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“AN AUTHOR IN FORM”: WOMEN WRITERS, PRINT  
PUBLICATION, AND ELIZABETH MONTAGU’S  
*DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD*

BY MARKMAN ELLIS

In May 1760, the Whig statesman and author George Lyttelton (1709–1773) anonymously published a collection of twenty-eight prose satires entitled *Dialogues of the Dead*, to considerable popular success. The last three dialogues, announced as being “by another hand,” were the first writing by Elizabeth Montagu (1718–1800) to be published in print.<sup>1</sup> Montagu was a woman of considerable wealth and social connection, who, during the 1750s, had developed an ambitious interest in literary and philosophical debate: in the 1760s and 1770s she found literary and intellectual fame as the so-called Queen of the Bluestockings, an informal sociable grouping of female and male writers and critics. Publication—becoming an author—was a significant event in her history, an important boundary crossing into the literary world. This examination of Montagu’s first publication focuses on the debate she undertook with other writers in her circle, especially Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Scott, on the question of being publically acknowledged as a writer, a condition she termed being “an author in form,” especially with regard to contemporary notions of female propriety and status.<sup>2</sup>

Recent studies in the eighteenth century have argued that the categories of literature were in transformation in this period. The commercialization of print culture, the emergence of the professional writer, and the rise of the woman writer all contribute to the modernizing narrative of the “restructuring of the literary world,” as Simon During has called it.<sup>3</sup> The context of this essay is the intersection between the rise of the professional writer, figured as an independent, commercially-oriented originator of his or her own intellectual property, and that of the women writers, for whom professionalization remained deeply troubling.<sup>4</sup> It has been repeatedly argued—by Jane Spenser and Janet Todd in the 1980s, and Norma Clarke and Betty Schellenberg in recent years—that the eighteenth century witnessed a significant increase in the number of women writers, and in the number of their publications.<sup>5</sup> And yet, as has been noted often, long after the first echelon of women writers such as Delarivier Manley

and Aphra Behn, there remained among women writers a significant resistance to the professional status of an author. This was manifested at the level of discourse and practice in an unwillingness to be known as a writer in public and an almost habitual recourse to anonymity in publication. Anxiety about the public propriety of authorship remained evident late in the century amongst writers such as Frances Burney, Ann Radcliffe, and Jane Austen: Burney's elaborate schemes to conceal her composition of *Evelina* in 1778, from her father and more generally the public, are well known.<sup>6</sup> Harold Love has described this resistance to print publication as a culture of "hiding," while Schellenberg has described "the modest muse" of women writers, and Catherine Gallagher has noted their "vanishing act."<sup>7</sup> While many women saw writing as a legitimate creative medium, they also expressed doubts that print publication offered them the dignity and propriety appropriate to their gender.

This paper uses the case of Elizabeth Montagu's first publication to explore the complicated paradox of the woman writer in the context of professionalization and commercialization. It does so in the spirit of involution, following the model of other contributions to this debate (Love, Margaret Ezell) that have recognized the endurance of submerged and complicated histories of authorship in the period, including practices of social and collaborative composition, and manuscript dissemination or scribal publication.<sup>8</sup> It explores a specific discourse on authorship, associated particularly with high-status and aristocratic writers, and outlined in the *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times* (1714) by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713). Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* is an important statement of aesthetics and moral philosophy in the early eighteenth century that remained popular throughout the century. In his self-reflective analysis of his philosophical methods, Shaftesbury analyzes the dynamics of polite conversation and coffee-house debate, and reflects on the status of the author and of commercial print publication. In *Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author* (a part of *Characteristicks* first published separately in 1710), Shaftesbury developed an argument to reconcile aristocratic manners, whose independence eschewed the obligations and compromises of trade, with the practices and ideology of commercial print publication. His discussion turns on his definition of a writer who through commercial print publication accepts the character of an author in public, a state he identifies as "an author in form."<sup>9</sup>

Shaftesbury declared his motive in writing to be "self-entertainment": that is, he wrote independently, without regard for commercial

or political reward. He recognized, however, that other authors wrote for money: these he disparaged as “Merchant-Adventurers in the Letter-Trade, who in Correspondence with their factor-Bookseller, are enter’d into a notable Commerce with the *World*.”<sup>10</sup> Despite his hostility to the corrupting influence of commercial bookselling, Shaftesbury paid very close attention to the production of his works in the press. Adopting a practice common in the period, one identified by Love as a particular form of scribal publication called author publication, manuscript copies of his works were circulated amongst a small coterie of friends, not simply for amendment and correction, but in place of print publication.<sup>11</sup> Shaftesbury observed, however, a hidden danger in this practice: manuscripts in circulation could be subject to further copying outside the author’s control, in the course of which errors could be introduced. To protect the writer from these errors, Shaftesbury proposed that his “pen-work” should be set up in type, made perfect by revision, and printed in as many copies as he needed.<sup>12</sup> The resulting printed copies would be easier to read, he argued: “’Tis requisite, that my Friends, who peruse these *Advices* [*Soliloquy*], shou’d read ’em in better Characters than those of my own Hand-writing.” It is thus with some irony that Shaftesbury referred to his printer as his amanuensis, a term usually reserved for a manuscript copyist. Printer’s type, he reasoned, was a “very fair Hand,” which “may save me the trouble of re-copying, and can readily furnish me with as many hansom Copys as I wou’d desire, for my own and Friends Service.” Furthermore, and somewhat disingenuously, he argued that it would be vulgar and self-indulgent to forbid the amanuensis-printer the right to print as many copies as was commercially prudent. “I have not, indeed, forbid my *Amanuensis* the making as many [printed copies] as he pleases for his own Benefit. What I write is not worth being made a Mystery. And if it be worth any one’s purchasing; much good may it do the Purchaser. ’Tis a *Traffick* I have no share in; tho I accidentally furnish the Subject-matter.” Shaftesbury’s disinterested publication method reconciles his aristocratic status to the new and vulgar world of commercial print publication, with all its attendant benefits. As Shaftesbury proclaims, “Thus I am no-wise more an AUTHOR, for being in *Print*.”<sup>13</sup> Shaftesbury recognized that a writer can be an author through manuscript dissemination as readily as through print, and concluded that a writer’s productions might be disseminated in print by a bookseller, without that writer necessarily becoming that low and vulgar thing, an author. Reflections on Shaftesbury’s model continued through the century: when Philip and Charles Yorke (sons of Philip

Yorke, first Earl of Hardwicke), composed their *Athenian Letters*, together with eight friends, and edited by Thomas Birch, they had it printed by the bookseller James Bettenham in 1741 in an edition of twelve copies for their private consumption only.<sup>14</sup> Shaftesbury's model of publication and authorship, this essay proposes, is adopted by Lyttelton and Montagu in the *Dialogues of the Dead*, evidence for which can be found in the text itself, and in Montagu's extensive and still largely unpublished correspondence.

