of professional authorship.

Foote’s representations of authorial oppression and resistance in *The Author* are an appropriate place to conclude this chapter on the power struggles between literary professionals which end with the bookseller-character holding outcome power. Though these scenes are predicated on a culturally familiar eighteenth-century binary of oppressive bookseller and oppressed author, this binary is never stable within the literary imagination of the period, despite the repetition of character types that occur through the century. Cape’s position of dependence on Vamp and other members of the book trade means that he is unable to secure outcome power in particular scenes. Nonetheless, within the larger arc of the play, he is able to break these chains by exercising his moral independence, which ultimately gets him what he has sought since Act One: financial security. Though the literary works examined through the course of this chapter would initially seem to confirm the binaries apparently created by the processes of commercial publication, the intradiegetic interactions between authors (those dealing with words and ideas) and merchants (those interested in money and materials) inhibit simple assessments of power in the literary marketplace. The historical author uses these scenes to consolidate his own power, conferred by readers, who are encouraged to authorize print by their negotiation of the internal and external comedy within these works of fiction and drama. Ultimately, the powers of the writer-character that hold little currency within the text are revalued via comedy within the texts (or in the case of Foote’s comedy, through the unmasking of Governor Cape who represents the anonymous reader covertly critiquing the author-character). In all four texts I have
comedy facilitates the construction of the paradigmatic Literary Professional, a project that
necessitates readers’ evaluative participation. Consequently, historical and individual readers are
connected by this process, bonded by way of shared understanding of professionalism, as it is
directly and indirectly (through comic counter-representation) represented.
Chapter 3

A Balance of Powers

Whereas there is a dirty Fellow, in shabby black Cloaths, a flux’d Tye-Wig, and a Quid of Tobacco in his Jaws, that runs up and down, that calls himself Henry Folding, Esq; begging Money, and complaining of one Fut [sic], a Grocer, from whom he says he has lately received a severe Drubbing: Now this is to inform the Public, that this said dirty Fellow is an arrant Imposter, it being well known that the true Henry Folding died about four Years since, Soon after the Publication of Joseph Andrews; and that he now lies interr’d in St. Paul’s, Covent Garden, near the Remains of his old Friend and Patron, Edmund Curll, Bookseller, in whose service he lived and died.

-Samuel Foote, the Daily Advertiser, April 23, 1748.43

In a number of the Daily Advertiser from the 23rd of April 1748, Samuel Foote made a bold claim about his literary rival, Henry Fielding, who had castigated Foote in print as a scandal monger. Foote’s retaliation is a report that the real Fielding had died years ago; hence, the “Fielding” walking the streets of London is “an arrant Impostor”—a slovenly hack, “begging money, and complaining of one Fut [Foote].” Moreover, readers were informed that the original Fielding’s body was buried at St. Paul’s, Covent Garden near that of “his old Friend and Patron, Edmund Curll, Bookseller, in whose service he lived and died.” By all historical accounts, however, Fielding was never employed by Curll, whose shady practices he criticized in The Author’s Farce—examined within this chapter—and the newspaper The Champion, to which he contributed from 1739 to 1741. While Foote’s accusation is patently absurd, it is nonetheless revealing as a satiric dig at a fellow author. Foote’s insult is two-fold, consisting of aspersions on

43 Qtd. in Battestin, 238.
the present Mr. Fielding and the purportedly “late” author (he was friends with Edmund Curll). Foote insinuates that Fielding’s supposed relationship with the century’s most infamous publisher was cozy indeed, so much so that the author’s remains lie near those of his crony: they are united like husband and wife in the churchyard. The circumstances of their burial suggest an unnatural amicability between public figures widely understood in the cultural imagination as foes: authors and booksellers. Essentially, this detail denotes an intimacy which, between members of the literary marketplace, has aesthetic implications; namely, Fielding’s writing, as it was shaped by his relationship with the book trade as Foote constructs it, cannot but be stained with “Curlisms,” lapses in integrity manifested in print. Fielding’s alleged association with the notorious bookseller is both funny and damning not simply because of Curll’s notoriety but also because of its subversion of cultural expectations about the relationship between authors and their booksellers as a perpetual struggle, be it artistic, economic, interpersonal, or legal.

Some eighteenth-century booksellers, including Edmund Curll, were able to profit from the practice of collecting and supporting hacks who mechanically churned out literary matter for their employers, in whose homes they lived and worked.44 Authors in literary representations of “stabled” hacks are dependent on their bookseller-conservators, who keep a tight grip on the reins of power. Yet more co-dependent, equitable dynamics are represented in the fiction and drama of the period, as many literary merchants establish other kinds of close relationships with impecunious writers to secure reliable, prolific sources of original (or at least quasi-original) material to send to their printers. Even when the bookseller is both “friend and patron” to an

44 Adrian Johns considers Curll’s “Literatory,” under the bookseller’s own roof in Bow Street, Covent Garden, as a problematic professional space, as it “epitomizes the ambiguity of private arrangements facilitated in the book trade (n. 124). As well, see Edmund Curll, Bookseller by Paul Baines and Pat Rogers and “Lessons from the Literary” by Ian Hunter and David Saunders.
author, power struggles still occur between literary professionals, rarely absent in the fictive dialogues between financially and domestically intertwined hack-characters and bookseller-characters. Yet while many authors of imaginative literature conventionally depict their kind in oppositional situations with fictional publishers, localized opposition does not always indicate a fixed state of enmity or aloofness produced by ideological difference. Distinctions between authors and booksellers in the eighteenth-century literary marketplace were comically blurred, not just sharpened, by comic interaction within works of imaginative literature. As the century progressed, writers continued to explore and exploit the comic possibilities of imaginatively representing the book trade and the wider literary marketplace in which the book and the historical author and reader are embedded. Humorous scenes between author-characters and bookseller-characters, part of a larger body of print-on-print, demonstrate the ways that fictionalized print culture could be used to comment on and potentially influence—rather than simply represent—this sphere. To reiterate a point made in Chapter One, the value of these representations extends beyond critique to underpin an argument for print even as print culture seems to be exposed to the critical gaze of the individual reader. These exchanges provoke the knowing laughter that brings individual readers closer to the writer—the extradiegetic reader/writer relationship outside being stressed, privileged over the professional connections of the historical author to the historical publisher.

Chapter Two attended to the first of three common and comic literary models of interaction between members of the marketplace of letters: an exchange between an oppressive bookseller and an oppressed author, outcome power—the ability of an actor to effect a desired outcome—resting with the former, whose actions and decisions impact, usually adversely, on the latter. Despite pervasive eighteenth-century cultural stereotypes of tyrant publishers and their
cowed writers, other, more complicated dynamics appeared in the period’s imaginative literature. As this chapter will establish, bookseller-characters and writer-characters are also depicted in another fundamental power relationship: a balance of power—a state characterized by both actors’ possessing outcome power in the texts under consideration. Foucault’s observation that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” is apt: the author’s ability to balance the bookseller’s power is incorporated in the mutually dependent nature of the relationship between the two (History 95). So I will turn away from the naïve, inexperienced author-characters I scrutinized at the beginning of Chapter Two and towards more knowing author-characters like Young Cape in Foote’s The Author, the work with which I closed that chapter. This chapter will focus on fictionalized writers who are aware—or become aware through the course of the narrative—of the conditions of commercial authorship and publishing. Armed with this awareness, these characters make use of these conditions, even as they perpetuate their own subjugation to external forces by contributing to the decline of culture. This awareness changes the power dynamics between characters within the narrative and, by extension, as I will discuss later in this chapter, the dynamics between individual readers and the historical author. A writer-character’s knowingness, like the author-character’s naivety, is central to not only the humour, but the strategic and ideological purport of the scene and the larger work in which it is enclosed. The putative writer, demonstrably embedded in the literary marketplace, possesses and asserts power over his booksellers, which results in alternating moments of resistance and cooperation that are, like the exaggerated authorial ignorance and miscommunication discussed in Chapter Two, comical. More humour is created by a shared discourse among the characters in this chapter than by a gulf of understanding between author-character and bookseller-character; though their interactions contain embryonic aspects of
Literary Professionalism, this ideal is generally established obliquely through comic displays of unprofessionalism. As in the works examined in Chapter Two, London’s literary marketplace is satirized as the parameters of Literary Professionalism are drawn through their comic erasure—comedy being the constant among representations of the author-bookseller interface.

In this chapter I will examine several primary texts in which both author-characters and bookseller-characters exert multiple, identifiable forms of power over each other; neither actor can be identified as attaining a definitively superior position within the narrative, each securing a desired/desirable outcome. This chapter will begin with a brief investigation of an episode from an anonymous English picaresque novel, *The True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body* (1740). Then I move into a lengthier analysis of Henry Fielding’s comic medley, *The Author’s Farce*, first performed and published in 1730. Turning to Charles Johnstone’s *Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea* (1764), a popular it-narrative or novel of circulation, I read a particular writer-character in the first volume of this multi-volume work as establishing a balance of power through trickery. Concluding the chapter in the same way I drew Chapter Two to a close, I look at another comedy by Samuel Foote, *The Patron* (1764). All of these texts feature scenes between author-characters and bookseller-characters, and involve unstable accord and conflict produced by warring interests; these episodes terminate with a balance of power, a “draw,” in which underlying tensions remain. These complex interactions indirectly give shape to the Literary Professional, unrealized or partially realized within the text as a balance of power is comically established.

*The True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body* (1740)
The anonymously published novel *The True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body* (1740) is part of the English picaresque tradition and looks forward to the it-narratives modish in later decades of the century. Containing a metaliterary episode that is repeated with some variation in other highly episodic works of popular fiction, the *Adventures of Some-body* is notable for its early example of novelized literary professionals, for establishing patterns of character behaviour for the rogue hero’s foray into the world of commercial letters.\(^{45}\)

The narrative trajectory of the London “picaro” is predictable. In this subgenre of the novel, a socially mobile hero, usually a poor but genteel or semi-genteel young man with a modicum of authorial talents, will pursue professional authorship for several chapters and then abandon the literary life as quickly as it was adopted. Though initially oppressed by agents of the book trade, the author-character actuates a balance of power, his acclimatization to the literary marketplace and subsequent rebellion against the publisher shifting the power dynamics initially established within this text. This balance of power is not realized by professional negotiation, agreement, and compromise, but by scheming, the author-character attempting to undermine the authority of the literary merchant and only partly succeeding. The hero’s short literary career usually begins with a dialogue, the protagonist, who knows little about commercial publication, meeting with a bookseller-character who initiates him into the literary marketplace. Recognizing the aspiring author-character’s ignorance, the fictive publisher, possessing both informational and resource power, volunteers advice on how one should write for the buying public. Either the fictive publisher, seizing an opportunity for exploitation or a display of power, offers him employment

\(^{45}\) Laura L. Runge, drawing on the work of James Raven and others on anonymity, comments that “because of its pervasiveness, the authorless document did not raise the same sense of suspicion that it does today” and draws the interesting conclusion that “this strategy of not naming or naming indirectly is a strong sign of the culture’s ambivalence towards the developing role of print; it suggests a desire to expose and yet hide authorship and its purported authority” (16).
or else treats him to empty promises or outright rejection. After a period of hard labour for this publisher, the author-character breaks the mold of oppressed bookseller’s hack, engaging in an act of resistance after it appears that the bookseller-character has established the power relationship seen in Chapter Two. An example of this kind of power play occurs in *Adventures of Some-body* and therefore before entering into the major texts of this chapter, I will briefly consider one stand-alone episode from this anonymous novel. In this episodic political work, the narrator-character “Some-body,” a generic youth with a little literary talent, squanders his fortune and searches for other sources of wealth and social importance. Though readers are invested in the protagonist’s survival, Some-body’s failings head the image of the suffering artist off at the pass. Attempting to make his way in a world that is largely indifferent to his fate, the novel’s hero passes through London’s social strata, taking on various roles and occupations including bookseller’s hack. Swept up in the social and economic currents of metropolitan life, Some-Body often appears—like the central figure of the “it narrative”—subject to actions and decisions of other people, particularly those with more power and influence in the city. The novel’s hero is an example of an initially *inexperienced*, by no means innocent, author-character who learns to “play the game,” pushing back against the world of commercial writing which would render him relatively powerless. His resistance is not the responsible adherence to moral and artistic standards ignored by the bookseller-character, but an attempt to thwart the fictive publisher’s desires. The balance of power that is humorously established within the text is underlined to readers as another undesirable, *unprofessional* dynamic, like the unequal power relationship (discussed in Chapter Two) which characterizes the early interactions between author-character and bookseller-character.
Some-body turns to selling his books after his taste for “an extravagant Life” makes him spend his last sum of money by “living with as much Grandeur, as if he was possesst of an Estate of as much per annum” (18). Though victim to his own spendthrift ways, he is also taken advantage of when he is at his lowest point financially “at a Bookseller’s disposing of a few books he had left” (18). Yet the bookseller-character is depicted as acting humanely, recognizing Some-body’s desperation and desiring to alleviate it, for “the Man of the Shop having formerly taken a pretty deal of his Money, taking Compassion on him, told him, that it was a great Pity, a Man of his Parts and Education should be reduced to want” (18-19). Though the bookseller’s flattery and sympathy seem politic in light of the gains he stands to earn from the young man’s labour, the literary merchant is consciously no hypocrite. Some-body, for whom writing is a pastime, is encouraged to transition from amateur to professional scribbling, informed by a bookseller that “what was formerly a Pleasure, might now become profitable to him” (19). The suggestion here is that professional writing will be both pleasurable and profitable, though hack writing is generally depicted as neither in eighteenth-century fiction and drama. Tantalized by the fair prospects the bookseller-character proffers, Some-body, revealed to be a likely candidate for victimization by the print industry, naively plunges into the literary marketplace. Untouched by cultural conceptions of the London book trade, the comically ignorant protagonist expresses his admiration of booksellers, whom he perversely lauds as “a People of universal Learning” (19). Mistaking sales tactics for erudition, Some-body recalls that as a customer he observed booksellers “descant as readily upon [a requested book], and display its Beauties with as much Facility, as if they had studied the Author all his life; no matter whether it be History, Divinity, Mathematicks [sic], or any other branch of Literature” (19). The word “beauties,” however, suggests the true state of affairs in the book trade, that “books were ubiquitous urban objects,”
for, as Barbara M. Benedict observes, “In booksellers’ shops, they often appear beside other fashionable items for sale” (279). The narrator sets down a pseudoscientific theory that explains the material source of booksellers’ “learning,” which comes from the book as a physical object rather than as “the quintessential vehicle for enlightenment” (Benedict 275). Booksellers become learned by mere physical proximity to books rather than “a severe Course of Reading, as practiced by our Students at the Universities” (19). Learning is acquired second hand, comically, by inhaling “certain Effluviums that arise from the Volumes, which fill their shops” (19-20). As the product of a physical phenomenon rather than sustained intellectual effort, “Learning” is devalued. The bookseller’s edification is also devalued in being wholly involuntary as he “can’t chuse [sic] drawing them in every time he breathes vital Air” (20), the comic implication being that most booksellers would not, if given the choice, choose to acquire knowledge, however easily and passively acquirable. The novelist is gently satirizing the perceived commodification of the book, putting forward a position on literary materialism with which many eighteenth-century readers would agree.

Some-body’s reverence for booksellers as a trade would seem to set the hero up to be manipulated into an exploitative relationship and finally disillusioned, the expectation being that he will acquire a bookseller-patron who will swiftly turn tyrant in a typical “bait and switch” move. The shiftless hero, having no ready money and lacking any conception of the cultural stereotypes he and his interlocutor are falling into, accepts the offer to become a bookseller’s hack: he will be provided with “a Room in [the bookseller’s] own House” as well as “Pen, Ink and Paper” (19). In return for these necessities, the publisher will presumably receive exclusive rights to the newly-minted hack’s literary productions. Some-body secures a steady income by entering into this domestic arrangement, which proves lucrative for the literary entrepreneur. The
hero experiences beginner’s luck as his first poem “was universally admired, and run thro’ several Editions” (21). The partnership seems mutually beneficial, as the narrator relates that this poem was “followed by some other Pieces, which filled the Pockets both of Somebody and his Bookseller” (21). Somebody spends all his money on new clothing and then “appeared at all the Places of Beau Resort,” indicating his superficiality and preoccupation with social display (21). Yet this fanatical concern for appearances could be overlooked were it not for the blatant unprofessionalism in his treatment of other writers. Once Somebody makes a little money, he wields his power over his literary brethren, the narrator reporting that he “kept constant Correspondence with the Wits at Buttons, where he and two or three more of the same Fraternity, enter’d into a League offensive and defensive against all other Poets, Writers, &c. who should not pay a just regard to their works” (21-22). Members of this gang of literary bullies “monopolized all the Wit of the Town,” taking turns complimenting each other in print, thereby promoting sales and benefitting “Somebody’s friend the Bookseller” who retails their works (22). The novelist uses “friend” ironically as the amicable relationship between the author-character and bookseller-character is short lived, Somebody treating the literary merchant like no friend.

The bookseller-character “soon got an Estate” (22) from the proceeds of Somebody and his compatriots, the upwardly mobile merchant appearing to secure outcome power in the narrative, obtaining everything he could desire from the business relationship established at the beginning of the scene. Yet Somebody’s latent roguery awakens, thus altering power relations between these literary professionals. The bookseller-character “might have continued getting Money, if it had not been for an Amour he unluckily discovered, between Somebody and his Daughter” (22); the author-character betrays his patron’s trust by conducting a secret relationship
with the bookseller’s daughter. The liaison between the author-character and the bookseller-character’s daughter comes out of the intimacy of the hack’s position within the merchant’s household; the author-character exploits his own exploitation, for, recompensed appropriately, Some-body would have had no need to sleep under his employer’s roof. Read in conjunction with other fictional confrontations between authors and booksellers, this “Amour” can be interpreted as evidence of the writer-character’s corruption by an amoral literary marketplace. Some-body’s indiscretion can also be read as evidence of a slippage between the author-character and the bookseller-character, as in several other literary works (e.g. Foote’s *The Orators* and Thomas Bridges’ *The Adventures of a Bank-Note*) it is the bookseller-character who indulges in sexual escapades. More commonly, however, the bookseller-character encourages the production of pornographic works which can embroil him or his authors in legal difficulties. Similarly, Some-body corrupts the body a young woman and would as willingly corrupt the minds of his readers.

Some-body’s clandestine affair, if made public, would involve the bookseller-character’s family in scandal, a daughter’s infamy having social implications for herself and her relatives. A young woman with a compromised reputation could expect a difficult time on the eighteenth-century marriage market; if society catches wind of her ruin, this daughter of commerce’s chances of “marrying up”—thus connecting her nouveau riche family to higher social circles—are dashed. By refusing to marry her, Some-body compounds his first transgression against the bookseller’s family, exerting his own power over his master, who earlier seemed, with his

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46 In “Edmund Curll and the Publishing Trade,” Pat Rogers, attempting to situate Curll within an industry that was engaged in similar practices as the infamous bookseller, remarks that “although much of Curll’s fame rests on his brushes with obscenity law involving such items as *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (1718), he was by no means a lone pioneer in bringing out sexual material under the guise of medical advice” (224).
purchase of a gentleman’s lifestyle, to secure outcome power within the relationship. But in
seducing his employer’s daughter, the author-character balances their existing power dynamics
by acting independent of—and independently against—the bookseller. The merchant gains an
estate, but loses a daughter’s honour, potentially hampering his social ambitions. Though the
bookseller unsuccessfully attempts to reassert his authority by forcing Some-body out of his
house, this action is “too little, too late” as a punishment of the writer-character. Though
devastating to an impoverished hack, this eviction is inconsequential to Some-body, who has
“well lin’d his Pockets” (22) with his gambling winnings, and is therefore at liberty to cast off
his identity as a bookseller’s hack. Both author-character and bookseller-character have gambled
for their fortunes, the former at the gaming table and the latter by employing Some-body when
the young man comes into his shop. Both gambles pay off in the short term as the fictional
publisher materially profits from Some-body’s hackney labours. 47 Significantly, the narrator
reports that the novel’s hero, like the bookseller-character, purchases land, and soon “possest of a
pretty estate,” looks to add to his household (22). Some-body, however, creates his own
household scandal by supporting an expensive mistress, an actress he pursues when seeing her
“performing the Part of a Harlot, confin’d in Bridewell” (22). Like the bookseller-character who
provides for his scribbling charges, the protagonist is able to support his own dependent, the
actress—purchasing her sexual services as the merchant had purchased Some-Body’s literary
services. 48 Some-Body, like his bookseller-patron, is imposed upon, as he is “charged with a

47 In his contribution to Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays, James Raven,
discussing the risks of bookselling, observes that after considering the costs and retail prices, everything points to
high potential returns, even where an edition of 500 copies proves a slow earner” (22).
48 Comparisons between hack writers and prostitutes are more directly made in other eighteenth-century works (e.g.
in Oliver Goldsmith’s Citizen of the World, which I discussed in Chapter One and in The Adventures of an Author
(1767), which I examine at length in Chapter Five.
constant Expense for that which many before him had enjoyed for Half a Crown, [his mistress] being no other than a Bum’s Daughter” (22-23). The balance of power between author-character and bookseller-character is confirmed by the parity of their situations, the parallel rise and fall of their fortunes. Both construct class fictions, and remake themselves as gentlemen by investing their speculated money in property; Some-body takes his pretensions further than the merchant’s, for, after quitting the bookseller’s service he enters the world of “Politicks” when he “began to have Thoughts of raising himself in the World, and of appearing in a higher Character than he formerly had done” (23). By the end of this episode in *A True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body*, the bonds of dependence between Some-body and the bookseller are dissolved, their resource and social power are equalized and distinctions between these two figures are blurred.

*The Author’s Farce* (1730)

A balance of power involving the blurring of distinctions between author-characters and bookseller-characters is also struck in Henry Fielding’s experimental or “irregular” comedy, *The Author’s Farce*, first performed on Monday, March 30, 1730 at London’s Haymarket Theatre. Attributed on the title page of the first edition to Scriblerus Secundus, Fielding’s play was published as *The Author’s Farce; And the Pleasures of the Town. As Acted at the Theatre in the Hay-Market.*

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49 In *Professional Imaginative Writing in England, 1670-1740: ‘Hackney for Bread’*, Brean Hammond observes that “the Scriblerians found their subject-matter and their most compelling forms, tropes, and techniques in the confusion generated by the growth of the literary market-place and in their resistance to the imperative of adjusting to it” (240). Since much of the humour of *The Author’s Farce* involves the absurdity and necessity of adjusting to such changes, Hammond confers “‘honorary’ Scriblerian status” upon Fielding, whose “irregular” plays were no doubt inspired by the work of Pope, Swift, and Gay, particularly Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) and the farce *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717) by Arbuthnot, Gay, and Pope.
actors), the antics of Punch and Judy, dances, and songs, and other popular elements that contributed to the play’s success. *The Author’s Farce* ran for 42 days in its first season, was England’s most successful original dramatic work since John Gay’s phenomenally popular and generically influential ballad opera, *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), from which Fielding borrowed five airs. Through an overworld frame story, an underworld internal drama, and the doubling of characters, Fielding is able to present and re-present interactions between literary professionals. Fielding’s protagonist, Harry Luckless, the “author” in the play’s title, is the hero of the frame comedy about the struggles of professional authorship in the metropolis. My treatment of the published text of *The Author’s Farce*, a work I primarily discuss as it was read rather than watched, is organized into three parts. In the first part of this section on Fielding’s farce, I examine the comic interactions in the frame play between the bookseller-character, Bookweight, and a group of hack-characters; I explore how this writing collective is bound to the publisher, operating in a power relationship with their employer which is relatively static. In the second part of this section on *The Author’s Farce*, I scrutinize the exchanges, also comic, between Luckless—a freer authorial agent than the hacks—and Bookweight; their engagements, particularly after the author-character’s deliberate authorial (re)self-fashioning, result in shared outcome power. In the third part of my analysis, I focus on the scene in the internal drama, the pseudo-puppet show “The Pleasures of the Town,” which includes a different kind of author/bookseller interaction than those in the frame story. Each of the three parts supports a reading of author-bookseller dialogues in Fielding’s play as working towards a circuitous

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50 Though fashionable in its debut season, the popularity of *The Author’s Farce* was not enduring, as the short run of the play’s revival (after Fielding’s revisions) in 1734 attested. See Thomas Lockwood’s introduction to the 1734 version in Henry Fielding, *Plays. Volume I* (1728-1731).

51 In *Henry Fielding: A Life*, Martin C. Battestin and Ruth R. Battestin identify Harry Luckless as “Fielding’s projection of himself and his own circumstances in 1729-1730” (84).
construction of paradigmatic Literary Professionalism (extracted from the rampant unprofessionalism, as well as the latent professionalism among the characters), comedy’s illumination of character and power being crucial to readerly participation in this process; as a result, Fielding and his individual readers are drawn together as observant cultural arbiters, in their shared perception of author-characters and bookseller-characters as in some ways interchangeable. Ultimately, as this section on Fielding shows, the historical author and reader are able to identify each other as engaging responsibly in commercial culture; in doing so, their relationship is privileged above that between writer and publisher (imagined within this chapter’s major and minor texts as problematically close and ultimately unprofessional).

In terms of the dissertation’s organizational principles, the scenes with Fielding’s bookseller-character, Bookweight, and his stable of hacks (i.e. Act Two, Scenes Three to Seven) can be considered as exemplifying the power dynamic probed in Chapter Two; yet they also partly display aspects of the relationships at the centre of this chapter and complicate the binary of oppressed author/oppressive bookseller. This fictive publisher, as others within eighteenth-century fiction and drama, stereotypically keeps a collection of garret-bound writers alive and scribbling under dubious working conditions. The relationship between the bookseller-character and his author-characters is an odd admixture of intimacy, suggested by the domestic setting, and exploitation. Initially this group is comprised of Dash, Blotpage, and Quibble and in Act Two, Scene Four, Scarecrow joins their ranks. In return for providing the hacks with food, lodging, and a little money, the bookseller-character obtains the rights to their works, many of which he directly commissions. The literary merchant has established the kind of comically unequal power relationship between himself and these hacks against which the ideals of Literary Professionalism can conversely be constructed. For example, it is questionable whether all of
Bookweight’s hacks are fairly remunerated for their labours. At the beginning of Scene Three, Dash complains that he has “not din’d these two Days” (245; 2.3) and poetically describes his unfortunate condition: “I carry about me Symbols of all the Elements; my Head is as heavy as Water, my Pockets are as light as Air, my Appetite is as hot as Fire, and my Coat is as dirty as Earth” (245-246; 2.3). As he makes his moan before the bookseller’s entrance, Dash can be exonerated from manipulating his bookseller-patron into improved financial support. Regardless, Bookweight’s consideration for indigent writers is limited, an empathy gap—injurious to interpersonal relationships—being perceptible between the two parties. When a new hack, the desperate Scarecrow, approaches Bookweight for employment, complaining of “an empty Stomach” (249; 2.6), the publisher-character responds with a witticism about the writer’s empty stomach and empty head, making light of his supplicant’s plight. Bookweight—because he is in need of a new translator—offers Scarecrow work. He tells the would-be author: “I wou’d advice you to come and take your Seat at my Tables. Here will be every thing that is necessary provided for you. I am as great a Friend to Learning as the Dutch are to Trade.—No one can want Bread with me, who will earn it” (249; 2.6). The insinuation is that hacks who do not meet his quotas are punished with reduced rations.

Bookweight, couching their relationship as a humane domestic partnership, establishes a dynamic of dependence couched as camaraderie, making room for Scarecrow at “my Tables” and referring to himself as a “Friend to Learning” (i.e. to his authors, some of whom he rather disingenuously also addresses as “friend”). Yet this fraternization is not the same as the

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52 Bookweight needs a new translator because his “last is in Newgate for shoplifting,” adding, “The Rogue had got a trick of translating out of the Shops as well as out of the languages” (2.6). The crime of shoplifting is carelessly dismissed as “a trick,” congruent with booksellers’ stereotypically cavalier attitude towards law-breaking of any description (i.e. libel, sedition, and the pirating of print).
collegiality between Literary Professionals, Bookweight’s supposed integrity and altruism undercut by his ruthless statement in Act Two: “I will use my Enemy as I wou’d my Friend, for my own Ends,” an admission of Machiavellianism (251; 2.7). Despite his show of magnanimity, as much the purview of the tyrant as shows of cruelty, the fictional publisher is aware that Scarecrow (his name suggesting a gaunt or haggard appearance) is powerless to refuse any offer. When Scarecrow makes a motion to join the stable of hack writers, he does so because he “prefer[s] any thing to starving,” amenable to any terms that will secure his survival (249; 2.6). Bookweight’s show of welcome is an injunction to “throw by your Hat, which you will have no more use for, and take up your Pen” (249; 2.6). The Scarecrow will not need his hat because he will not be venturing outdoors, but will instead spending his hours hard at work in the bookseller’s crowded garret. The bookseller-character’s control over the hacks’ physical liberty is matched by his control over their social and mental liberty. Act Two, Scene Four begins with Bookweight entering and interrupting the hacks’ conversation, which began in Scene Three. Making a show of his authority, he discourages his writers from socializing because he fears chatting will undermine their productivity and adversely affect his profits. Displeased with his workers’ inactivity, he complains: “Fie upon it Gentlemen! what, not at your Pens?” (247; 2.4). The literary merchant reminds the hacks of their accountability to him and wields reward power, the ability (though not necessarily the inclination) to grant material benefits. One by one, the writers present the fruits of their labour to their taskmaster, who accepts or rejects their efforts, and self-importantly proffers advice, criticisms, and further demands.

The bookseller-character’s rule over the hacks generally leaves little room for negotiation, power being unilaterally exercised by the authoritarian, though there are a few rare moments of bi-lateral decision-making in Fielding’s play. Act Two, Scene Five, however,
consists of an exchange in which power seems all but absent, though it is of course not, as Foucault convincingly posits: “Power is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere… Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society” (History 93). The bookseller-character, who wavers between friend and authoritarian in these scenes, and a self-possessed hack named Index interact with an ease born of intersecting views and interests. Bookweight has some appreciation of Index’s skills, an estimation that facilitates their cooperative interactions—the bookseller-character’s resource power is balanced with the author-character’s expertise power. Index hands Bookweight a bill for his work, the bookseller-character looking this document over, genially asks: “Why, Friend, are your Latin Mottos dearer than your Greek?” (248; 2.5). Index is frank in his admission that Greek translation (really pseudo-translation) is easier, less exacting work, knowingly observing that “as no body [sic] now understands Greek, so I may use any Sentence in that Language, to whatsoever purpose I please” (248; 2.5). An awareness—or at least purported awareness—of readers’ tastes and limitations—also empowers this author-character in his negotiations to create a balance of power. Their businesslike conversation—each actor is subtle in displaying the source of his power—is surprisingly free of the tension and misinterpretation so characteristic of many of the period’s fictive author/bookseller dialogues. They understand each other perfectly, as both men are more concerned about the utility than the sense of the mottos, which serve as showy, meaningless

53 Janine Barchas, responding to Gérard Genette’s discussion of the epigraph, avers that “from the panoply of epigraphs printed at the top of periodicals, such as each original sheet of the Tatler and Spectator; to the epigraphs fronting such diverse literary projects as Pope’s Rape of the Lock (1714) and Johnson’s Dictionary (1755), eighteenth-century print culture abounds with epigraphs” (85).
flourishes to inferior works.\textsuperscript{54} Bookweight is interested in these mottos from a marketing standpoint as “the epigraph partakes of the book industry’s rhetorical strategies to authorize and gentrify print” (85). Barchas notes that “Epigraph usage in literary works, was, indeed so ubiquitous that Fielding in \textit{The Author’s Farce} (1730) can poke fun at a lively Grub Street trade in the adaptation of Greek and Latin literary mottoes” (85). Though their accord is ideologically problematic, the author-character cannot properly be considered a victim of the literary merchant’s exploitative remunerative terms; with minimal effort, the author-character is able to secure his requested payment, Bookweight declaring to the translator that “You shall have your Money immediately” (248; 2.5). Yet their conversation still falls short of exemplifying Literary Professionalism, though the composure of the interlocutors during their negotiations brings them superficially closer to this ideal. Theirs is a kind of perverse professionalism, as they are operating on a shared code of ethics, but not a desirable one; their system of commercial amorality blurs the lines between author-character and bookseller-character in a manner both humorous and disturbing to eighteenth-century readers cognizant of the discourse of cultural decline to which Fielding, without the alarmist attitude of the literary polemicist, adds.

This admixing of author/bookseller, illuminated through conversation, can be detected elsewhere in these scenes, particularly when characters active in the literary marketplace talk in general ways about the book, namely the physical, saleable book as an end in itself rather than a medium for ideas. Bookweight, a merchant of object-books (books he considers \textit{objects} rather than \textit{texts}) memorably compares plays to nuts, informing Luckless that this “is a plentiful Year

\textsuperscript{54}The bookseller-character’s indifference to quality and accuracy is confirmed in the next scene, Bookweight articulating his sentiments on translation as he tries to recruit Scarecrow as a translator, though the hack just admitted: “I understand no Language but my own” and “translated [Virgil] out of Dryden” (2. 6). To this confession, Bookweight exclaims “Not qualified! If I was an Emperor thou should’st be my Prime Minister. Thou art as well vers’d in thy Trade, as if thou had’st labour’d in my Garret these ten Years.—Let me tell you, Friend, you will have more occasion for Invention than Learning here” (2.6).
of Plays—and they are like Nuts: In a plentiful Year they are commonly very bad” (236; 1.6). As he considers books just another fungible commodity, he privileges what is superficially attractive about them, discounting their content and their influence, positive or negative, on the society of readers in which they circulate. The hack writers in the garret give voice to remarkably similar attitudes towards the texts they produce, their language, stressing the physical manifestation of the text, echoes the sentiments uttered earlier by their employer. During the conversation among Bookweight’s hacks, Dash vindicates his own “Business” as a composer of titles: “It becomes an Author to be Diffusive in his Title Page. A Title Page is to a Book, what a fine Neck is to a Woman—Therefore ought to be the most regarded, as it is the Part which is view’d before the Purchase” (246; 2.3). The publisher’s minion, then, considers buying a book and purchasing the services of a prostitute as interchangeable, ethically-equitable commercial transactions.