#### I. COLLABORATION AND COTERIE

Although the Elizabeth Montagu's biography, and her role as the Queen of the Bluestockings, is well known, she was an atypical woman for the period.<sup>15</sup> She had a relatively extensive education, in which she learned French, Italian, and Latin. Her family was wealthy and well-connected: part of the Montagu cousinhood, a powerful family in Whig politics in mid-century England. Her wealth was significantly increased after her husband Edward Montagu (1692–1775), an MP whom she married in 1742, inherited extensive collieries in Newcastle in 1758. Elizabeth Montagu occupied a privileged position in society, even though she was untitled and her husband's political career was negligible.<sup>16</sup> Montagu's intellectual curiosity and ambitions first became apparent in the early 1750s through her engagement with intellectual circles close to her family, manifested especially in letters to her cousin, the clergyman, poet, and philosopher Gilbert West. Her experience with these intellectual circles and correspondence networks in the 1750s formed an important precursor for the more extensive sociable assemblies for which the Bluestocking "salon" later became well known.<sup>17</sup>

It was through her participation in West's intellectual circles that Montagu cemented her acquaintance with Lyttelton, an established literary figure who had published influential poetry and satires. He was moreover an important Whig politician: one of Cobham's Cubs in the 1730s, he had held high office in 1740s, and in 1755 was made Chancellor of the Exchequer in Newcastle's administration.<sup>18</sup> Sir George, as he was known from 1751 to 1756, was elevated to the peerage on his retirement from office in November 1756, as the first Baron Lyttelton of Frankley. From around 1753, Montagu and Lyttelton followed a broadly coincident social circuit, focused on a summer season at Tunbridge Wells, the winter parliamentary sessions in London, and interrupted by periods apart at their country houses (Montagu

at Sandlesford in Berkshire, Lyttelton at Hagley in Wiltshire). Their friendship was consolidated by the close proximity of their London townhouses, located within a few doors of each other in Hill Street, Mayfair. After West's death in 1755, Montagu sought more social and intellectual stimulation beyond her close family circle, looking not only to Lyttelton but also another elder Whig statesman, William Pulteney, known then as Earl of Bath, and, after 1758, Elizabeth Carter. Dissemination of her writing, both letters and satires, in manuscript within this coterie, established for Montagu a considerable intellectual reputation, although as Emma Clery has suggested, this reputation caused her some embarrassment, she having been "hailed as a genius before managing to produce a single work."<sup>19</sup>

The sociable formation established by West's circle provided Montagu and Lyttelton with a model for how to conduct a heterosexual intellectual relationship, although when they first began corresponding in 1755, other more established forms of courtship and flirtation were hard to evade. Montagu had some difficulty asserting her intellectual and moral seriousness in the face of Lyttelton's flashy and flirtatious epistolary swagger. Montagu's letters persevered with long and considered analyzes of books and ideas even when Lyttelton's response was simply witty and teasing. Her strategy seems to have worked, as Lyttelton, impressed with her intellectual ability, began to share her letters with others. An important topic of their correspondence was reading history, a genre accorded importance in this period for women as well as men, "as a mode of personal and national education," as Karen O'Brien has argued.<sup>20</sup> Montagu and Lyttelton's letters in the 1750s record their engagement with contemporary histories by David Hume, William Robertson, and Voltaire, amongst others. Montagu also offered praise for Lyttelton's own labours as a historian: he was engaged in writing his *History of the life of King Henry the Second*, a project that occupied him for more than twenty years before the first volume was published in 1767.<sup>21</sup> History-writing in Lyttelton's circle was predominantly an expression of political allegiance, but also an outlet for aesthetic and social values. Lyttelton's history-writing was published under his own name and aristocratic title, the burden of which gave him considerable pains. In preparing his work for the press, Lyttelton practiced a form of manuscript publication, common in the period, circulating copies of his manuscript widely amongst his circle. Lyttelton also used a variation of Shaftesbury's method of private print-publication dissemination: he arranged at his own expense for drafts to be set in type, and sheets to be printed off the press, only to

give them such extensive revision over such a long period, that new settings and proofs had to be prepared subsequently.<sup>22</sup> Lytteltonian history-writing was completed very slowly, revised extensively and repeatedly, and published in prestigious formats appropriate to patrician and aristocratic values. Both the debate on history and history-writing in the correspondence, and Lyttelton's publication practices, form the intellectual and practical context for the *Dialogues of the Dead*.

The dialogues, composed in the winter of 1759–1760, emerge out of a process that was as much sociable as literary. In late 1759 Lyttelton and Montagu began exchanging letter books, which comprised organized collections of exemplary manuscript letters assembled in order in a book or folder. The purpose of these exchanges was sociable, a gift of entertainment and information that was also a display of wit and learning. Montagu's letter book was also circulated to Pulteney in March and April 1760.<sup>23</sup> The exchange of letter books opened the way to the circulation in late 1759 of a manuscript collection of *Dialogues of the Dead* written by Lyttelton: as he commented, "to amuse you tonight I have sent you two Dialogues more. You have not told me what you think of the last."<sup>24</sup> Montagu responded to Lyttelton's dialogues with copies of her own literary compositions, commenting on 1 January 1760 that

Those [letters] from the illustrious I consider as written in their theatrical character, for tho' they are written behind the scenes, which gives them an air of reality, they are made to suit the assumed character.<sup>25</sup>

In March and April 1760, the dissemination coterie for these "theatrical" letters was extended to include Pulteney, Anne Pitt (the sister of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham), Edmund Burke, and perhaps also the physician Messenger Mounsey and Elizabeth Carter.<sup>26</sup> Except for Carter, this was a local group comprised of friends living proximate to each other in Westminster. Montagu and Lyttelton were both in London occupying houses only a few doors apart, Anne Pitt was staying with Montagu while her own house was being fitted up, Burke lived in Wimpole Street at Cavendish Square, and Pulteney was not far away in Bath House, Piccadilly. Proximity reinforced the sociable composition of the manuscript dialogues: through regular meetings, Montagu developed topics, received advice on argument and allusion, and established responses. Revision was also sociable: the group practiced a form of amendment criticism aimed at preparing

the work for the press and for the public by the systematic removal of errors of fact or grammar, clarification of prose, and sharpening of wit. These practices of sociable composition and coterie criticism find further elaboration in the social formations of Montagu's subsequent Bluestocking assemblies.

Writing a satire was a brave step for an intellectually ambitious woman, given the historically enduring hostility to women satirists.<sup>27</sup> Publishing such a satire was even more risky. Nonetheless, by the end of April 1760, Montagu's dialogues were included in Lyttelton's plans to publish in print a volume of *Dialogues of the Dead*.<sup>28</sup> Although she wrote at least five dialogues, only three were included in the published volume.<sup>29</sup> She intended them to be published anonymously. She advised Carter that "You may tell any of yr friends of Ld Lyttelton's dialogues, as to ye other scribblers they desire to be unknown to all but you, Mrs Pitt, Ld Lyttelton & Mr Burke, who writes over these dialogues, least ye hand shd betray it."<sup>30</sup> The sense of Montagu's sentence is not easy to follow, and is not helped by her suggestion of multiple "scribblers" contributing to the publication. But it seems that, to maintain her anonymity, she had Burke act as her amanuensis or copyist, so that her own handwriting would not be recognized, especially by her publisher and printer.<sup>31</sup>

Montagu's comments to Carter suggest some uncertainty about the moral virtue of allowing the dialogues to be printed. Her satires would, she supposed, arouse public comment: that was integral to their purpose as satire. In her letter to Carter, she commented that she had written a dialogue "between Mercury & a modern fine Lady, for which ye fine Ladies wd hate me still more than they do, but I shall decline ye honour of their aversion by being unknown."<sup>32</sup> The maintenance of anonymity was central to her project. Montagu proposes that anonymity would protect her reputation from the stigma of public recognition and critical judgement, but at the same time, she expresses excitement at the prospect of public recognition. In the same letter, she promised to keep Carter informed of the *Dialogues*' reception: "I shall at times tell you all ye Criticks say of ye dialogues from the great W—n [Warburton] to the commentators in ye chronicle." Montagu imagines criticism polarized in two extremes: on one side, William Warburton (1698–1779) was a prominent clergyman (at this time, dean of Bristol), and a fractious literary critic; and on the other, *The London Chronicle*, a thrice-weekly newspaper. With more than a little false modesty, however, Montagu thinks her contribution beneath the attention of the critics.

I fear ye dialogues by ye unknown hand will be below criticism. I propose great entertainment in hearing people delicate before me in their criticism of my friends work & very explicate in ye faults they find with mine, or rather exclaim against their general want of merit, but in this they will not pain me, for I hope my inducement was only to do that little good it was in my power to aim at.<sup>33</sup>

Carter, in reply, was polite in her congratulations, but did not offer much hope for Montagu's bid for anonymity, writing on 12 May:

Do not flatter yourself that the anonymous author of the Dialogues will remain long concealed. I have a strange persuasion that it will be immediately be discovered to whom the world is obliged for them; at least I think I should certainly have ascribed those which I have had the pleasure of seeing to but one person.<sup>34</sup>

Carter's observation that Montagu's authorship will be discovered, perhaps even from her style of writing, suggests a more pragmatic understanding of the literary scene, even though Carter's language here, describing her "strange persuasion," has overtones of a more unwelcome interrogation.