According to Barbara M. Benedict, Alexander Pope “suggests that vulgar people misunderstand books as only text-bodies” (282). Dash and Bookweight are clearly these kinds of “vulgar people,” while Fielding’s readers, patently not, are encouraged to think of themselves as Professional Readers, closer to the Literary Profession as apposite arbiters of print. Positioned to laugh and critique these literary (un)professionals who blame their ills on cultural consumers, Fielding’s readers are distinguished from those characters. The readers are aligned with the historical author, who, in Fielding’s case, consolidates his own power by giving readers a feeling of superiority over characters in the diegetic worlds of the text. Fielding compliments his readers’ sagacity, specifically their appreciation and deeper understanding of the intellectual, moral, and social possibilities offered by the book-as-text. There is also a blurring of lines between bookseller-character and author-character as Bookweight takes on authorial responsibilities that turn the bookseller-character into a kind of head author (like a master painter
and his workshop of assistants or pupils). Peter Lewis considers the bookseller-character the source or the *spiritual author* of the bad literature being produced at the hack’s tables. In his study of Fielding’s burlesque drama, Lewis observes that “The writers who work for Bookweight have execrable literary standards, and at the times they themselves recognize this, but considering the conditions in which they have to work they can hardly be blamed. They are merely drudges [...] The real culprit is their employer, or more accurately their exploiter” (93).

The series of conversations between Bookweight and the supplicant hacks underline various ways in which the bookseller-character, and by the extension the writers whom he controls, fall short of Literary Professionalism, which necessitates expertise and ethics. Bookweight poses as a Literary Professional, though he is as unliterary in his scenes with his scribblers as he is unprofessional, for despite his protestations to the contrary, the bookseller-character is minimally invested in literary excellence, hypocritically paying lip service to learning while in fact proving himself to be a friend to personal profit alone. Fielding’s readers are supposed to consider the bookseller-character ridiculous, yet simultaneously appalling in light of his role as a gatekeeper to print. Despite his protestations of erudition, he epitomises its opposite: he passes judgment on a multitude of texts, but, not having actually engaged with them, knows no more about their content than what is required to promote them. Laughably, Fielding’s bookseller-character considers his physical proximity to the material conduits of learning as proof enough of his command of them. Bookweight also falls short of literary professionalism in the crucial matter of ethics, adhering to a code of action that disregards all manner of civic duties and responsibilities. Luckless, observing Bookweight and the sequestered hacks, ironically

55 See Lisa Maruca’s chapter on booksellers as authors in *The Work of Print*.
56 This idea can be compared to the pseudoscientific theory to explain the booksellers’ “learning” that the hero of *A True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body* (1740) articulates.
wonders: “Who can form to himself an Idea more amiable than of a Man at the Head of so many Patriots working for the Benefit of their Country?” (251; 2.7). These hacks are demonstrably, like Timothy Spinbrain (an author-character referred to in Chapter One), no patriots, their labours weakening the nation on several fronts—if not directly through sedition, then indirectly through false information, scandal, and mindless literary diversion. Fielding’s readers, understanding the irony and the critique behind this comment, “get the joke,” their recognition of this internal comedy drawing them away from the bookseller-character, who, a self-proclaimed “honest Tradesman,” bristles at this offhand comment and threatens legal action (251; 2.7). He may be technically “honest” as a tradesman, but financial responsibility does not translate into cultural responsibility. Bookweight’s unprofessionalism, rendered transparent through comedy, extends beyond the inequalities of power he cultivates and the effects of his tyranny are felt not only by his authors, but by society at large. Irresponsible as cultural arbiter, he willingly compromises the reputation of private and public individuals who figure in the literature he prints. As an exchange with Quibble demonstrates, Bookweight’s chief concern is with the bottom line, as he seems ill-equipped even to conceive of any qualms about the ethics of his publication, and more than willing to excite rather than enlighten the minds of prospective readers.

The moral ambiguity of the literary labours accomplished under Bookweight’s auspices is further suggested by the bookseller’s question to Mr. Dash (“have you done that Murder yet?”) and the hack-character’s answer: “Yes, Sir, the Murder is done—I am only about a few moral Reflections to place before it” (247; 2.4). Of course Dash is referring to a crime piece which he has just completed, but his phrase, taken literally (and out of context), identifies the writer as

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57 Recall that this is the same way Melopoyn discussed his own hack work in Smollett’s Roderick Random, discussed in Chapter Two.
committing, rather than reporting on, the felony. Moreover, the “moral Reflections” are an afterthought, thrown in to lamely justify a sensational piece. The Bookseller-character proceeds to compliment Mr. Blotpage on his use of the dash in a work entitled “Poetical Advice to a certain— from a certain— on a certain— from a certain—” (247; 2.4). Dashes were often used in eighteenth-century slander writing to circumvent legal action against literary producers. Yet the dashes are taken to such an excess that this particular title is absurdly vague, such that the attack is effectively stifled, too oblique to be either slanderous or satirical, individually-damaging or socially-valuable; this work could be about anyone and anything. Commercial interests also sometimes subsume meaning by mistakenly stifling political content. When Scarecrow announces to Bookweight that he has “brought [him] a Libel against the Ministry” (249; 2.6), the fictive publisher refuses to promote this work, albeit not because of possible legal consequences of publishing libelous material. Slave to Smith’s “invisible hand” of supply and demand, Bookweight inadvertently, and comically, does the right thing for the wrong reasons: far from objecting to the inappropriate content, he explains that he already has this genre covered with “two in the Press already” (249; 2.6).

Bookweight also pretends to a degree of professionalism by stressing the complexity or mystery of his livelihood, the procedures, the necessary experience needed to acquire the skill set of the successful bookseller. One of the tricks of the trade he has mastered is revealed in a conversation about how to maintain what book historians have termed a “print war.” Urging his hacks to greater levels of commercial success, he chastises one of his underlings with:

Do you consider, Mr. Quibble, that it is above a Fortnight since your Letter from a friend in the Country was publish’d. –Is it not high time for an Answer to come out—at this rate, before your Answer is Printed your Letter will be forgot—I love to keep a
Controversy up warm—I have had Authors who have writ a Pamphlet in the Morning, answered it in the Afternoon, and compromised the matter at Night (247; 2.4).

He also admits that some of his published “translations,” for example, are actually original works—likely of poor quality—that he sells as English translations of French books. When the bookseller reveals this particular scam, Scarecrow wonders to Bookweight: “Your Trade abounds in Mysteries,” a judgment the bookseller-character seconds, boasting: “The Study of Bookselling is as difficult as the Law,—and there are as many Tricks in the one as the other. Sometimes we give a Foreign Name to our own Labour—and sometimes we put our own Names to the Labour of others” (250; 2.6). Here he equates the law, which requires formal training, with bookselling, which requires little more than capital, in order to enhance the prestige of his trade; the learned lawyer is not the model Bookweight evokes, however, but the canny lawyer, underhand “Tricks” being the link in the publisher-character’s mind between these two professions.58 By making fun of these characters, Fielding directs his readers to understand that Literary Professionalism involves an imaginative leap beyond what is depicted in these scenes. The playwright thereby cultivates a powerful kinship with his knowing audience during the course of the farce.

In Act 1, we learn that the writer-hero is a stranger to commercial success as his play is yet “un-acted” (229; 1.1). Having trouble paying his rent and purchasing dinner, the impecunious hero argues with his landlady, pawns his hat, and finally meets Bookweight, on whom he hopes to pawn his manuscript. In displaying his knowledge of the state of commercial letters, Bookweight tries to wield informational power—social power predicated on the possession of

58 Here, Fielding’s satire on bookselling is linked to another satiric target: the law, as Fielding refers to stereotypically vicious lawyer-characters abusing their power and relying on unscrupulous ‘tricks’ to get ahead financially.
important information, in this case information related to the book trade—over Luckless, attempting to silence the aspiring playwright with truisms like: “A Play, like a Bill, is of no Value before it is accepted, nor indeed when it is, very often” (236; 1.6). Fielding’s protagonist is not interested in passively accepting the merchant’s nuggets of wisdom or joining the humorously pathetic set who must pretend to do so, clearly wanting to secure more favourable and equitable terms with Bookweight. In Luckless’ first scene with the bookseller, the writer-character announces the business of his visit: “I have something to put in your hands. I have a Play for you, Mr. Bookweight” (236; 1.6). More aggressive than the hacks, Luckless presents the play as a special gift instead of an untested work that has not yet met with the approval of the theatre-goers or even the theatre-managers. Fielding’s playwright-character boldly asks the bookseller to “advance fifty Guineas on [his] play” (238; 1.6). The most recent editor of Fielding’s plays, Thomas Lockwood, calls this an “absurd request,” explaining that “Even established playwrights could not reasonably hope for much more than half this amount from the sale of a copyright in a play being staged, let alone a play not even accepted” (n. 238). Yet so confident is he in the value of his writing that Luckless attempts, unsuccessfully, to assert a form of ascribed power—power based on the perception of his own abilities. But the bookseller’s own knowledge of the literary marketplace prevents him from accrediting the playwright-character’s unrealistic offer. When informed that the young author’s dramatic work has not yet been accepted for performance, Bookweight prudently dismisses it for the moment, conforming to the standard practice in the eighteenth century of printing a play only after its stage success.

When Bookweight rejects the play (which he will not even have for “fifty shillings”), the slighted author threatens the bookseller with violence, telling his servant Jack to “Take this worthy Gentleman and kick him down Stairs” (238; 1.6). The bookseller-character responds with
a menace of his own, vaguely warning Luckless: “Sir, I shall make you repent this—” (238; 1.6). When it appears that Jack is going obey his master’s order to use direct force, the frightened bookseller-character cries: “Help—Murder—I’ll have the Law of you, Sir” (238; 1.6), which Luckless greets with laughter—mirth being an understandable reaction to Bookweight’s threat because Luckless has so little to lose, possessing neither money nor reputation. Neither actor in this exchange is able to achieve their goals through coercive power and their dispute, moreover, proves impermanent. Despite the mutual threats that end their first business meeting, Luckless and Bookweight nonetheless continue their dealings in a later scene. As inter-reliant players in the literary marketplace, authors-characters and booksellers-characters are oftentimes depicted as resolving their differences for their mutual benefit, although both may be apt to understate or deny their cooperative tendencies.

As in The True and Impartial History of the Life and Adventures of Some-body, the relationship between author-character and bookseller-character in Fielding’s play changes as the former acclimatizes to the literary marketplace. Relations between Luckless and Bookweight shift later in the frame play after the former makes an informed decision to adopt the bookseller’s mindset and produce what will sell. Though Luckless and Bookweight clashed in a previous scene, once the latter character is offered a more commercially attractive piece, the puppet-show farce, the duo interacts more equably. The author-character, possessing a valuable commodity, a dramatic work in the vein of Samuel Johnson of Cheshire’s Hurlothrumbo (1729), is in an improved bargaining position.59 The bookseller, referring to Luckless’ new product, declares he had “rather venture on a thing of that nature, than a regular Play” (252; 2.7). He perceives a

59 Several Fielding scholars have commented on the relationship between The Author’s Farce and its immediate predecessor, Hurlothrumbo; see e.g. Thomas R. Cleary’s Henry Fielding: Political Writer.
“regular play,” a conventional comedy or tragedy, as less marketable than the popular nonsense of the period. Luckless’ capitulation to commercialism is a calculated response to what is identified in the play as the tastes of the town, hence the title of his dramatic creation, “The Pleasures of the Town.” Yet it is not Bookweight but Luckless’s friend and alter-ego Witmore, who is credited for this dramatic reversal. The misanthropic Witmore, the voice of reason in the din of cultural noise, recalls that everywhere he has been, “I have heard Sense run down, and seen Idiotism, downright Idiotism triumph so often [...]” (253; 2.9). The critic-character’s pessimism is seconded by Luckless himself, who acknowledges the decline of drama with the rhetorical question: “What have been all the Play-Houses a long time but Puppet-Shows?” (252; 2.7). He justifies “selling out” by reminding us of his poverty, for like others of his kind, Luckless, would “rather Eat by his Nonsense, than Starve by his Wit,” a statement he makes in the guise of “Master of the Show” (256; 3.1). This is the moment of resistance, a milestone in what Foucault calls the ceaseless movement of “mutual incitement and struggle” (“Subject and Power” 342) between the oppressed individual and the broad social trends in which he is caught up, as the author consciously decides adhere to the bookseller’s attitudes in order to balance the latter’s economic power.

Luckless emerges in Act Three, Scene One as the Master of the Show and speaks to a player, who complains that the author’s puppet-show is “beneath the Dignity of the Stage” (256; 3.1). The Master’s reply puts playgoers in the critical spotlight, for he observes that: “you see a Farce brings more Company to the House than the best Play that ever was writ” (256; 3.1).

60 Interestingly, eighteenth-century critics did not necessarily distinguish Fielding’s outrageous production from its unselfconscious predecessors. Claude Rawson, discussing The Author’s Farce, observes in Henry Fielding: Novelist, Playwright, Journalist that “The surviving first records of critical opinion, however, are almost entirely disapproving, their gist being that this was an irrational and vulgar entertainment” (23).
establishing that entertainment, rather than literary merit, succeeds in the world of the play, rendering Literary Professionalism as it emphasizes public utility, a superfluous concept. Luckless’ farcical piece—with its otherworldly setting and cast of characters drawn from eighteenth-century popular entertainment—is appealing in its variety. The puppet-show, which is set in the underworld, begins with the frothy antics of Punch and his shrewish wife Joan—whose relationship, like that of author/bookseller, combines closeness and contention. Nonetheless, the tensions between authors and booksellers evidenced throughout the frame play are transformed as they are reflected in the doubly fictive world of “The Pleasures of the Town.” In the fantastic underworld setting of this play-within-a-play, Charon ferries the generic author-puppet named “Poet” across the Styx to the Court of Nonsense. The poet has, like Luckless himself, consciously decided to relinquish his allegiance to Apollo—and by extension, poetic excellence—and actually seek the patronage of the Goddess of Nonsense, whose court supports cultural forms perceived as debased, such as opera and pantomime. Poet’s journey to the court of nonsense allegorically represents Luckless’ bid for financial success by bringing his puppet show to the attention of London audiences, arranging to have his absurd creation performed at the “Haymarket Theatre.”

On his journey to meet the Goddess, the puppet Poet converses with a puppet bookseller, named Mr. Curry—an allusion to the infamous early eighteenth-century bookseller Edmund Curll. Curry requests “News [...] from the other World” and the Poet obliges him, reporting that when he was recently above ground writers were still exploited, still going hungry while booksellers thrived: “Why Affairs go much in the same Road there as when you were alive, Authors starve and Booksellers grew fat” (265; 3.1). Cultural decline has eaten away at Britain’s Britishness, the Poet remarking that “Grub-Street harbours as many Pirats [sic] as ever Algiers
did—They have more Theatres than are at Paris, and just as much Wit as there is at Amsterdam; they have ransack’d all Italy for Singers, and all France for Dancers” (265; 3.1) The puppet-bookseller, unsympathetic to those thrown under the wheels of commercialism, both expects and approves of an unequal distribution of wealth among booksellers and authors—as he remarks after the Poet’s report: “I find Matters go swimmingly” (265; 3.1). The poet does not seem particularly troubled either, though his tattered clothing and his dispute with Charon over payment suggest that he experienced hardships in the world above. Now seeking Nonsense’s encouragement, he is disconnected from the author-bookseller antagonisms he left behind. Removed from their “reality,” bookseller and author continue to converse pleasantly without any of the miscommunication associated with stock scenes between these traditionally antagonistic figures. Unlike the author-characters in the frame story that introduces “The Pleasures of the Town,” the “puppets” are in complete agreement, both discerning the Goddess of Nonsense’s immediate passion for one of her followers, Signior Opera. The puppet-bookseller proceeds to marvel “That a Woman of so much Sense as the Goddess of Nonsense, should be taken thus at first Sight!” (264; 3.1). With this comment, Fielding underlines the obtuseness of the Bookseller, who does not recognize the paradox of characterizing the Goddess of Nonsense as a woman of “sense.” The ghostly tradesman declares his intimate acquaintance with the Goddess of Nonsense, whom he has “serv’d […] faithfully these thirty Years as a Bookseller in the upper World, and never knew her guilty of one Folly before” (264; 3.1). Acquitting Nonsense of “folly” also confirms him as an unfit judge of merit, a bad reader. Fielding’s readers cannot but recognize and laugh at the bookseller’s insensibility to language, which manifests itself in these oxymoronic statements. The underworld exchange between the Bookseller and Poet ends as genially as it began, with the Bookseller helpfully offering to lead him to the Court and the poet
tamely replying: “Sir, I follow you” (265; 3.1). Worshipped by such men as the Bookseller, “Nonsense” is renamed in “The Pleasures of the Town,” becoming the “Goddess of Wit.” Neither Poet nor Curry recognizes the absurdity of this re-titling, which Fielding’s audience, it can be surmised, acknowledges with its laughter.

The blurring of the figures of author and bookseller continues after “The Pleasures of the Town” is collapsed into the frame story, farce and comedy intermingling. The harmony between the poet and the bookseller—brought together by mutual devotion to nonsense—is taken a step further in the final scene of The Author’s Farce. The play ends with the merry chaos of the underworld of “The Pleasures of the Town” spilling into the overworld. William Warner makes a claim about the thematic significance of the blurring of diegetic boundaries. “At the end of The Author’s Farce,” he observes, “farce melds into the framing play, suggesting the way in which entertainment media engulf their consumers” (242). For Fielding, when the distinctions between author and bookseller—maintained by conflict—disappear, cultural disintegration, albeit playfully represented by the bedlam that ends The Author’s Farce, is most closely at hand.

Ronald Paulson, however, interprets the ending in terms of its emphasis on division, positing that “when … Fielding gives his characters a happy ending, and distributes rewards and punishments, it is plainly the work of the playwright, who is demonstrating the discrepancy between his world and the real world” (101).

The harmony between the poet and the bookseller—brought together by mutual devotion to nonsense—is taken a step further in the final scene of The Author’s Farce, when peace is superseded by congruence, an interchangeability of author/bookseller; the Author, Luckless transformed into a universal, finally takes on the role of the bookseller as he enters and asks for the Epilogue, which he has commissioned four poets to write. The “Author” imitates Bookweight
in keeping a stable of hacks to compose for him, overseeing their feeble efforts. Despite the fact that there are four writers—four minds and four quills—to produce an original epilogue, plagiarism is nonetheless proposed as a viable means by which to complete the task at hand. Poet One suggests lifting lines from other modern epilogues, to which the third Poet rhetorically asks: “What will the Name of Imitation soften?” (290) The first Poet justifies the act of plagiarism with the couplet: “sure those Thoughts, which in another shine, / Become not duller, by becoming mine” (290). Bookweight, earlier in the play, had expressed a casual attitude towards plagiarism, speaking of it as an ordinary tool in the arsenal of book-making; the publisher-character’s methods are tellingly repeated by the group of writers at the end of the play, and literary theft, among other artistic crimes, is encouraged and perpetuated. The first poet also suggests an epilogue comprised of “Smut,” which he declares “pleases all” (291). The perpetuation of booksellers’ values is reflected in the circular structure of the text—specifically the return to a scene of collaborative, hack composition. The Author decides upon a gimmick to distract the audience from the quality of the writing, announcing: “I’ll have the epilogue spoke by Cat” (291). The collapsing of Bookweight into the Author at the end of the play implies the descent of print culture while encouraging individual readers to consider themselves as allies of the author. Fielding’s satirical vision of the future of culture therefore resembles The Dunciad, though he never reaches the same depths of pessimism as Pope.

*Chrysal; or the Adventures of a Guinea*

The disunity of action in Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce* can be compared to the episodic structure of the anonymously published *Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea* (published in four volumes), which presents fictional fragments of print culture rather than a sustained, unified
portrait of the literary professional. The generic conventions of the “it narrative” with its revolving door of characters and shifting social settings foster a state of flux similar to that in Fielding’s irregular drama. This popular work of fiction, fully titled *Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea. Wherein are exhibited views of several striking scenes with curious and interesting anecdotes of the most noted persons in every rank of life through whose hands it passed through, in America, England, Holland, Germany, and Portugal*, was written by newspaper proprietor Charles Johnstone, thought it was attributed to simply “an adept” on the title page. Jonathan Lamb identifies this novel as “the most ambitious and widely read of all the it-narratives” (220). Like *The Adventures of a Bank-Note* (addressed in Chapter Two), *Chrysal* is told through an object possessing subjectivity, a self-aware piece of English currency whose experiences in the temporary possession of various men and women are “recorded” for posterity. Transferred from one individual to another as resources change hands, the guinea that narrates the text is a visible yet invisible witness to scenes of economic activity and the workings of power. As in *The Author’s Farce*, the figure of the author in *Chrysal* is chameleon-like, as there are several episodes in the text that novelize eighteenth-century cultural producers. I narrow my focus to one episode in Volume One to which Johnstone devotes several chapters. To summarize: the guinea falls into the possession of a writer-character, identified by Betty Rizzo as based on one of Johnstone’s contemporaries, the hack writer and physician Dr. John Hill (373). Most pertinent to the central concerns of my study, the semi-fictional writer is described as interacting with two bookseller-characters, their conversations comically displaying their perverse ideas of literary professionalism. The narrator-character, in stressing the similarities

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61 Mark Blackwell records that Johnstone’s novel “went through twenty editions between 1760 and the close of the century and was later collected in Sir Walter Scott’s *Ballantyne’s Novelists’ Library* (1822), together with a biographical sketch of Johnstone” (188).
between these encounters, suggests the apparent inevitability of the writer/publisher agon and the ubiquity of authorial oppression. Though he is “obliged to prostitute his labours,” the writer-character resists the power of the booksellers, as he “he outdoes them in deception,” while still satisfying their demands (Johnstone 1:103; Rizzo 371). In other words, he comically empowers himself by using methods akin to the booksellers’ own, and in doing so, solidifies the balance of power which is presaged within their conversation. Before each bookseller-character visits with the hack, Johnstone establishes the author-character as deeply embedded in the materialist literary marketplace. The circumstances by which Chrysal comes into his possession are a barometer to the moral defects of this “modern genius,” as he is identified in the chapter description (Johnstone 1:102). The guinea passes to the putative hack from a lord who rewards him “for throwing dirt on the characters of those who had detected and defeated [this patron’s] schemes of leading his country into ruin” (1:102). Before he is even introduced, the author-character is identified as mercenary, flexible in both his morals and his politics, willing to pen vengeful slander against a set of British patriots. The guinea’s possessor, whom Johnstone ironically deems “a votary of Apollo,” writes on a range of topics: “panegyric, libel, physic, divinity, cookery, criticism, politics, ballads, botany, &c. &c. &c.” (1:108). Chrysal is impressed by “the extent and volubility of his capacity,” though acknowledges “such rambling prevented his ever getting deeper than the surface of any subject” (108). The writer-character’s personal and intellectual investment in these works is minimal, as he “indefatigably worked the talk of the day, changing his subject with as little concern as he did his paper” (108). His minimal “concern” reflects the parity of material and immaterial components of the literary work in his mind. The narrator excuses his master, explaining that the doctor prostituted his pen because of

62 As I have brought up in my exploration of The Adventures of a Bank-Note in Chapter Two.
the forces of the marketplace that compel him to write in this hasty and superficial manner. The fictional readers in this tale are blamed as Chrysal reports that low works are the most marketable, explaining the converse relationship between intellectual rigour and profit:

He had the solid consolation, that his gain generally rose, in proportion as his subject sunk, the caprice of the world paying best, that is buying most eagerly, what it affected to decry most. Nor is this to be wondered at, a loose tale, or a receipt for cooking a new dish, being better adapted to general taste, than a moral essay, or metaphysical speculation (103).

As Fielding does in *The Author’s Farce*, Johnstone escorts his readers “backstage,” flattering them with an insider’s view of the world of letters to which they are encouraged to respond with an admixture of sympathy, laughter, and criticism. The heading to Chapter XX informs readers of their forthcoming glimpse into the art of bookselling, as they will be let into “Some of the secrets of the trade” (107). As well, the supposed realities of authorship are also laid bare, readers following the author-character from his patron’s levee to his home (where he puts on “his cap and slippers”), and then to a coffee-house, and finally back to his garret. From noting the disorder of his study, “his particular sphere,” Chrysal describes the author-character’s mind as being in a similar state, claiming that “Chaos is order to the confusion there” (107).

After completing a work, which is borne away by printer’s devils, the hack-writer is visited by a bookseller-character, Mr. Vellum, the literary merchant described as “accosting [his] master” (108). The it-narrator describes the tenor of their initial interaction and observes “much

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63 It is through this involvement of individual readers in the represented literary marketplace that the argument for print is implicitly made. Readers are further embedded in the literary marketplace, which is highlighted through their engagement with the *literary* literary marketplace. Yet their knowing embeddedness has positive implications for the future of commercial letters.
ceremony on one side and little civility on the other,” alluding to the publisher’s rudeness to the author in this fictive conversation (108). The bookseller-character, arriving with a complaint and a litany of demands, opens the conversation by playing the role of the oppressor, the actor in the dyad bent on obtaining outcome power. A heated exchange ensues when the bookseller-character expresses his displeasure with his employee, the guinea’s possessor, whom he expected to produce an answer that very evening to a pamphlet published the previous day. Apt to stereotype rather than individuate authors, Vellum extrapolates from this perceived unreliability and declares that “there is no dependence on the word of an author!” (108). The demanding literary merchant is irate when the author-character cites other “business” as his excuse for not yet producing the reply, asking “what business can you have, that should interfere a moment with your engagements with me?” (108) The author-character, addressing him as “Dear Mr. Vellum,” begs, “do but hear me!” and elaborates on why he has missed this deadline, that he is pursuing a side project congruent with the bookseller-character’s values and interests. The unnamed author-character was pursuing a piece of salacious upper class gossip: “a noble lord is going to be divorced for impotence” (108). Continuing in his appeasement of Vellum, he tempts the literary merchant with the profits of this piece of scandal writing, telling him: “I have learned the whole story, now leave me to it to set it out! I'll engage to make a noble eighteen-pennyworth of it” and offering to finish it by the next morning (108). Considering the ignoble nature of this money-making venture, “noble” is a comically inappropriate adjective here, despite being a pun on his subject’s aristocratic identity. “Noble” is also in bad taste because of the dishonourable way in which the slandermonger has acquired this information, the author-character learning about this misfortune in his other capacity as a physician; he reveals that he has a “particular intimacy” with the gentleman in question, “having served him in my profession more than once,” revealing
his unprofessionalism as both a writer and a doctor (108). Though the bookseller-character is interested in this new scheme, he still wants the author to write the next pamphlet to sustain the fierceness of the debate, telling the author “in the mean time you should not let other matters cool!” (108). When asked about the success of yesterday’s pamphlet, the bookseller-character acknowledges that it was received “tolerably well,” but worries about the possible repercussions, presumably under English defamation law, of its publication: “the scandal was so gross, that I was almost afraid” (108). The author-character, responding with a hearty “Aye! aye!” (109), is pleased with this reception and reminds Vellum that he can be counted on for this kind of piece.

Despite initial tensions, this exchange settles into an amicable conversation because of the shared values of the participants, evident in their similarity of expression: both speaking of the literary work as commodity to be hastily produced with minimal investment of resources. The interchangeability of their sentiments predicts the final balance of power between the author-character and the bookseller-character. Both of these literary professionals are preoccupied with time, the when often trumping the what of literary production, symptomatic of the ephemerality or “quickly expiring topicality” of their productions (Blackwell 187). Vellum reminds the author-character of “that book you promised to re-write,” cautioning the writer-character that if he does not hurry “someone else will do it, and prevent you” (109). The guinea’s master reassures the bookseller-character that he has “altered the title already, and that you know is the principal thing,” the phrase “you know” emphasizing the congruency between their beliefs, hence Vellum’s enthusiastic agreement: “That is right!” (109). The author-character capitalizes on

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64 In the eighteenth century, as Kathryn Temple states in Scandal Nation: Law and Authorship in Britain, 1750-1832, “scandal was imagined as something that could shock the sensibilities of the public at large.” Moreover, though “it was connected to ‘low’ popular discourses like gossip, broadsheets, news and hearsay... ‘scandal’ gained its cultural and historical weight from the law” (6-7).
Vellum’s enthusiasm for the paratextual materials for the marketing of print, but cannot match the fictive publisher’s passion for haste, for when Vellum remarks that there has been no public response to the doctor’s essays, the bookseller-character must be reminded that he only sent the work to the printers an hour ago. Vellum even makes a rush request for a collection of titles, crying “I want half a dozen directly! this very day if possible!” (109). The bookseller-character reveals that the books he wants retitled have been in storage for seven years, laying like unused tinder in a “lumber-garret,” this analogy revealing the extent to which he considers books just another commodity to be stored and sold (109). He relates the circumstances of their production and his own sordid part in the history of these books “that were never known” (109). The bookseller-character reveals that their late author, possessing the means to self-publish his works, paid to print his own books. Vellum contrived to block their sale and so “had them for the publishing,” intending to secretly profit from the fictional writer’s supposedly unpopular books (209). He laughs at the memory of tricking the deceased writer out of the printing costs and his potential earnings. The internal comedy within this scene—Vellum considers his ruse a joke—is not shared by the novel’s individual readers who are supposed to recoil from his abuse of power as well as disapprove of his amusement at exploiting the self-published writer’s monetary investment and literary labours. Vellum does not disguise his pleasure in this author-character’s passing, exclaiming, “now he is dead, they may safely come out, under new titles!” (109). No conception of fairness or plain-dealing enters into his calculations, as he concludes that “it was not a bad job” (109), his diction revealing that his ideas of good and bad are clearly based on economic rather than moral returns.

The author-character’s own interests appear to align with those of the bookseller-character when the former predicts that his new pamphlet, which he intends to write in response
to one he composed the prior week, will “make a noise,” arousing a “curiosity, that will sell another edition of the pamphlet” (109). Open about his manipulation of readers, this writer-character admits to praising people in his first piece that he intends to damn in its answer, using “pieces of secret history to hit them off with” (109). Though this author-character vouches for the success of this answer, Vellum only cautiously agrees: “Aye, secret history, and stories of family misfortunes, and such like, may do something,” that “something” meaning making money (109). Nonetheless, the bookseller-character wants to establish his superiority by directing the agenda of their dealings, regardless of the appeal of the author-character’s own proposals.

Vellum presents the “main business” of his visit, a proposal to avail of a clergyman’s demise “this morning” by quickly writing and falsely publishing sermons under the deceased man’s name, a publishing tactic that Curll was said to have used. Vellum conspiratorially couches this project as collaboration, as he asks the author-character: “could we not vamp up a volume or two of sermons for him, think you?” (109). Though Vellum calls the clergyman an “eminent Divine,” the supposed author of these sermons “was suspected of heresy and atheism” rather than piety or learning, the bookseller-character hoping to profit from this notoriety (109). The hack-character responds with eagerness to this proposal, crying “Egad! that is a good thought!” thus showing the same linguistic/moral backwardness as Vellum (110). The author-character adds that the clergyman’s demise was “particularly lucky at this time” as he has been “engaged in divinity lately,” bragging that he “knows the weak sides of the question” and will find “infidelity…refreshing,” an attitude which points to a troubling spiritual flexibility (110). He wonders, however, at the bookseller-character’s uncharacteristic interest in religious texts, remarking that he thought Vellum “had given up sermons” (110). Vellum clarifies that he will be most definitely not be publishing the sermons; he will pawn them off on another bookseller, “Mr.
Vampe,” while Vellum himself will only be involved with their “confutation” (110). Continuing to agree with all of Vellum’s statements, the writer exclaims, “Egad, another good thought! the confutation will do better” (110). He laughingly assures Vellum that he will “take care to make it a smart one, and play the devil with the author; ha, ha, ha” (110). Through this part of the conversation, the power struggle between these actors is latent, the author-character being largely compliant and complimentary in his echoing of Vellum’s statements; while the interlocutors avoid the subject of remuneration, their exchange remains congenial.

The tenor of the dialogue changes abruptly, however, when the writer-character, pressing the position of submissive bookseller’s hack, politely reminds Vellum that it has been “some time since [he] promised to settle with me” and continues “You should consider, Sir” until the bookseller interrupts him, obviously bristling at the word “should” (110). The bookseller-character is unwilling to listen to this request, citing the author-character’s dependence, Vellum facetiously asking: “What pray, good Sir, should I consider? that I have supported you!” (110). The writer-character objects to what he considers a biased assessment of their relationship, and asserts his independence with the observation “Sir, I have a profession!” being both physician and writer (110). After the bookseller-character insultingly generalizes about his profession, the writer-character reasons, “Mr. Vellum, you know this way of talking signifies nothing” and brings the conversation back to specifics with the observation: “it is a long time since we have settled any account, and there are a great many articles!” (110). He begins listing the works that he has produced for the bookseller, and for which he has received no compensation: “NINETEEN PAMPHLETS, with ANSWERS to FOURTEEN of them; NINE RAPES, SIX MURDERS, FIVE FAST and FOUR FUNERAL SERMONS, THIRTY-SIX ESSAYS, TWENTY-TWO TITLES, FOUR QUARTO VOLUMES RE-WRIT, SEVENTEEN WILLS…” (110). Vellum interrupts this list by
presenting his own grievances, undercutting the hack’s complaint by reminding him of his debts. Vellum presents a two-year old bond for fifteen pounds that the writer-character has not yet repaid, and makes it clear that he would not have brought up the matter if the writer had not chosen “to talk of accounts” (110). Unable to release himself from this bond, the hold the publisher has over him, the author-character attempts to placate his creditor, addressing him as “good Mr. Vellum” and entreating him: “do not be so hasty” as he “did not mean to give offence” (111). His employer, however, will not drop the subject so easily and reminds his dependent of another instance of his leniency: that he has “supplied [him] with paper above the weekly allowance [they] agreed for” (111). Displeased with the author’s unexpected truculence, Vellum stresses his own supposedly sterling character and unimpeachable behaviour, accusing his employee of taking advantage of his “easy temper” (111). Restoring his authority with a show of indulgence, the bookseller-character promises to “encourage you, and show you I mean generously by you” (111). Vellum makes a proposal (yet really a demand considering his superior bargaining position): if the author-character finishes the scandal piece, as well as “the Answer, and the Sermons, and the Confutations, and the Titles and the Exercitations,” then he will cancel his debts. Asking for a lot of writing from his debtor, Vellum promises that after this deal is put into effect, “we will begin an account on fair, even terms,” presenting the fiction of a balance of power to the discontented author-character (111). Securely in possession of resource power, Vellum bids his hack “good morning” and leaves abruptly without letting him get another word in edgewise to negotiate or reject these parsimonious conditions. At the end of this exchange, it would appear that the bookseller-character possesses outcome power, obtaining his desired terms. Yet the author-character does not consider this conversation the end of his power struggle against this “damned imposing, grinding Scoundrel” (111). Viewing his deal a bad one,
the author-character expresses his intention to punish Vellum and booksellers in general, intending to “teach such stupid rascals to attempt outwitting men of genius” (111).

Despite this ejaculation, the author-character takes the bookseller-character’s oppression rather better than Chrysal expected. The it-narrator, who has been silent for some time observing this scene, is surprised by his master’s attitude, namely “the ease with which he took a denial, and the joy he expressed at Mr. Vellum’s departure,” though his confusion evaporates when “Mr. Pamphlet, another of the trade” appears, upon invitation, as the guinea deducing from “his reception” that the book merchant was “expected” (111). Clearly Vellum only thinks he has rendered the scribbler powerless, as this second business connection suggests that the writer-character can resist victimization, not by asserting himself as a Literary Professional, but by engaging in the unsavoury practices associated with the bookseller-figure. Unbeknownst to the bookseller-characters, he manipulates both merchants of print (thus capitalizing on their own lack of professionalism towards each other, just as Pamphlet and Vellum are “mortal enemies” (111), punishing them for the poor treatment the author-character receives at their respective hands (111). Chrysal, comically naive about the workings of the literary marketplace, admits it was “shocked at the cruelty with which I thought Vellum treated [the guinea’s] master” and equally shocked “at the part he acted with Pamphlet, with whom he bargained over again for the very same ware which he before promised to Vellum” (111). The three literary professionals essentially become interchangeable in their mistreatment of each other, a slippage occurring between the author-character and Vellum and between Vellum and Pamphlet as the second bookseller-character is not distinguished from his former in anything but name.65 The guinea

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65 Even in this detail they are similar as their names both evoke the material presence of the printed text, “Vellum” being “a fine parchment used especially for writing, painting, or binding” (OED) and “Pamphlet” being, of course, a
does not feel the need to record the dialogue spoken in the second exchange, instead, he summarizes the meeting: “the discourse between these was much the same as the former, only that it was concluded in a different manner; Pamphlet giving my master a couple of pieces to keep him in mind of his engagement” (111-112). In Chrysal’s storyworld, the roles of author and booksellers and the interactions between them are then largely predictable even if one of the parties, in this case the bookseller, changes.

The author-character, whose overheard thoughts now reveal his own selfish outlook, soliloquizes on how he means to covertly dupe and overtly satisfy both of his booksellers. Minimizing the work he must do, the author-character comments that his literary task has “nothing in it but a little trouble of writing” (112). In short, he intends to divide his reply into two pieces, deploying a new title and pen name for the second one to hide his literary recycling. In his case, pseudonymity facilitates his morally-problematic practices; he admits that: “this method that I have found, of using a feigned name, makes it all easy” (112). “Easy” in this case means avoiding detection by the fictive publishers, who are unaware that they are sharing the literary labours of the crafty hack. Viewing himself as gifted and resourceful, he prides himself on being a literary professional rather than a leisured gentleman, scorning those “born to fortunes, [who] spend them in sloth and ignorance” and prefers his own internal “estate”, which, unlike money, “can never be exhausted” (112). Nonetheless, his vengeful treatment of the booksellers simply mirrors his aristocratic patron’s revenge on his political detractors, this congruency undermining the hack’s claim to superiority over men possessing fortunes.66 Attributing his talents to “nature

66 Interestingly, revenge catalyzes the movement of the guinea at the beginning and the end of this episode. The similarity between the lord’s motive and that of the hack point to a universal Hobbesian view of human nature, men from all levels of society being motivated by passionate self-interest. Mark Blackwell takes note of a complaint among eighteenth-century reviewers that Chrysal reflected the author’s overly pessimistic view of life.
only,” ignoring the art of his machinations, he extravagantly adds that he bears “the fountain of honour and fortune in the fluency of [his] genius” (112). Yet in his current state of affairs his “fortune” consists of a single guinea and his “honour” is tarnished by his willingness to set his quill to all manner of slanderous and atheistic writing. He not only talks himself up to his booksellers, but to himself, possessing an estimation of his value which is comically lofty, the author-character’s garret being referred to as an “aerial citadel” (112). Nevertheless, the word “citadel,” with its martial implications, draws attention to the conflict at the centre of the garret exchanges; within this besieged stronghold, the author-character resists two waves of invading bookseller-characters whose powers the scribbler succeeds in matching, thus creating a stalemate. His ability to thwart these literary merchants and manipulate them to his own advantage is the dubious source of his personal and professional pride. As Vellum’s demands indicate, the bookseller-character would exploit his employee as much as he could (and vice-versa). Yet through much of their dialogue, these literary figures operate as collaborators, co-conspirators, comically willing to do anything to sell their printed wares, includes humouring each other. Though there is something to be said about the superficial decorum they maintain through much of the conversation, polite discourse is a veneer rendered meaningless without the ethical heart of Literary Profession. The author-character and the bookseller-character are therefore unprofessional in their discord and their accord, both states humorously revealing their problematic foundational values. Johnstone’s readers, ideally sensitive to both internal and external comedy, are therefore encouraged to identify, mostly through their comic antitheses, the qualities of the paradigmatic Literary Professional, of which there is very little evidence in the
“it” narratives of the late eighteenth century, foregrounding as they do materialism and commercialism run rampant in British society.⁶⁷

*The Patron*

Samuel Foote’s *The Patron* (1764), a three-act comedy first performed at the Theatre-Royal theatre in 1764, is the final text I consider in this chapter.⁶⁸ Published in the same year it was first played, Foote’s comedy fictionalizes, and at times, *caricatures* London’s “Republic of Letters,” an ironic tagline for the literary marketplace used several times in the play. Foote’s source text for *The Patron* was a French work, “Le Connaisseur,” a story in Jean-Francois Marmontel’s *Contes Moraux* [Moral Tales] (1761).⁶⁹ Like other metaliterary works from the period, Foote presents multiple author-characters, both amateur and professional, giving currency to the idea of eighteenth-century London as teeming with writers.⁷⁰ Foote’s age, the latter half of the eighteenth-century, is an age of print, professional authorship, as well as continuing patronage, a period when both authors and readers were aware of the literary marketplace as a permanent, perfectible cultural institution. The main theme of Foote’s satire is the failure of literary patronage, the playwright questioning the place of the unlearned patron in England’s cultural landscape. “The Patron,” Elizabeth Chatten writes, “satirizes the lack of taste,

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⁶⁷ The guinea’s time with the author-character is brief, as would be expected from a wheeling-and-dealing hack. The author, who is also a doctor, leaves with the coin to “visit his patient,” and on the way stops at a coffee house, the usual haunt of a writer with the means to leave his garret. The coin narrates that the writer “changed me at a coffee-house,” where the guinea is passed along to an officer.⁶⁸ *The Patron* was a modest success, playing for seventeen performances during its first run.

⁶⁹ The popularity of Marmontel’s three-volume work in England has been noted by several scholars of eighteenth-century literature. Robert Mayo, observing “the rage for Marmontel,” remarks on how often these tales were reprinted in British periodicals (376).

⁷⁰ *The Patron* is convincing as a text that reflects Samuel Johnson’s assertion, also quoted in Chapter One of this dissertation, that his is an “Age of Authors.”
discrimination, and common sense displayed by Sir Thomas Lofty, patron of the arts” (40). Foote himself acted the comic part of the principal patron-character, exaggerating the shortcomings still so apparent in the printed version of the play. Foote’s mocking portrait of the title character debunks nostalgically idealistic conceptions of aristocratic patronage and conversely establishes the qualifications of the paradigmatic Literary Professional. As several of Foote’s prologues and epilogues underline, the playwright is often best served by collective patronage, his best patrons being the theatre-goers and readers whose applause is the hardest won, but which is most valuable in the playwright’s estimation. Though certain types of patrons inimical to the cultivation of genius, are critiqued, patronage is not dismissed wholesale in Foote’s plays. England’s patrons, the playwright intimates, should possess more than simply deep pockets, the practice of patronage ideally being subject to ethical and artistic standards and qualifications like those established for literary professionals by cultural commentators like Samuel Johnson. My reading of The Patron will necessarily involve a discussion of Foote’s patron-characters, Sir Thomas Lofty and a Sir Peter Pepperpot, a minor figure in the play who also rehearses stereotypes of the nabob. As well, I will consider the author-hero Dick Bever, whose interest in marrying Sir Lofty’s niece draws him into the patron’s circle, despite the young man’s professional reservations. The most extended part of this section on Foote’s comedy is an examination of the conversation between another author-character, the hack Mr. Dactyl, and his bookseller, whose argument reveals their long-standing personal and business relationship. The power struggle between this author-character and the bookseller-character ends in a stalemate, a balance of power in which each actor has some measure of outcome power, the outcomes effected being less than perfect for either side because their power is relational, not exclusively held.
The Patron is another dramatic work in the vein of Foote’s The Author and Fielding’s The Author’s Farce that has at its core the personal and professional struggles of an author-character. Fielding’s Harry Luckless is initially thwarted in his courtship of his landlady’s daughter, Harriet, but by the end of the play is both a lover and a writer. Foote’s comedy begins with a dialogue in the street between the play’s author-hero Dick Bever and his friend, Frank Younger. The conversation quickly turns from the subject of Bever’s beloved, Julia Lofty, to her uncle’s character. Drawing on “fifty dedications,” Younger describes Sir Thomas Lofty as “the patron of genius, the protector of arts, the paragon of poets, decider on merit, chief justice of taste […]” (329).71 Bever acknowledges that Lofty “is universally allowed to have taste,” but Younger does not agree with this assessment, viewing the patron’s reputation as wholly undeserved, produced by sycophants lusting after his wealth, namely “underling bards, that he feeds; and broken booksellers, that he bribes” (329). Mixing with hacks and publishers in this fictional literary marketplace, the aristocratic Lofty disrupts the potential meritocracy that print culture represents, as he is possessed of “neither genius to create, judgment to distinguish, or generosity to reward” (329). Younger dismisses the patron as “a rank impostor, the buffo of an illiberal, mercenary tribe,” a motley crew with ambitions that do not rise above material acquisition (329). As Lofty is essentially an untalented amateur writer, Foote uses the literary dilettante to make an argument for print even as he critiques its flaws and failings, apparent in the book trade riffraff orbiting around the aristocrat. In the service of this goal, Foot doubles the figure of the patron, introducing Lofty’s friend and one of Julia’s other suitors, Sir Peter Pepperpot, who has built his fortune and cultivated his self-importance in the West Indies. “No inconsiderable patron,” the moneyed Pepperpot proudly tells Bever and Younger: “I love to

71 As there are no scene numbers, I will cite page numbers parenthetically.
encourage the arts,” though a less hypocritical version of this line would read, “I love to encourage [myself]” (330). Harbouring authorial ambitions of his own, Pepperpot modestly refers to himself as “a mere dabbler,” elaborating: “I have blotted my fingers, ‘tis true: —some sonnets, that have not been thought wanting in salt” (332). In addition, Pepperpot has also composed “epigrams,” which he brags, feigning humility, were “Not entirely without point” (332). Pepperpot’s coarseness, confirmed at every turn in his conversation with Bever and Younger, suggests the inferiority of his writing. When the conversation moves to the topic of courtship, Pepperpot confesses in “poetic” and unfortunately colonial terms: “I have always admir’d Miss Juliet [...] sweet as a sugar-cane, straight as a bamboo, and her teeth as white as a negro’s” (332). His blazon-like description of his lover, “a plantation of perfections”, indicates his artistic deficiencies, while his proposal to murder the antiquarian Rust, Julia’s other lover, with a poisoned “jar of citrons and ginger,” points to his moral shortcomings (332). The weaknesses of Pepperpot and Lofty as patrons, writers, and human beings prove that the theatre/print is patently not the sole cause of literary chaff and the cultural and moral decline of the nation. Foote is also invested in critiquing commercial letters as well as aristocratic patronage and dependent authors as well as their patrons and booksellers. Sir Pepperpot tells Bever and Lofty that a writer he had been supporting, his chaplain “eloped” with his payment without following through on his literary project. “He was to dedicate his volume of fables to me,” the nabob reports, continuing, “so I gave him thirty pounds to get my arms engrav’d, to prefix (by way of print) to the frontispiece; an O grief of griefs! the Doctor had mov’d off with the money” (334). This comic anecdote, a power play between a patron-character and an author-character, reveals the ubiquity of unprofessionalism among literary figures in Foote’s comedy.
After Pepperpot exits, Bever, however, responds to this story of this unprofessional abuse of “the wealthy fool” by commenting on the abuses to which authors are subject. The young hero, like Witmore in *The Author’s Farce*, remarks on the state of the literary marketplace, epigrammatically noting “Fortune to booksellers, to authors bread,” extemporaneously composing a couplet about the plight of the professional writer (334). To that Younger says, “The distribution is, I own, a little unequal: and here comes a most melancholy instance; poor Dick Dactyl, and his publisher Puff” (334). Dactyl and Puff join the young men onstage and a dispute ensues between the newcomers, the former having just given the latter a manuscript, a collection of poems. These literary professionals, more accurately *unprofessional* professionals, their tense conversation revealing their codependent relationship as overly familiar—like the relationship between Curll and Fielding posited by Foote. This argument, while fierce, represents a temporary interruption in a relationship characterized by a balance of power, despite Younger’s label of Dactyl as “poor.” This clash begins with the bookseller-character telling the writer-character that he will not publish his work. Puff instructs the poet to take his verses elsewhere: “Why, then, Mr. Dactyl, carry them to somebody else; there are people enough in the trade: but I wonder you would meddle with poetry; you know it rarely pays for the paper” (334). The bookseller-character’s denigration of verse establishes him as a profit-driven merchant, an inappropriate arbiter of print in his blindness to the cultural importance of poetry. Paula R. Backscheider attests to the significance of poetry in eighteenth-century Britain, which she describes as “sacred ground—the field on which the nation’s claim to artistic equality with the Greeks, the Romans, and the French, would be contested,” adding that “poetry was also written

72 Paula Backscheider observes that “writing extempore poetry was a fashionable social activity that captured transitory feelings and shared, ordinary events” (*Women Poets*, 28). The poet-character Dabbler, lacking wit and originality, is tellingly unable to compose extempore in Frances Burney’s *The Witlings* (1779).
to participate in the most serious social and political debates and to express, and therefore propagate and teach, philosophical arguments” (28). Dactyl’s argument for verse, however, is predicated on the idea of artistic inspiration, as he replies to the bookseller-character by rhetorically asking, “And how can one help it Mr. Puff?” and explaining “genius impels, and when a man is once listed in the service of the Muses—” (334). He is interrupted by his scornful interlocutor, who has a comically utilitarian view of book-making, as he tells Dactyl to “give warning as soon as he can” because the Muses do not pay (335). “A pretty sort of service, indeed!” Puff exclaims, “where there are neither wages nor vails” (335). Insulting the poet’s clothing, which we can surmise is very shabby, he continues: “The Muses! And what, I suppose this is the livery they give. Gadzooks, I had rather be a waiter at Ranelagh,” lowering the profession of writing by referring to it alongside serving refreshments at a public pleasure garden (335). Bever, overhearing this exchange, exclaims with irony rather than genuine surprise: “The poet and publisher at variance!” and asks Dactyl to elaborate on this conflict. Dactyl, referring to the work rejected by the bookseller-character, calls it “as pretty a poem, and so polite; not a mortal can take any offence; all full of panegyric and praise” (335). Puff, in turn, responds to Dactyl’s description and in his response, interestingly, likens literary consumption to eating and literary taste to gustation, reflecting his materialist tendencies:

A fine character he gives of his works. No offence! the greatest in the world, Mr. Dactyl. Panegyric and praise! and what will that do with the public! Why, who the devil will give me to be told that Mr. Such-a-one is a wiser or better man than himself? No, no; ‘tis quite and clean out of nature. A good sousing satire now, well powdered with personal pepper, and seasoned with a spice of party; that demolishes a conspicuous character, and
sinks him below our own level; there, there, we are pleas’d; there we chuckle, and grin, and toss the half-crowns on the counter (335).

Dactyl responds with the objection: “Yes, and so get cropp’d for a libel,” referring to a punishment which involved a criminal’s ears being cut off or nailed to the pillory, his conversation revealing their different views of the risks and the rewards of writing (335). Puff has no qualms about this form of physical punishment—as brutal as it is—and even views it as a boon. Being “cropped,” in Puff’s opinion, is “the luckiest thing that can happen to you, elaborating: “I would not give two-pence for an author that is afraid of his ears. Writing, writing is, (as I may say,) Mr. Dactyl, a sort of warfare, where none can be victor that is the least afraid of a scar. Why, ‘zooks, sir, I never got salt to my porridge till I mounted at the Royal Exchange” (335). The bookseller-character praises the pillory as a machine for generating fame, calling the pillory his “making,” for it was then that “[his] name made a noise in the world” (355).

Perversely proud of his public disgrace, Puff is comically unprofessional in his law-breaking, and his Falstaffian disregard for honour. He rejects the classically-inspired rhetoric of poetic creation and scoffs: “Talk of forked hills, and of Helicon! romantic and fabulous stuff. The true Castalian [sic] stream is a shower of eggs, and a pillory the poet’s Parnassus” (335). Adhering to established stereotypes of his trade, Puff privileges the material over the immaterial, which must be fixed—made real, if not debased—by the concrete, however low. Dactyl presses Puff on the issue of remuneration in light of the legal and bodily risk authors are expected to take in the service of their employers, asking what poets “get for our pains” (335). The bookseller-character responds with indignation to the binary of oppressed author/oppressive bookseller to which

73 Foote’s use of “mounted” as a pun is multifaceted. Possible sexual connotations aside, “mounting” refers not only to standing on the pillory, but mounting the steed of poetic genius, Pegasus, or scaling or mounting the Classical seat of genius, Parnassus.
Dactyl refers. “Why, what the deuce would you get?” Puff asks, proposing “food, fire, and fame. Why, you would not grow fat? a corpulent poet is a monster, a prodigy! No, no; spare diet is a spur to the fancy; high feeding would but founder your Pegasus” (335). Puff himself is now trotting out literary stereotypes and truisms, in his case the old chestnut that well-fed hacks are too complacent to work, to falsely justify underpaying his hacks.

Their dispute moves from the manuscript at hand to general and particular issues of literary production, and finally to personal attacks on the opposing disputant, their shared history revealed by their mutual accusations. The poet-character calls Puff an “impudent, illiterate rascal!” and wonders that the bookseller-character “dare treat [him] in this manner,” alluding to Puff’s ingratitude with the question: “is this the return for all the obligations you owe me?” (335). Dactyl threatens to expose his employer with the announcement that “the world, the world shall know what you are, are how you have used me” (336). He explains that he will carry out his threat by revealing the bookseller-character’s low origins: “They shall be told from what a dunghill you sprang” proceeds to describe the bookseller’s sorry “state” upon their meeting: “his shop was a shed in Moorfields; his kitchen, a broken pipkin of charcoal; and his bed-chamber, under the counter” (336). Dactyl also lists the texts that, at this low period, made up the bookseller’s paltry stock.

The poet-character, compensating for his own low origins, attempts to undermine the bookseller’s facade of respectability and reveal his social pretensions. Puff, according to Dactyl, is only rich because he has made his wealth off the back of the slave-driven poet. Dactyl, gesturing to the bookseller, claims: “that fellow owes every shilling to me” and refers to the specific text upon which Puff’s fortune was built: “I gave you my Canning; it was she first set you afloat” (336). Dactyl goes on to claim that Puff has also risen on account of his “physick,”
the poet-character being both writer and physician. He lists the quack medicines ("flatulent crudities," "pregnancy-drops," etc.) which he had a hand in inventing and which Puff sold, thus duping both Dactyl and his own credulous customers (336). The lack of professionalism with they treat each other is thus reflected in their dealings with readers in Foote’s fictional literary marketplace.

The author-character and the bookseller-character—each feeling wronged and intent on wronging—address themselves to Bever, the most professional literary figure in The Patron. Puff declares that no “mortal [would] believe that I ow’d my all to this fellow,” referring to Dactyl, to which Bever responds, “why, indeed, Mr Puff, the balance does seem in his favour” (337). Puff defends himself by slandering his enemy: “why you don’t give any credit to him! a reptile, a bug, that owes his very being to me” (337). Puff continues his harangue, insulting the poet’s conveniently short memory and stressing the opportunities he gave Dactyl. “What, I suppose,” Puff tells his former protégée, “you forget your garret in Wine-office-court, when you furnish’d paragraphs for the Farthing-post at twelve-pence a dozen”. Dactyl denies this narrative of his hack origins and Puff continues in this strain, accusing the writer-character of indolence and ineptitude as a news-gatherer: “then, did not I get you made collector of casualties to the Whitehall and St. James? but that post your laziness lost you. Gentlemen, he never brought them a robbery till the highwayman was going to be hanged; a birth till the christening was over; nor a death till the hatchway was up” (337). The bookseller-character accounts for the apparent change

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74 Paul Langford, investigating the pharmaceutical industry in eighteenth-century England, observes that “booksellers and publishers played a crucial part in the sale of medical nostrums” and relates the story of “the most famous of all eighteenth-century medicines, Dr. James’s Powder, [which] made a fortune for its inventor and for the publishing firm Newberry, which owned a half-share in it.” (664). Langford also charts the growing public discomfort with the link between commercial publishing and medicine, noting “the publicity which attended Goldsmith’s death, allegedly hastened by doses of the powder” (664).
in Dactyl’s attitude, the transformation that apparently precipitated this dispute. “And now,” Puff explains, “because the fellow has got a little in flesh, by being puff to the playhouse this winter, (to which, by-the-by, I got him appointed) he is as proud and as vain as Voltaire,” Foote’s readers being encouraged to laugh at the inflated ego of an author-character engaged in hack work like puffing (337). The bookseller-character predicts that Dactyl’s run of success will end with the poet will being properly humbled, Puff telling Bever that soon enough: “I shall have him sneaking and cringing, hanging about me, and begging a bit of translation” (337). Puff refers to the specifics of his support—he has been feeding the dependent—and feeling like he is being taken for granted, announces he will supply Dactyl with “No boil’d beef and carrot at mornings; no more cold pudding and porter,” this promise revealing the extent to which their domestic circumstances are intertwined (337). This close relationship seems to be at an end when the bookseller-character concludes his rant by inviting Dactyl to leave his shop and the author-character angrily retorting that he will “then at parting I will leave [Puff] a legacy,” presumably offering violence to the bookseller-character (337). A physical altercation seems imminent as Bever attempts to check the poet and also entreats Younger to “restrain the publisher’s fire” (259). Younger is appalled at the unprofessionalism of both actors in this power struggle, exclaiming against “such an illiberal combat—it is a scandal to the republic of letters” (337). Bever attempts to quell the poet’s anger by reminding him that the bookseller is merely “an old man, a mechanic, beneath—” (337). Though the young hero, believing in the inherent superiority of writers, might have ended this sentence with “his notice,” Dactyl interrupts this sentiment, possibly because Puff is not his inferior; these characters are like in their woeful lack of professional decorum (337). This unprofessionalism is apparent in his subsequent menace: Dactyl is only delaying his attack on Puff, as he pronounces: “what my generosity has saved, my
pen shall destroy,” seemingly intent on libelous retribution (337). The disputants exit, and Bever, amused by the heated exchange, laughs and throws out another couplet: “Blockheads with reason wicked wits abhor, / But dunce with dunce is barb’rous civil war” (338). Younger, who has taken this scene more seriously than his witty companion, repeats the refrain “Poor Dactyl!” and, misquoting Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, asks “‘dwells such mighty rage in little men?’ I hope there is no danger of bloodshed” (338). Bever, knowing more about the workings of the book trade and witnessing the scene with more of a critical eye than his friend, assuages this concern, observing, “Oh, not in the least: the gens vatum, the nation of poets, though an irritable, are yet are a placable people”; he believes that the poet and publisher are not going to remain the sworn enemies they appear because “Their mutual interests will soon bring them together again” (338). Bever predicts a restoration of the balance of power between author-character and bookseller-character.

Though the conversation between Puff and Dactyl is illuminating as an example of literary power struggle that is ultimately superficial, the codependent personal/business relationship between these actors is ultimately unchanged by this violent bickering. Dick Bever’s career as a professional writer is, however, permanently marred by the patron-character Sir Thomas Lofty, the “sworn appraiser to Apollo and the tuneful Nine” (329). Lofty’s supposed intimacy with Apollo and the muses does not reflect his poetic or critical abilities, his name underlining this irony. Though he views himself as soaring to the “lofty” heights of Parnassian literary achievement, Lofty is grounded by his own leaden writing for the stage. As a patron-author, Lofty is chiefly interested in securing his own fame as a great contributor to the arts. There is, however, a selfish element to extending one’s “favour” and “protection” to artists; Dustin Griffin, unpacking the “cultural economics” of patronage in the eighteenth century,
discusses the relationship between patron and writer “as a complex exchange of ‘benefits’” (18). Yet Lofty’s self-interest extends beyond the bounds of this honourable commerce, the patron too focused on self-elevation to foster genius elsewhere. Sir Thomas inappropriately requests that the young author put his name on a play he has written on “The Story of Robinson Crusoe” (349). Bever agrees, since he desires Lofty’s niece Julia for his wife, and Act Three opens with Bever reading the dramatic manuscript he has been given and disgustedly disclaiming: “There’s no bearing this abominable trash” (351). Bever tells Julia that this is “The most flat piece of frippery that ever Grubstreet produced” (352). Lofty abuses his power as patron, for, unwilling to gamble with his own reputation, he privately decides only to reveal himself as the playwright if the piece is applauded. Lofty can be compared here to the stereotypical bookseller-character in both his lack of integrity and taste as well as in his self-seeking. Lofty’s play—which Bever, at Lofty’s request, reluctantly owns—is played and swiftly damned, the hisses of his audience bringing the performance to a premature close. When the play flops spectacularly, a minor character observes that “the poet has made a mistake in measuring the taste of the town; the goods, it seems, did not fit; so they returned them upon the gentleman’s hands,” using the materialist language of the commercial milieu and likening the playwright to a tailor (355). “Robinson Crusoe is dead,” announces one witness to the fiasco (355), and another rings the death-knell of Bever’s career, remarking: “this is but a bitter beginning; then the young man must turn himself to some other trade” (356). The bookseller-character Puff comments on the audience’s reaction to the derivative play, unable to “remember to have seen a more general dislike” (356). Puff, aware of the public’s response and its effect on sales, confesses to the patron: “I was thinking to ask you, Sir Thomas, for your interest with Mr. Bever about buying the copy: but now no mortal would read it. Lord, sir, it would not pay for paper and printing” (356). The bookseller-character
understandably refuses to take a risk by publishing a play so roundly damned on the London stage.

While Lofty stands idly by when Bever’s literary reputation is destroyed in one fell swoop, the young writer serving as his personal scapegoat, the bookseller character Puff is sympathetic, exclaiming: “Poor gentleman! I warrant he won’t show his head for these six months” (357). Puff’s pity for Bever indicates that the bookseller-character is not as fully absorbed in the mechanical side of book production as he appears in his conversation with Dactyl. He has a moment to reflect on Bever’s ruin, and puts himself in the author’s place by a step of imaginative sympathy. Perhaps because his own interests are not at stake and wounded pride is taken out of the equation, he can reveal his more humane, less business-oriented side. Puff, subtly humanized, complicates cultural stereotypes about how author-characters and bookseller-characters interact, pointing to a localized professionalism and the possibility of its fuller realization with the literary marketplace, which individual readers can identify and use to construct a paradigm of the Literary Profession.

Samuel Foote’s The Patron, like his other work examined in this dissertation, The Author, ends with an author-character’s flight from the literary marketplace and its accompanying frustrations, obstacles, and instabilities: Bever’s marriage opens up social and financial opportunities for him that commercial writing does not. Foote’s depiction of a retreat, if not salvation, from commercial literature is typical in comedy because it allows the historical author a way to evade a key problem of literary literary representation: how to directly present models of Literary Professionalism in comic works while maintaining the entertainment value in scenes of comic unprofessionalism. In The Patron, the retreat from commercial literature also lets Foote sustain the connection between the author and individual readers fostered through the
laughter of recognition, and the ironic distance between characters and reader that leads to the indirect formation of a shared, largely extratextual, idea of the Literary Professional
Chapter 4

Authors Schooling Booksellers

[...] The bookseller, who heard him speak,
And saw him turn a page of Greek,
Thought, what a genius have I found!
Then thus addressed with bow profound:

‘Learn’d sir, if you’d employ your pen
Against the senseless sons of men,
Or write the history of Siam,
No man is better pay than I am;
Or, since you’re learn’d in Greek, let’s see
Something against the Trinity.’

When wrinkling with a sneer his trunk,
‘Friend,’ quoth the elephant, ‘you’re drunk;
E’en keep your money and be wise:
Leave man on man to criticize;

John Gay’s “Fable X” versifies an imagined encounter between a learned, articulate elephant and a London bookseller who tries to bring this “genius”—a potentially lucrative authorial novelty—into his pay. The merchant, obviously embedded in the literary marketplace, offers unsolicited advice on how to become a professional author—suggesting, for example, that the pachyderm, knowing Greek, should pen religious controversy, “something against the Trinity.” The wise elephant rebukes the enterprising bookseller, however, asserting his independence and superior judgement, and thwarting the intended outcome of the literary merchant’s show of informational power. While Chapter Two focused on fictional confrontations between author-characters and bookseller-characters which result in the latter actor securing outcome power, within the primary texts in that section the bookseller-character can be identified
as the oppressor and the author-character as the oppressed; humour operates to temper sympathy and to facilitate critique among individual readers. Chapter Three dealt with encounters which involve mutual oppression or uneasy concord, both the product of shared interests and values, and which close with a balance of power being realized between the author-character and the bookseller-character. Parity is achieved when both or neither actor secures outcome power and they become in key ways interchangeable, the author-character, for example, adopting the typified bookseller’s deceptions. Comedy in these scenes encourages critical assessment, underlining the slippage between author-characters and bookseller-characters.

This chapter concentrates on comic scenes of implicit and explicit power struggle within the literary marketplace in which author-characters effect their desired outcomes. The writer-characters, embedded in their worlds of commercial letters, knowingly level the hierarchy established by domineering bookseller-characters. Some distinctions between these figures are collapsed, but others are reinforced by authorial resistance at the diegetic narrative level: writer-characters attempt in different ways to school their publishers, establishing authorial superiority and exposing the weaknesses of their bookselling counterparts. These distinctions are made either by an individual author or a collective of authors who resist the authority of the book trade symbolically and practically. Though writer-characters may—with at least a small measure of success—destabilize the author-bookseller hierarchy, they do so in an attempt to reverse rather than dissolve this hierarchy.

I will begin my exploration of this last model of literary interaction by looking at specific scenes in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). From there I will turn to a dramatic prelude by Irish playwright Arthur Murphy, *News from Parnassus* (1776). The final text I examine in this chapter is Elizabeth Montagu’s “Dialogue XXVIII: Plutarch – Charon – And a
Modern Bookseller,” from Dialogues of the Dead, published anonymously in 1760. In all of these works, power struggles result in some success for the author-character and some advantage over the bookseller-character within the text. The excerpt from Gay’s “The Elephant and the Bookseller” is particularly appropriate in relation to the last two texts by Murphy and Montagu respectively: in these three works there is an element of the fantastic that shifts power relations between these fictionalized literary professionals, presenting hermeneutic possibilities that arguably extend beyond those offered by the more realistic texts.

The Expedition of Humphry Clinker

Tobias Smollett’s last novel, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker (1777), is, like Roderick Random (examined in Chapter Two), episodic and similarly conducive to short forays into different British locales, social spheres and subcultures like Grub Street. As a fictional epistolary travel narrative, Humphry Clinker is a rich collection of voices and discourses. Smollett’s correspondents include the family patriarch and principal letter-writer Matthew Bramble, his niece Lydia Melford, his nephew Jery Melford, his sister Tabitha Bramble, and Tabitha’s servant, Winifred Jenkins. This group tours through England (London and Bath) and Scotland (Edinburgh and the Highlands), the letter-writers recording their personal observations and opinions. Smollett’s novel is prefaced by quasi-paratextual letters between Jonathan Dustwich, an invented editor-figure who provides an equally fictional London bookseller named Henry Davis with the private letters that comprise this narrative. Fictionalizing the distribution of Humphry Clinker, these epistles draw attention to Smollett’s novel as a comic text mediated by

75 This work is just one example of many modernized “dialogues of the dead,” a genre of its own in the eighteenth century which was often used for political or personal attacks.
print culture, a manuscript that has successfully run a gauntlet, the end of which is publication. The editor-character Dustwich and the bookseller-character Davis, engaged in written rather than verbal negotiations, each deftly manoeuvre for power within a storyworld in which the Brambles are a real family, their letters real letters. On both sides, power is secured through both knowledge and the withholding of information and the fabrication of mysteries, fictions, and half-truths. The first of the prefatory letters is attributed to Dustwich, who has supposedly come into the possession of the travelers’ correspondence and offers it up to the fictional London bookseller, Davis, who believes these writings “may be printed with a good prospect of success” (1). Smollett thus opens Humphry Clinker with the convention of the “found” manuscript, though he does not go so far as to narrate the story of how the letters came into Dustwich’s hands.76 Though effusive in other ways (he sprinkles his writing liberally with superfluous Latin phrases) the editor-character is suspiciously close-lipped on the matter, terming it “a circumstance that concerns my own conscience only” and providing Davis with the vaguely phrased assurance that he has “fully satisfied the parties in whose custody they were” (2). This may simply mean that he has Curllishly paid, not necessarily the letter-writers themselves, but the shady people who had these epistles in their possession. The afterthought that Dustwich adds to his first letter does not bolster readers’ confidence in his honesty; he expresses his hope of seeing the bookseller-character when he comes into the city, as he will give him “a parcel of MS. sermons, of a certain clergyman deceased” (2).77 The vagueness of “a certain clergyman” suggests that Dustwich has

76 In the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the “fiction of a ‘found’ manuscript was to assume an increasingly literary charge, as masses of manuscripts from private collections found their way into new public collections” (Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman 26).