## II. DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD

The completed 332-page octavo volume was published as *Dialogues of the Dead*, on Saturday 17 May by William Sandby of Fleet-Street, having been printed by Samuel Richardson.<sup>35</sup> The anonymous title page was adorned with a new, specially cut engraving of Mercury, summoner of the living to the realm of the dead.<sup>36</sup> Such was the public enthusiasm for the work that on the first day of its sale, a second edition was advertised as being in press, to appear "On Thursday next," that is, 22 May.<sup>37</sup> In fact, as William B. Todd has shown, the book's rapid sale caused the printer a great deal of trouble, as demand exceeded the capacity of Richardson's printing shop to produce the sheets. When the decision came to increase the run mid-edition, Richardson was forced to farm some sheets to other printers. Todd's examination of the press figures demonstrates that there were three interrelated editions in the first few days: two unmarked firsts and a "second" (third), all three published between 17 and 22 May, and another, the "third" (fourth), on 4 September 1760.<sup>38</sup> The book was a publishing phenomenon: the antiquary William Clarke reported to Lyttelton's brother Charles, in August 1760, that "we hear something almost incredible, that the whole impression of the *Dialogues of the*

*Dead* was sold off in two Hours.”<sup>39</sup> The popular welcome to the book made it one of the great literary successes of the year, alongside that of the first London volumes of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1760). Curiosity about the anonymous writers was intense.

The volume consisted of a preface followed by twenty-eight dialogues, the last three identified as being “by another Hand.” In his preface, Lyttelton signalled the project’s allegiance to classical precedents, noting his debt to Lucian “among the Ancients,” and to the French writers François Fénelon and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle “among the Moderns.”<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Lyttelton complained that no dialogues of the dead “worthy of Notice” had been published in English, excepting those by Richard Hurd, which could be excluded because they passed “between *living Persons*.”<sup>41</sup> Classical literature offered several formal models that allowed the dead to speak, including narratives of a descent into the underworld, letters from the dead to the living, and dream visions. In the dialogue of the dead the voice of the dead was presented without a framing narrative: the dead speak to each other, the reader overhears. Lyttelton’s preface lays out the rules obeyed by his dialogues, in which “remarkable Persons” from “the History of all Times, and all Nations” debate together in the after-world. This method allows him to give the dialogues “*Dramatic Spirit*” and so convey “Critical, Moral, or Political Observations” (instruction), in an “agreeable Method” (entertainment).<sup>42</sup> The dialogues continue his interest in history writing by another method: as Karen O’Brien has observed, such historical satires were typical of the “refurbishment” of historical subgenres in the mid-eighteenth century, reflecting “a new awareness among writers of the affective possibilities of history.”<sup>43</sup>

Lyttelton’s twenty-five dialogues introduce a comparatively narrow range of characters, ranging from classical figures (writers and philosophers such as Plato, Virgil, Lucian, and characters from classical fictions such as Ulysses and Circe), to historical personages of the early modern period and the eighteenth century (John Locke and Pierre Bayle, Queen Christina of Sweden, Niccolò Machiavelli). Two are identified as generic types: an “English duellist” and a “North-American savage” (40). As this suggests, Lyttelton’s dialogues are an elite space: while the underworld is accessible to every dead person, all but two of the conversations recorded by Lyttelton are between named and celebrated men and women. Although the dialogues range widely over history, three historical periods are especially favoured: the Roman Civil War and the peace of Augustus, the conflicts of the Elizabethan period, and the English Civil War and Restoration. These

three periods are a key focus for Whig historical writing of the mid-eighteenth century, as the favoured occasions for debate on liberty in its English settlement. The dialogues repeatedly turn on a contrast between ancient and modern society, and while they often consider the achievements of their historical actors, they do not simply champion one period over the other, but rather, analyze the historical factors that influenced events. Lyttelton's dialogues aim at the balanced view that Paddy Bullard has argued was typical of mid-century Whig historiography.<sup>44</sup> The historiographic seriousness of the dialogues was reinforced by Lyttelton's deployment of extensive marginal citations pointing to scholarly evidence.<sup>45</sup> The citations advertise the ambition and seriousness of Lyttelton's scholarship, but also undercut his didactic purpose by implying that his readers lack the education to recognize his allusions unaided.

Montagu's three dialogues appear to be an adroit imitation of Lyttelton's project, yet offer subtle revisions. Two of her three satires—between Cadmus and Hercules, and Plutarch and a Modern Bookseller—focus on the question of the moral status of learning and the arts, and the third—between Mercury and a Modern Fine Lady—directs attention specifically to the status of women. She shows more interest in type-characters than historical figures: a good example is found in Montagu's second dialogue (No. 27), between Mercury, the messenger of the underworld, and "A *Modern Fine Lady*" (300) further identified as "Mrs. Modish" (300).<sup>46</sup> In this satire on the wealthy women of urban high society, Montagu was essentially attacking her own peer group. When the messenger of death calls, Mrs. Modish politely explains that she is too busy to accept his invitation to travel to the underworld, complaining "Indeed, Mr. Mercury, I cannot have the pleasure of waiting upon you now. I am engaged, absolutely engaged" (300). When Mercury reiterates that death does not wait, Mrs. Modish insists that she is too busy, as her time is occupied by social engagements, by the balls, plays, opera, and parties "common to women of my Rank. . . . It would be *the rudest thing in the world* not to keep my appointments" (301). Montagu's attack converges on the empty language of society women, noticing especially the fashionable and foreign term "the *bon ton*," a new Francophone borrowing that the satire describes as beyond definition. Although Montagu's self-reflexive satire turns on the language of fashionable female society, it also seems to depend on such discourse itself, especially misogynist discourse against the moral values of femininity. As will be shown below, the satire exposed Montagu to accusations of hypocrisy, as her

own elevated social position as a woman was not markedly different from those women she attacked. Although this was Montagu's most popular and fêted dialogue, it is also the most problematic. By exposing herself to criticism, through its pointed social criticism of her equals and betters, Montagu was severely testing the propriety of her border-crossing into publication.

The cultural value of literature forms the topic for Montagu's other two dialogues. Her first is arguably the most orthodox imitation of Lyttelton: it is conducted between two classical heroes, Cadmus, known for his prominence in the arts, and Hercules, the martial hero. Hercules complains that while Cadmus has won no battles, and made no conquests, he has a high status in the underworld. Hercules accuses Cadmus of having done nothing but teach "his Countrymen *to sit still and read*" (293). The dialogue is a defence of wit, learning, and poetry, promoting virtue and civilisation against the claims of military exploits and heroism.<sup>47</sup> The third dialogue begins with the historian and essayist Plutarch (Mestrius Plutarchus, 46 AD?–AD 120), and Charon, in Greek mythology the ferryman of the newly dead across the Hades. These two representatives of classical culture encounter a type-character from the modern age, a wealthy book-merchant called the "Modern Bookseller," who complains he has too much "Business in the other world" to stay long in the underworld (306). (The particular subject of Montagu's bookseller satire is not known).<sup>48</sup> As a great author, Plutarch is charged with reasoning with him: but the Modern Bookseller replies derisively: "Am I got into a world so absolutely the reverse of that I left, that here *Authors* domineer over *Booksellers*?" (306–7). As classical authors don't sell, the bookseller claims they have no power over him. In his estimation, the "natural War" (309) between "men of Science and Fools," (310) has been won by the latter, and "the Party of the Learned" (310) hold out only in the "Forts and Fastnesses at Oxford and Cambridge." (310). Classical authors, the "old musty moralists" (310), are no longer studied by young men and "men of the world" (310), and instead the market is all for "New Books, which teach them to have no Virtue at all" (310). Even women, he says, are "not afraid to read our Books, which not only dispose to Gallantry and Coquetry, but give rules for them" (311). Even the morally improving novels of Richardson and other "good *Wits*" (319) comply with the taste of the age, responding to the "disposition of those who are to read them"—in other words, the market (316). In its conception of the corrupt state of the literary world, the dialogue's satire is broadly Scriblerian. Booksellers debase the world of learning, Montagu argues, by understanding books only

as commodities whose sole index of success is their popularity on the market. Literature does not have a moral, political, or cultural value, but is simply a commodity that appeals to base or venal tastes. This Scriblerian hostility to the booktrade priorities of the modern bookseller thematizes Montagu's anxiety about the cultural status of a commercially-oriented professional author. Montagu's satire offers a contrast between the manuscript world of publication among the ancients, in which the author is figured as a man of virtue, learning, and honor, and the moral bankruptcy of the new market-driven world of bookseller publishing. The satire dramatizes her own predicament, as a woman writer publishing in commercial and public print, as clearly as it does that of the modern fine lady.