77 Irène Simon discusses the controversy surrounding Edmund Curll’s publication of Posthumous Works of the Late Reverend Robert South, D.D., Containing Sermons on Several Subjects (1717). In 1716, the executors of South’s
perhaps opportunistically and unlawfully availed himself of the manuscript sermons, and by
extension, of the published text of the Brambles’ journey. It is doubtful that he acquired these
writings lawfully as a friend or relative of the deceased, as he cheerfully and rather flippantly
calls the papers “a cake of the right leaven, for the taste of the public” (2). Davis’ cake metaphor
undermines the idea of bookselling as an intellectual, and thus professional, pursuit, an
occupation that goes beyond economics even as it involves a financial transaction. Also, the
practice of stealing papers from the recently deceased and hastily publishing them was not an
uncommon practice in the eighteenth century. Alexander Pope, for example, successfully
prosecuted the bookseller Edmund Curll in 1741 for publishing an unauthorized volume of
Swift’s correspondence, which included several letters penned by Pope. Mark Rose
extrapolates from Pope’s writing on this issue that the poet “was genuinely distressed by the
practice of rogue booksellers surreptitiously printing personal letters” (60). This issue was for
Pope not simply about physical theft and financial exploitation, but about the invasion of
privacy, a less concrete, definable offence. Smollett’s bookseller-character, having already
perused the collection of letters which comprise Humphry Clinker, has different concerns about
their publication. Dustwich, in this letter, endeavours to assuage these worries, for these
“objections” are such that, as the editor-character opines, “may be redargued [sic], if not entirely
removed,” using formal discourse, specifically the legal language, throughout his letters to win
Davis over (1). In this discursive exchange between the hesitant bookseller-character and the

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78 Mark Rose in “The Author in Court: Pope v. Curll (1741)” in The Construction of Authorship, states that “Pope
v. Curll, which established the rule that copyright in a letter belonged to the writer, remains a foundational case in
English and American copyright law” (211).
man who has supplied Mr. Davis with the missives, the latter correspondent addresses the danger of prosecution which attends printing private letters. He maintains that these missives have nothing in them “to the mala fama, or prejudice of any person whatsoever” (1), and, to this effect, he claims to have consulted with “an eminent attorney” by the name of Mr. Davy Higgins, who “doth not think the said Letters contain any matter which will be held actionable in the eye of the law” (1). Nonetheless, he does say that if Davis is prosecuted, he “will take the whole upon [his] own shoulders,” accepting “fine and imprisonment” (1). Moreover, Dustwich sententiously suggests that, despite these supposedly negligible risks, it is the publisher’s moral duty to have these letters printed for the “information and edification of mankind” (1).

However, the bookseller-character is not entirely swayed by Dustwich’s arguments, particularly his last point. Davis, adhering to stereotypes of his trade, is more interested in profit than moral imperatives, declaring that publishing is “uncertain” and “Writing is all a lottery” and complaining that he has “been a loser by the works of the greatest men of the age,” even authorial reputation being no guarantee of the bookseller’s financial success (2). “The taste of the town is so changeable,” he laments and the market flooded with “so many letters upon travels lately published—What between Smollett’s, Sharp’s, Derrick’s, Thickness’s, Baltimore’s, and Baretti’s, together with Shandy’s Sentimental Travels, the public seems cloyed with that kind of entertainment” (2-3). Davis’ comments can be read as shrewd prevarications that serve to devalue the product being sold and justify his own terms, which, in light of these supposed market conditions, seem generous as he agrees to “run the risque [sic] of printing and publishing” and offers Dustwich “half the profits of the impression” (3). The bookseller-character also contradicts the editor-character’s claim about the marketability of the manuscripts authored by the deceased clergyman, bluntly telling him that he “need not take the trouble to
bring [them] up,” because “No body reads sermons but Methodists and Dissenters” (3). It would seem that Dustwich and Davis are each trying to, albeit obliquely enough, take advantage of the other, exercising different forms of power in this epistolary exchange. Though Dustwich may actually believe the sermons to be so well-suited to public tastes, he may also be cannily talking up dusty material he hopes to unload on Davis. The bookseller-character apparently has reason to be wary of authors and editors as he takes care to incorporate a grievance into one of his letters about the unreliable men in his pay. There is perhaps an underlying economic motive for Davis’ disclosure of these betrayals, being yet another way of justifying the caution he displays in his dealings with Dustwich. Davis relates that one of his authors has gone abroad (presumably to escape his debts to become “carpenter of a man of war”) and “the other has been silly enough to abscond, in order to avoid a prosecution for blasphemy” (3). Davis bewails: “I’m a great loser by his going off—He has left a manual of devotion half finished on my hands, after having received money for the whole copy” (3). Unconcerned about the charge of blasphemy, the bookseller-character writes that “He was the soundest divine, and had the most orthodox pen of all my people; and I never knew his judgement fail, but in flying from his bread and butter on this occasion” (3). Significantly, writing “blasphemy” is not in Davis’ eyes a failure in “judgement,” while leaving a piece of writing unfinished is, the bookseller-character counting his former employee’s financial misstep, but not his spiritual offence. Moreover, he views Dustwich’s own possible trial and punishment as a positive outcome, not a shameful consequence of law-breaking, but an opportunity on which to capitalize. He tells the editor-character: “if you should be sentenced to the pillory, your fortune is made—As times go, that’s a sure step to honour and preferment. I shall think myself happy if I can lend you a lift,” Davis’ tone becoming friendly and conspiratorial towards the end of the letter (3). The bookseller-character’s postscript
confirms the growing intimacy of the relationship between these literary professionals, which, founded on shared values, becomes a partnership in which power is balanced (a dynamic I probed in Chapter Three). Their connection is nearly familial, as he tasks Dustwich, whose neighbour is the Davis’ cousin, with a domestic matter. The editor-character is charged with telling his relation “to accept as a small token of [his] regard,” two books which he is sending to Wales (4). Though this gift would appear to be a gesture of generosity, it is obvious that he wants something in return, namely, “toasted cheese” (4). He tells Dustwich that his wife “begs to know if there’s any of that kind, which he was so good as to send us last Christmas, to be sold in London” (4). The matter of the books is not disconnected from that of the cheese. The bookseller-character’s skill in negotiation and the materiality of his focus can be observed even in this small article. This enquiry is a roundabout request for another shipment of a desirable commodity, for which the books, or rather object-books, have implicitly paid, these items being in his mind equally valuable, and thus interchangeable. Even in his relations with members of his family, Davis is a consummate dealer, couching his self-interest in shows of liberality.

The mock correspondence between the fictional bookseller and editor at the beginning of Smollett’s novel introduces the idea of the literary work as emerging out of power-laden interactions between multiple individuals. Smollett, like Pope, criticizes eighteenth-century book culture and yet plays a part in the fashioning of the professional writer and the exploration of print’s potentialities. “If in many of [Pope’s] letters,” argues one scholar, “he complains about piracy of his texts and the corruption of London booksellers and the texts they violate, he nevertheless maintains his faith in the capacity of signification to make sense of the world, epistemologically, ethically, and politically” (Wildermuth 94). Ultimately, Smollett also demonstrates this belief in signification within the context of the period’s print culture, the
prefatory exchange of fictional letters drawing the reader’s attention to *The Adventures of Humphry Clinker* as a printed text with both commercial as well as literary value. This fictionalization of the novel’s circumstances of publication is also a fitting beginning to a work in which characters—and caricatures—drawn from the world of commercial writing periodically appear, signalling the historical writer’s preoccupation with the state of British letters. Smollett, himself deeply embedded in eighteenth-century print society, has many characters in his oeuvre who self-identify as authors and as otherwise involved in book production, express interest in the Republic of Letters, or lay claim to knowledge about the literary marketplace.79 I will continue my discussion of *Humphry Clinker* by spotlighting several individual author-characters and groupings of author-characters who make brief but memorably comic appearances in this novel of letters, focusing, of course, on their relationships with members of the book trade (and to a certain extent, with each other). This chapter focuses on the power dynamic of author-characters obtaining outcome power; “schooling” bookseller-characters is most effectively and comically exemplified in this physical, and yet also symbolic, engagement. I will read this scene as forging strategic bonds between individual readers and the historical author and argue that these bonds are part of a larger argument for print made *through* the novel even as eighteenth-century print culture is simultaneously critiqued *in* the novel. Concluding this section on *Humphry Clinker* is a brief examination of how Smollett “increasingly moves the conversation towards the mature optimism of commercial humanism,” directly representing Literary Professionalism in Edinburgh, the home of the Scottish Enlightenment (Sullivan 426).

79 This interest in the state of letters in Britain is directly evident in Smollett’s work with the *Critical Review* and other literary periodicals. See Frank Donoghue’s *The Fame Machine* for a more involved exploration of the relationship between Smollett’s position as editor of the *Review* and the content of his novels.
Issues of authorship are evident in several of Jery Melford’s letters to Sir Watkin Phillips, whom he met at Oxford, some of the novel’s most interesting references to individual writers and writing as a profession in Smollett’s *literary* literary London being contained in Jery’s sections of *Humphry Clinker*. For example in his own diatribe against this livelihood, he details the plight of Psalmonazar or Salmon, a decrepit hack working under another author:

Salmon, at the age of fourscore, is now in a garret, compiling matter, at a guinea a sheet for a modern historian, who, in point of age, might be his grand-child; and Psalmonazar, after having drudged half a century in the literary mill, in all the simplicity and abstinence of an Asiatic, subsists upon the charity of a few booksellers, just sufficient to keep him from the parish (133).

The unequal power relationship between the “modern historian” and Salmon can be likened to the stereotypically exploitative dynamic between the author-character and bookseller-character, the younger man in this episode of *Humphry Clinker* securing outcome power (the outcome in this instance being cheap labour). Jery uses the example of this aged hack to explain to his correspondent that he has no intention of joining the ranks of professional authors, remarking that “the poor of this society” is “composed […] from the refuse of every other profession” (133). He recognizes that literary endeavours can end in a dependence that is both ridiculous (the historian “might be his grand-child”) and un-English (the writer ekes by with the “abstinence of an Asiatic”). Salmon, described as “having drudged half a century,” has been perpetually overworked and underpaid, barely compensated for his troubles in kind of “white slavery.” As a cog in the oppressive marketplace machine, Salmon resembles the author-characters scrutinized in Chapter Two, some of whom are virtually powerless over their circumstances. Though Salmon is pitiable because of his age and poverty, nonetheless the image of a garret-bound, eighty-year
old hack toiling for a significantly younger historian is darkly funny.\textsuperscript{80} In light of Salmon’s hyperbolically miserable existence, the idea of commercial writing as a profession seems absurd, for, “at best,” Jery concludes, scribbling is “a desperate resource against starving, as it affords no provision for old age and infirmity” (133). That the toiling hack is sustained by “the charity of a few booksellers” suggests, however, a feeling of responsibility towards a fellow literary professional (133). Yet Salmon’s support is limited almost to the point that it only represents a glimpse—or a ludicrously minimal example—of Literary Professionalism, mainly established conversely through this episode.

Jery gets much of his information about writers and writing through his “old acquaintance Dick Ivy,” who, shown interacting with Bramble’s nephew, is sketched in greater detail than Salmon, whose portrait is static. Ivy is a roguish writer-character with a checkered past, whom his friends had “imagined died of dram-drinking; but he is lately emerged from the Fleet [which imprisoned mostly debtors and bankrupts], by means of a pamphlet he wrote and published against the government with some success,” his intemperance with the bottle linked to his intemperance in print (115). As readily seditious as Fielding’s Bookweight and as artistically malleable as the garret-bound hacks of The Author’s Farce, Dick learns to turn his prostitute pen to whatever form, genre, style or subject that will sell.\textsuperscript{81} Though artistically confined to following

\textsuperscript{80} Salmon’s unnamed superior is another, more powerful, author, like the knowing writer-characters in Chapter Three who emulate their bookseller-character “friends” and antagonists. Historically, it was not uncommon for authors to hire lesser (less experienced, less talented, or more impecunious) writers to complete large literary projects. J.C.D. Clarke notes that “at different times, Johnson employed six amanuenses to help him with the compilation of his Dictionary: five of them were Scots” (174).

\textsuperscript{81} Dick Ivy can be compared to the real life hack author, John Kelly, the author of a sequel to Richardson’s Pamela called Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life (1741). Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, discussing his career in relation to “the precarious emergence of professional writing in the expanding print culture of the Pamela moment,” observe: “At once unique and highly representative, Kelly is indeed (as Richardson characterized him), the archetypical
the tastes of the town (rather than confined as an inmate of the Fleet), the hack-character enjoys his newfound notoriety and freedom, Jery cataloguing the disasters through which his struggling acquaintance has emerged:

Dick certainly deserves some countenance for his intrepidity and perseverance—It is not in the power of disappointment, nor even of damnation, to drive him to despair—After some unsuccessful essays in the way of poetry, he commenced brandy-merchant, and I believe his whole stock ran out through his own bowels; then he consorted with a milk-woman, who kept a cellar in Petty France: but he could not make his quarters good; he was dislodged and driven up stairs into the kennel by a corporal in the second regiment of foot-guards—He was afterwards the laureat [sic] of Blackfriars, from whence there was a natural transition to the Fleet—As he had formerly miscarried in panegyric, he now turned his thoughts to satire, and really seems to have some talent for abuse. If he can hold out till the meeting of the parliament, and be prepared for another charge, in all probability Dick will mount the pillory, or obtain a pension, in either of which events his fortune will be made (116).

Jery gives his correspondent a sense of the varied experiences of this circulating writer-character who has become a knowing expert on the literary marketplace in which he is consummately embedded. This embeddedness makes Ivy, like the narrator of Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea (1760), an appropriate tour guide to literary London. Ivy takes Jery to meetings of several sects of writers operating in the metropolis, Smollett giving his readers a sub rosa glimpse into the social circles where lettered men collect.
Smollett’s protean hack-character has literary connections everywhere, including among “the respectable authors of the age”, first introducing Jery to a “society of these geniuses” when the young man expresses his desire to learn about London literary culture (116). Though “without all doubt, some of them were men of learning, wit, and ingenuity,” these writer-characters, regardless of their individual talents, do not cohere as a professional body (117). Though “learning, wit, and ingenuity” are components of Literary Professionalism, they must, as Smollett would argue, be joined with other social virtues.\textsuperscript{82} The young letter-writer is disappointed by this assemblage, its participants lacking the collegiality of genuine Literary Professionalism, an ideal constructed by Smollett and his readers out of the literary unprofessionalism of various author-characters. Their interactions are characterized by comically self-involved pedantry, pride, and pettiness, as “they seemed afraid and jealous of one another,” their interpersonal relations being governed by emotion rather than reason (116). Lacking the trust and open communication desirable among literary professionals, they barely engage with each other, apprehensive of becoming the butt of their colleagues’ jokes and compromising their reputations. Chary of maintaining their dignity and power as individuals, they limit their interactions to the exchange of “insipid observations and comments,” which bear no trace of the intelligence of their writings (117). With this scene Smollett would seem to be passing judgment on the literary marketplace as it encourages a socially detrimental competitiveness, the counterproductive desire among characters for winners and losers surfacing throughout eighteenth-century literature as either antagonism between fictive authors and their publishers or,\textsuperscript{82} Gillian Paku, discussing anonymity and authorship at midcentury, reflects on the nameless text as part of “Johnson’s insistently social theory of authorship” (100). According to Paku, Johnson’s conception of professional writing stressed social cohesion, the idea that “authors are bound together not legally, but by collegiality and [a] shared responsibility to contribute to ‘real knowledge’” (107).
as in this scene, as discord among writer-characters themselves. Yet Smollett’s narrative, particularly as it is focalized through Matthew Bramble, shows that “a balance,” as Charles R. Sullivan observes, can be “achieved between public spiritedness and rational self-interest; hence, commerce and learning need not be mutually exclusive” (427). Nonetheless, while in the company of this first group of writers, Jery witnesses no genuine intellectual exchange, artistic collaboration, or social cohesion. Bored by the cold superficiality of their interactions, the young man remarks to his correspondent: “I never passed a duller evening in my life” (Smollett 117).

When Jery reports back to his uncle on the transactions of the evening, Matthew pontificates on the differences between good and bad writers, contending that the quality of an author’s work has a direct bearing on his physical appearance: “there is seldom any thing extraordinary in the appearance and address of a good writer; whereas a dull author generally distinguishes himself by some oddity or extravagance. For this reason, I fancy, that an assembly of Grubs must be diverting” (124). The “dull author” seizes upon sartorial power, a superficial form of self-advertisement, to get ahead in the literary marketplace, while the “good writer” lets the content of his works, the product of effort and imagination, speak for itself. Again benefiting from his acquaintance with Dick Ivy, Jery has the opportunity to test his uncle’s theory in the company of a gathering of London hacks. Among these literary specimens, the Oxonian is exposed to another dynamic among writers, another way in which their interactions fall short of Literary Professionalism: the abuse of the author-patron. The two go to dine with S—, a white-washed version of Smollett himself that the author has inscribed into the novel. S— embodies in certain ways the qualities of the paradigmatic literary profession, as he is desirous, for example, of supporting his brethren; S— is generous to a fault, as “every Sunday his house is open to all unfortunate brothers of the quill, whom he treats with beef, pudding, and potatoes, port, punch
He possesses a sterling character in both his public and his private life, his virtues (as in the case of Pope’s friend Lord Burlington) reflected in his landscaping. Jery notes that the gardens are kept in “excellent order” and remarks: “I saw none of the outward signs of authorship, either in the house or the landlord, who is one of those few writers of the age that stand upon their own foundation, without patronage, and above dependence” (124). The virtues evident in his residence and its environs are specifically those of the ideal Literary Professional, which are confirmed by his interactions with the other characters in the ensuing scene.

These “outward signs of authorship” are the stereotypical physical indicators—involving dress and deportment—that writers, particularly hack writers, exhibit. These writers-for-hire form what the young man ironically calls an “assemblage of originals.” “What struck me,” Jery writes to his correspondent, “were oddities produced by affectation, and afterwards confirmed by habit” (124), the self-caricaturing hack marries extravagance to banality.83 One of the writers wears spectacles though his eyesight is perfect; another wears a “laced stocking, and [uses] crutches, because once in his life, he had been laid up with a broken leg” (125). One randomly wears yellow gloves while at the dinner table and yet another wears the flaps of his hat down, hiding his face. The conditions of the book trade—with its tremendous output of print and plethora of genres—create a stage for authorial performances of both textual and bodily eccentricity. The highly competitive, mercenary nature of Grub Street is a catalyst for deliberate—and deliberately self-promotional—affectations. These producers of popular literature have “set up for themselves in various departments of literature,” identifying their

83 Paul-Gabriel Boucé, interpreting the scenes at S—’s, writes that in Smollett’s portraits of the hacks, “comedy and quasitragedy rub elbows and end in becoming indissolubly mingled; the comedy of these poor starvelings who ape a physical defect and the quasitragedy of their voluntary slavery from which they derive a pathetic vainglory” (317).
generic affiliations through outward variation, thus situating themselves in the inscribed print market of *Humphry Clinker* (126). Staged authorial eccentricity announces their ability to provide textual novelty while obscuring lack of talent, because for these writers “eccentricity is the sole creative talent of failures” (Boucé 317). These writer-characters’ substandard contributions to print culture discount their claims to Literary Professionalism, an ideal which S— (and Smollett himself) attempts to uphold. The inferiority of their writing is not wholly unchecked, their most egregious faults exposed by reviews in S—’s literary journal (the fictional counterpart of Smollett’s *Critical Review*). Dick Ivy relates what happens when “their productions are necessarily brought to trial” (132). Though these reviews are not fatally damning, they do not ignore fault, as some censure “could not be avoided” without compromising the journal’s admirable “pretensions to candour and impartiality” (132). When penning nonfiction, these writer-characters are literary charlatans, comically pretending to informational power, knowledge they do not possess, and consequently misinforming their readers. Through the humorous revelations of their intellectual inadequacy, they are identified to the readers as literary *un*professionals, as the ideal Professional Author as Smollett would define him publishes only what he is qualified by his expertise to write. Jery meets an author-character who, comically ignorant, “had just finished a treatise on practical agriculture, though, in fact, he had never seen corn growing in his life” (127). Another imposes on the intradiegetic reading audience as travel-writer, an imposter in this role as he “had almost finished his travels through Europe and part of Asia, without ever budging beyond the liberties of the King’s Bench” (127).

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84 Smollett founded the *Critical Review* in 1756. Frank Donoghue, examining the careers of this eighteenth-century novelist and critic, asserts that “Smollett’s position as editor of the *Critical* from 1756 until 1763 made him one of the most powerful men on the London literary scene” (125).
Smollett’s hacks are ultimately part of a larger system of collective literary production that goes beyond unscrupulous booksellers as “most of [the hacks] were, or had been, understrappers, or journeymen, to more credible authors, for whom they translated, collated, and compiled, in the business of book-making” (126). The larger system of printing, publishing, and textual consumption in eighteenth-century England imposes quotas on those “more credible authors” who cannot keep up with the demands placed on their time and skill. Smollett emphasizes how low literary standards, the consequence of overproduction, are perpetuated in all corners of this putative book market, by author-characters of varying abilities and responsibilities.

Continually running from creditors and the law, this “parcel of authorlings,” cannot be classed as oppressed victims because of the ways in which their own personal and moral failings contribute to their unfortunate circumstances. S—, however, can lay claim to Literary Professionalism, as Jery discovers from Dick Ivy, that S— has personally rescued many of these writers from their dire financial situations, taking responsibility for the well-being of his colleagues, and acting to preserve the reputation of his profession: commercial writing. Dick, delineating some of the “particular obligations” the shiftless hacks have received from S—, recounts a few of their scrapes:

One of them [S—] bailed out of a sponging-house, and afterwards paid the debt—another he translated into his family, and clothed, when he was turned out half naked from jail in consequence of an act for the relief of insolvent debtors—a third, who was reduced to a woolen nightcap and lived upon sheep’s trotters, up three pairs of stairs backward in Butcher-row, he took into present pay and free quarters, and enabled him to appear as a gentleman, without having the fear of sheriff’s officers before his eyes (131).
The hacks do not appreciate S—’s efforts on their behalf, disrespecting their patron even as they avail of his hospitality, as “they make use of his name with the most petulant familiarity” (131). Other aspects of literary unprofessionalism are explored as this scene moves out of the dining room, a significant episode involving S—, a hack-character named Mr. Cropdale, and a bookseller-character, Mr. Birkin, occurring when the party moves into the garden. The conflict between Cropdale and Birkin, though mediated by S—, represents the ongoing power struggles within the literary marketplace as well as the operations of “a larger social world which is increasingly chaotic and disorderly, its instability caused by the ceaseless striving of every individual to imitate his social betters” (Schellenberg, *Conversational Circle* 109). The “spruce bookseller,” arriving by horse to S—’s house, is obviously wealthy, possessing the status symbol of “his own gelding” (128).

In Smollett's novel and in other literary works, the “bookseller-made-gentleman” was a satiric target because of diffuse class anxieties in eighteenth-century British society. In *The Business of Books*, print cultural historian James Raven writes that “like so many practitioners of other trades, self-made booksellers were often vilified in popular literature” (218). Birkin conspicuously displays his wealth, making “his appearance in a new pair of jemmy boots, with massy spurs of plate”; any penchant for showiness aside, Birkin has a more practical reason for his appearance “a-horseback”: he is actually “too fat to walk a-foot” (128). The bookseller-character’s corpulence, as in this period’s visual representations of members of Birkin's trade, is indicative of his affluence, if not also his greed. One of the hacks, Tim Cropdale, makes fun of the arrogant bookseller-character, “who took umbrage at this poor author’s petulance in presuming to joke upon a man so much richer than himself” (128). Troubled that his money has not secured him deference, Birkin tries to scare the hack into submission, though his coercive
power is as ineffectual as his resource power. Birkin, flaunting his acquired social influence in the same way he flaunts his silver-spurred riding boots, responds to Tim’s “sarcasms” by threatening debtor’s prison, warning Tim that “he could move the Marshalsea court for a writ, and even overtake him with it, if he did not very speedily come and settle accounts with him, respecting the expense of publishing his last ode to the king of Prussia, of which he had sold but three” (128). The author-character, calling Birkin’s bluff, does not take this intimidation seriously, perhaps with the thought that the relationship between bookseller and author is ultimately a symbiotic one, the former paying their hacks negligible sums for the works that keep the presses running. Standing up to the economic power of his creditor and mocking his social pretensions, Cropdale flippantly responds to the bookseller-character blustering words by “saying he had expected in a post or two, from Potsdam, a thanks from his Prussian majesty” (128). Most likely, he “affected to receive [the bookseller’s] intimation with good humour” because the sly hack had a scheme in mind to punish the self-important Mr. Birkin (128).

A trick to school the bookseller is played on “this midwife of the Muses,” this turn of phrase used by the narrator to underline Birkin’s feminine flaws: his vanity, his physical weakness, and his peevishness, all qualities incompatible with the masculine, rational Literary Professional as Smollett and his readers construct him. Smollett first undermines the bookseller linguistically, and then continues his mockery through the physical comedy of the practical joke. Tim Cropdale, who at the beginning of the scene was depicted bickering about business with the bookseller, proposes a “boots against stockings” footrace between Birkin and himself (128). Cropdale appeals to the bookseller’s pride rather than his magnanimity by pointing out their disparity in footwear (representative of a wider disparity in resource power), which gives Birkin a distinct advantage and Cropdale a handicap that will diminish the merchant’s potential victory.
Overconfident of his abilities, the portly publisher gives his boots to Cropdale for the race and the hack, instead of loping thrice round the garden, literally runs off with the expensive boots; the author-character’s action is an extension of his earlier offhand comments by which he discursively rebelled against his employer. But the writer’s attitude is expressed materially with his confiscation of the boots. Cropdale, exploiting Birkin’s competitiveness, makes a fool of this self-assured bookseller. Though Boucé describes such scenes as introducing a “note of farcical comedy” into the text, I would argue that this incident, in dramatizing the tensions between booksellers and their authors, represents the latter’s attempt to reverse the hierarchy—enforced by the former—that shapes their relationship (306). The source of their tensions is elucidated by James Ralph, who begins his anonymously published literary polemic *The Case of Authors, by Profession or Trade* with the pithy statement that “Wit and money have always been at war, and always treated one another with reciprocal contempt.” The initiation of the race between Birkin (money) and Cropdale (wit) seems to embody this enduring conflict. The contemptuous manner of Smollett’s bookseller-character, perceptible before the contest, emerges in full-force when he realizes he has been swindled, and with some ingenuity.

Though pretending to the businessman’s sagacity, Smollett’s bookseller-character is easily manipulated, duped into lending out costly footwear and tempted to participate in a foot race though unfit for physical exertion. S—’s tale about Cropdale borrowing and subsequently selling his host’s horse, suggests that it is the hack, after all, who excels at fiscal guile. Moreover, this episode highlights the scapegrace wit’s ingenuity as well as the bookseller’s gullibility—the hack’s ploy is rationalized by the inscribed Smollett in terms that link the ploy to authorial creativity. S— tells the literary merchant that Cropdale’s feat “is no more than a humbug in the way of wit, though it deserves a more respectable epithet, when considered as an effort of
invention” (Smollett 129). In the past, S—, presumably believing in the work’s merit, encouraged Birkin to purchase a farce Cropdale penned which subsequently resulted in a loss for the bookseller, who judges authors and their texts solely by their profitability. Cropdale vindicates his comic genius by generating humour within the storyworld of *Humphry Clinker*, constructing an entertaining farcical impromptu that he stages for an appreciative audience, the group of hacks visiting S—’s house.

Smollett portrays S— as exemplifying several key aspects of Literary Professionalism. S— attracts the admiration of individual readers who are directed to recognize the dichotomy between S— and his ridiculous literary contacts. Significantly, Smollett is able to establish S—’s professionalism without aligning his author-character too closely with the fictive bookseller and without compromising the comedy of the episode. S—, invested in establishing polite relations among members of the literary marketplace, makes a concerted effort to mitigate the bookseller’s wrath, using several tactics to do so. He tries to incite the bookseller’s empathy for the hack while encouraging the merchant to acknowledge the unequal distribution of resources between employer and employee. S— avers that Cropdale did not rob the bookseller out of malice, but out of penury, supposed to be “out of credit with the cordwainer [shoemaker]” (129). But the words “I suppose” before S—’s interpretation of the incident makes us wonder whether Cropdale really had such a pressing need to be shod. Nonetheless, S— flatters the publisher by explicating that the latter “fell on this ingenious expedient to supply the want of shoes, knowing Mr Birkin, who loves humour, would himself relish the joke upon reflection” (129). In adroitly painting Birkin in the best possible light—not as dupe or victim, but as good-humoured participant, responsive to both the comedy of the situation and the cleverness of his author—Smollett’s peacemaker implicitly urges the bookseller-character to live up to this characterization. Closest
to embodying Literary Professionalism, S—attempts to resuscitate the relationship between Birkin and Cropdale, if not exactly bringing about civil, productive encounters, at least envisioning them. Moreover, S—a writer, verbally re-imagines the scene; he discourages Birkin from construing it as an isolated, personally antagonistic incident. According to the host, the boot trick is but one in a series of similar pranks: to be deceived by this hack is a matter-of-course. “Cropdale,” S—says, “literally lives by his wit, which he has exercised among all his friends in their turns” (129). If anything, S—construes the ruse as indicating a friendliness and understanding between the two men, as Cropdale’s friends are all subject to this treatment.

Birkin, stubbornly confirmed in his ire, dismisses S—’s explanations and indicates that he will use his influence at the Old Bailey and have the thief transported, which echoes his earlier threat about sending the hack to the Marshalsea. Of course, the money-conscious bookseller-character notes how, in taking his revenge, he will “lose [his] debt in consequence of his conviction” (129). Personal considerations like revenge are trumped by financial considerations, though often the two are blurred as he lumps the loss of his boots with the losses he has incurred by publishing Cropdale’s works, taking both blows personally. In his mind, Tim Cropdale has stolen from Birkin on several accounts, the bookseller-character complaining, in language that reveals his crass materialism: “I lost twenty pounds by his farce, which you persuaded me to buy—I’m out of pocket five pounds by his damn’d ode; and now this pair of boots, bran [sic] new, cost me thirty shillings, as per receipt” (129). Birkin’s animosity appears to ebb when S—placates him with a pair of shoes, and, treating the bookseller like a fractious animal, “order[s] his servant to rub him down, and comfort him with a glass of rum-punch, which seemed, in a great measure to cool the rage of his indignation” (129). At one point in the extended scene Birkin paints himself as someone who “loved a joke as well as another.”
apparently excusing the rambunctious writer (130). Indeed, he seems all generosity when he asks the hacks where Cropdale lives so “he might send him a proposal about restitution” (130). Bargaining as he would for a manuscript, Birkin says he would give the delinquent hack a “new pair of shoes [...] and half a guinea into the bargain for the boots” (130). Nonetheless, this proposed leniency could be read as a transparent ploy to get the hacks to disclose their compatriot’s address. They do not take the bait, however, and the frustrated bookseller-character, realizing this, angrily curses his antagonist, wishing him to the devil. Cropdale’s ingenuity cannot be bested by the fictive bookseller, Birkin’s counter-ruse proving unsuccessful. At the scene’s conclusion, the hack-character has secured outcome power, the hierarchy of power being reversed not only by Cropdale’s victory, but by S—’s show of Literary Professionalism in its aftermath. Birkin is forced, in the end, to accept the loss of his property despite his claims to authority over the hack-characters, schooled in this scene on several levels. The author-character obtains outcome power in his contest with Birkin, schooling the bookseller-character in a way that the novel’s readers are supposed to interpret symbolically. In the end, the proud, mercenary Birkin, through the loss of his boots and the loss of his dignity, is taught a lesson in humility as well as the danger of underestimating the cleverness of his writers and overestimating his own abilities.

Literary Professionalism is directly represented in the figure of S— and conversely and comically imagined through the other writer-characters Jery encounters during the family’s stay in London. When these travellers make their way to Edinburgh, Literary Professionalism becomes more than an ideal upheld by a single voice of literary reason, S—. Arriving in the Scottish metropolis at the beginning of Volume Two, Matthew Bramble reports to his correspondent, Dr. Lewis, that “Edinburgh is a hot-bed of genius” and notes the individual and
collective virtues of the city’s writers: “I have had the good fortune to be acquainted with many authors of the first distinction; such as the two Humes, Robertson, Smith, Wallace, Blair, Ferguson, Wilkie, &c., and I have found them all to be as agreeable in conversation as they are instructive and entertaining in their writings” (233). These learned, yet sociable, participants in the intellectual movement of the Scottish Enlightenment represent the real potential for print as a vehicle for civic and commercial humanism and for a resolution of the “dichotomy of public individualism and private sociability” that is evident throughout Smollett’s Expedition of Humphry Clinker (Schellenberg, Conversation Circle 110).

News from Parnassus

From The Expedition of Humphry Clinker I turn to a mid-century dramatic work, News from Parnassus, by one of Foote’s contemporaries, the Irish playwright Arthur Murphy. In News from Parnassus, a comic prelude or introductory piece, issues of commercial cultural production predominate, highlighted rather than veiled by the work’s fantastic central premise. The power dynamic in this text, as in the other works discussed in this chapter, involves the author-character thwarting or “schooling” the bookseller-character, the former successfully achieving outcome power within the narrative and the latter’s authority weakened within the context of their relationship. News from Parnassus was first staged at the newly remodelled Covent Garden on September 23, 1776. Murphy’s piece celebrated the theatre’s makeover and “wafted incense towards Garrick at Hampton,” News from Parnassus complimenting the famous actor who had just retired (Boaden 35). This prelude was also commissioned by theatre manager Thomas Harris and his partners to compete with another short metaliterary work, George Colman’s New Brooms! An Occasional Prelude (1776), which appeared at the rival theatre, Drury Lane.
Murphy’s piece was, however, directly inspired by a seventeenth-century continental work, Traiano Boccalini’s *Raggiagil du Parnaso*, translated in England as *Advertisements from Parnassus* by Henry, Earl of Monmouth.\(^85\) The title of Murphy’s version, like the title of Monmouth’s English translation, joins a heavily commercial literary form (“news”) with an idealized conception of literature represented by “Parnassus.” The protagonist Boccalini, identified before his entrance as a literary critic, has ties to Italy, France, England, and Parnassus, the classical abode of artistic creation. The characters in Murphy’s play consider the mythical Parnassus a physically accessible, if not heavily trafficked, realm—the special destination of a special few in the temporal Republic of Letters. None of the play’s action occurs in Parnassus, however, as the prelude is set in Boccalini’s lodgings, the entry to which is guarded by a French servant, La Fleur, who is irritated with his master’s visitors, various representatives of London’s cultural milieu.\(^86\) The group at Boccalini’s doorstep—like the goddess Nonsense’s followers in Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce*—is made up of stereotypes of different contributors to London culture and includes Rebus (a poet), Catcall (a critic), Fitzfrolic (a pantomime Poet), and an actor, Rantwell. Unprofessionally aggressive, they refuse to accept La Fleur’s assertion that his master cannot be seen and insist “We must see him; we must come in” (392). Boccalini generates such rabid interest because he has recently returned from Parnassus, where he has spoken to Greco-Roman gods, deceased English cultural greats like Shakespeare, and the retired David Garrick. Gone for some time, Boccalini returns from this fantastic realm to an England, which,

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\(^85\) Dane Farnsworth Smith and M. L. Lawhon note that “*News from Parnassus* borrows its title, main character, and central structural device from Traiano Boccalini, an Italian political satirist of the seventeenth century” (86). Smith and Lawhon go on to note differences between Boccalini’s work and Murphy’s prelude.

\(^86\) La Fleur is also the name of Yorick’s servant in Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768).
crowded with popular entertainers, is represented as possessing few connections to Parnassus or, less allegorically, few claims to artistic excellence according to Murphy. The mob’s fervour for Parnassian news is presented as symptomatic of England’s literary decline, one of the visitors, the actor Rantwell explaining that “We have had nothing from those parts a long time. Our Poets seem to have dropped all correspondence with the Muses” (394). Yet literary accomplishment is not positioned in direct opposition to print or as being necessarily tainted by market circulation for Boccalini’s celebrity status is the effect of his earlier contributions to London’s literary marketplace. These published pieces were evidently commercially successful, as Rantwell observes that “Boccalini’s advertisements from Parnassus are well known” (392). The Italian’s recent travels consequently attract an interested throng that is eager for the “gossip” that Boccalini has collected on the Parnassian heights. These characters flock to Boccalini out of both self-interest and curiosity; they seek to profit from the novelty of Boccalini’s news, their desires incited by matters of supply and demand: the scarcity of his knowledge as well as the proven popularity of his prior advertisements. His news is particularly attractive to Vellum, a bookseller and owner of a newspaper, and a key figure in the ensuing dialogue with Boccalini.

Boccalini evidences, to the surprise of his jaded interlocutors within the play, qualities of genuine Literary Professionalism, as opposed to the bold unprofessionalism or perverse, pseudo-professionalism rife within the play. He is described by Rantwell as “a queer odd sort of a good kind of critic,” strange because he is “good,” unlike the many hack writers that plentifully supply London periodicals in this storyworld (392). He is also “odd” because of his empowered position within this represented literary marketplace, Boccalini being sought after rather than solicitous and dependent like so many professional authors in eighteenth-century fiction and drama.

Murphy immediately forges connections between his critic-character and Alexander Pope. The
stage direction and first lines of *News From Parnassus* echo the beginning of Alexander Pope’s “Epistle to Arbuthnot” (1735), which represents the poet as embattled by print culture (Hess 3). This verse letter opens with the speaker, Pope’s poetic persona, responding to being besieged by a hoard of aspiring writers. The inscribed poet, a “cultural celebrity” (Justice 74) like Boccalini, tells his servant:

  Shut, shut the door, good John! fatig’d said,

  Tye up the knocker, say I’m sick, I’m dead.

  The Dog-star rages! nay ‘tis past a doubt,

  All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:

  Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,

  They rave, recite, and madden round the land (Pope, *Poetical Works* 1-6).  

Boccalini, like Pope who “declare[d] proudly to his aristocratic friends and protectors that he was nobody’s placeman or slave,” is independent even as he is enmeshed in the literary marketplace (Griffin, *Patronage* 177). Murphy’s prelude opens with the complaints of La Fleur, Boccalini’s servant, about the “violent rapping” at his master’s door (391). The heavily accented Frenchman, like Pope’s speaker, comments on the madness of the visitors: “De people in dis country it is all mad—rap, rap, rap—knock a de house down!” (391). Murphy, beginning with this nod to Pope, represents Boccalini as embodying the ideal of the British Literary Professional in almost everything but his nationality. The Italian, the “straight man” in his interactions with his visitors, is the calm, rational eye to the farcical storm that whirls around him. In both these scenes, the

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87 George Justice talks about this poem as “not, like Sidney’s before or Shelley’s after, an apology for the poet and poetry through the uses and effects of poetry itself, but instead a justification of the poet as a conspicuous presence in the cultural marketplace” (74).
social and cultural power of the professional author—a man after whose attention and resources are sought—is stressed. Unlike the oppressed and ridiculous writer-characters whose booksellers and creditors barge into their garrets, Boccalini is inconvenienced by his visitors, but maintains his dignity as he interacts with petitioners over whom he has power. There is, of course, an element of fantasy in this depiction of the author-character, his authority literally being derived from Parnassus.

Rantwell presents himself to Boccalini and the bookseller follows the actor’s lead, proudly introducing himself as “well known in the Row” [Paternoster Row]—echoing the description of Boccalini’s advertisements as “well known” (393). This repetition can be read as the bookseller-character underlining his own importance in the literary marketplace. Not content with equality with the writer-character (as it is established linguistically at least), he attempts to assert his power over the author, warning Boccalini: “To refuse me admittance, would have been an error of the first impression” (393). The fictive merchant’s instinctive use of the language of his trade (“first impression”)—like his name—points to the extent to which his trade defines him and affects, often comically, how he communicates and negotiates. Yet an argument for print is made through Boccalini, whose integrity and independence are evident in how he chooses to publicize his news, which he announces is “to be published when I have arranged my materials” (394). In other words, his news will be carefully prepared and then released when he deems his work ready as opposed to when the bookseller commands its hasty appearance. The author-character operates under Pope’s model of professional authorship, maintaining his self-respect in exercising control over his work and maintaining his own standards of quality. Vellum’s request to Boccalini—“Now, Sir, if you will let my paper have the first of your news” (394)—indicates the power of the author-character over the bookseller-character, for whom professionalism
means negotiating rather than demanding, and collaborating rather than dictating. Boccalini attempts to regulate the conversation, maintaining order and impressing a sense of professional decorum on Vellum and Rantwell with comments like “Why must you both speak at once?” (395). After being interrupted, he politely chastises the bookseller-character, encouraging his visitor to behave better. Nonetheless, the actor-character and the bookseller-character trade invectives and accusations, Rantwell calling Vellum: “A paper and type rascal” (400) and “A mere bundle of fools-cap” (400), and “A duodecimo of waste paper” (401). Countering this immature squabbling is Boccalini’s account of Parnassus as a decorous cultural space of Professionalism; the interactions of its artistic producers represent the mingling of the classical and the contemporary—of progress achieved through a respectful dialogue with the past. Murphy’s travelling critic recollects the collegiality of its inhabitants: “Shakespeare retired himself to the banks of the Avon, and he wishes Roscius [David Garrick] a happy retreat on the banks of the Thames. Apollo has decreed him a laurel-crown for his services” (402). Perversely, Vellum dismisses Boccalini’s report of amicability between the playwright and actor as “bad news” because there is “no abuse it in: dull truth is a drug” (402). The bookseller-character is displeased by the diplomacy of Shakespeare’s admiration of Garrick, which does not involve the denigration of rival actors like Booth, Wilkes, and Cibber, but rather an appreciation of them. Vellum, invested in inciting “print wars,” concludes that “This will never do. There will be no dispute about this: no pro and con: and pro and con is the life of a newspaper. Essays, letters, squibs, paragraphs, epigrams—” (403). Murphy, however, underlines the importance of restraint in both print and professional interactions, the playwright satirizing the proliferation of printed ephemera which a “Shakespeare hugely angry” at Garrick would engender (402). Boccalini’s final words to Catcall, the critic-character, contain a similar message of restraint, consisting of
“some sound advice from Parnassus concerning a critic’s function as well as his manners” (Smith and Lawhon 86). The Italian asks Mr. Catcall for “a word” and pronounces:

Banish noise and riot: let critics have knowledge and candour. A true son of Apollo has well observed, that the first office of criticism was to beat time to the chorus of the muses, not with clamour and violence to interrupt the song. Let audiences support the decorum of the theatre… (Murphy 423)

Boccalini not only argues for civility, but demonstrates it in his self-possessed reactions to the parade of irksome visitors to his lodgings, as he works to maintain an even professional tone, even with Catcall who wants to monopolize his time, the Italian attempting three times to cut their dialogue short with comments like “You see I am not at leisure” (413). Ideally, a shared, elevated code of polite discourse would exist between literary professionals, but communication is at times comically unsuccessful between Boccalini and his interlocutors when their discourses—emerging out of different knowledge, experiences, and values—clash. Boccalini’s language rises above Vellum’s materially-minded understanding when the celebrated critic mentions meeting with several ancient writers in Parnassus. Boccalini reports to Vellum and Rantwell that “Seneca, Epictetus, and other philosophers” gave him “some papers of patience-powder, of more efficacy than all your quack medicines”—in short, the moral and improving works that can inculcate virtues such as patience (394). Vellum, the consummate materialist his name suggests him to be, only acknowledges the literal meaning of “patience-powder” and assumes that the critic has literally returned from Parnassus with fresh nostrums, which the

88 In Chapter Three, I identified a shared discourse between author-character and bookseller-character which indicated a perverse literary professionalism or rather unprofessionalism.

89 This encounter allegorizes Boccalini’s learning, another quality of the paradigmatic Literary Professionalism as it is constructed through News from Parnassus.
bookseller-character offers to advertise in his newspaper. Vellum’s misreading of the Italian’s declaration is a comic moment in the prelude that underscores the absence of an ethical foundation to his literary professionalism, obvious as the dialogue progresses that Vellum has no interest in the didactic possibilities of print, possibilities of which eighteenth-century readers—understanding Boccalini more than his visitors are able—are ideally aware.

The conversation between Boccalini and Vellum is also shaped by gaps in shared knowledge, the bookseller-character being questioned when literary practices and standards to which Vellum alludes are unrecognizable to the Italian. In Chapter Two, I examined a similar informational dynamic in scenes between naïve writer-characters and the knowing bookseller-characters whose advice by turns baffles, shocks, and angers the aspiring authors in the narrative who are introduced to the literary literary marketplace. Boccalini is no wide-eyed amateur, but still must be reintroduced to the world of print because of his absence: while travelling through Parnassus he was not privy to the changing landscape of cultural production in the world below. At several points during Murphy’s prelude, the dialogue takes the form of an interview as Boccalini queries eighteenth-century developments in theatre and print, asking different cultural producers to expound on certain topics; Boccalini, for example, asks “what say you of those who profess to serve the public?” (401). This deliberately controversial question sparks a discussion between the actor-character and the bookseller-character about their duty to their audiences, theatre-goers and readers, respectively. With the rhetorical question “what do we print lies for but to please the public?” (401) the printmonger negates his responsibility as a moral director to the public, blaming buyers for his own ethically-challenged practice. Serving the public, Murphy implies, should involve more than simply diverting a body of spectators and catering to the tastes of the consumer, however base. Rather, serving the public should be interpreted as a civic duty,
acting in the best interests of audience members by providing them with entertainment while simultaneously appealing to their highest instincts and cultivating their intellectual, spiritual, and moral well-being. Murphy’s extradiegetic audience comes to these ideological conclusions before Boccalini begins more directly “schooling” his visitors, the comedy within these conversations serving as the scaffold on which paradigmatic Literary Professionalism can be constructed.

Boccalini presses both the general attitudes and the specifics of cultural production in this literary London. Profit-minded Vellum reveals aspects of his trade to Boccalini, who marvels, that “a newspaper is an extraordinary manufacture,” the adjective “extraordinary” suggesting the complexity and skill of professional collective literary endeavours (395). Yet his admission—that “what kind of animals engender a newspaper is beyond my skill,” dramatizes the period’s scepticism about collective literary endeavour (395). Vellum allegorically describes the process of creating a newspaper: “A printing-house is like a bee-hive: some drones there are; the busy fly and buzz abroad in a morning, and return loaded at noon: but they never bring enough; we supply the rest” (396). The dehumanization of the bookseller-character’s employees in these images implies the newspaper, with men like Vellum overseeing its production, runs almost automatically, its contributors, interchangeable and thus replaceable, engaged in basic tasks. His language steeped in commerce, Murphy’s bookseller-character speaks of the newspaper as an institution, implying order and regulation, though not necessarily Literary Professionalism. “A newspaper, Sir,” Vellum pronounces to Boccalini, “is a great school of science: most of the

90 Daniel O’Quinn notes that Murphy’s “bookseller, Vellum, describes the activity of the press by referring to the same bees that Cowper would employ in The Task” (Entertaining Crisis 26). I would add that this line from News from Parnassus could be related back as far as Bernard Mandeville’s The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Public Benefits (1714).
modern authors have never been at any other. With a good genius for lying, a tolerable stock of malice, a store of envy, and not a grain of literature, they write in the Journals for three or four years” (397). The qualifications of Vellum’s “ideal” Literary Professional are comically antithetical to those shared by Murphy and the individual readers who recognize the perversity of a “school of science” in which learning is systematically replaced by ignorance and cunning. Instead of regulating its participants’ ethics, Vellum’s school normalizes the fabrication of information, the printer-publisher admitting to encouraging various deceptions in the name of productivity and profit. As the bookseller-character sees it, “have a regard for truth, and starve by it,” a paraphrase of a sentiment voiced in Fielding’s The Author’s Farce (398). In keeping with his excessive concern for the physical materials of literary production, the aptly-named Vellum reports that “[Without lies] the paper would be a blank: truth would not fill half a column of the paper” (396); and speaking for himself and his writers, “the staining of paper is our object,” revealing his exaggeratedly materialist value system (397).

Spurred by Boccalini’s interest in newspaper-making, Vellum continues to detail the objectives and practices of his newspaper including the exploitation of readers’ patriotism. Flippantly referring to the American War of Independence, he responds to an enquiry about gathering intelligence from distant sources—“Troops in America!”—and explains that “a letter from thence is writ in my garret” (397). O’Quinn interprets this detail as Murphy “dramatizing the desire for information about America and emphasizing that the commercial system of the press will supply the material to fill that vacuum” (Entertaining Crisis 27). The reading public is duped, treated to the scribblings of a hack writer instead of the genuine letters of a soldier overseas as Vellum exploits the conflict in the colonies for his own financial gain. The bookseller-character also tells Boccalini how he generates an appetite among the readership for
sensationalism and conjures up local news, particularly crimes and sordid indiscretions, equating his writers to the malefactors whose supposed actions make the newspaper. Sharing culpability with his contributors, Vellum relates that he and his writers “rob this man on the high-way; we kill another at a city feast; and we stop payment for a great house, just as we like” (396).

Linguistically, the newspaper owner and hack journalists are indistinguishable from their subjects, the offenders; they seem to be simultaneously robbery or invent a story about a robbery, but committing the crime itself. Vellum and his men collect the names of fashionable families in St. James and “deal with them as we like,” restrained by no moral dictates and negligible legal controls (396). He gives several examples of this practice: “We ruin the eldest son at play, and sometimes shoot him: we ravish the daughter, put the mother to bed with the coachman, hang the father up in the stable, and make a Lord steal half a dozen tea-spoons out of a silver-smith’s shop” (396-397). There is a deviant methodology to newspaper production, Vellum announcing: “we in our paper turn all topsey turvey, right or wrong, true or false, no matter for that; we kill the living, bring the dead to life, and represent all just as we please” (398). Humorously, Vellum—who clearly has not read the critic-character’s previous publications—assumes Boccalini’s news is of a piece with the content of his newspaper. He assures the Italian that “there’s room enough for your news from Parnassus: a good budget of scandal will have a run” (398). Like Mr. Puff in Samuel Foote’s The Patron (discussed in Chapter Three), Vellum lives by scandal and risks prosecution for libel as he will regularly “venture to publish defamation” (399). Vellum considers his past legal issues badges of honour, bragging “I laugh at law” and, proudly confessing that after standing in the pillory: “I went to the coffee-house without washing the eggs off my face,” revelling in his hard-won notoriety (399). Exploiting a political position for his own personal gain, Vellum “told the mob in handbills that the liberty of the press was in
danger” and consequently, “the pelting was but slight,” his manipulation of the crowd corresponding to his manipulation of newspaper readers with misinformation (399). Vellum perceives himself as an exemplary practitioner of his trade because he supports his writers in their scandal-mongering by concealing their identities, “secrecy warranted,” and deflecting punishment (and fame) from them (399). To Boccalini, whom he treats as a prospective contributor, he boasts: “You can’t have a better publisher,” and promises: “you may murder characters, and compliment yourself just as you please in my Journal,” an offer the bookseller-character considers both collegial and generous (399). Murphy’s critic-protagonist delays his judgement of Vellum’s proposals, telling the bookseller: “I understand you: Parnassus is invited to a share in scandal and malevolence: you shall have my answer presently,” his use of “understand” suggesting an accord between author and bookseller that is exploded with Boccalini’s final judgements (399).

Boccalini engages in a similar line of questioning that ends with a deferred judgement when Rebus, a playwright, joins the fray. Like Vellum, this new fictive participant in the literary marketplace emphasizes the sources of his “professional” power, which are questioned in this dialogue. Boccalini’s assumptions about authorship, like his ideas about publishing, clash with those of his interlocutor, creating moments of illuminating humour. The Italian, informed that Rebus’ “first push” will be in theatre, specifically comedy, responds with a list of prerequisites he expects from the playwright-character:

And for this I suppose you have prepared yourself by accurate study of men and manners: you have attended to the humours that gather in the mind, and the tinge those humours are apt to give to the imagination. You have pursued affectation through all her
shapes, and can open with a nice hand the vien [sic] of the ridicule that springs from that source. You have seen life, you know the foibles of the fair; the turns of vanity, pride, love, extravagance, and all the whims of fashion. You know the relative duties of life, and— (405).

Possessing the stereotypically modern preoccupation with rapid production, Rebus interrupts Boccalini with “At that rate, when should I begin to write my comedy?” (405). Boccalini, however, making a Johnsonian argument for a systematic process of professionalization, the cultivation of expertise through careful training, observes that “At Athens [authors] were forbid before the age of thirty” to begin writing (405). He assumes, unaware of that many English scribblers are so ill-equipped, that the playwright has “digested Aristotle, and all the rules of [his] art” (405); when Rebus responds in the negative, Boccalini questions whether mere genius is enough, advising that writing is refined by the acquisition of specialized acknowledge, akin to “A painter [who] studies the principles of design and colouring before he takes a pallet” (405).

Rebus does, however, have experience, citing five-years writing for Vellum’s newspaper, an unconvincing qualification in light of Boccalini’s catalogue, Rebus defending himself by averring: “I have watched effect; observed where the audience applauded; gave the plot in the papers, abused every successful writer, and now have turned one of my own novels into a comedy. No wit, no humour in it!” (406). Instead of shaping the moral climate of his age, he seems to simply mould to it by extrapolating/fabricating what audiences want to see and working from there. The plots of his own “pathetic comedy” (407) and his tragedy, “an eastern story” (408), are impenetrably complex and when Boccalini asks “will the audience understand it?” Rebus answers “Not a syllable: they’ll stare like stuck pigs,” the playwright ignoring his obligation to serve the audience in Boccalini’s sense of the phrase (409). The author-character
deliberately impedes communication by using “a parcel of obsolete works” taken from Shakespeare, which he hopes will add cultural cachet to his own work (409). Boccalini’s opinions are obliquely revealed as he questions the selfish playwright’s ideas about diction, namely this use of archaisms where language “should be natural,” but again reserves direct judgement until the end of the piece when Murphy’s protagonist systematically challenges the boasted powers of his interlocutors and establishes his outcome power. In the same way that Vellum and Rebus are manoeuvred into uncovering their failings as promoters and producers of culture, Catcall, another critic, is positioned as a foil to the ideal literary professional created through the course of this tête-à-tête. When he is first introduced, Catcall, who describes himself as being “of the same trade” as the Italian, desires to speak about “The reformation of theatrical abuses,” which Boccalini deems, with sincerity: “The true province of criticism!” (410). Catcall, like Rebus, presents his qualifications, which in fact disqualify him as a Literary Professional:

I was born a critic. I hissed the moment I saw light. I rejected all play-things till a catcall was put into my hand: that delighted me. When I took to my horn-book, the first letters I learned were, D, A, M, N, which makes the word Damn you know. From school, I came upon town; lounged at coffeehouses, read magazines, laid down the laws of the drama at George’s, and pronounced upon wit at the Bedford (411).

Boccalini’s exclamation “Good materials for a critic!” is a private sarcasm understood by Murphy’s readers, indicating his opposition to yet another travesty of professional identity. His disapproval is yet concealed from his visitors. Catcall’s unprofessionalism is revealed in the self-interested request he makes for Boccalini to “by an edict from Parnassus revive the good and ancient privilege of seeing an act at each house for nothing” (412). Terming this discount “good”—as opposed to financially convenient—suggests the same kind of mercenary ethics
Vellum exhibited, the amorality that unconsciously informs the linguistic imprecision of Murphy’s characters.

The similarities between Catcall, Vellum, Rebus, and Rant point to the intersections within this “matrix of culture workers,” Daniel O’Quinn commenting that “Murphy’s satire is notable for both how it underlines the interconnectedness of the newspapers and the theatre and for how it assumes that the audience already comprehends the moral criteria by which Boccalini will judge Vellum, Rebus, and the corrupt critic Catcall” (Entertaining Crisis 26; 28). This assumption on the part of the historical author that the audience possesses this kind of understanding is vital to the larger argument that I make in this dissertation about how the paradigm of Literary Professionalism is fashioned. Part of his news is Momus’ judgements of English newspaper culture, Boccalini reporting that while “the works of the ancients were called the physick [sic] of the soul: modern newspapers are the poison” (420). The bookseller-character only responds to this conclusion with a threat, charging the Parnassian visitor to “Look into Poets Corner next Saturday for an epigram upon yourself” (421). Vellum’s menace is futile as so many public and private figures are slandered in his paper that the impending personal attack carries little weight, especially against Boccalini’s renowned advertisements and the Italian’s statement about the resilience of “the valuable character” against baseless attacks (421). Therefore, the bookseller-character’s comment goes unacknowledged, the critic moving onto his next “pupil.” Boccalini next schools the playwright Rebus, directly establishing where merit lies in comic writing, maintaining that “a comedy was meant to be the mirror of life” and supporting this statement with a quotation from Pope’s Essay on Man: “The proper study of mankind is man” (421). Murphy’s author-protagonist explains that “True comedy serves that purpose: it helps to develope [sic] the discriminations of character, and to laugh folly out of countenance” (421).
Yet Murphy, even as he parades this series of derisory literary professionals across the stage, cannot be accused of pessimism or of dismissing eighteenth-century print society to gaze back nostalgically on an idealized classical past. Boccalini draws an analogy between the defiling of an Athenian temple by “a set of libertines” (420) and the defiling of English society by the newspapers that “traduce and vilify whom they think fit” (420-421). Murphy’s main character concludes that “the temples in Greece continue sacred, in spite of indecency; and the valuable character may bid defiance to scurrility,” debunking the bookseller-character’s claims to power over his subjects (421). Moreover, print is still valuable despite the corruption of the newspapers, as Boccalini announces: “and now, gentlemen, you shall, in your terms, hear the decrees of Apollo and the muses,” adding that “the public shall have them soon in my old way; in the form of advertisements from Parnassus,” implicitly maintaining the value of commercial publishing, despite its abuses (421). As O’Quinn interprets the prelude’s end, “despite the manifest corruption of culture in the play, and the clear invocation of an empire unravelling in America and India, Boccalini does not condemn the convergent media of theatre and the newspapers. Rather, he concludes by celebrating the commercialization of culture itself” (28).

Popular literature need not be a stranger to artistic excellence, Boccalini tellingly using the language of commerce as he makes his pronouncements on popular drama, concluding News from Parnassus with “in a word, let Managers consider themselves at the head of a great warehouse; procure the best assortment of goods, get proper hands to display them; open their doors, be civil to the customers, and, Apollo foretells that the generosity of the public will reward their endeavours” (424). O’Quinn identifies these lines as “an apt celebration of the commercial theatre pioneered by Garrick” (Entertaining Crisis 28). Though Vellum, a target of Murphy’s satire on London booksellers, also speaks the language of commerce, he is faulted for it because
it reflects a limited view of the printed work as nothing but a commodity. Boccalini, however, accepts the permanence and possibilities of print culture and embraces its potential, which lies in an audience of discerning consumers complicit in the “schooling” of the literary (un)professional in Murphy’s prelude.

**Dialogue XXVII: Plutarch—Charon—And a Modern Bookseller**

Like playwright Arthur Murphy, bluestocking writer Elizabeth Montagu puts a fantastic spin on a familiar eighteenth-century comic scene—a conversation between literary professionals—in “Dialogue XXVIII. Plutarch—Charon—And a Modern Bookseller” from George, Baron Lyttelton’s anonymously published *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760). Montagu, working from this witty Lucianic tradition, contributes three satiric dialogues to Lyttelton’s collection, her two others being “Dialogue XXVI. Cadmus and Hercules” and “Dialogue XXVII. Mercury—And a modern fine Lady.” Montagu’s dialogues were later published separately as *Three Dialogues of the Dead* (1769).91 “Plutarch—Charon—and a Modern Bookseller” looks back to Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce* as well as Swift’s 1704 *Battle of the Books*, as a quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns is played out. Montague’s “Plutarch—Charon—and a Modern Bookseller” is set in a pseudoclassical underworld, the modernized “dialogue of the dead” being a genre of its own in the eighteenth century, often used for political or personal attacks.92 The comic scene in Montagu’s short piece, like Fielding’s work, involves

91 In “Women and Literary Criticism” from *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume 4*, Terry Castle notes that Montagu’s dialogue and Clara Reeve’s *The Progress of Romance* (1785) “were among the only literary-historical works written by women in the period in dialogue form” (440).

92 Lyttelton and Montagu are drawing from Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Dead*, influential in both eighteenth-century French and British literature. In England, several volumes of translations were published between 1700 and 1710.
demonstrations of authority which comically reveal the shifts in power engendered by the fantastic setting. As in the case of Murphy’s *News from Parnassus*, the fantastic seems to underline the fictionality of these scenes, the “schooling” of the bookseller-character by the author-character made possible through uncommon circumstances. Boccalini, for example, is empowered by his travels to the airy realm of Apollo, which lend him incredible purchase in his interactions in London’s cultural marketplace as it is imagined in Murphy’s prelude. Montag’s characters are removed from the practical realities of the *literary* literary marketplace while simultaneously, and therefore comically, engaged in debates concerning the values and practices of that marketplace. Montagu enacts this fantastic relocation for satiric ends, Dialogue XXVIII critiquing modern publishing practices and illuminating the decline of popular culture since Plutarch’s golden age of learning and ethics. An implicit contrast is immediately set up between the classical hero and Montagu’s modern bookseller; while in Book 6 of *The Æneid*, Virgil’s Aeneas nobly descends to the underworld to commune with his father’s spirit, Montagu’s literary merchant whines his reluctance to his psychopomp. As in Henry Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce*, Charon appears to ferry the shade of a literary professional across the river Styx. In both Fielding and Montagu’s metaliterary works, the incursion of commerce into the realm of Hades comically reimagines this classical space as British, while reasserting its satiric Lucanian roots. The underworld setting for this author/bookseller dialogue underscores the element of *judgement* that should, according to Montagu, be involved in almost all facets of commercial literary activity, including writing, publishing, and reading. Montagu’s readers are given an opportunity to

under the title: *The Works of Lucian*, (tr. from the Greek, by several eminent hands ... with the life of Lucian, by John Dryden).
evaluate the extent to which the bookseller-character and the author-character embody Literary Professionalism, the ideal through which print is critiqued, normalized, and rehabilitated.

Montagu’s witty dialogue begins with Charon, who introduces his passenger, an irritated bookseller-character geographically inconvenienced by his mortality. Montagu uses the word “modern” pejoratively, in the same way she does in Dialogue XXVII with its “modern fine lady.” The lady’s mortality is also a nuisance to her, not because she misses her family, but because she longs for her card games and the other frivolous activities she enjoyed in the metropolis. The mercenary “modern bookseller” in Montagu’s Dialogue XXVIII, also a Londoner, has similarly misplaced priorities. The ferryman tells Plutarch that his charge is “a fellow who is very unwilling to land in our territories,” Charon reports that “he says he is rich, has a great deal of business in the other world, and must needs return to it” (97). The merchant-cum-shade refuses to accept the conditions of the afterlife forced upon him and tries to bribe his way out of Hades, attempting to bargain with Charon to ferry him back to the world of the living. Stereotypically wealthy, the bookseller-character is also stereotypically self-important, as he asserts his social prominence with uncooperative behaviour. Charon remarks with frustration on his abrasive character which he hopes interaction with the classical author will smooth out: “He is so troublesome and obstreperous I know not what to do with him” (97). Consequently, he leaves his charge with Plutarch, telling the deceased writer: “you will easily awe him into order and decency by the superiority an Author has over a Bookseller” (97). Though the fictive bookseller’s power—grounded in material wealth—is attenuated in the afterlife, Montagu’s literary merchant, clearly used to controlling his authors, is unhappy to be forced into Plutarch’s care. Invested in a different hierarchical structure, he exclaims: “am I got into a world so absolutely the reverse of that I left, that the Authors domineer over Booksellers?” (97). Plutarch,
confined to Hades for several hundred years, is unaware of this shift in the dynamics of power. Though he has conversed with the shade of a French writer of Romance, he knows little of what has transpired in the world of letters since his death in 120 AD. His incorrect assumptions about the present world are comical, Montagu using this ignorance to defamiliarize and highlight the accepted state of Britain’s Republic of Letters.

The bookseller-character articulates a specific dislike of Plutarch, whom he blames “for having almost occasioned [his] ruin” near the beginning of his career (97). The literary merchant elaborates to Plutarch: “When I first set up shop, understanding but little of business, I unadvisedly bought an edition of your Lives; a pack of old Greeks and Romans, which cost me a great sum of money. I could never get off above twenty sets of them” (97). The celebrated classical figures Plutarch immortalizes in biographies are dismissed as so much clutter, unsold volumes of Parallel Lives deemed worthless for overstaying their welcome on his shelves.93 As a merchant of “object-books,” he equates demand with value, ignoring the important information housed in this first-century text. Plutarch gracefully expresses his disappointment in the poor sales to which the modern bookseller refers, the historian commenting that “From the merit of the subjects, I had hoped another reception for my works” (97). Endowed with the ability to objectively evaluate his own work, notably lacking in the stereotypical hack-character, he recognizes the weaknesses and the strengths of his final product: “I will own indeed, that I am not always perfectly accurate in every circumstance, nor do I give so exact and circumstantial a detail of the actions of my heroes, as may be expected from a biographer who has confined

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93 Discussing the eighteenth-century ramble novel, Simon Dickie discusses this genre as seemingly “designed for the ‘extensive’ readers so long thought to be emerging in the period—those who carelessly consumed multiple books rather than intensively reading a small number” (270). Dickie references Montagu’s dialogue as engaging in the midcentury voice against “this hasty and distracted way of reading” (270).
himself to one or two characters” (97). “My reflections,” he also acknowledges, “are allowed to be deep and sagacious; and what can be more useful to a reader, than a wise man’s judgement on a great man’s conduct” (98). Possessing different ideas of the role of literature and of what it means to be “useful to a reader,” Plutarch and the modern bookseller misunderstand each other. The classical author assumes that his works did not sell because they have been improved upon by later authors, positing that “the world has now the advantage of much better rules of morality, than the unassisted reason of poor pagans can form” (98). Consequently, he is sanguine about his unpopularity, reflecting that “If indeed latter ages have produced greater men and better writers, my heroes and my works ought to give place to them” (98). The bookseller-character is confused; and wittily declares: “Why, Master Plutarch, you are talking Greek indeed!” (98). Despite the humour of such an exclamation to a Greek writer, the modern bookseller is claiming that Plutarch is spouting nonsense, speaking incoherently.94 The works of classical authors have not been usurped by better ones, but rather, the quality of literature has declined, as the modern bookseller cannot satisfy Plutarch’s request to “give [him] account of those persons, who in wisdom, justice, valour, patriotism, have eclipsed [his] Solon, Numa, Camillus, and other boasts of Greece or Rome” (98). The bookseller-character explains that he recovered his losses on the “costly edition of your Books” with “The Lives of the Highwaymen,” the criminal subjects of this sensational piece of literary ephemera contrasting poorly with the men of Plutarch’s illustrious catalogue (98).95 Comically oblivious to the absurdity of his views,

94 In a letter addressed to the Countess of Ossory, Horace Walpole uses “Greek” in a similarly punning way. He writes that he made a statement based on the Greek derivations of the words “genesis” and “exodus,” but as it proved enigmatic, he admits: “I find that much learning has made Paul mad, and that I talked nonsense by talking Greek” (149).