Montagu's three dialogues have a distinct flavor. Compared to Lyttelton's, hers are more interested in contemporary culture—both the follies of high society and the follies of learning—than his historical interest in political conduct and varieties of Whiggism. While the tropes of Lyttelton's dialogues recur to a series of robust attempts to establish or defend established moral and critical certainties, Montagu's dialogues attack the tenets of their own possibility: that there might be stable and enduring cultural value in print and amongst society women. The self-devouring quality of her satirical observations reflects in part the precarious subject position she inhabits as a socially-mobile and wealthy woman of quality who is also an author. Nonetheless, while she attacks novelty and modernity, she seems unable to understand the ramifications of her own rebellious subject position as a woman who writes satire. Her resistance to her own argument might be read as a deliberate and strategic maneuver: supposing that she is aware of the precarious nature of her border-crossing into publication, she masks her adventurism with a conservative cultural agenda designed to placate those readers she discomforts.

### III. READERS AND AUTHORS

Montagu's correspondence shows that her friends, especially those who knew of her contribution, were enthusiastic about her contribution to the *Dialogues*. Although this debate amongst her inner circle was private and unpublished, it offers a telling examination of the propriety of a woman of her status appearing in print. The most important exchange was with Elizabeth Carter, whose prestigious and publically-acknowledged translation of the ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus had appeared to high praise in 1758.<sup>49</sup> As a published woman writer,

Montagu valued her opinion highly.<sup>50</sup> Montagu had promised Carter a copy of the book as soon as it came off the press, and sent it finally to her at Deal on Thursday 15 May.<sup>51</sup> Carter described in several letters how the book's arrival at Deal was received in her family. Her brother, she said, "snatched it away in an instant" when it arrived: after that, she "consigned it over to my father."<sup>52</sup> Her anecdote explains why she had only had time to read the first two of Montagu's three dialogues, which, she said, gave her "a pleasure at least equal to what I had expected from them."<sup>53</sup> Carter's letter is full of this sort of back-handed and half-hearted praise: she recalls that she laughed "most cordially" at Mrs. Modish's "fine lady delineation of the *bon ton*," and opined that it was "scandalous to suspect that Mrs. Modish wants the power of amusing" or that "Cadmus talks like a pedant."<sup>54</sup> Carter finished her letter with another "obliging" compliment about their public reception, saying "I shall soon enjoy the pleasure of hearing them admired by the rest of the world."<sup>55</sup> Given the perils of public criticism, Carter's observation carries a threatening weight.

In her reply, written around 21 May, Montagu thanks Carter for what she takes to be her supportive praise, and declares herself "very happy in her approbation of ye dialogues." "With her encouragement I do not know but at last I may become an author in form." She then expatiates on the role of the satirist:

It enlarges ye sphere of action, & lengthens ye short period of human life. To become universal & lasting is an ambition which none but great genius's should indulge; but to be read by a few, & for a few years, may be aspired to. We see in Nature some birds are destined to range the vast regions of ye air, others to fly & hop near the ground, & pick up the worms, I shall think myself happy if I can do any thing towards clearing society of their lowest & meanest follies.

Montagu recognizes that the satirical agenda of her dialogues is reformative and as such, satire in this mode (polite, gentle, Horatian) is not sublime, but is at least oriented toward public virtue. She goes on to discuss, at some length, the "favourable reception" of her three dialogues, noting that while "Lord Lytteltons have been admired to the highest degree," her own have not been "disadvantaged" by comparison. "Mrs. Modish is a great favourite with the Town, but some Ladies have toss'd up their heads & said it was abominably satirical."<sup>56</sup> Her point with this equine image is to remind herself that ridicule has the power to wound and as such, could be considered dangerously improper for a woman of her status.

Montagu's letters repeatedly return to her anonymity: noting with self-interested glee the various conjectures about the author by friends and acquaintances, recording their mistaken guesses and reasoning. She notes that her dialogues were "for some days attributed to Mr. Charles York," a lawyer, antiquarian, and man of letters, and in 1760 the Solicitor-General. The report that Yorke was Lyttelton's collaborator was still being credibly reported a month later by Richard Hurd.<sup>57</sup> Another acquaintance, Mrs. Anne Donnellan, who was a well-connected society woman, pressed her for information. Montagu reported she

wrote a note insisting to be informd whether they were yours [i.e. Carter's] or — I got myself pretty well out of ye scrape, & feeling they were unworthy of you, I took care to intimate they were not your writing. My friendship resisted the temptation of giving you the blame. I believe without telling a direct fib I have puzzled Donnellans curiosity. Few have had the indelicacy to ask, but several have hinted & I have parry'd the blow.

She admitted however that "alas they are now mostly given to ye true Author. Lady Fr: Williams & ye authors friends had little doubt." Montagu's rather coquettish reports of the public speculations reveal one of the perils of anonymity: in denying her role, she has had to tell a fib, a venial falsehood, even to her friends. Montagu weighed the opportunity of literary fame against the risk of reputational damage. She ends her letter requesting further reports of the fortunes of her publication amongst Carter's acquaintance, specifically in the circles of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Carter's friend Catherine Talbot was a close member of the family of Archbishop Thomas Secker [1683–1768]), and more generally, Carter's friends in Deal: "Pray let me know the sentence of ye Academy of Sciences at Deal on ye dialogues."<sup>58</sup> That sentence was passed a few days later, when Carter replied from Deal on 23 May 1760.

Developing an important critical response, Carter is just and candid in her account, adopting a polite but circumspect tone that Montagu cannot have understood as anything but severe in criticism. (Carter did not write again until 5 September 1760, perhaps suggesting a coolness between the two).<sup>59</sup> She begins by describing the book's reception in her family: with her father and brother, with her friend Mrs. Hannah Underdown, and with Carter's sister.<sup>60</sup> The book she reported had been handed about eagerly—exchanged, debated, discussed—but anonymity involved evasion: "Without any manner of falsehood, I have hitherto avoided all difficulties about the author, who, you tell me, is

as well known in town, as I told you she would be.”<sup>61</sup> Carter remains unconvinced by Montagu’s faith in anonymity, explaining “You tell me you do not know but you may at last become an author in form. I hope you are in earnest, and long to know, whether you have really thought on any particular plan.”

The complications are explored in an example: Carter observes that “Mrs. Modish is a favourite here, as well as in London,” and goes on to make some comments of her own in the next paragraph on the follies of female society. Carter’s reaction implies that the satire on female manners in the dialogues is its most ideologically acute discussion. But she also suggests a continuum of folly exists between Mrs. Modish and the project of Montagu’s published satire:

I really think the character of Mrs. Modish, may make many a fine lady heartily ashamed, yet how long that salutary effect may last, I know not, or whether she may not content herself with displacing one absurdity to make room for another. Merely to pluck up the weeds of vice and folly as they rise, is an endless task. There will be a constant succession perpetually springing up in vacant ground, and the only way of preventing their growth, is by sowing the mind with the principles of duty. I heartily wish you to be engaged in some work of this kind.<sup>62</sup>

Carter rejects the moral project of gentle satire: correcting minor follies by exposing them to ridicule, she explains, merely leaves more room for new and diverse forms of foolishness. Rather, she proposes in the final sentence, Montagu ought to write in an improving genre that would actively cultivate virtue, such as a conduct book, or a manual of practical devotion. Carter here occupies an orthodox position amongst women writers of this period, supporting the kind of pious sentimentalism practised by Sarah Scott, for example, as much as her own scholarly endeavours. Scott herself, writing from Bath around 20 June, also expressed her disapproval of the *Dialogues* as a form unsuitable for a woman like Montagu. Scott argued that

The way you defend yourself from having the three Dialogues ascribed to you may weigh with some, but I confess it has not alter’d my opinion; if you think me obstinate I can’t help it, but it remains just the same, & except the Dialogues had less merit I cannot wish to alter it.<sup>63</sup>

Scott recognized that anonymity forestalled some objections, but did not obviate her main complaint, that the dialogue form, a prose satire on social follies, exposed her sister to public censure about her own

follies. Montagu knew two women who were published authors, and both expressed firm reservations about her publication of the dialogues.