95 Two of the most famous compendia of criminal lives, from which Erin Mackie draws in Rakes, Highwaysmen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century, are Captain Alexander Smith’s A
the bookseller-character articulates a perverse idea of “improvement” and progress, as he impresses on the other shade that “it is only by a modern improvement in the art of writing, that man may read all his life, and have no learning or knowledge at all” (98). The bookseller-character, unaware of ongoing debates about women and reading, celebrates the corrosion of female innocence by way of literature, for he comments: “if it were not for the friendly assistance of books, [women] would remain long in an insipid purity of mind, with a discouraging reserve of behaviour” (99). Montagu’s modern bookseller claims he simply satisfies readers’ desires for secret histories and scandal and light, fanciful fiction, citing Monsieur Scuderí’s observation to Plutarch that “authors must comply with the manners and disposition of those who are to read them,” a strategy that leaves no room for Plutarch’s cultural idealism (99). The comic image of “a modern fine gentleman, who is negligently lolling in an easy-chair” being forced by a writer to “climb the Alps with Hannibal” makes the opposite point that the bookseller-character is attempting to prove: the gentleman’s indolence should be challenged rather than indulged. Plutarch is appalled by the bookseller-character’s irresponsible attitude towards the moral character of his readers, especially “concerned for the women, who are betrayed into these studies” (99). When Plutarch mentions the French romances of their deceased French author he met in the underworld, the modern bookseller comments that “these books were very useful to

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96 In *Women’s Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation*, Jacqueline Pearson specifies that “the most persistent dangers of female reading are figured as sexual” (109). Throughout the eighteenth-century, cultural authorities, including the Montagu and her circle, debated the timely issue of the reading practices of women. Though the virtuous Bluestockings were conservative in their literary tastes, Elizabeth Carter in particular engaging in “self-censorship” (140) as a reader, Pearson observes that “the more confident Montagu believed even bad books might have good uses” (140-141). Though Montagu promoted morality through reading, she thought *how* women read was almost as important as *what* they were reading.
the Authors, and their Booksellers; and for whose benefit beside should a man write” (100).

Plutarch would not hesitate to answer “readers,” believing writers should be moved by civic duty to ensure that readers benefit spiritually, morally, and intellectually from the literary work. The classical writer likens the fictional bookseller to a “second Pandora” and he proceeds to sternly advise him to alter his direction of authors because that “it should be the first object of writers to correct the vices and follies of the age” (101). Yet Plutarch, still speaking authoritatively, is willing to concede on some points, as he declares: “I will allow as much compliance with the mode of the times as will make truth and good morals agreeable,” considering didacticism strengthened rather than weakened by a pleasing literary vessel (101). He even admits “your love of fictitious characters might be turned to good purpose, if those presented to the public were to be formed on the rules of religion and morality” (101). Plutarch predicts in his concession to the educational potential of imaginative literature the emphasis on piety and domestic virtue in Richardson’s *Pamela* and the sentimental novels which offered like moral pleasures.97 “It must be confessed,” the shade declares, “that History, being employed only about illustrious Persons, public Events, and celebrated Actions, does not supply us with such instances of Domestic merit as one could wish” (101). Continuing in this strain, Plutarch speculates on the utility of “examples of domestic Virtue,” fictional characters with exemplary private lives more instructive to female readers than accounts of “great heroines” (101). The bookseller-character’s response—“we have had some English and French writers who aimed at what you suggest”—indicates that he has in fact been listening to Plutarch and that these shades are at this point in the scene having

97 *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* charts the novelization of domestic ideals, Nancy Armstrong observing that “Richardson successfully introduced into fiction the highly fictional proposition that a prosperous man desired nothing so much as the woman who embodied domestic virtue. By Austen’s time, this proposition had acquired the status of truth” (135).
a successful *dialogue* free from the interruptions, misunderstandings, and monologic soliloquizing characteristic of many exchanges between fictive authors and booksellers (101). The bookseller-character is professional in his vindication of the “moderns” as he references the productions of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, both of whom he collegially praises. He recollects that: “in the supposed character of Clarissa (said a clergyman to me a few days before I left the world) one finds the dignity of heroism tempered by the meekness and humility of religion, a perfect purity of mind, and sanctity of manners” (101-102). The character of Sir Charles Grandison is deemed “a noble pattern of every private virtue, with sentiments so exalted as to render him equal to every public duty” (102). The bookseller-character’s prior conversation with the clergyman suggests the literary merchant’s openness to outside perspectives: he has listened to a man of the cloth opine on the moral utility of Richardson’s characters. Their reciprocity of their exchange of information is evident when Plutarch, after hearing Richardson extolled, asks “are there no other authors who write in this manner?” (102). The bookseller-character obliges the Greek historian’s interest in modern literary excellence and speaks about Fielding as an author of “imaginary histories,” the bookseller-character testifying: “his works, as I have heard the best judges say, have a true spirit of comedy, and an exact representation of nature, with fine moral touches” (102). Significantly, the modern bookseller, going beyond his overwhelmingly fiscal outlook, is complimentary in his report on Fielding’s achievements as a writer and moralist. Though the literary agent does not claim to have read these works himself, he is at least open to the opinions of “the best judges.” Fielding “has exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule” (102). With this report on these eighteenth-century novelists, Plutarch’s view of imaginative literature, which he damns earlier in the conversation, shifts. By the end of the scene there is a subtle, but important, shift in the bookseller-character’s articulated
views of literature. He is finally able to admit at least a tolerance of merit: “I will own that, when there is wit and entertainment enough in a book to make it sell, it is not the worse for good morals,” declaring himself no enemy to merit when it is no enemy to profit (102). Though their communication is initially inhibited by the discrepancy in knowledge between Plutarch and the modern bookseller, their dialogue is ultimately productive as a vehicle of dialogic learning.

Charon, who bookends the dialogue, is reintroduced to conclude the exchange. He approves of Plutarch’s influence on the bookseller, observing that the censorious Greek has “made this gentleman [the modern bookseller] a little more humble” (102). Still wary of his charge, Charon is not sure what to do with him, and speculates about what horrible penalties will—and should, in his opinion—be meted out to the bookseller-character, who, powerless as a shade must accept his fate. Charon’s suggested punishments, which he fits to the literary merchant’s crimes, all have a bookish edge, as the ferryman declares:

I have a good mind to carry him to the Danaides, and leave him to pour water into their Vessels, which like his late readers, are destined to eternal emptiness. Or shall I chain him to the rock, side to side by Prometheus, not for having attempted to steal celestial fire, in order to animate human forms, but for having endeavoured to extinguish that which Jupiter had imparted? Or shall we constitute him Friseur to Tisiphone, and make him curl up her locks with his satires and libels? (102).

Charon makes these witty suggestions with the thought that the bookseller-character is beneath the notice of the great judge of the dead, “too frivolous an Animal to present to wise Minos,” but Plutarch, corrects the boatman, observing that “Minos does not esteem any thing frivolous that affects the morals of mankind” (102). Until the merchant leaves his charge, the author-character is in possession of outcome power as he makes the decision to present the booksellers to the
underworld judge for divine retribution. Like Boccalini, Montagu’s writer-character speaks for the mythological Greek judge; both Boccalini and Plutarch speak the last lines of their respective pieces, presenting—both literally and metaphorically—the “last word” on the production and regulation of culture. Though the bookseller-character has indeed been “schooled” and ends the scene divested of power, Plutarch does not scapegoat the trade, concluding the dialogue by stressing the culpability of writers in Minos’ eyes; his report that the judge will punish “Authors as guilty of every fault they have countenanced, and every crime they have encouraged” underscoring the seriousness as well as the importance of published writing in eighteenth-century print society (102). In this justice system, the protection of individual readers is stressed, as “vengeance will be denounced in proportion to the injuries, which virtue or the virtuous have suffered in consequence of their writing,” literary professionals being held accountable for the damage they inflict on their audience (102).
Chapter 5

Literary Multiplicity in *The Adventures of An Author*

*Introduction*

A contributor to *The Critical Review*, remarking on a two-volume novel recently published in London, *The Adventures of An Author. Written by Himself and A Friend* (1767), detects a stale note in how this anonymous work represents the book trade. The critic comments on the widespread stereotyping of writers and booksellers in *The Adventures of an Author* and similar metaliterary works:

The wisdom of the Greek philosopher’s saying ‘Know thyself’ is exemplified in no instance more than the accounts which authors give of themselves and of each other in performances of this kind. They generally couple an author and a bookseller together, like a quack doctor and a merry andrew; the former giving the word of command, and the other going through all his exercises of buffoonery to please the gaping crowd, and to fill his master’s pockets. How far this is a just representation of authorship, we shall leave the fraternity to judge, for our readers cannot (216).

*The Adventures of an Author*, like other “performances of this kind,” is charged with relying on repetition, reusing established comic types that have popular appeal. The book itself is a performance, its actors – the narrator and characters – playing roles in a public commercial sphere. Hence, the reviewer links metafiction to the low popular entertainment of street performance, comparing the interactions of literary characters to the predictable antics of a mountebank and his clown, the power dynamic within this comic duo being fixed and simplistic.
In the standard metaliterary fare to which the critic refers, the writer-character complies with the bookseller-character’s orders by deploying literary “buffoonery” to entertain an audience of “gaping” readers and to profit his employer. *The Adventures of an Author* was also reviewed by *The Monthly Review* and *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, both considering the novel flawed, its depictions of authorship not necessarily just. In the latter periodical, a pithy evaluation of *The Adventures of an Author* appears in “An Account of new Publications; with Remarks,” the reviewer pronouncing: “This is full of faults and inaccuracies as a piece of writing, but is very sprightly and entertaining” (258).

Since its cool initial reception, *The Adventures of an Author* was largely forgotten by both readers and critics, the latter group only until recently sporadically and briefly mentioning this novel in relation to its allusions to contemporaneous works as well as its topical references and issues. For example, as the hero’s first ambition is to be a tragic actor, this anonymous novel is cited in two works on tragedy and Shakespeare in eighteenth-century fiction. It is briefly considered in Linda Evi Merians’s *The Secret Malady*, a monograph on venereal disease in eighteenth-century Britain and France. Academics have referenced *The Adventures of an Author* several times for its anecdote about Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and Locke.

*The Adventures of an Author* is summed up in *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature: 1660-1800* as the “education of a young man in the ways and wiles of society,” (1001) a line that could apply to any number of novels from the period. Yet this generic

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98 Merians, examining different fictional representations of sexually-transmitted ailments, notes that the “author” of the title complains that as a writer by trade he can look forward to little money or sex; if he does purchase the embrace of a “shilling Venus” he risks both going without dinner and contracting an infection (219).

99 In the diary chapter, the unnamed fashionable gentleman records that he discovered a volume of Sterne’s novel on a lady’s dressing room table; though this lady boldly asks her male visitor to “explain the stars” in this bawdy text, she blushes when asked her opinion on Locke and perversely dismisses the question as “indecent” (1:172).
descriptor, like the comments in *The Critical Review*, presents a misleading idea of *The Adventures of an Author* as a derivative text peopled by derivative characters, the reviewer’s duo of “quack doctor” and “merry andrew” belying the variety within the novel. As my examination of several interpersonal exchanges will illustrate, there is variety in this novel’s characterizations of authors and booksellers and in the gradations of power and professionalism exercised in book trade interactions. Though author-characters are insistently portrayed as disappointed or deceived by their booksellers in eighteenth-century fiction, Adrian Jones, commenting on the historical book trade in *The Nature of the Book*, makes the point that “a successful bookselling business required the active preservation of delicate systems of trust and honour among people in constant proximity to each other” (113). These systems of trust and honour are often hidden in *The Adventures of an Author*, grasped between moments of comical amateurism and comic unprofessionalism. From a cultural studies perspective, this novel is an invaluable resource for its multiple depictions of literary professionals, its characters reenacting a print society more fully realized—taking disparate episodes collectively—in the pages of this work than few other eighteenth-century imaginative texts. *The Adventures of an Author* fictionalizes the vagaries of urban life and authorship through a protean central writer-character (Jack Atall, or more formally John Atall, Esq.). Atall’s comic assays as a writer, both amateur and professional, make up a considerable portion of the novel’s escapades, which include forays into theater and the law, several amours, and a period of high adventure at sea. Though Atall is presented at the end of the novel as an unusual exception to the proverb “once an author always an author,” he embodies this idea through both volumes, finding multiple entryways into a labyrinthine print society that he finds considerably more difficult to exit (2: 195). The hero’s extraliterary activities are, moreover, often couched as delays or breaks in his writing career or as providing fodder for
future composition. Like Harry Luckless in Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce* and Young Cape in Foote’s *The Author*, Atall is referred to by his role (“an author”) rather than by his given name in the work’s title, writing fixing his identity within a narrative that insistently returns to the physical locales of print culture in urban Britain. Even when Atall’s story strays from the literary world—most notably in a lengthy section in Volume Two when Atall finds himself in a Spanish prison and, after a thrilling escape, aboard a ship of mutineers-turned-pirates—the twists and turns of the hero’s fate mirror the unexpected revolutions of print culture.

Atall does not reflect a single cultural understanding of the author, mutability pointing to the developing status of professional authorship, a yet unfixed concept. His periodic encounters with other writer-characters also serve as a prism, refracting the different spectral colours of authorship. A careful examination of the novel’s protagonist reveals that *The Adventures of an Author* accommodates multiple modes of comic representation of the cultural producer, the hero possessing different forms of power at different times and invoking varying degrees of sympathy, identification, and critique; his personal and pecuniary circumstances change throughout the narrative, engendering different power relations with other literary professionals.

In her investigation of British it-narratives, Christina Lupton refers to *The Adventures of an Author* as a text that “describes a young man who climbs every rung on the professional ladder and down again” (59). Though he is treated differently depending on what rung he currently stands, the protagonist’s interactions with members of the book trade are consistently comic and usually satiric; comedy is generated in diverse ways to criticize aspects of commercial literary production and to make an argument for print by encouraging active readerly participation in establishing Professionalism through the critical interpretation of fictionalized literary activity. I have chosen *The Adventures of an Author* as a representative concluding text, as it contains all of
the models of interaction—identified by evaluating the outcome power of the participants—individually scrutinized in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. With its wealth of comic interactions between fictional literary professionals—writers and other participants in the intellectual work of the print marketplace—this novel makes a strong case for expanding conceptions of the literary marketplace beyond the oppressed author/oppressive bookseller paradigm.

The Narrator on Authorship

I begin my discussion of *The Adventures of an Author* by examining how literary professionalism is outlined and embodied by the narrator, an author-character in his own right. The second part of the novel’s title, *Written by Himself and A Friend*, suggests the comic bifurcation of the subject of the novel into two characters: the narrative persona who refers to himself as the “editor” or the “master of ceremonies” (but who continually interrupts this fiction of editing rather than writing the manuscript) and the protagonist of the novel, the adventuring author-hero, Jack Atall. Officially, the narrator or “editor” is Atall’s “friend,” but this speaker is Jack himself operating under the thinnest of literary disguises. The voice of the narrator shifts through the novel, the speaker adopting disparate views of writing in the public sphere, some of which miss the mark in their attempt to highlight authorial oppression. Yet his rhetorical missteps peripherally guide readers towards a truer conception of the Literary Professional, which is found *through*—but nonetheless lies *beyond*—the comic. Comedy steers readers through the shoals of his problematic ideas, in his reflections and digressions—as well as through the encounters between fictional cultural producers contained in the narrative. Before I investigate the particulars of the hero’s “history,” I will first take stock of the novel’s introductory chapter, which presents the narrator-character’s general claims about the nature of
professional authorship in the period, and then I will press other narratorial statements about authorship. In the first chapter of The Adventures of an Author the narrator declaims on the oppressive nature of the literary marketplace and presents the ubiquitous image of author-as-victim, remarking: “though it frequently happens among the brethren of the quill, that many are starved into writing, I believe it will be found upon the examination that full as many are starved out of it” (1:2). He lists the causes of the latter phenomenon, and explains:

for what with the tyranny of patentees and booksellers, the additional taxes upon paper and publication, and the little attention of the town to works of genius, not to say merit, it is fifty to one, if an author does not happen to start at the change of a ministry, the breaking out of a war, or the shooting of an admiral, that he does not go nine months with an empty belly (1:2).100

Painting the desperation of their plight with melodramatic figurative language, the narrator claims that some writers are forced to “leave the muses to starve by themselves upon ideal nectar and imaginary ambrosia” and alleges that unless buoyed by sensational political events to exploit in print, many become soldiers or highwaymen (1:2). They choose tangible sustenance over the insubstantial rewards of poetic inspiration that fail to fill “an empty belly.”

There are hints in the narrator’s introduction that indicate the historical novelist’s comic intentions to undermine the narrator’s authorial polemics, which are grounded in materialism. “I would not have it be believed,” the narrator asserts, “that every man who may accidentally be seen writing in public, in a shabby coat, a dirty shirt, and a fluxed periwig, is absolutely and bona fide an author by profession” (1:3). Though he spends some time in this chapter drawing

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100 This reference to “nine months” can be read as part of the feminization of the hack author in the eighteenth-century cultural imagination.
attention to the neglect of writers, particularly the inadequacy of their material rewards, he also wants to prove that authors are not so déclassé as to appear down-at-heel. In service of this latter goal, he stresses the outward gentility of several famous professional authors. The narrator reports that he is “well-assured Addison never wore a shirt above three days, that Steele had at least two suits of cloaths [sic] a year, and that even Johnson is shaved, and has wig dressed, at least once a week” (1:4). The reference to the respected and respectable among eighteenth-century professional letters can be read as part of the novelist’s larger argument for print, which lies beneath the comedy of noting how often the eminent Addison could afford to have his clothes laundered. The narrator-character establishes professionalism through false distinctions, deliberate red herrings in the search for the professional author. In the first chapter, readers are encouraged to weigh in on the narrator-character’s suspect claims about literary professionalism. The professional author is defined by particular characteristics that set him (women writers do not figure in this novel) apart from other men in public life. Misleadingly, he claims that “a good physiognomist will always discover a man of real genius, that is an author” (1:4). A comic gap is then created between the idea of genius as it is conceived by the narrator and that formed by readers—a reaction presumably orchestrated by the novelist. The narrator, continuing to define professional authorship without referring to literary merit, declares that his brethren are spotted by: “the absence of our look—the carelessness of our attitudes—the nonchalance of our behavior—and, above all, the pedantry of our conversation” (1: 5). These so-called signifiers of authorship in the narrator’s comical list are undesirable and superficial—and therefore easily affected—qualities. Essentially, he does not conceive of the literary profession in a meaningful way: “In a word,” he vaguely declares, “an author is a perfect phenomenon, in many respects incomprehensible and unaccountable” (1:5).
From overemphasizing the material markers of authorship, he overemphasizes the impact of a writer’s material circumstances on his literary production, echoing and magnifying the authorial polemics of his “contemporaries.” In a chapter near the end of Volume One labeled a “dissertation upon authors,” the narrator calls for an end to penury among, declaring that “the poverty of writers is a greater stigma upon the public than it is upon themselves” (1: 221). He advises “every constituent of the republic of letters” to hold themselves responsible for preserving the integrity of this realm, elaborating that “care should be taken that writers never by necessity be driven to argue against their consciences; or, in a fit of despair, renounce their future aid to the commonweal of understanding” (1: 219). The narrator reflects on Shaftesbury’s elevation of authorship as a vital civic practice, necessary for the well-being of British society. Immediately after quoting Shaftesbury, the narrator speaks in grandiose terms of his scribbling kind: “we are the people that must think, reason, explain, and expound for the whole nation: our ideas are in fact the general stock of knowledge of the period; so that when we are broke, an universal bankruptcy [sic] of good sense must ensure” (1: 219). In consideration of this keystone role they play in society, authors—he argues—should be supported—financially and socially. Yet the narrator exaggerates the impact of the commercial on the artistic, the extent to which the writer is supposedly corrupted by financial exigencies. The exact nature of their material support moves his rhetoric into comic territory, as he details what alcoholic beverages foment the literary imagination. The narrator opines that “a man who never soars higher than Porter, may write a good treatise upon hops and malt; but that Burgundy and Champaign only can invoke the muse of Poetry, or inspire the true vis comica” (1: 221). Beneath the surface of his “theory” about the connection between good writing and fine wine is the self-interested sensualist’s pleasure-seeking. The narrator’s arguments against authorial oppression and his views on authors as “the
buttresses of learning and good sense” are therefore undermined by comedy, which complicates his polemical position on the literary marketplace. The narrator concludes his “dissertation upon authors” (221) with “a fragment that [he] accidentally found in a certain coffee-house near St. Paul’s, during the last political contest” (1: 221-222). The fragment-writer pontificates on the marvels of his kind: “in a word, an author is a phenomenon….we resemble an aurora borealis, yet we really look upon ourselves as fully incomprehensible as the northern lights, and as yet equally misrepresented as the milky way”(1: 222). He punctuates these lofty—and again, vague—reflections on authorship with an exclamation: “Gods! what a thought was there for an author—he might feed upon it, at least for a month, even in a dearth of herbage and scandal,” the latter half of this comment revealing his materialist leanings (1:222). His choice of quotidian words (“feed,” “herbage,” and “scandal”) lowers the tenor of his reflections, countering the image of exalted, abstracted authorship (1:222). The conception of the “aurora borealis” author is further undermined by the intrusion of reality in the form of a visitor. The fragment-writer’s train of thought is interrupted, as he writes “but mum, my printer is knocking at the door for a reply to Anti-Sejanus’s last letter” (1:222). The printer’s knock on the door, like the reference to a writer’s sustenance, represents the uneasy coexistence of economics and other registers of cultural activity. The unnamed scribbler is participating in the 1766 print war involving James Scott, John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, and John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute. Using the pseudonym “Anti-Sejanus,” Scott wrote letters, apparently on Sandwich’s behalf, to The Public Advertiser that attacked Bute. The fragment-writer awkwardly attempts to obscure his hack identity while acquiescing to the printer’s demand. The unnamed author-character, posing as a connoisseur, tries to justify his desire for payment with aesthetics: “a yellow-boy is one of the prettiest medals, I (though a deep virtuoso) know this day extant” (1: 222). The basic mercenary
motive—the pursuit of a guinea—that lies behind his fulfillment of the printer’s commission destabilizes the image of the author as unknowable and unquantifiable.

*Enter Jack Atall: THE AUTHOR*

From the general claims about authorship articulated in *The Adventures of an Author*, I move to the particulars of the author-hero’s career. The narrator, elevating his subject by delaying the entrance of his protagonist, concludes the first chapter of Volume One by addressing the reader and announcing his intention to “usher you into the presence of THE AUTHOR, without any further punctilio or etiquette” (1: 5-6). The second chapter is narrated by “THE AUTHOR,” Jack Atall, who relays his life story in the first person, adhering to various conventions of autobiography: he briefly outlines his family background and then recollects incidents from his early life, namely an episode of roguery from his schoolboy days and another from his time as a lawyer’s clerk. Negligent on several fronts as an autobiographer, the narrator-character does not until Chapter Four bring up the matter of his name. He reveals to the reader, whom he addresses as “sir”: “to tell you the truth, I have in the commerce of this world, been obliged so often to change my name, as well as appearance, that it requires a greater memory than wits are generally endowed with, to remember my primitive appellation” (1: 26-27). He lists a series of pen names that he may possibly have employed and finally settles on a “certain nomination,” that he will use for the remainder of the novel (27). He claims for himself the psedonymn “Jack Atall, a name which I believe is spick and span new, and therefore on that account, not devoid of merit,” his undue emphasis on novelty pointing to his hack nature (1: 27). Yet the shortness of his memory is revealed by this statement because the name Atall is patently *not* new. The name of the hero, Atall, is taken from Colley Cibber’s comedy *The Double Gallant*
(1707). Attal is the name of Cibber’s title character, a “resourceful” rake who is “keenly aware of the advantages of duplicity in a changing social world” (Appleton 148). His unacknowledged “borrowing” of this name also suggests the stereotypical hack's ease with deceptions like plagiarism.

As a kind of eighteenth-century künstlerroman, *The Adventures of an Author* charts Atall’s route to commercial writing, which is not a direct one, though the narrator suggests the inevitability of his turn to authorship as a young man. In these early chapters, the narrator draws attention to the qualities that make Atall a born author and more precisely, a born hack. Attention is paid to his literary education and Atall’s natural abilities, the hero presenting himself as a prodigy: “I was put to writing and accounts, and learnt Latin before I could speak English. I could construe Horace and Virgil, before I knew what was an idea; and made Latin verses long before I learnt whether Great Britain was an island, or part of the continent” (1: 9-10). His gaps in learning, like his ignorance of geography, do not prevent, however, his early associations with print culture, the speaker boasting, “There can be no doubt that I was a genius at twelve years old, and was a correspondent to the printer of the York Courant ere I was fourteen” (1: 9-10). His precocious self-importance and affectation of knowledge are also portents of his future career as a hack. Atall recollects:

> I was introduced at fourteen into the Saturday night’s club, and consulted upon the change of weather, the cause of heat and cold, and a hundred other things that I knew nothing of; but which I explained constantly to the satisfaction of the members, and alwaysastonished them with my learning, by concluding my observations with a quotation from Martial or Pliny, which as they did not understand, it was no necessary
that it should be pertinent: but their applause was constantly in proportion to their ignorance (1:10).

Much of the rhetorical force of his pronouncements comes from the classical fragments he —like booksellers and their hacks—deploy to dazzle and distract from inferior content and also successfully flatter an audience. This episode from Atall’s childhood prefigures his role as a periodical writer passing judgments on a multitude of topics, of which he has varying degrees of mastery over, conveying truths, half-truths, and lies, to an undiscerning throng of readers. Despite this and other “gifts,” Atall’s first choice of profession is acting; as “a spouting lawyer’s clerk,” he practices his oratorical abilities at a debating club where his talent for appearing learned serves him well. As his plans to follow in the footsteps of David Garrick fall through after a discouraging meeting with a theater manager, he declares “I will be Virgil and not Roscius!” (1:74). The narrator, praising his subject—really himself—refers to Atall’s decision to become a writer rather than an actor a “noble resolve,” idealizing the pursuit of writing as a route to fame (1:74). The reality of Atall’s literary pursuits is remote from that of his classical predecessor, however; the hero enters the literary marketplace “a magazine poet and hebdomadal [weekly] rhymer,” the scale of his creations is comically small, risible in comparison to Virgil’s epic feats (1: 74-75). The real novelist underlines that Jack is no Virgil with the narrator’s pseudo-modest addendum that “though we will not pretend to say that our hero, who will soon turn out a bard, has ever yet wrote an Æneid, yet he certainly fancied he had some poetic merit, though inferior to the Mantuan Swan [i.e. Virgil], which he failed not to exert monthly, and sometimes weekly, for the amusement and edification of the public” (1: 74). The link between Virgil and Atall is comically tenuous, the recognition of which draws individual readers closer to the novelist’s own conceptions of professionalism—in which the hero’s vanity and scholarly
inadequacies have no place. The novel’s hero cannot become an eighteenth-century Virgil because Atall goes through no period of vigorous study and literary training; instead, the author-character precipitously declares himself as the next literary great. Yet it is not print culture with its publish-or-perish pressures that stands in his way of literary excellence, though Atall later makes this complaint when he finds himself penniless and dependent. At one point when he finds himself in a situation of financial stability, Atall struggles to produce anything and suffers from writer’s block, jotting down the note: “N.B. Genius is arbitrary—All attempts to force it ineffectual—No hot-beds of wit or humour—whence arises that wit is not a staple commodity, except in Pater-Noster-Row, which is the only market for it” (2:163). In this schema, the book trade, structuring the professional author’s time, is the enemy to poetic creation, an idea that is yet comically embodied in eighteenth-century imaginative literature, but which by the nineteenth century is a serious contention.

Moreover, Atall’s pretensions to the beau monde as fashionable writer and “a gentleman at large” undermine the arguments he directly articulates against the literary marketplace (1:78). There are humorous clues to Atall’s deficiencies as a professional author, even as these failings are couched as strengths, the narrator equivocating:

Though Jack’s propensity to letters and his earnest desire of being a genius of reputation was strongly rooted in him, as they generally are in young fellows just turned of one and twenty; yet he was so far from being a Cynic, and had such an inclination to blend the dulci with the utili, that he did not think it necessary for a man of taste to mope himself in his study from morning to night—his present design was to signalize himself by works of genius, works of imagination, works of fancy. Such works as might be easily written upon a bench in St. James Park, as in the Harleian library [one of the British Library’s
main collections], or the most recluse apartment in all *Brazen-nose* [college at Oxford] (1:79).

His aspirations are founded on misguided notions of literary professionalism, as he discounts the role of steady concentrated work, preferring desultory, self-indulgent flights of literary fancy. Jack seems to want to be seen more than he wants to be read, as he could not realistically expect to secure much uninterrupted composition in a place of leisure and socialization like St. James Park. In prioritizing cutting a genteel figure, Atall and his literary endeavours take on an amateur flavour, hence becoming the target of readers’ mocking laughter. The novel’s hero, aiming to be a fashionable writer, proudly avoids some of the clichéd markers of the hack (as well as the Oxbridge pedant), particularly poor dress and social isolation. Like Fielding’s Harry Luckless, he dons a laced coat that distinguishes himself from the Grub Street set even as his writing fails to consistently do so. The narrator comments on how Atall superficially readies himself for his “profession”: “these preparations were not made to scribble in a garret; a man can write there as well in a thread-bare coat, or as it has oftened [sic] happened, with no coat at all, and in a suit of embroidery—and indeed better” (1:80). Readers are led into a critique of the writer-character’s “professional” arrangements by the observation that “this new dress would cramp the body, if not the mind, through fear of spoiling it, and suppress, perhaps, many brilliant flights, by too brilliant an appearance” (1:80). To complete the fiction of gentility, Atall adds Esquire to his name and resides as a “man of fashion at the polite end of the town, with lodgings at two guineas a week, and a servant in livery” (1:82). Though he initially writes “only for his amusement, or to fill up a vacant hour,” with neither the intent or dedication of a serious professional, Atall develops a desire to rise within the public sphere of London culture: “his ambition was to be reckoned a man of taste and letters, keeping company at present
with none but such as were upon this list” (1:152). Atall, more concerned with fashionable appearances than learning, tellingly puts “taste” before “letters;” he is still misguided in his conception of cultural excellence, as he considers the “celebrated and admired,” but empty-headed Lothario as his model. Taste, as it is considered by Shaftesbury in “Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author” (1710), is the refined product of self-reflection and conscious intellectual growth. In *Taste: A Literary History*, Denise Gigante explains this Shaftesburian process as “a technique by which the aspiring author, orator, or expresser could dispose of all culturally accrued rudeness to emerge in his natural purity as a Man of Taste” (49). Atall, however, interprets taste to be exclusively a socially and materially realized goal. Excerpted in the novel is a slice of Lothario’s day-to-day life entitled “Journal of a modern man of taste,” which Atall acquires and includes in his autobiography. Yet the absurdly superficial Lothario is a poor example of even the gentleman author, retreating from social events for weeks when his wig is damaged in order to preserve an external polish that is in no way matched by mental refinement.

*Atall as a Writer of Fashion*

Once he establishes his persona, Atall engages in frivolous literary and romantic pursuits that align him with the foolish Lothario and place him closer to the amateur writer on the spectrum of professionalism represented in the novel. Before he seeks public adulation in earnest, Atall courts an heiress Miss L—, writing her poems and letters that are treated as art objects and shared among her friends; this exchange, akin to “coterie circulation,” prefigures the print circulation of Atall’s later works. As well, Atall’s bid for Miss L— and her fortune prefigures his mercenary pursuit of financial success in the literary marketplace. A perceptive gap forms between the hero and the novel’s readers, who are provided with a sample of his
“epistolary disposition” and with Atall’s opinion of his own writing (1:97). While Atall admires his own letter, “which he read over with pleasure, fancying it to be the standard of elegant composition,” readers are encouraged to recognize his prose as flimsy and judge his writing against higher literary standards (1:97). The narrator criticizes the hero’s love notes, which he observes “might be reckoned among the number of unmeaning epistles, containing words, phrases, lines, and sentences, which might serve upon that occasion as well as any other, or any other as well as that” (1:99). Atall’s reliance on clichés indicates his lack of originality, the imaginative genius that justifies incursions into print culture on the grounds established by Edward Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). The paradigmatic Professional Author—implicitly constructed against Atall in the novel—possesses abilities beyond slavish imitation, which his audience *within* the narrative cannot identify. The coquette Miss L—’s good opinion of the author-hero’s writing is confirmed by two other women, a widow and Miss F—, the latter described as “a great novel-reader, and reckoned a complete judge of polite writing” (1:100). Atall’s coterie is comprised of these “professed great admirers of poetry” (1:100), the word “professed” suggesting that their appreciation of literature is superficial, if not feigned, as well as untutored, voracious novel-consumption being a poor claim, in the narrator’s eyes, to critical authority. The ladies are “highly delighted” by his poem “and the widow *purtested* [sic] he was a *genus* [sic],” their hyperbole and distorted language undermining the credibility of these adjudicators (1:102). The narrator reports that Mr. Atall’s character is “established with the ladies as an *elegant writer*,” the emphasis placed on style rather than substance (1:100). Atall’s insincere lyrics and actions establish him, like Mr. Dabler, the ridiculous amateur scribbler in Frances Burney’s *The Witlings* (1779), as the pet poet of a set of literary triflers. Dabler, ostensibly caressed by Lady Smatter and her circle of “luminaries” for his poetic clichés, and less
overtly for the mutual flattery he facilitates. A similar dynamic is evident in The Adventures of an Author, as Atall and the object of his affection and poetic affectation, Miss L—, “could not help acknowledging that Mr. Atall had a mighty pretty way of expressing himself’’ (1:9-100). The intradiagnostic reader-characters with whom Atall interacts are oblivious to his failings as an author because literary activity and social activity are so overly—and therefore unprofessionally—coupled in this episode. The novel’s readers are aware that the localized admiration of such an audience is no prediction of an author-character’s future success in print. On one hand, writing for the literary marketplace is portrayed in eighteenth-century imaginative literature as scribbling for a wider, and therefore more intellectually-unreliable consumer base than a coterie; on the other hand, however, print generates a larger, and thus arguably more objective audience—an anonymous mass of readers who cannot directly interact with the author, but can engage with his text unbiased by the familiarities of intimate acquaintance. Implicitly compared to their fictional foils, individual eighteenth-century readers of The Adventures of an Author represent print’s potentiality, which is predicated not only on authorial excellence but readers’ critical appreciation (1:100).

Atall’s courtship of Miss L—produces ephemeral work, not only semi-private manuscript notes and verses, but an unpublished manual as well. Atall turns his extraliterary experiences, namely his contested pursuit of the coquette, into literary matter intended for a larger audience, his encounters with a rival suitor in particular inspiring him to pen a work called “The Complete Gentleman: Or rules for behaving upon every critical occasion that can occur, wherein honour and punctilio are concerned” (1: 134). The narrator extols his treatise as being “of infinite service to young gentlemen upon their first setting out in life” (1:133). Yet this work is not, as readers of The Adventures of an Author recognize, a conduct book, but a misconduct book, directing its
prospective readers towards uncivil and unprincipled behaviour. Part II of The Complete Gentleman, for example, deals with how to treat “a rival,” in a situation “with a mistress upon honourable terms” and “with a mistress in keeping” (1:135). Furthermore, there are sections on “debauching” and “ravishing,” patent departures from any accepted code of ethics (1:136). Atall plays at being the Literary Professional in proposing to advance mankind through his supposedly improving production and shows this “great and noble work” to a bookseller he has befriended. In this scene, Atall, interested in getting “The Complete Gentleman” published, casually converses with his bookseller acquaintance about the potential of this work as a viable literary commodity. Though the bookseller declines financing this particular piece (because “the subject was too confined” and would therefore attract only a limited readership), their interaction is remarkably amicable, unstrained by the tensions present in similar scenes of negotiation elsewhere in the novel and other metaliterary works from the eighteenth century (1:136). Firstly, the bookseller softens his rejection with a qualification, informing Atall that if he “could get a subscription among the people of fashion at the west end of the town, he had no objection to print it” (1:136). Though he demurs about investing his own money in this publication, he suggests a compromise that will nonetheless preserve his relationship with Atall. The civility of their negotiations gives the impression of professionalism as it involves a balance of power, power inequalities—often the product of financial and personal vulnerabilities—being a distinct impediment to professional relations. Another key explanation for their concord is their shared values, their priorities and concerns intersecting, but which in fact, in excluding concern for fictional readers, comically calls their professionalism, which they clearly embody only superficially, into question. As the dialogue progresses, the specifics of their jointly-held principles are revealed, casting a pall over the exchange as it could indicate culturally-productive
unity. The author of *The Adventures of an Author* encourages readers to consider the foundations of this suspicious harmony—the desirable result of undesirable causes. Ideally, their civil treatment of each other should reflect a deeper investment in literary culture as it contributes to civil society. Yet “The Complete Gentleman” advocates fashionable barbarities like “Spitting in the face,” “Taking by the nose,” and “Kicking,” and a range of other rude and violent gestures. (1:134). Problematically, the bookseller-character makes no morally-grounded objections to the work, to which he only applies one criterion: will it sell? On the understanding that books promoting practical middle-class misbehaviour sell better than those on genteel corruption, the bookseller owns that he would rather have “a good treatise on compound interest….or the art of bankruptcy made easy” (1: 136). The merchant’s favoured topics are as dubious as Atall's subject matter, as compound interest was perceived in this period as the worst sort of usury. Yet like Atall’s flimsy love poems, “The Complete Gentleman” goes unpublished, which, despite the particulars of the bookseller-character’s rejection, at the very least cannot be used to further arguments against print. If anything, this unrealized publication is suggestive of the “invisible hand” of anonymous, unregulated readers operating in the literary marketplace. Readers of *The Adventures of an Author* should come to the same conclusion as the bookseller-character: that Atall’s manual on gentlemanly behavior should not evolve beyond its manuscript form, albeit with different justifications.

A converse reaction can be posited: even as the novel’s readers are made privy to putative backstairs exchanges, they are pulled away from the fictional author and bookseller as these characters are drawn together. The intimacy of the author/bookseller exchange is underlined by the latter’s conspiratorial whisper, which demonstrates the exclusivity of their collusion. In hushed tones, the bookseller-character opines that “this is not a fighting, but a — age” (1:136).
Though their subsequent comments confirm that the missing word is “gaming,” the dash (used elsewhere in eighteenth-century literature to conceal obscenities) immediately suggests “fucking,” thereby creating an alliteration and potentially a deeper moral dilemma for the bookseller-character (i.e. does he take advantage of this widespread lasciviousness or attempt to curb it?). Nonetheless, “gaming” is the elided word, the dash equating the loss of fiscal control to sexual intemperance and implicitly pointing to the ways the book trade participates in shaping, and subsequently labeling, the age. The author-narrator, responding to this assessment of the times, observes that “I was a good deal of his opinion,” a statement that indicates possible slippage between the writer-characters and bookseller-characters, a dynamic explored in Chapter Three (1:136). Their agreement exposes an alignment of ideas that unsettles the popular view of authorial identity revealed through conflict and oppression. When the conversation turns to the financial opportunities offered by the age’s preoccupation with gaming, the bookseller-character encouragingly tells Atall “there you have hit it, had it been all upon that subject, I’d have given you a hundred guineas for the copy, before I saw a word of the work” (1:136-137). The bookseller-character, supportive when it is profitable, is unconcerned about the quality of Atall’s writing, indicating that he would recompense the author handsomely without actually reading the manuscript if it addressed such a lucrative topic; the suggestion is that a book on play has universal appeal, gambling being a vice found among all classes of readers and which can be without legal consequences, exploited and encouraged, rather than corrected. Atall declines putting this project into effect, not because of any moral qualms about encouraging this social ill, but because of concerns for his own safety; comically fearful, he is worried that he may be persecuted for revealing the secrets of the gaming table. Like the bookseller-character, the author-character is motivated by a desire to protect his own interests, rejecting the proposal as
comfortably as the literary merchant declines funding “The Complete Gentleman.” Yet no falling out occurs between these characters, as they reach decisions with an even-handedness and friendly decorum that suggests at least a superficial level of professionalism. Their interactions give the appearance of mutual respect, which, if accompanied by a shared ethical system, would allow them to work together in the service of literary and moral excellence. While true Literary Professionalism is built on ideological foundations, the professionalism Atall and his bookseller friend enjoy runs no deeper than sociability. The connection between these characters is ultimately benignly unproductive, though there is a latent danger posed by their cooperative dynamic, namely that their power-sharing could result in publications harmful to the reading public. Nonetheless, the scene between Atall and the bookseller-character results in a stalemate with a positive outcome: the fictional audience of readers is spared the corruptive influence of the manuals on gambling and on supposedly gentlemanly behaviour. Happily, the dubious proposed texts are not validated by print, an ironically ideal product of unideal motivations. That correct literary decisions come about accidentally rather than purposefully puts the novel’s readers into a position of superiority over the interlocutors who do not recognize “The Complete Gentleman” or the gaming handbook as morally unfit for the public’s consumption.

*The Hack’s Disappointment: Mr. Hyper and Mr. Folio*

From this cordial conversation between Jack Atall and his bookseller acquaintance, I turn to a much tenser exchange between a different bookseller-character, Mr. Folio, and Atall’s friend Mr. Hyper, described as “a certain great writer, who had the faculty of producing fresh pamphlets as diurnally as bakers do hot rolls” (1: 62). The materiality of this analogy underlines Hyper as a hack writer, a status confirmed by the narrator’s footnote clarifying that “great” is not
synonymous with “good” and that “the quantity, and not the quality of his works, is here alluded to” (1: 62). Before entering into the specifics of Hyper’s situation with regards to the book trade, the narrator characterizes his subject as living in a time “when every man was an author by profession” (1:62); this sentiment echoes Rambler No. 115, Samuel Johnson’s discussion of his own period as an “Age of Authors,” a time when too many literary aspirants without training or talent pretended to Professionalism. Critical of the literary marketplace’s glut of scribblers, Johnson satirically wonders at the causes of “this epidemical [sic] conspiracy for the destruction of papers” (28). He argues for the necessity of professional qualifications for commercial writing, aiming to reverse the cultural decline incidental to an overfull, amorphous print market. For, without the qualification he lists, a writer will “contribute…to the deprivation of taste and the corruption of language” (29), Underlying The Adventures of an Author is a similar concern for establishing the paradigmatic Literary Professional, which the novelist does less directly, but more humorously than Johnson by way of the unprofessionalism of hacks and merchants of print in their different power transactions. Readers are put into a position whereby their recognition of the subtleties of the novelist’s critique and their recognition of Literary Professionalism, positions them as the appropriate gatekeepers of print.

The narrator gives his audience the impression that he is telling Hyper’s story to illustrate the harsh realities of authorship and the failings of the book trade, presenting the literary marketplace as a single power relationship: bookseller as oppressor and writer as the oppressed. The chapter heading—“The hard fate of authors, exemplified in the case of Mr. Hyper, poet, politician, and critic”—announces the polemical purpose of the fictional storyteller’s account of this scene (1:62). Yet humour complicates the stated intention of this episode, and readers are directed to cast a more critical gaze on Hyper, with telling details undermining his position as a
victimized genius. As in similar episodes in eighteenth-century imaginative literature, the writer-character’s disappointment is the crux of the scene, the narrator recounting the causes and consequences of this event. Mr. Hyper, fully expecting the publication of his work of political satire, the “production that was to make his fortune,” indulges in a celebratory drink (1:62). The narrator informs the novel’s readers of the superiority of this piece—“too good to sell to the trade, at their starving price”—over Hyper’s usual efforts (1:62-63). Hyper arranges to have it printed, published, and advertised, combing Paternoster Row and finding “a sensible bookseller, who approved of his title, and the side of the question he had espoused” (1:63); the adjective “sensible” is misleading, however, considering the fictional publisher’s lazy business practices: his decision about Hyper’s work is based on a superficial evaluation—he “saw nothing but the title-page” (1:65). Despite Hyper’s initiative and perseverance with members of the book trade, the author-character’s professionalism is called into question when the narrator reports how “our bard” reacts to the promise of literary success with overindulgence: he stays up all night to “drink libations to the rising sun” (1:64). “Libations” and “bard” are part of the mock heroic diction used to establish Hyper as a hack writer, a “manufacturer of ideas” as he is labeled by the narrator (1:70); he is also described as paying “his fervent devotions to Bacchus, who had been the original inspirer of his genius,” alcohol, rather than learning or the imagination, being revealed as Hyper’s muse (1:64). After his premature cheer, he discovers in the morning (which he greets with a headache) that the bookseller with whom he dealt has unexpectedly not backed his pamphlet. Hyper’s reaction to this news—he takes the rejection personally—confirms his lack of professionalism: “Away he flew in rage and almost despair, to the Learning-merchant, and without enquiring the cause of his disappointment, he represented in the liveliest and most dreadful colours, the irreparable damage he had thereby sustained” (1:64-65). The author-
character’s melodramatic response is hasty and self-involved, as he does not pause to ask why his pamphlet has been rejected, and lets himself be carried away by his emotions; nonetheless, readers are also positioned to condemn the bookseller-character, Folio, who explains his betrayal, but cannot exonerate himself to his audience within the novel or outside of it. In the initial encounter between author-character and bookseller-character, Folio misapprehends the ironic title of Hyper’s work and later realizes his mistake, considering this the timely detection of subterfuge. Folio’s view of his predicament is biased, as he takes no responsibility for Hyper’s disappointment, placing the blame entirely on the hack without questioning his own interpretive powers. Both Hyper and Folio are bad readers of character, each considering the other the dishonest party. The hack accuses the bookseller of misleading him, of unprofessionally reneging on their agreement, reminding Folio: “did you not approve of it yesterday, and even say you should be glad to have a share in it?” (1:65) The bookseller-character attempts to justify his reversal by construing Hyper’s irony as trickery and accusing the author of creating “a palpable fraud” (1:66). Folio, whose name aligns him with the material side of the book trade, is unreceptive to satire, as he tells Hyper: “had you told me it had been ironical, I wouldn't have had nothing to do with it” (1:66). The internal comedy in this scene, Hyper’s “ironical” title page, separates the novel’s readers, open to satirical content in actively negotiating *The Adventures of an Author*, from the humourless bookseller-character, deemed a “blockhead” by his antagonist for his inattentive reading. Stereotypically, the overly pragmatic bookseller-character comprehends the world—and the written word—more literally than the author-character, who in this case is both a wit and a drunkard hack.

This misunderstanding generates conflict between Hyper and Folio, who exchange oaths, insults, and threats, the fictional publisher responding to the hack’s grievances with “some
warmth,” feeling entitled to his monopoly of power (1:66). Instead of calmly and rationally discussing the problem, they attack each other, comically demonstrating the literary unprofessionalism that emerges from their particular power dynamic. Folio, unilaterally deciding at the last minute not to back Hyper’s pamphlet, plays the tyrant in his monopolization of outcome power. In the ensuing argument between these characters, the author-character attempts to assert himself, while the bookseller-character endeavours to maintain his stronger position. Criticism of the eighteenth-century literary marketplace’s power relations is a key aspect of this and other represented conversations between literary professionals in the period’s imaginative literature. In this episode of The Adventures of an Author, a bookseller-character’s abuse of power is revealed to be founded on pride and self-interest. Folio dismisses Hyper’s work because “it is on the wrong side of the question,” revealing his conflict of interest: “I am to publish a pamphlet to-morrow, that is my own, and it would have entirely [sic] knocked it on the head” (1:66). As a gatekeeper to print, Folio is therefore found wanting on several scores. He prevents the publication of a potentially influential work not because it is in some way deficient, but because it is competition. With his own personal benefit in mind, Folio limits the prospective audience’s exposure to multiple political perspectives, suppressing Hyper’s opposing viewpoint because it challenges his own, perhaps rhetorically inferior, pamphlet. Lacking the ethical consideration and loyalty of the paradigmatic Literary Professional—constructed against both participants in this dispute—Folio sacrifices the inconvenient pamphlet and compromises Hyper’s livelihood, the writer-character exclaiming: “So I am to be ruined...because your own pamphlet must not be confuted” (1: 66). Hyper demands to be recompensed and swears to the publisher that “if there is any law to be had for love or money, I’ll make you pay ample satisfaction,” threatening legal action for this breach of trust (1: 66).
The bookseller-character responds to Hyper’s menace with his own warning, declaring that he shall first detect Hyper “for an impostor,” with the intent of tarnishing the hack’s name and ruining his credit with other members of the book trade (1: 66). With this overblown threat, the author-character’s frustration and anger erupt into violence. He throws a quarto bible at Folio’s head, the author-character apparently oblivious to the irony of his weapon of choice (in the same way that Folio is oblivious to the irony of the title that has sparked the fray). The use of the bible as simply a handily weighty object underlines the materiality and amorality of the author-character’s own viewpoint, which is closer to that of his opponent than their tension would at once suggest. There is a correspondence between Folio and Hyper’s behaviour, for both, when given the opportunity, empower themselves through the mistreatment of their rival. Quarto bible in hand, Hyper literally takes control of a book in this scene, and in doing so, injures Folio, as the tome knocks the bookseller-character to the ground where he lies bleeding of a “small contusion” and “cried out murder” (1:67). The hack is then mauled by the bookseller-character’s wife who “flew at Mr. Hyper, scratched his face, tore at his shirt, pulled his wig off and flung it into the fire” (1:67). The involvement of Folio’s “connubial auxiliary” adds to the comedy of the scene, the writer-character rendered ridiculous as the target of a woman’s wrath and as he is physically humiliated, especially as he is divested of his wig. The domestic setting of this squabble and the close contact between Hyper and Folio’s wife highlights the familiarity of the relationship between hacks and booksellers in the literary marketplace, a fraught intimacy I have examined in earlier chapters. Folio retaliates and launches his own physical/literary attack: he seizes the author’s “five hundred ready-stitched pamphlets (Hyper’s prospective fortune) and without farther ceremony gave them a cant into the middle of the kennel, when the string breaking, the wind dispersing them like Sibyl’s leaves” (1: 68). The
narrator’s bracketed commentary encourages readers’ criticism of the bookseller-character’s destructive action, which dashes the author-character’s financial hopes. Folio’s amusement confirms his insensitivity to writers’ hardship, as he gloats: “You wanted them published today, said Folio, with a grin, and now I think they are made public enough, without the expense of advertising” (1:68). Reversing a common literary stereotype, the bookseller-character exercises his wit while the author-character is uncomprehending, distracted by the disaster that has befallen his pamphlets; the narrator relates: “this was the only *bon mot* Folio ever said in his life; yet it was lost upon Hyper, who was too busy in gathering up, as fast as he could, his literary estate, to attend to any other good things” (1: 68). Readers who recognize this witticism as mean-spirited do not join Folio in laughing at the beleaguered hack; their detachment from his mirth is important, for, as Paul Lewis explains in *Comic Effects*: “when a character says something he or she regards as amusing and we fail to share in the humour, our lack of identification is both highlighted and intensified” (35). There is also comedy in the parodic literalization of the publishing process (the pamphlets are technically released into the public domain), the novelist spoofing the eighteenth-century literary marketplace as an unregulated, corrupt environ, the texts at hand being subject to forces both random and malicious. Yet Hyper does not by default claim our sympathies because we cannot view him with appropriate seriousness as a victim. The novelist presents readers with a comical image of the hack frantically collecting his scattered pamphlets, now besmirched by the filth of London’s open sewers. The novelist carefully prevents readers from entering too deeply into either character’s plight because, as Richard Bevis opines, “comedy, in a word, cannot survive too large an admixture of fellow-feeling” (231).

After this recorded dialogue, the narrator summarizes how this private antagonism, which culminated in Hyper’s attack on the bookseller-character’s person, expands into a more public
legal battle, as “a prosecution now ensued on each side—judges warrants and writs flew about as fast as Hyper’s pamphlets” (1:69). The effects of this feverish legal activity are as lasting as the hack’s literary ephemera, though at its nadir, Hyper’s situation seems dire. The author-character is jailed, which “proved nearly the ruin of the genius,” his confinement representing the loss of outcome power to the fictional publisher who almost brings about the hack’s death (1:69). Despite the severity of the author-character’s persecution—he would have “perished” in the prison’s insalubrious environment— the author-character forgives and forgets. The combatants “by the intervention of a printer, were reconciled, and are at this hour upon very good terms” (1:69). The narrator relates that the imprisoned hack “would certainly have perished, if B—g had not been shot in time, when being of a very spiritual nature, he obtained his liberty, in quality of the adm—l’s GHOST” (1:69). The hack, proving himself useful to the book trade, is saved by the opportunity of writing about the sensational news of Admiral John Byng’s death by firing squad on 14 March 1757, his execution following a court-marshal for losing the Battle of Minorca early in the Seven Years War. With his exploitation of this lucrative tragedy, Hyper is again unseated from the position of victim that the narrator-character, invested in authorial polemics, would have him occupy. A newfound amicability is generated between the writer-character and bookseller-character, reforged and cemented by money as Folio now “pays Hyper a guinea a week” (1:69). Thusly salved, the altercation between Hyper and Folio is additionally comic in retrospect, the potential seriousness of the encounter undercut by the short-lived nature of Hyper’s fury and Folio’s indignation. Their unprofessionalism, represented in the verbal, physical, and legal excesses of this encounter, is succeeded by a parodic Professionalism, the balance of power established at the end of this chapter as a mimicry of Literary Professionalism.
The novel’s readers stand outside of the final collaboration of the fictional author, bookseller, and printer, aware that their peace is as superficially-founded as their war.

_The “Fall” of Jack Atall_

As the conflict between Hyper and Folio underscores, economic fault lines, latent threats to stability, lie beneath the balance of power between literary professionals. Jack Atall’s cordial relationship with members of the book trade, such as the bookseller-character with whom he discusses “The Complete Gentleman,” proves impermanent, shaken by the author-character’s loss of financial independence. Atall’s inheritance dries up, consumed by an irresponsibly lavish lifestyle that he cannot sustain for long. Atall’s first “expedient to recruit his finances,” is not professional writing, however, but gaming, which suggests the shaky moral foundations upon which his literary career is built. When luck at the table fails him, Atall, “willing to anticipate the tyrannic [sic] hand of misery by suicide” almost ends his own life with a pistol (1:164). Atall, impractical and histrionic, considers this extreme solution before he thinks to pawn his possessions, which his mistress Fanny does after convincing him to live. Another trip to the gaming table is followed by the ineffectual begging letters he sends to his former friends, another pathetic last resort before he takes up commercial writing in earnest. Atall’s straitened circumstances lead to his dependency on writing as a source of income rather than as tool for social climbing. The narrator reports that “Mr. Atall was compelled to lay aside the man of fashion, the writer of taste, fancy, and imagination, and commence the bookseller’s galley-slave” (1:169). The novelist critiques the centrality of money in (so-called) professional interactions, as members of the book trade treat him with diminished consideration, giving him less agency in determining the content of his productions. In his employer’s service, Atall is forced to write on
a multitude of topics in various forms and genres, the adaptable writer-character being “now poet, politician, biographer, essayist, and, by necessity, philosopher, all within the limits of a sixpenny monthly production” (1:169). His position vis-à-vis the book trade changes, the author-character finding it more difficult to secure outcome power, is often subject to the unilateral decisions of men of authority within the literary marketplace. The narrator likens his subject to an overworked animal, “but a few months before [Atall] might have had his own price for any work he would have wrote, was now compelled to labour like a mill-horse for the scanty stipend of a guinea and a half a month” (1: 170). The idea of the hack’s dehumanization, linked to the image of a lowly beast, has a comic edge. Even when the writer-character is exploited in The Adventures of an Author, he is typified as a mock-victim, which precedes the nineteenth-century artiste maudite. The narrator constructs the fiction of Atall’s artistic fall, generalizing about the effects of financial dependence on cultural output. “Necessity,” observes the narrator, building on a proverb, “is the mother of invention, to which might, with equal truth be added, it is the scourge of genius and the bane of merit” (1:170). The narrator’s critical view of the literary marketplace is undermined by evidence that Atall—not commercialism and culturally-depraved readers and booksellers—is oftentimes his own “scourge” and “bane.” The narrator, however, exaggerates the distorting effects of marketplace economics. After all, Atall’s ill-conceived manual “The Complete Gentleman” as well as his insubstantial missives and verses come out of an earlier time as a “writer of taste” when he had the money and leisure to produce superior works.

Atall defensively embraces the identity of the oppressed author (a type of character explored in Chapter Two), the author-as-victim and bookseller-as-victimizer dynamic apparently replacing a balance of power. Yet as I have argued in earlier chapters, the eighteenth-century
oppressed author is a comic type, a parodic precursor to later literary manifestations of the
Romantic oppressed genius. Atall’s shabby material circumstances are comically pathetic rather
than truly pitiable because they serve as a foil to his recent lifestyle. He goes from wearing a
laced waistcoat to only an unwashed shirt, his appearance deteriorating such that one extreme is
replaced by another. Atall’s kept woman, Miss Fanny G—, hitherto his companion in pleasure,
joins him in becoming a “labourer in the vineyard of learning and industry” (1: 169). In a
humorous transformation from mistress to print helper, she “submitted to lend a helping hand in
this great periodical work” (1:169-170). The use of “great,” as in Henry Fielding’s The Life and
Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great (1743) and other eighteenth-century satires, is sarcastic,
employed as a term of mockery to suggest the periodical’s artistic insignificance. The
periodical’s status as a piece of literary ephemera is emphasized by the link made between
Atall’s writing and the ornamental butterflies Fanny colours for the bookseller, the butterfly a
symbol of frivolity and impermanence. The bookseller-character “insists upon [the butterflies]
being thrown into the bargain,” straining the relationship between Fanny and Atall (1:171).
Fanny, directly likened by the narrator to a butterfly, leaves the author-character to become a
richer man’s kept woman, her career paralleling the continuing prostitution of Atall’s pen.
Though the author-character laments the young woman’s departure, readers are aware of the
humorous edge to this event, Atall being abandoned by his mistress when he is rendered
financially impotent, unable to support their affluent, pleasure-loving lifestyle.
Atall’s emasculating dependence on his publisher for survival, like his need to put Fanny to
work, is comically antithetical to his pose as a fashionable gentleman-writer. The bookseller-
character opportunistically abuses Atall’s financial need and gift for hack writing; and, as the
fictional publisher “found him a useful man [who] could turn his hand to any thing, he took care
that Jack did not absolutely starve, and very prudently enabled him to keep life and soul together, for the emolument of letters”(1:172). Atall is not, as the narrator sarcastically implies, being spared for the benefit or improvement of the literary world, but for the bookseller-character’s convenience. The narrator bemoans his subject’s fall, rhetorically addressing the author-character:

Alas! poor Atall, how art thou fallen! Could it have been thought three months since, that you would have been compelled to use as much eloquence as could have filled a shilling pamphlet, which you might have sold for ten pieces, to persuade your grinding bookseller to advance you half a crown for the ensuing month (1:171).

Interested in promoting the usefully polemical stereotype of the victimized author and the victimizing bookseller, the narrator stresses Atall’s powerlessness, equating his lack of resource power with an absence of culpability; by this token, the book trade is to blame for bad literature, a conclusion too simplistic for The Adventures of an Author to accommodate. The narrator characterizes Atall’s position of dependency as beneficial to the fictional publisher and injurious to the reading public, the latter denied the “eloquence” now devoted to wheedling the former for sustenance.

Jack Atall’s “LITERARY BILL OF MORTALITY AND CASUALTIES FOR THIS MONTH”

Though the narrator is prone to exaggeration, an important scene in The Adventure of an Author revolves around the suppression of the author-character’s eloquence. At this point in the narrative the writer-hero is hired by a bookseller who has begun “a new periodical paper,” specifically “engaged as an occasional writer in that part which was to be devoted to humour and fancy” (1:171). The author-character’s literary and critical talents surface in a manuscript Atall
presents to his employer (1:172). The writer-character’s hardships have sobered his “humour and fancy”, as he “drew up, from very feeling motives”, the darkly satiric “LITERARY BILL OF MORTALITY AND CASUALTIES FOR THIS MONTH” (1:172). These “feeling motives” can be contrasted with the self-indulgent and mercenary impulses driving his earlier writing projects. The protean hero of *The Adventures of an Author* progresses beyond the identity of the fashionable amateurish writer with a piece that represents his sympathetic connection with other writers-for-hire, a tie that brings Atall closer to Literary Professionalism as an ideal of collegiality and understanding between individuals working within a community. He creates a fictional catalogue of recently deceased and otherwise incapacitated authors, providing their causes of death, which range from the serious to the laughable. Some “Starved to death,” others simply “Miscarried,” or “Died of the bookseller;” one “Broke his neck out of a garret window” and several “Died for want of paper and employment” and left this world “Raving mad” (1:174-5). Among these enumerated casualties are writers who expire in ridiculous ways that indicate their inadequacy as Literary Professionals rather than just their victimization by unfeeling tyrants in a ruthless market; several, for example, “Died of Thinking,” which suggests that Atall, like Johnson, recognizes the need for professional qualifications and standards (1:174). This list concludes with a count of the living authors—1413 to be precise—“Still groaning under the weight of the press,” Atall almost certainly classing himself among these exploited scribblers (1:174-5). The bookseller-character cannot appreciate Atall’s comic representation of the book trade and complains “that as he did not understand it, or see any kind of wit in it, he would not insert it” (1:175). The bookseller’s inability to interpret this work could stem from his limited perceptions of the literary marketplace, his blindness to the plight of its struggling writers as well as his deafness to irony, which we also saw in Folio, the bookseller-character who struggled with
Mr. Hyper’s ironic title earlier in the novel. Nonetheless, he shows a willingness to meet the author-character halfway, as the bookseller-character, asks Jack “to explain it.” Rejecting the possibility of negotiation and compromise, Atall replies with the pronouncement that this work is “inexplicable,” its wit perhaps so self-evident to the author-character that he despairs of ameliorating the other man’s ignorance. Yet the opportunity this scene presents to “school” the bookseller-character, a dynamic I discussed in Chapter Three, is lost. Still, the same readers who blame Atall for not attempting to forge a connection with the bookseller-character are implicitly flattered into knowing laughter at the literary merchant’s failure to interpret the piece. Readers are also given a sense that this impasse in communication can be broken—imaginatively—by individual readers who tacitly participate in this exchange and who would make better gatekeepers to print than the bookseller-characters they evaluate. Through this episode, the novel’s author forges bonds of understanding with individual readers, who, unlike the bookseller-character, can understand this satiric piece, and unlike the author-character, are not so close to its subject matter that it is “inexplicable.”

The narrator notes that “Mr. Atall, had not, however, the satisfaction of seeing this production in print,” the bookseller-character seemingly achieving outcome power in this encounter by refusing to publish the manuscript (1:175). Within the narrative, the author-character’s work, denied a print existence, is subject to the power of the fictional publisher. Nevertheless, as this piece is inserted into the printed novel, the “LITERARY BILL OF MORTALITY AND CASUALTIES FOR THIS MONTH” does in fact have the authorization of print outside the storyworld of *The Adventures of an Author*. Readers acknowledge the bookseller-character’s decision not to publish Atall’s piece as incorrect, seeing that the catalogue in print, inserted in a larger published work which they, according to the narrator, sanction. The
Literary Bill of Mortality then serves as an internal comedy that establishes the novel’s readers as arbiters of print. The narrator ends this chapter with the proposal that “if the reader should be of the same opinion [as the bookseller], he may, if he please, erase it from this volume” (1:175). This injunction incites readers to view themselves as print’s best gatekeepers, as Professional Readers with the capacity to rightly judge literary merit and even, like the bookseller-character who rejects Atall’s piece, vet or “erase” content. Hence, it is through a Professional Readership that the possibilities of print can be realized, authorization placed in the hands of the novel’s readers rather than the novelist’s bookseller; the historical publisher, despite the visibility of bookseller-characters in the narrative, is more an invisible force than the “invisible hand” of the novels readers.

Even as the exchanges between author-characters and bookseller-characters point to the ways in which ideal print practices are not achieved, they also contain kernels of Literary Professionalism. Surprisingly, the misunderstanding involving the Literary Bill of Mortality does not preclude the bookseller-character from being supportive, as he tells Atall “that a fine opportunity now offered itself of rising to the top of his profession, and that he might have it in his power to guide the taste and genius of the town” (1:176). Considering Atall a potentially influential cultural force, the bookseller-character verbalizes the possibility of authorial power, which complicates stereotypes of the oppressive publisher. The bookseller-character’s collegiality in encouraging Atall is in keeping with Literary Professionalism as it was being defined in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Though this bookseller-character does not directly aid the writer-hero, he puts Atall in contact with another member of the print trade, the novelist gesturing to a larger professional network in this literary literary marketplace with the potential to provide support. Knowing that a position is available at the “— Review”, the
fictional publisher helpfully introduces Atall to Mr.—, a bookseller and proprietor of this periodical (1:177).

*Mr— and the “— Review”*

While Atall and the first bookseller-character disagree about the meaning of his satirical piece, the author-hero and Mr— experience miscommunication in their conversation and on a more fundamental level. The misreading of the Literary Bill of Mortality is followed by Mr—’s misapprehension of authors themselves as individuals and as a professional group. As the novel’s hero speaks with M —, the subject of Atall’s employment serves as a springboard into more general territory: the role of writers in the commercial production of literature. The businessman devalues the intellectual and creative work of writing and dehumanizes authors, presenting a dystopian vision of print culture devoid of Literary Professionalism. Mr— considers writers as mere tools, replaceable instruments, the bookseller disclosing to Atall that he “had now the plan of a machine, which by the working of a single horse, would perform all the necessary operations for fabricating a dozen indexes at once” (1:177). This scheme comically highlights the literalness of the bookseller’s conception of the manufacture of literature and his single-minded focus on the efficient mechanical production and reproduction of print matter. Mr— hopes to eventually replace his hired authors with this machine, for “he had some thoughts of improving upon that plan, to supply all the departments of his Review” (1:177). Under the bookseller-character’s proposed regime, writers are powerless because of their sameness as they lack the “genius” that would prevent their replacement. The author-character initially misinterprets Mr—’s plan as a witty metaphorical statement, an ironic commentary on the state of the literary marketplace: “Atall at first imagined he was in raillery, and that he meant nothing more than to signify that the
present race of authors were little more than mere *automates* (1:178). But as the dialogue ensues, the author realizes his mistake, as “he had presently some reason to think [Mr—] serious,” discoursing in earnest about a material change to business operations (1:178). Yet the novels readers can presumably appreciate Atall’s misreading of irony into Mr. M—’s scheme, recognizing the satiric possibilities of the image of an ordinary horse—pointedly no Parnassian Pegasus—doing the work of a team of writers. The novelist implicitly makes readers possessing the same comic sensibility aware of their superiority over the bookseller-character who is oblivious to the absurdity of his proposal. An argument for print lies in readers’ recognition of the humour within these scenes of interaction. As I have underlined periodically in this dissertation, internal comedy—comic moments (practical jokes and witty dialogue) and comic texts created *within* the narrative—affects not only the power dynamic operating within these scenes, but the relationship between readers and characters, as well as readers and the historical author. Readers reacting with critical laughter to the implicit humour of the bookseller-character’s skewed methodology are closer to conceiving of the appropriate counterpart, a true art of reviewing. The bookseller-character admits that careful reading is not a part of his time-saving system of evaluation, asserting: “Now with respect to criticizing according to their real merits and ascertaining their specific value, it would be endless toil” (1:178-9). Instead, Mr— and his reviewers “take them in the lump,” dismissing “all pamphlets written on *one side of the question* [as] trash and catch-pennies; and all those written on the other [as] *fulsome panegyrics, destitute of truth and argument*” (1:179). He adds that they “let their publishers [sic] name serve as fuel to our wit and humour” (1:179). Their “wit and humour” is unrefined and unoriginal, as the bookseller-character directs his reviewers to rely on a document he has created that the narrator terms “The Punster’s Vocabulary.” Mr— explains:
An alphabetical string of puns upon all the booksellers and publishers within the bills of mortality; and this I consider as a stock in trade, which I allow no writer in this department to ingross [sic], but to use discretionally, when the fertility of his imagination is exhausted (1: 179-180).