#### IV. "AN AUTHOR IN FORM"

Carter's letter of 23 May 1760 is an interesting reflection on Montagu's ambitions for publication—even to the point of picking up her term "an author in form." The phrase is a distinctive one: the *OED* defines the phrase "in form" as meaning "according to the rules or prescribed methods; also, as a matter of merely formal procedure, formally."<sup>64</sup> In this sense, then, an "author in form" is one who is so formally, according to all the rules: that is, not only published, but so identified in public, and subject to critical examination and debate. Becoming an "author in form" is an important event, especially to one who had long entertained the possibility of, and impediments to, such an event.

The phrase itself, an "author in form," as used by both Montagu and Carter, was adapted from Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* (1711), and is, I suggest, used in a distinct Shaftesburian sense. Montagu and Carter were not alone in adopting this phrase: Hugh Blair and Hurd both returned to the phrase in a commensurate usage later in the century.<sup>65</sup> Montagu's letters suggest she had enduring interest in Shaftesbury, especially his doctrine of ridicule, although aspects of his theological speculations aroused her suspicions. The first record of Montagu reading the *Characteristicks* was in 1742, when she asks her husband, Edward, to send her their copy of the book.<sup>66</sup> Montagu's interest in Shaftesbury was not unusual in the period, as new popular "pocket" editions in octavo and duodecimo brought the work to new generations of readers.<sup>67</sup> Reading and debating the *Characteristicks* was routine amongst thinking women and men in the mid-century. The debate on Shaftesbury was further kept alive by continuing commentary on his arguments, such as John Brown's *Essays on the Characteristics* (1751), which Montagu read, and Charles Bulkley's reply, *A vindication of my Lord Shaftesbury, on the subject of ridicule* (1751).<sup>68</sup>

The term "author in form" emerges in the *Miscellanies* volume of the *Characteristicks*, in which Shaftesbury adopted the persona of a miscellany writer, or periodical essayist, to return to topics canvassed earlier in the book. In the third "Miscellany," Shaftesbury reexamines the relationship between the author and the public.

Of all the artificial Relations form'd between Mankind the more capricious and variable is that of *Author* and *Reader*. Our Author . . . supposes that every *Author in Form*, is, in respect of the particular matter he explains, superiour in Understanding to his *Reader*; yet he allows not that any Author shou'd assume the upper hand, or pretend to withdraw himself from that necessary Subjection to foreign Judgment and Criticism, which must determine the Place of Honour on the Reader's side.<sup>69</sup>

Shaftesbury argues that though an author may be superior to a reader in understanding on a particular matter, he is not to assume that he is exempt from critical analysis by such a reader. To Shaftesbury, an “author in form”—elsewhere he says “author in due form” and “author-character”—meant one who accepts the outward form of an author, and who appears before his readers in such a character.<sup>70</sup> The “Author-Character,” Shaftesbury concludes, appears on the world's stage in the dress of an author, and as such cannot achieve that degree of self-reflective understanding allowed in the disinterested leisure of aristocratic cultivation.<sup>71</sup>

Shaftesbury focuses on how being “an author in form” exposes a writer to criticism by other men, and argues that despite the apparent challenge to the established mores of aristocratic honour, this sort of “literary” criticism can be just, fair, and honorable. He argues that an author writes for his reader: an “author's art and labour are for his reader's sake alone”: in that sense, the reader is master of the author.<sup>72</sup> But many writers, he says, set themselves above criticism, not wishing to be “reminded of those poor elements of speech, their alphabet and grammar.” An author, he concludes, is not at liberty to say his work is above or beyond criticism. Such views inform the complicated proof-revision process adopted by Lyttelton for his *Henry the Second*, which was designed to revise the work beyond critical reproof, especially in regard to those menial elements of writing, alphabet (spelling), and grammar. Lyttelton was greatly concerned that his punctuation might be found wanting, even going to the extent of hiring a professional “pointer” to “stop” or punctuate his work.<sup>73</sup> Montagu adopted a similar stance when publishing her *Essay on the Writing and Genius of Shakespear* (1769), which included a list of errata prominently displayed on the contents page, so making a virtue of the care taken over the work's printed appearance.

This is not to say that Shaftesbury thinks favorably of critics: rather he criticizes them as “answers,” men who do nothing but answer other writer's arguments. A critic, he says, is one who sets out “To

censure merely what another person writes, to twitch, snap, snub up or banter, to torture sentences and phrases, turn a few expressions into ridicule.”<sup>74</sup> But despite this dismissive regard for critics, Shaftesbury argues that an author in due form is one who allows and welcomes critical engagement. By using the Shaftesburian term an “author in form,” Montagu suggests she will accept becoming a wholly public writer: not only admitting her authorship, but also submitting to the discipline of criticism, and with it, the possibility of public censure for the shortcomings of her wit and scholarship.

#### V. CRITICS AND ANSWERERS

The treatment of her contribution to the *Dialogues of the Dead* by readers and critics was a matter of considerable concern for Montagu. Beyond her inner circle of correspondents, her letters express her concerns about the maintenance of her anonymity, assessments of the quality of her writing, and the reception of her satire. Over the months that followed publication, the bookseller Sandby kept the book in the public eye through advertisements in five different newspapers.<sup>75</sup> Critical notices about the book appeared first in newspapers, and then in the periodical press. Some of these merely were informational, noting the book’s publication and reprinting one of the dialogues.<sup>76</sup> Lyttelton’s identity as the principal author was revealed in newspapers within a few days of publication.<sup>77</sup> Reviews in the newspapers—broadly enthusiastic about Lyttelton’s achievement—were followed by more substantial notices in the literary reviews: by Tobias Smollett in the *Critical Review*, Owen Ruffhead in the *Monthly Review*, by Oliver Goldsmith in the *Lady’s Magazine*, by Edmund Burke in *The Annual Register*, as well as two reviews in France.<sup>78</sup> The most substantial assessment appeared on 17 June, when an anonymous gentleman “answerer” published a 94-page book-length critical commentary on the *Dialogues*, entitled *Candid and critical remarks on the Dialogues of the dead: in a letter from a gentleman in London to his friend in the country*.<sup>79</sup> As the critical debate unfolded, the central issue that emerged was Lyttelton’s handling of recent politics, notably his treatment of rival statesmen such as William Pitt, then one of the chief ministers in the coalition administration with Newcastle. Although a lifelong friend and ally of Pitt, Lyttelton had fallen out with him during the breakup of the Devonshire-Pitt administration in 1757: several of Lyttelton’s *Dialogues* were reported to reflect badly on Pitt’s conduct since that time. Montagu’s anonymous contribution received a little comment in

these reviews, for which Montagu may have been thankful. Ruffhead, in the *Monthly Review*, made the most negative comment, suggesting that few readers would agree with Lyttelton's chivalrous comment that the last three dialogues were to be preferred. But in general, there was nothing in any public notice to trouble Montagu.