Essentially, the ostensibly funny parts of their reviews are mechanically generated from this list. There is a discrepancy between how Mr— and the narrator describe “The Punster’s Vocabulary,” the latter calling it “a most uncommon collection of distorted names and dislocated words; some of which notwithstanding the unlimited [sic] torture they had undergone, would hardly convey a double meaning, or indeed any meaning at all” (1:180). Internal comedy, in these punning reviews, distinguishes Mr— from the author-character who, like Samuel Johnson scorns the pun as false wit.

The fictional bookseller is unwilling to invest sufficient time and money in the kind of operation that keeps the interests of the readers in mind. As works under review in the journal are subject to no rigorous diagnostic, the fictional readers of the “— Review” are misinformed, positioned outside the working of this literary marketplace. The novel’s readers, however, are privy to the operations of the represented book trade and, through comedy, empowered as active, critical participants in the world of print. Jack Atall is taken aback at Mr —’s corner-cutting, as “this information made Jack stare: but he had no time to remonstrate,” his silence in this scene implicating him in the bookseller-character’s practices (1: 179).

The exchange between Atall and Mr— is interrupted by the entrance of one of the bookseller-character’s current employees, the narrator announcing that he will present “a short dialogue, which at this time took place between Mr— and another author,” a microdrama that contrasts with the preceding conversation (1:181). While the encounter between Mr— and Atall
is placid enough, the author-character suppressing his reservations, the exchange between Mr—and the second writer is a tense affair, an overt power struggle that is comical because of the ways in which the actors in this dispute undermine themselves and each other. Their quarrel centres on whether this author-character can include a long quotation in the article he has written for the “— Review”. This writer-character, the supplicant in this scene, argues to keep the borrowed lines, asking the bookseller to “consider the importance of the subject, and the noise it makes in the world—”, a point revealed as sheer manipulation when the reviewer admits his true motivations: poor recompense (1:181). Their connection is far from a trusting, professional relationship as the bookseller-character accuses the reviewer of “quot[ing] away six full pages, for [his] own private advantage” (1:181). The author-character, after unsuccessfully contending that “it was impossible to give an idea of this work in a smaller space” takes a more honest approach and declares to his opponent that “it would not be worth an author’s while to write for you, if it was not now and then for a pretty handsome quotation” (1:182). The underpaid author-character protests that his employer demands more original prose than can be expected given the incentives, asserting power through his understanding of the economics of the print market. His prudence in avoiding the expense of more (creative) energy than strictly required aligns him with the bookseller-character, who expressed similar sentiments in the prior conversation with Atall. This congruence of values is overshadowed by the author-character’s resistance, which enrages Mr —. The bookseller-character dismisses the reviewer’s power play as ingratitude, exclaiming: “Zounds! do you mean to bully me.—Get back to your garret and small-beer—and pull off my breaches, if they are not lousy.—Was there ever such insolence in a puppy of an author? a fellow that was starving on a dunghill, before I took him into my pay” (1:182). The reviewer is punished for his rebellious candour and is subject to the bookseller’s abuse. The nature of his insults
suggestion, however, a close, long-standing relationship between these characters, as the bookseller-character indicates his familiarity with the reviewer’s background, Mr— reminding his protégé of his lowly origins (exaggerated as “starving on a dunghill”). He belittles the author-character by verbally reducing him to his material circumstances, his current living conditions which involve a “garret and small beer.” Intimacy is also suggested by Mr—’s demand for the return of his breeches, which the reviewer is wearing; the author-character’s financial dependency is literalized by the matter of the breeches. Exercising petty authority, the bookseller-character reasserts his position of power, his decision-making challenged by the reviewer, with this demand. The writer-character, lacking the resource power to break from the bookseller who has clothed him, drops his complaint, as the narrator reports: “The author did not think proper to remonstrate any farther, when the argument became so critical as to call the possession of his breeches in question” (1:182). Their exchange ends on the humorous note of the breeches, which detracts from the writer-character’s apparent defeat. As an interlude enclosed in the conversation involving Atall, this encounter highlights what often passes for Literary Professionalism in the represented book trade—familiarity rather than respect and an admixture of conflict and acquiescence rather than honest collaboration. As he is put in his place by the bookseller, the unnamed writer is an example to Atall of what he can expect as a contributor to Mr—’s periodical.

When Mr— returns his attention to Atall, he shows him the collection of puns discussed before the other author’s entrance. Friendly to the point of conspiratorial, he even asks Atall his opinion of “my fruitful invention,” showing the other side of the hack/bookseller connection, a familiarity that is, in discouraging professional distance and objectivity, inimical to literary excellence. As “The Punster’s Vocabulary” makes a mockery of the ideal of original
composition, the writer-hero is not inwardly impressed; nonetheless, he is outwardly appreciative, as “Atall thought it was not his province to dispute his master’s talents, and he therefore highly applauded it” (1:183). Atall’s disingenuous, sycophantic response confirms a power relationship that is predicated on the bookseller-character’s dominance and the author-character’s voluntary submission, but which does not establish the writer as a victimized genius—an image that humour systematically thwarts in eighteenth-century fiction and drama.

Though the writer-character is surprised by Mr —’s views and practices, Atall proves adaptable, eventually influenced by the literary merchant’s instructive power, the narrator observing that “In this conference [the bookseller] gave Atall great lights, with respect to the present state of criticism, which he found to be a very different province from what he expected” (1:177). Moreover, after perusing “The Punster’s Vocabulary”, the hero’s opinion of the art of reviewing changes, as Atall began “to hold critics and criticism in the highest degree of contempt”, author-character and bookseller-character rendered interchangeable by agreement as they are by disagreement, the dynamic of the episode with the unnamed reviewer (1:183).

Though Atall espouses literary polemics and views himself as the victim of his impoverished circumstances, however self-inflicted, he is occasionally depicted as a potential victimizer, unprofessionally scheming to get the upper hand over his publisher. Readers are witness to an example of this tendency in Volume Two when Fanny abandons him and Atall uses his mistress’s remaining clothes to his own benefit, namely to make an improved figure in the literary marketplace. Like the reviewer with his “handsome” quotations from the works of more successful writers, Atall is opportunistic and attempts to manoeuvre for outcome power in his negotiations with members of the book trade. He tries to capitalize on the unexpected sartorial windfall that allows him to make “a more decent appearance in public” and fosters secret hopes
“of thereby raising his price with his bookseller” (2:5). Though Atall’s “ambition rekindled upon looking in the glass,” the writer-hero is only inspired to make a “higher demand for his lubrications,” rather than manifest his revived self-respect in his writing (2:9). In this episode, the author-character proves more fixated on the material markers of success than the bookseller-character, who is not swayed by appearances. The author-character’s amended wardrobe gives him no greater influence over members of the book trade, as the narrator reports that the “the only satisfaction he found, was to be told that he was better paid, and dressed more like a gentleman than many authors of much superior abilities” (2:9). Atall’s employer sees through the ploy and, in resisting duplicity, complicates stereotypes of booksellers as preoccupied with surfaces and misled by appearances and interested in paratexts rather than texts.

Though Jack Atall tries to con more money out of his publisher, he does not simply represent a reversal of the binary of victimized writers and victimizing booksellers. The literary unprofessionalism endemic in The Adventures of an Author highlights the absurdity of localizing blame for cultural decay, a tendency of the literary polemic. In the next scene I examine, the narrator records, as the chapter title indicates, “a conversation between bookseller and a genius,” the genius being himself and the unnamed bookseller being an acquaintance of his (1: 208). Unlike the majority of the exchanges between these figures in eighteenth-century fiction and drama, there is no element of negotiation; their meeting is not a business transaction and no text—or proposed text—is at the centre of their dialogue. Instead, they debate the nature of authorship and the literary marketplace. This fictional publisher, unaware of his own culpability, self-righteously characterizes authors as manipulators and booksellers as their targets, making an involved comparison between writers and prostitutes, both of whom, according to this speaker,
overcharge for their services after their fatal first transaction. This bookseller-character, described by the narrator as “no fool,” synonymous here for unsympathetic, explains:

[T]hat an author resembles a prostitute; her virginity is generally given up for the pure desire of parting with it; but those who come after pay for the loss she before sustained—An author generally gives up his first-fruits for the sake of seeing himself in print; but makes ample reprisals upon his future booksellers for the generosity with which he parted with his literary maidenhead. (1:210)

In response, says the narrator, “I agreed with him in the simile in part, but we never could settle the ample reprisals to our mutual satisfaction”. He goes on to say that “having read Ralph’s Case of Authors reminded him” of a particular passage: “There is no difference between the writer in his garret and the slave in the mine…both must drudge and starve, and neither can hope for deliverance” (1:210-211). The writer toils until “he has worn out his parts, his constitution, and all the little stock of reputation he has acquired among the trade” (1:211). The narrator-character disagrees with the bookseller-character’s assertions about writers being handsomely recompensed for their labours. As a subject of debate among these characters, Ralph’s pamphlet, which discusses individual writers and professional writers as a group, is contentious. Both men have a stake in Ralph’s subject matter, their evaluations of the failings and merits of this text therefore being highly subjective. The bookseller-character thinks poorly of this work’s vindication of professional authorship. The exchange about Ralph emphasizes the extent to which authors and booksellers are invested in stereotypes that justify their treatment of each other. “Mr. Ralph,” the bookseller rants, “is the most ungenerous and ungrateful of men, to make such a reflection upon an honest, industrious, and, I may say, honourable body of people, as they always amply rewarded him, and enabled him, not only to live at ease, but even in
luxury, and almost in idleness” (1:211). The bookseller-character represents men of his profession as upright, hardworking men, while painting authors as slothful, overpaid, and self-indulgent. The “genius” quotes Ralph extensively, this ventriloquization underlining the slippage between the fictional and non-fictional, the serious and the comic. He is, in fact, surprised that the bookseller-character allows him to do this because, in an aside to the reader, he confesses: “I was not a little surprised that my friend had patience to hear me” (1:216). Nevertheless, “upon recollection [he] attributed this condescension to the nature of the subject, as it displayed the ingratitude of the race of authors, and the generosity and beneficence of their patrons, amongst the foremost of whom a bookseller constantly places himself” (1:216-17).

Octavo’s Advice Unheeded

This last scene of debate between the narrator-character and his bookseller acquaintance reveals a key obstacle to Literary Professionalism, the communication problems concomitant with a rigid power dynamic. Though these characters are ostensibly engaged in a dialogue of ideas, each is overly embedded in his own subjective conceptions of the literary marketplace, which include the stereotypes that limit their movement towards a professional relationship within this storyworld. The next comic scene from The Adventures of an Author that I will examine in this chapter is a scene of advice-giving which points to Literary Professionalism as a possibility, even as it is not achieved within the exchange. Scenes of writer-characters being treated to the dubious advice of their self-interested booksellers are a comic staple in eighteenth-century works that fictionalize the trials of authorship. In many cases, the bookseller-character gives bad advice, the heeding of which can jeopardize the author-character’s health, reputation, liberty, or conscience. Some bookseller-characters are indeed caricatured as foolish and magpie-
like, drawn to the glittering coin of prospective wealth, or Machiavellian, willing to sacrifice their hacks’ well-being in the name of profit. Yet these unsympathetic literary portraits are not universal, for, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, there is a greater variety in the presentation of literary professionals than an initial survey of the imaginative literature of this period would suggest. Though the selfless bookseller-character is rare, the practical literary merchant is less so, his knowledge of the book trade, which he openly conveys, highlighting the author-character’s unprofessionalism.

Though in other eighteenth-century works the writer-character receives unwanted advice, at this point in *The Adventures of an Author*, the author-hero solicits his publisher’s input. Jack has returned to London after a series of adventures and misadventures abroad and, finding himself poorer than ever after a financial disaster in Hamburg, realizes that “in this situation it was necessary to recommence author” (2:141). He reconnects with his contacts in the book trade, namely his former bookseller Mr. Octavo, whom the narrator calls Jack’s “old friend,” an endearment suggesting professional amity or unprofessional (over)familiarity (2:141). A rational conversation ensues between the returning author and Octavo who “seemed very glad to see him,” a reaction that augurs the bookseller’s obliging attitude (2:141). To this literary agent, Atall “proposed writing his travels, and publishing them by subscription” (2:141). Octavo cautions Atall against this method of publication, presenting reasons why he should avoid subscription and correctly predicting Atall’s failure. He explains that the flakiness of many authors publishing in this manner has alienated much of the reading public; he tells Atall:

101 Though the fictional author, Jack Atall, fails in his efforts to collect subscriptions, in *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800*, Dustin Griffin debunks the idea that this method of publication nosedived because of deceptions like the ones Octavo puts forth, at p. 267: “the number of books published by subscription remained fairly constant during the period 1720-1780 at about 250 a decade” and argues against “Claims that the subscription system was abused by undeserving writers, and that, in consequence, patrons withheld their support.”
That people were grown too sensible now to subscribe, there had been too many *hums* of the kind; that some who had promised to publish in six months, had not printed a sheet in as many years; and that others had no sooner received half of the subscription money down, than they laid aside all thoughts of the work, which indeed they had never prosecuted beyond the proposals (2:142).

Though his reasons look like criticisms of authorial reliability, the bookseller-character makes a valid point that Atall ignores. Speaking authoritatively on the print market, Octavo concludes his diatribe with the warning “that publishing by subscription was absolutely damning a work before it appeared; and, that if it were ever so good, this method alone was sufficient to give the world a bad opinion of it” (2:142). He would save Atall from disappointment, but would also benefit himself, proposing a mutually-profitable collaboration. Octavo makes him an offer, letting the author-character decide on the schedule of payment: “if [Atall] would take pains, write it well, and put his name to it, he would purchase it, and pay him for it, as soon as it was ready for the press, or as he produced it sheet by sheet” (2:142). Despite the closeness of his relationship with Octavo, Atall is wary of the bookseller-character, whom he suspects of having ulterior motives, making this offer on the heels of attempting to dissuade him from subscription. The author-character, however, desiring to maintain the illusion of agreement, “listened attentively to Mr. Octavo,” and then dismisses his wisdom (2:143). Atall “imagined [the bookseller’s] advice was solely founded in self-interest,” he “rejected this counsel” to pursue his own plan of collecting subscriptions among the great using the “Court Kalendar [sic]” (2:143). In the previous scene of debate, the novelist revealed the bookseller-character’s lack of trust, the narrator’s acquaintance volubly complaining about authorial deception. In this episode, however, suspicion on the author-character’s side is the central obstacle to honest, productive collaboration. Again,
considering sartorial display as the shortcut to literary success, Atall “furnished himself with a
genteel suit of clothes and a sword” to hide his poverty behind the guise of gentleman-author—as
opposed to hack—and thus encourage support among his distinguished potential subscribers. As
these expedients do not confirm his respectability, Atall finds “subscription-hunting”
demoralizing (2:143). Feminized in his position as a supplicant, he endures humiliation engaging
with his potential subscribers, many evidently his intellectual inferiors as they “Consisted of
those ‘who would think about it’ though they never thought in their lives” (2:151). Even when he
is technically successful, Atall’s experiences illustrate “the uncommon distress of a petitioning
author, &c. &c.” as the chapter title indicates; though he receives money from one lady, he is
embarrassed during a talk he gives before company, during which a pin replacing a lost button on
his breeches comes lose, revealing a dirty shirt under his clean ruffles; he is then harassed by a
lap dog that urinates on his exposed linen. The narrator comments that “this guinea was very
dearly earned; nor would Jack in his present necessitous condition have underwent such another
sweat for five times the money” (2:151). Not only his masculinity, but his perceived class is
undermined when, after trying to obtain the support of a lord, Atall is subjected to the
disapproving gaze of the servants, who “considered him as little better than a pick-pocket”
(2:149). The investment he makes in this venture does not pay off as he hoped, the narrator
noting that “this pursuit was not productive of the most lucrative advantage to Mr. Atall”
(2:152)\(^\text{102}\). In hindsight, the bookseller-character’s advice is sound and his business proposal
sensible, for “when Atall was by experience convinced of the rectitude of Mr. Octavo’s advice,
he would have gladly submitted to the terms he had proposed” (2:161). Octavo’s offer has

\(^{102}\) Despite the widespread popularity of subscription lists, not all eighteenth-century writers were able to avail of
this method of publication. Charlotte Lennox, as Ellen Gardiner points out, had difficulty gathering subscribers.
expired, however, Atall being “informed it was then too late, the thing had been hawked about, and none of those who had refused subscribing would ever become purchasers,” the author-character’s text devalued by its pre-print circulation and thus referred to as “the thing” (2:161). Nevertheless, the adventures that Atall cannot get published within this interdiagnostic literary marketplace—as “his Voyages and Travels were never swelled beyond the outlines here inserted”—have a life in print as part of the novel (2:162). The novel’s readers are raised about Atall’s potential subscribers, the persons of distinction who, surprised to think he would “apply to them for their subscription for Voyages and Travels in countries they never before heard of,” cannot recognize the potential of his work, the account so recently enjoyed by the reading audience of The Adventures of an Author (2:151-152). Thus, the bonds between individual readers and the novelist are strengthened via this text over which they, unlike Octavo and prospective subscribers, can agree. Though Atall’s episode of subscription-hunting initially seems to represent the failure of collective patronage, the author-character finds that “it was not entirely destitute of satisfaction” because while engaged in this “circuit,” he gleans Miss Louisa T—’s story. This didactic tale about the dangers of female “inattention” during a marriage is inserted in the novel after the narrator expresses a hope that the reader will “pardon” him for doing so (2:153).

Atall as a Religious Writer: Approaching Literary Professionalism

Late in Volume Two, the hero, as the chapter title indicates, experiences “success as a religious writer.” Passing by a Methodist meeting house, Atall decides to enter out of curiosity, getting an earful of the preacher’s impassioned cant. Damning his listeners for availing of any form of entertainment, he rants: “You are all damned ... all—all—you that go to playhouses—
bawd houses...to balls, to concerts, to coffee-houses, to taverns—ay and to alehouses—,” the dashes indicating the rabid fervour of his sermonizing (2:192). Many eighteenth-century writers satirized the Methodist movement, which was depicted as spiritually and socially dangerous as it was ridiculous. Atall’s reaction to this “nursery of iniquity” and its “damned fools” reveals the civic-minded side of the author-hero (2:193). 103 His thoughts and impressions following this encounter with Methodism—rather than financial need and market forces—inspire him to write: “This display of enthusiasm, joined to Mr. Atall’s reflections on the growth of Popery, naturally led him to consider the dangers attendant on these religious evils; and he soon communicated them to the public” (2:193). His reading audience gave his works “a pretty favourable reception, which tended to the recovery of Mr. Octavo’s good opinion, who now advised him to stick to religion, as it seemed to be his fort [sic]” (2:193). The bookseller-character’s “good opinion” is tantamount to an extension of power to the author, outcome power leveling out and making their professional dynamic more equitable. In this episode, print culture is functioning at its best: an ideal production-consumption loop is evident: good works are published and find a receptive readership, thus rewarding the Literary Professionals involved in their production and distribution and encouraging more good works. Atall’s bookseller responds to the financial success of these “reflections” and in a move which seems to represent his promotion of learning, as he “accordingly sent him Hobbs [sic], Spinosa, and Boilingbroke, to suck their essences and make the most of them” (2:193-194). Yet Atall’s next piece, which espouses a more controversial religious view, is more problematic both inside and outside of the novel’s storyworld. The law, as it operates in Atall’s London, would suppress the author-character’s next

103 Misty Anderson’s Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain, probes cultural representations of Methodist preachers and their adherents. Anderson analyzes the negative stereotypes of Methodists in British culture that evidence the scorn and fear of religious difference during this period.
piece, for, “Jack had just finished a very elaborate treatise in defence of Deism, when Mr. A—
was set in the pillory for an offense of the same nature, which deterred the author, as well as the
trade, from bringing forth this publication” (2: 194). The possibility of Literary Professionalism
appears for a moment with the author-hero’s critique of Methodism as it is supported by the
bookseller-character and Atall’s fictional readers, but evaporates when their collegiality brings
about the defense of deism and the threat of the pillory. An argument for print can nonetheless be
gleaned from the operation and influence of the law on Atall and Octavo and the suppression of a
manuscript that most eighteenth-century readers would not, if given the authority of the
bookseller, usher into the world of print.

*The Author-Character's Salvation*

Jack Atall’s stint as a religious writer ends abruptly, the “editor” remembering that he
should announce the author-character’s change of fortune. Atall inherits his mother’s fortune,
and in one fell swoop, is “settled beyond even the power of the muses to disturb him” (2:196).
His relationship to writing changes dramatically with this permanent financial independence, as
he is wholly freed from the pressures of hack authorship, the pressures that he claims stifle his
genius. As Atall, “had no longer occasion to rack his invention for subjects of disquisition, or
distill his brains in the alembic of necessity, to furnish matter for these subjects,” he is able to
casually contribute to the Republic of Letters as a gentleman author (2:197). He does not,
however, become the British Virgil, the significant and influential public figure in literary culture
he imagined himself becoming near the beginning of the narrative. The narrator reports on
Atall’s desultory forays back into print in which “he would indeed throw out the occasional essay
for the Gazeteer or the Public, and once wrote a six-penny pamphlet, that was pronounced a high
finished satire upon the times” (2:197). He is in a powerful enough position that he publishes on his own schedule, and therefore as infrequently as he pleases. His “high finished satire,” does not prove that literary quality is dependent on financial independence, as readers are informed that this work sells for the meager sum of six pennies, which suggests it is mere literary ephemera, making no real mark on London's print society. The narrator concludes with an evaluation of Atall’s personal growth, observing that “A few select friends, a small, but well chosen library, an estrangement from every thing ridiculous or contemptible, render Jack Atall an amiable character,” which confirms readers in their recognition of the younger Atall’s unamiability (2:220). The Atall who emerges at the close of the novel is closer to the paradigmatic Literary Professional who has learned from his experiences and “whose judgment now corrects those errors of youth and imprudence, which have, nevertheless, tended to improve the man as well as the scholar” (2:200).
Epilogue

In the *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, complains that “in our days the audience makes the poet, and the bookseller the author, with what profit to the public, or what prospect of lasting fame and honour to the writer, let anyone who has judgement imagine” (118). This statement, which posits print culture as a misguided venture full of uncertainties, seemed to become truer as the eighteenth-century progressed, the sea of aristocratic patronage perceived as receding before the rising tide of commerce. Shaftesbury, wary—sometimes baldly contemptuous—of the commercialization of culture, did not welcome changes in book production and consumption that he considered superfluous and dangerous to polite literature by polite people. Seeing others approach writing as a trade, he reflects: “I can call to mind, indeed, among my acquaintance, certain merchant-adventurers in the letter-trade, who in correspondence with their factor-bookseller, are entered into a notable commerce with the world” (135). Though the almost proto-Johnsonian phrase “notable commerce with the world” sounds complimentary to the twenty-first-century ear, Shaftesbury paints these literary professionals as self-interested men. He dismisses his own place in the economy of letters, declaring that if his writing “is worth the purchasing, much good may it do the purchaser. It is a traffic I have no share in, though I accidentally furnish the subject matter” (118). Shaftesbury, disinterested as a producer of anything more than his manuscript, acquires his authority from property, not print; he is a gentleman author with no vested interest in the inky profits of the literary marketplace. Indeed, he dismisses print as a cultural institution of little import, claiming: “I am nowise more an author for being in print. I am
conscious of no additional virtue, or dangerous quality, from having lain at any time under the weight of that alphabetical engine called the Press” (118).

By 1767, the year *The Adventures of an Author* was published, writers could not treat the “alphabetical engine” so cavalierly, as much vitriol was generated in early-to-mid eighteenth century debates about the influence of the press. Few authors in the intervening years could afford to be as unmoved as Shaftesbury about the increasingly powerful publishing industry. Alexander Pope was anything but blasé about print culture, as he “spent his poetic energies disdaining writing as a trade in the *Dunciad,*” a condemnation of Grub Street practices and values (Justice 78). Pope’s four-book poem imagines a dystopian future ushered in by print, the Goddess Dulness [sic] allegorically imprisoning the Sciences and silencing the Muses. In the front matter to this work, the Scriblerian hack-character Martinus Scriblerus contextualizes Pope’s mock epic by describing the apparent state of British letters. Its creator, according to Scriblerus, was “moved” to verse by the tenor of his age, for:

> He lived in those days, when (after Providence had permitted the invention of printing as a scourge for the sins of the learned) paper also became so cheap, and printers so numerous, that a deluge of authors covered the land; whereby not only the peace of the honest unwriting subject was daily molested, but unmerciful demands were made of his applause, yea of his money, by such as would neither earn the one nor deserve the other. At the same time, the license of the press was such, that it grew dangerous to refuse them either: for they would forthwith publish slanders unpunished, the authors being anonymous, and skulking under the wings of publishers, a set of men who never scrupled to vend either calumny or blasphemy, as long as the town would call for it (421).
This comic persona takes an extreme position in the paratext, villainizing print culture and the society that enables its vices, while elevating Pope to the level of a patriot-hero who brandishes the weapons of satire in an attempt to dethrone Dulness. Pope’s overzealous “champion” boasts that it was with a “public-spirited view [that Pope] laid the plan of this poem, as the greatest service he was capable (without much hurt, or being slain) to render his dear country” (421). Pope is obviously being deliberately facetious as he speaks through the character of Scriblerius, but only to the extent that the ills of print are being, in the poet’s mind, exaggerated rather than fabricated by this fictional hackney pedant. Book IV of The Dunciad ends on a serious note with a series of pessimistic images more tragic than comic:

> Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
> And unawares Morality expires.
> Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
> Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
> Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos is restored;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word:
> Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
> And universal darkness buries all (4: 649-656).

With this wholesale extinguishing of light, the implied poet’s rebellious mockery is subsumed like all other pretenses to art, goodness, and truth. Yet the imaginative works that I have examined in this dissertation lie between the extremes presented in Shaftesbury’s Characteristics (the press is essentially meaningless) and Pope’s Dunciad (the press monopolizes meaning). Shaftesbury downplays the text’s mediation by print while Pope inflates the dark power of print and its authorial and cultural ramifications. Significantly, these seemingly antithetical views of
the press are roads to the same destination: the devaluation of the hired writer and the overvaluing of the gentleman author who is situated above the pressures of commercial authorship, a pose which Pope famously took up, “mystifying [his] dependence on these print culture conditions” (Hess 2).

Later writers like James Ralph, Oliver Goldsmith, and Samuel Johnson, whom Gillian Paku credits with having “raised the status of the hired writer from hack to professional” (101), were invested, however, in illuminating rather than obscuring their involvement in—and authority to speak about—commercial writing and reading practices. Committed to raising the status of the writer as a public figure, they reflected on the essential requirements of professional authorship. Johnson, for example, spilt much ink on the necessity of authorial independence. In Rambler No. 26 from Saturday, June 14, 1750, Johnson writes in the voice of a young man sharing his unpleasant experiences as a dependent author, complaining: “I was obliged to comply with a thousand caprices, to concur in a thousand follies, and to countenance a thousand errors. I endured innumerable mortifications” (176). Goldsmith, while working as a periodical writer, also rails against the indignities of dependence in his Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe, “a uniquely theoretical overview of cultural production in the mid-eighteenth century,” first published by Robert Dodsley in 1759 (Donoghue 88). In this ambitiously titled work, Goldsmith attempted “to define directly the ideals of authorship and the habits of reading that ultimately generated the demand placed upon him as a hired writer” (Donoghue 90).

In the post-Shaftesburian and post-Scriblerian (and pre-Romantic) literary milieu, print is positioned as a permanent, perfectible cultural institution, many writers readily accepting the distinction of “author by profession” and embracing the authority conferred by the literary
career. Print culture becomes valued insofar as its participants—authors, booksellers, and readers—embodied Literary Professionalism, a state of equilibrium between individualism and collectivism, independence and dependence, as well as between learning and art and commerce. Though eighteenth-century writers were by no means unanimous on the particulars, they agreed on professionalism as it involved collegial, productive relationships built on a shared system of ethics. Shifting power dynamics characterize all of these relationships, included those between authors and booksellers (and other members of the book trade), authors and readers, and author and their brethren. In a fast-paced, competitive print economy, inequalities of power are constantly being established and redressed, for, as Dustin Griffin confirms, all parties within “the literary system—authors, readers, critics, booksellers, and patrons—advance claims for their own literary authority” (Patronage 281). Cultural critics idealize these relationships as rational partnerships, emphasizing compromise tempered by resistance (gendered masculine) rather than exploitation or co-dependence (gendered feminine). In the case of historical professional authors like Samuel Johnson, scholars have argued that the bookseller-system dignified the writer, confirming his masculinity as he “engaged in resisting the subordination of his opinions and morality to the demands of the booksellers and their audiences” while producing publishable material useful and entertaining to the British reading public (Zionkowski 20).

Polemical works like Goldsmith's Enquiry still tended, however, to present issues of authorship in black and white terms, the young Goldsmith declaiming against wholly mercenary writing by comparing the hack and the highwayman: “the author who draws his quill merely to take a purse, no more deserves success than he who presents a pistol” (42). Nevertheless, fictional explorations of commercial literary production continued, and the label of “author by profession” became increasingly destigmatized as literary professionalism was defined in diverse
cultural venues and vehicles, from the stage plays of Samuel Foote to the novels of Tobias Smollett. Investigating representations of print culture in imaginative literature, I found the satiric hyperbole of Pope’s *Dunciad* replaced in the mid-to-late eighteenth century by comedy, the comic literary literary marketplace emerging from anxieties about print as well as the impulse to mitigate these apprehensions. Author-characters and bookseller-characters, considered a standard comic pairing in the eighteenth century, appeared in nearly every form and genre of the period that accommodated humour. Encounters between literary professionals were almost always filtered through the lens of comedy. As well, within these comic scenes of negotiation and outright antagonism internal comedy is produced in the form of witticisms, practical jokes, and comic texts; how the characters respond to these internal comedies directs readers in their own response to the work as a critique-cum-celebration of print.

Both the conflict and concord among these characters illuminate a set of professional standards graspable to individual readers sensitive to the nuances of comedy and power in these negotiations. Professionalism is established against the examples of unprofessionalism amongst fictional authors. The amateurism of fictional authors has a dual purpose: defamiliarizing for satiric ends the print culture stereotypes these characters encounter and highlighting for readers the professional values and codes of conduct through which the potential of print can be realized. Professionalism in these novels and plays is imaginatively constituted against the literary self-indulgence of the frivolous and solipsistic fashionable author who, ungrounded by economics, operates on the periphery of British print society and, consequently, literary meaning. Yet this model is also constructed against the self-indulgence of the excessively mercenary literary “professional” whose hackney involvement in commercial writing and publishing is too grounded in the material world for his productions to have any sustained value.
The actors in scenes featuring an overt and implicit struggle for power do not repetitively enact the same dynamic perpetuated in eighteenth-century non-fiction and visual culture. The works of fiction and drama I study go beyond the paradigm of the oppression of authors by booksellers. Rather, there is a surprising degree of variation among fictionalized representations of writers and members of the book trade, the seemingly programmatic scene of the author-character’s subjugation by the bookseller-character being complicated and subverted in texts like *The Adventures of an Author*, which contains many of these variations and presents a spectrum of professionalism through numerous encounters between literary characters. In the middle chapters of the dissertation I used the final outcome power of the characters as way to distinguish among the kinds of fictional dialogues between literary professionals that appear in eighteenth-century fiction and drama. In many of the works under my consideration, the conversations between author-characters and bookseller-characters portray conflict as the natural state of affairs in London’s book trade. Nonetheless, as I discussed at length in Chapter Three, concord, produced by shared materialist conceptions of the book, also prevails with some regularity in eighteenth-century imaginative literature.

Responding correctly to internal and external comedy, individual readers negotiating the book as a literary text rather than simply a material object are automatically put into a position of superiority over characters whose view of literature is comically pragmatic. Recognizing publication as vital to the legitimization of the text, the historical author accepts *readers* as part of this process, the rejection of the print market and professional status being tantamount to dismissing readers’ capability as arbiters of artistic labour. The reader’s role is comparable to that of the historical bookseller, for, without the literary consumer, the text cannot be completed, materially or intellectually. Historical authors from this period publicly privilege their
relationship with their audience, prologues and epilogues from eighteenth-century dramatic works confirming writers’ awareness of the audience’s power. Readers are stimulated to infer the values of Literary Professionalism as they are presented directly and indirectly, bonds being forged between individual readers and the historical writers who share an understanding of this paradigm—and who play a role in the power relations which contribute to and detract from its realization—with their audiences. Though the literary professionals in this world do not consistently form supportive communities of intellectual and social interaction, the collegiality between historical authors and their readers represents a dimension of the professionalism often absent, incomplete, or superficial in the text. A lively and persuasive argument for print is ultimately made through the interactive nature of the comedy in these works, as a reader’s appreciation of the comic didacticism of these scenes and the internal comedy within these scenes establishes that reader as an authority on print in a way that the eighteenth-century bookseller, misrepresented or rendered invisible, cannot do without jeopardizing the relationship between reader and author.

Comedy is ultimately productive as an intervention in eighteenth-century Britain’s print society. The laughter generated by comic representations of literary professionals is a crucial tool for depolemicizing the debate about the commercial marketplace while strategically engaging and reassuring a readership concerned about its place in relation to the dyad of author-bookseller outside of the printed text.


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