Montagu's curiosity about the popular and critical success of the *Dialogues* is shown by her archiving of responses, in letters addressed to her, and by the careful preservation of letters sent to Lyttelton by men of his acquaintance praising the volume, even when they seem to be ignorant of her contribution. Her own archive of correspondence notes and preserves approving responses from an impressive list of intellectual men and women, including: Dodo Heinrich, Freiherr von Knyphausen, the Prussian Ambassador to England; Richard Meadowcourt, the vicar of Lindridge in Worcestershire, an accomplished critic of John Milton's works; Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield; Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth Palace; Edward Young, poet and critic; Dr. John Gregory, the Scottish physician and moralist; Lady Mary Hervey, the widow of John, lord Hervey; and William Clarke, antiquary, and canon librarian of Chichester Cathedral.<sup>80</sup> Montagu's correspondence does not archive or note the hostile response to the *Dialogues* by Horace Walpole, who sent copies to the Scottish judge and antiquary Sir David Dalrymple, later Lord Hailes (1726–1792), and Sir Horace Mann (1706–1786), the British consular representative in Florence, in which Walpole made fun of the “*Dead Dialogues*”; and the Cambridge fellow and antiquarian Richard Hurd, who thought them “very puerile, & composed with less elegance than one expects in such things.”<sup>81</sup>

Montagu also learnt of Lyttelton's ambitious circulation of the *Dialogues* to leading intellectual figures in Europe. He sent a presentation copy to Hume in Edinburgh.<sup>82</sup> Voltaire, who was mentioned of one of the dialogues, read the volume and wrote to Lyttelton to complain about the way he was represented.<sup>83</sup> His letter, and Lyttelton's complaisant reply, caused a sensation when they were published in the press.<sup>84</sup> Two rival translations of the *Dialogues* appeared in French as well. The first, by the prolific translator “professeur” Élie de Joncourt (d. 1770), was made from a copy sent by Anne Pitt to Louis-Jules Mancini-Mazarini, duc de Nivernais (1716–1798), a writer and fellow of the Academie Française.<sup>85</sup> In response, Lyttelton encouraged the publication of a translation made by Jean Des Champs, a French Protestant clergyman in London, which was published and sold by C. G. Seyffert from his “Libraire” in Pall Mall.<sup>86</sup> Des Champs's diary

notes that copies of his translation were presented to Frederick, king of Prussia (through his aide de camp, Samuel Baron von Coccej) and to the Queen Mother, Augusta Princesse Douairière de Galles. One copy even made its way to the Jesuit mission in Beijing, China, where it was praised for its pure and elegant style.<sup>87</sup> Although the *Dialogues* can appear to be a minor work of satire to the modern eye, the book's reception suggests it was something of an Enlightenment *cause célèbre*.

After the book's publication, Montagu went to Tunbridge for the summer season, joined by Lyttelton and Carter in July.<sup>88</sup> At Tunbridge the *Dialogues* made her a kind of celebrity. Montagu was pestered by an old Quaker chemist (unidentified) who, she said, "will believe in spite of all I can say that I wrote certain dialogues."<sup>89</sup> Knowledge that Montagu was a writer was apparently commonplace by August: her eccentric friend Messenger Mounsey wrote that "the world" believes "you have wrote some *Dead Dialogues*, however you have some grace left in denying 'em, and if they won't believe you, tell em I wrote 'em under a Blister."<sup>90</sup> The medical practise of blistering, in traditional humoral medicine, removed bodily fluids to correct the balance between the four humors: it was commonly prescribed for migraine and mania. The precarious fame Montagu achieved through the dialogues was attested in an anonymous verse satire on the Tunbridge season for 1760 called *Scandal at Tunbridge Wells: A Fable*, which identified her amongst various women sojourning at the spa. Scandal, the poem explained, came from London to Tunbridge for the summer season, where "with sly Leers and envious Smiles, / She trails her Robe along the Tiles," takes tea and begins to "sneer and flout the Ladies." While most women at the spa are criticized for not being as beautiful or as celebrated as they would claim, Montagu was satirized for her pretensions to learning.

Bless me! what's here? I did not see  
Wise *Montague*, the *belle Esprit*!  
That studies, reads, and writes, and talks,  
The very *Sappho* of the Walks!<sup>91</sup>

The poem concludes when Truth, who rises from her sacred cell within the well, expels Scandal from the town with a thunder-clap.<sup>92</sup> Montagu had become the subject of scandal, not only because she was an author in form, appearing in public as such, but because as a satirist, the scourge of folly and falsehood, she had set herself up as the arbiter of taste, as a judge of women and literature. As Montagu's adoption of the complex Shaftesburian term an "author in form" attests,

print publication exposed a writer to criticism, and constructed her character as an author in society. Although Montagu does not seem to have been wounded by the public reception of her book, public satires and private remonstrations reminded her of the fragile propriety of being a woman and an author in form.

The state of being a published author, and the question of anonymity, continued to exercise Montagu in the subsequent decade. As Elizabeth Eger has argued, Montagu remained wary of publication, even as she worked on her essay on Shakespeare.<sup>93</sup> When she first took up the topic of Shakespeare in 1761, she explained to Pulteney that “I know I am very unequal to the task but it will improve me, & the work will not expose me, for I shall never make it publick.”<sup>94</sup> In February 1766 she wrote to her sister Sarah Scott (whose sixth anonymous work, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, was published in 1766), stating that:

I am determined never to own any thing I print till I am past three score, & then as I shall look like a Sybil. I may scatter leaves about, but I cannot assume the character of an author & a critick while I appear in the gay world, & it is so much more agreable to be a Citizen of the World in general than to be of any particular class, that I would not on any account wear a distinction tho in some measure honourable. If indeed I had the genius of Pope, Addison, or Swift I wd with pleasure take the august name of author but it does not suit my situation & condition of life to appear all that I can appear, a mediocere writer.<sup>95</sup>

The central question remains that of owning a publication: to own a publication was both to assert that one was the author of that text, and transitively, that the writer was an author. Montagu asserts here that to assume the character of an author and critic, to take the “august name of author,” was incompatible with her status as a woman in the upper echelons of London society, in the “gay world.”

After a very long process of coterie revision and amendment, Montagu’s *An Essay on the writings and genius of Shakespear* was published in 1769, again anonymously.<sup>96</sup> As with the publication of the *Dialogues of the Dead* in 1760, she adopted a series of procedures to preserve her anonymity. Montagu maintained a strict cordon between her self and the publisher, Robert Dodsley; her friend Benjamin Stillingfleet corrected the proofs for the press; she took care to send letters to Dodsley from diverse addresses not known to be connected to her; she disavowed her friends’ enquiries about “where to fix the author.”<sup>97</sup> As with the *Dialogues*, her authorship eventually became known, but only after sales had proved successful, and a series of positive reviews had appeared in the periodical journals. In a letter to her

father, Matthew Robinson, in which she acknowledges his approbation of the *Essay*, Montagu defended both her status as an author, and the deceptions deployed to preserve her anonymity, explaining that “there is in general a prejudice against female Authors especially if they invade those regions of litterature which the Men are desirous to reserve to themselves,” such as criticism and satire. She explained how she had deflected personal criticism by anonymous publication, and had revised her work in consultation with an inner circle of “three or four people conversant in Critical learning.”

Despite the satisfaction she elsewhere reveals about the recognition she gained for her intellectual accomplishments, having been identified as the author of the *Essay* gave her cause for concern. She commented: “I shall not own the work, nor would [I] have any of my friends own it is mine, but leave people to think as they please. I am content to be a demirep in litterature, but cannot have the effronterie to go further.”<sup>98</sup> Montagu proposed to continue to deny ownership of the work, despite the widespread public recognition. But in her refusal to become an author in form, her phrase “demirep in litterature” is revealing. As a “demi-rep” is a woman of doubtful reputation or suspected chastity, the phrase advertises the precarious moral status of the author in form. Here as elsewhere, Montagu strategically deploys a complicated construction of femininity to both foil and engage with the discourse of the author.

Shaftesbury’s model of publication and authorship, adapted by Lyttelton and Montagu in the *Dialogues of the Dead*, and again by Montagu in the *Essay on Shakespeare*, offers an important model for publication: aristocratic and disinterested, but also publicly engaged with readers and critics in the literary world. Montagu’s discussion with Carter and Scott of the consequences of her decision to print her satires, detailed in her published writing and unpublished correspondence, provide an important commentary on, and test of, Shaftesbury’s discourse on authorship. Even though it does not resolve the stigma of print for Montagu, Shaftesbury’s model constitutes an important and yet overlooked discourse in the emergence of women’s writing. In the reception of her contribution to Lyttelton’s satires, Montagu’s particular status as an educated and talented women of great wealth but not nobility, reinforces the complex overlap between gender and status in discourses of publication and authorship in the period. These involutions of ambition and retirement are characteristic of the emergent figure of the bluestocking woman writer.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> George Lyttelton and Elizabeth Montagu, *Dialogues of the Dead* (London: W. Sandby, 1760), 290. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, 1 [21] May 1760, Papers of Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, MO3034, Huntington Library. Hereafter cited as Montagu Papers. Huntington dating has been followed unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> Simon During, "Church, State, and Modernization: English Literature as Gentlemanly Knowledge after 1688," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 37 (2008): 168. See also Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> For accounts that privilege legal innovations in copyright in forging the independence of the professional writer, see Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993); Alvin Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters & Samuel Johnson* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987). See also the rival account that stresses the survival and modification of the historically-enduring patronage model in which the author is sponsored into print by a person of high station, wealth, or birth: Dustin H. Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> See Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660–1800* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1989); Norma Clark, *The Rise and Fall of the Woman of Letters* (London: Pimlico, 2004); Betty Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> See Edward Bloom, introduction to Fanny Burney, *Evelina, or, The history of a young lady's entrance into the world* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Harold Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts: Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 54–55; Schellenberg, 1–2; Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> See Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times*, 2nd ed., 3 vol. (London: John Darby, 1714 [1715]), 3:284. A modern edition is Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 434.

<sup>10</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, 2:303; Klein ed., 136.

<sup>11</sup> See Love, 47–54.

<sup>12</sup> Shaftesbury to Thomas Micklethwayte, 22 November 1712, in *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, ed. Benjamin Rand (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900), 522.

<sup>13</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks* 2:305; Klein ed., 136.

<sup>14</sup> See Philip Yorke, Charles Yorke, Thomas Birch, and others, *Athenian Letters: or, the epistolary correspondence of an agent of the King of Persia, residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian war* (London: James Bettenham, 1741). Other contributors included Henry Coventry, John Green, Samuel Salter, Catherine Talbot, Daniel Wray, George Henry Rooke, John Heaston, and John Lawry.

<sup>15</sup> For recent scholarship on Montagu's writing see: Elizabeth Eger, ed., *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. 1 of *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738–1785*, ed. Gary Kelly, 6 vol. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999); Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010); Sylvia Harestark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Nicole Pohl and Schellenberg, eds., *Reconsidering the Bluestockings* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> See Bridget Hill, "The Course of the Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu: An Ambitious and Talented Woman," *Journal of Family History* 26 (2001): 3–17.

<sup>17</sup> On Montagu's sociable practices, especially her salon or assemblies, see Eger and Myers above, and also Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, *Millenium Hall*, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30 (2006): 25–55; Deborah Heller, "Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22 (1998): 59–82; Alison Hurley, "A Conversation of Their Own: Watering-Place Correspondence Among the Bluestockings," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40 (2006): 1–21.

<sup>18</sup> See Lewis M. Wiggan, *The Faction of Cousins: A Political Account of the Grenvilles, 1733–1763* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958).

<sup>19</sup> Emma Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 168.

<sup>20</sup> Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), 205.

<sup>21</sup> See George Lyttelton, *The history of the life of King Henry the Second, and of the age in which he lived, in five books: Vol. I.* (London: W. Sandby and J. Dodsley, 1767). The four volumes were completed by 1771.

<sup>22</sup> See Robert Joseph Phillimore, *Memoirs and Correspondence of George, Lord Lyttelton, from 1734 to 1773*, 2 vol. (London: J. Ridgway, 1845), 2:573. Phillimore estimated he spent more than £1000 on printing the first volume alone (2:570).

<sup>23</sup> See William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, to Elizabeth Montagu, 16 March 1760, Montagu Papers MO4221.

<sup>24</sup> George Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, [1759?], Montagu Papers, MO1285.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton, 1 January 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1393.

<sup>26</sup> See Pulteney to Elizabeth Montagu, 16 March 1760, Montagu Papers, MO4221; Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3035. Montagu's date is smudged and could read 6 May.

<sup>27</sup> See Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660–1750* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1984).

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3035. Montagu advised Carter that "You will receive ye dialogues in a fortnight."

<sup>29</sup> Two more from this period survive in manuscript; see "A dialogue between Berenice and Cleopatra" (1760), Montagu Papers, MO2998; "A Dialogue between Simon or Simeon Stylites and Mr Secretary" (1760?), Montagu Papers, MO2997. See also "Dialogue between Peter Pinder & Doctor Johnson" (1768?), Montagu Papers, MO6858.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3035.

<sup>31</sup> Montagu and Edmund Burke had become friends in 1759 after being introduced to each other by the Armenian Josef Emin; see F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 2 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998–2006), esp. 1:185–86.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3035.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3035.

<sup>34</sup> Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 12 May 1760, in Carter, *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs. Montagu, between the Years 1755 and 1800, Chiefly Upon Literary and Moral Subjects* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1817), 79–82. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington. This letter is an answer to Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3035, which, although dated 1 May by the Huntington Library, is more likely dated circa 6 May based on internal evidence.

<sup>35</sup> See *Public Advertiser*, 16 May 1760.

<sup>36</sup> See Keith Maslen, *Samuel Richardson of London, Printer: A Study of His Printing Based on Ornament Use and Business Accounts* (Dunedin: Univ. of Otago, 2001), 450.

<sup>37</sup> The second edition was advertised in four newspapers: *London Chronicle*, Thursday 15 May to Saturday 17 May 1760; *London Gazette*, Saturday 17 May to Tuesday 20 May 1760; *Whitehall Evening Post*, Thursday 15 May to Saturday 17 May 1760; *Public Advertiser*, Tuesday 20 May 1760.

<sup>38</sup> See William B. Todd, “Patterns in Press Figures: A Study of Lyttelton’s *Dialogues of the Dead*,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 8 (1956): 230–36.

<sup>39</sup> William Clarke to Charles Lyttelton, 13 August 1760, MS 754, Stowe Manuscripts, British Library, 58–59r.

<sup>40</sup> George Lyttelton, preface to *Dialogues of the Dead*, [iii]. The page is unnumbered, but the next page is numbered iv.

<sup>41</sup> See Richard Hurd, *Moral and political dialogues: being the substance of several conversations between divers eminent persons of the past and present age* (London, 1759).

<sup>42</sup> George Lyttelton, preface to *Dialogues of the Dead*, iv. As in dialogues in the modern tradition of François Fénelon and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, Lyttelton reiterates his commitment to novelty (“a *new Dress* for an *old Truth*” (iv)); notes that the dead are aware what has happened after their death; that the dialogues make use of established fictional locations and “necessary *Allegories*” (vi) (such “sports of a poetical Pen” (vi) as “Elysium, Minos, Mercury, Charon and Styx” (vi)); and are permitted historical variety (dialogues occur at “different Dates” (vi): either in deep historical time when the characters lived, or in the recent past, upon which the historical characters are commenting).

<sup>43</sup> O’Brien, 211.

<sup>44</sup> See Paddy Bullard, “The Latitude of Whiggism” in “*Cultures of Whiggism*”: *New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. David Womersley, Bullard, and Abigail Williams (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2005), esp. 312–16.

<sup>45</sup> In the dialogue between Louise de Coligni, Princess of Orange and Frances Walsingham, Countess of Essex, the reader is directed to “See Du Maurier *Memoires de Hollande*, from p. 177 to 190. *Biographia Britann. Essex.*” (147). These are two books of orthodox Whig history; see Louis Aubery du Maurier, *The Lives of all the Princes of Orange; from William the Great, founder of the Common-wealth of the United Provinces* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1693); and Thomas Birch’s biography of Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, in *Biographia Britannica*, 6 vol. (London: W. Innys, 1747–66), 3:1659–88.

<sup>46</sup> This dialogue was reprinted in *The Annual Register . . . for the year 1760* (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), 261–64; and in Vicesimus Knox, *Elegant Extracts* (London: Charles Dilly, 1784), 447 (along with five dialogues by Lyttelton).

<sup>47</sup> See *Dialogues of the Dead*, 291–99.

<sup>48</sup> See *Dialogues of the Dead*, 306–20. Although the bookseller comments that he has employed Richardson as a printer, more than 212 booksellers might claim that

privilege. See William Merritt Sale, "A List of Booksellers for Whom Richardson Printed" in *Samuel Richardson: Master Printer* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1950), 317–43; see also Maslen, 14.

<sup>49</sup> See Elizabeth Carter, *All the works of Epictetus, which are now extant; consisting of his discourses, preserved by Arrian, in four books, the Enchiridion, and fragments. Translated from the original Greek, by Elizabeth Carter. With an introduction, and notes, by the translator* (London: S. Richardson, 1758).

<sup>50</sup> The women exchanged six letters in the month of May 1760, an unusually large number. Some of these letters are undated, and although their sequence can be ascertained from internal evidence, exact dating is not always possible.

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, [15] May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3036.

<sup>52</sup> Carter to Catherine Talbot, 19 May 1760, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770*, ed. Montagu Pennington, 4 vol. (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1809), 2:330.

<sup>53</sup> Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 19 May 1760, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 83. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington.

<sup>54</sup> Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 19 May 1760, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 83. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington.

<sup>55</sup> Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 19 May 1760, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 85. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 [21] May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3034. The Huntington Library catalogues the letter as 1 May, but internal evidence indicates it is dated between 19 May 1760 (Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 83–85) and 23 May (Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 85–88).

<sup>57</sup> See Richard Hurd to Sir Edward Littleton, 14 June 1760, in *The early letters of Bishop Richard Hurd, 1739–1762*, ed. Sarah Brewer (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1995), 356–57.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Carter, 1 [21] May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO3034.

<sup>59</sup> See Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 5 September 1760, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 89–92. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington.

<sup>60</sup> Hannah Underdown (d. 1783) of Shepherdswell, Kent, was a close friend of Carter. See *Elizabeth Carter, 1717–1806: An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters*, ed. Gwen Hampshire (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2005), 24–25.

<sup>61</sup> Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 23 May 1760, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 85–88. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington.

<sup>62</sup> Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, 23 May 1760, in *Letters from Carter to Montagu*, 85–88. There is no manuscript for this letter in the Huntington.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, 20? June 1760, Montagu Papers, MO5281.

<sup>64</sup> *OED*, s.v., "form, n.," <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/73421>, accessed 5 March 2012.

<sup>65</sup> The term "author in form" is used by Hugh Blair in 1783: describing that "Simplicity of Style," which "shows us a man's sentiments and turn of mind laid open without disguise," he remarks that the "more studied and artificial manners of writing" of the "author in form . . . conceal those peculiarities which distinguish one man from another" (*Lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres*, 2 vol. [London: 1783], 1:390). For a modern edition see Blair, *Lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres*, ed. Linda Ferreira-Buckley and Michael Halloran (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 2005). The term was also used by Hurd in his memoir of William Warburton (1794), who had an

early “passion for letters” which transported him, but also the “sobriety of judgement” to avoid public recognition while he prepared himself by a “long course of reading and meditation.” Warburton’s distaste for fame, Hurd concludes, meant he was not seduced “into a premature ambition of appearing as an author in form, till he had fully qualified himself” (*Discourse, by way of general preface to the quarto edition of Bishop Warburton’s works, containing some Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the author* [London: John Nichols, 1794], 11).

<sup>66</sup> See Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 17 December [1742], Montagu Papers, MO 2154.

<sup>67</sup> The *Characteristicks* had remained popular throughout the first half the eighteenth century: after the sixth edition was published in 1738, there were eight further unnumbered editions in the 1740s and 50s.

<sup>68</sup> See John Brown, *Essays on the Characteristics* (London: C. Davis, 1751). In 1751 Montagu notes that “Mr Browns Essays on ye Characteristics of Ld Shaftesbury are well spoken of. I am going to read them” (Elizabeth Montagu to Maria Anstey, 23 November 1751, Montagu Papers, MO 114). See also Charles Bulkley, *A vindication of my Lord Shaftesbury, on the subject of ridicule. Being remarks upon a book, intituled, Essays on the characteristics* (London: John Noon, 1751).

<sup>69</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, 3:228; Klein ed., 434.

<sup>70</sup> Shaftesbury to Thomas Micklethwayte, 22 November 1712, in *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, author of the “Characteristics,”* ed. Benjamin Rand (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900), 522–23.

<sup>71</sup> See Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), esp. 105.

<sup>72</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, 3:228; Klein ed., 434.

<sup>73</sup> Phillimore, 2:573.

<sup>74</sup> Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, 3:228; Klein ed., 434. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “snub up” as “To take up sharply or severely.” *OED*, s.v., “snub, v.1.,” <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/73421>, accessed 5 March 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Announcement of the first edition appeared in *Public Advertiser*, Friday 16 May 1760. Advertisements for the second edition appeared in the following papers on the dates indicated: *London Chronicle*, Saturday 17 May 1760; *Public Ledger*, Monday 19 May 1760, Tuesday 20 May 1760, Saturday 24 May 1760; *London Gazette*, Tuesday 20 May 1760; *Whitehall Evening Post*, Saturday 17 May 1760, Tuesday May 20 1760, Tuesday 27 May 1760; *Public Advertiser*, Tuesday 20 May 1760, Wednesday 21 May 1760, Saturday 24 May 1760.

<sup>76</sup> For example, dialogue 4, “Mr. Addison—Mr. Swift,” appeared in the *London Chronicle* on 24 May 1760 and the *Public Advertiser* on 26 May 1760; meanwhile, dialogue 7, “Fernando Cortez—William Penn,” appeared in the *Public Ledger* on 29 May 1760; “A Dialogue between Earl Douglas Duke of Touraine, and John, Duke of Argyle and Greenwich” also appeared in the *Public Ledger* on 23 October 1760.

<sup>77</sup> See *London Chronicle*, 22 May 1760; see also *Public Ledger*, 29 May 1760.

<sup>78</sup> For newspaper reviews, see *London Chronicle*, 31 May 1760; see also “The Visitor. No. 12. By Philanthropy Candid,” *Public Ledger*, 29 May 1760. For Tobias Smollett’s review, see *Critical Review* 9 (May 1760): 390–93; for Oliver Goldsmith’s see *Lady’s Magazine* 1 (May 1760): 401–406; for Owen Ruffhead’s see *Monthly Review* 22 (May 1760): 409–23; for Edmund Burke’s see *Annual Register . . . for the year 1760* (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), 256–64; an anonymous review can be found in *Universal Magazine*

of *Knowledge and Pleasure* (May 1760): 270–72. For the French reviews, see *Journal Encyclopédique* 4 (Mai 1760): 53–81; see also *Année Littéraire* 2 (Mars 1761): 73–96.

<sup>79</sup> See *Candid and critical remarks on the Dialogues of the Dead: in a letter from a gentleman in London to his friend in the country* (London: George Kearsly, 1760).

<sup>80</sup> See for example the following letters: Dodo Heinrich Knyphausen to George Lyttelton, 14 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1212; Richard Meadowcourt to George Lyttelton, 28 May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1512; Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield to George Lyttelton, ? May 1760, Montagu Papers, MO5072; Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton, 14 June 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1395; Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton, 21/22 September 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1400; Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton, 3 Oct 3 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1401; George Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, [10–18] October? 1760, Montagu Papers, MO129; William Clarke to Charles Lyttelton, 13 August 13 1760, MS 754, Stowe Manuscripts, British Library, 58–59r.

<sup>81</sup> Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 24 May 1760, in *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis, 48 vol. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1937–83), 11: 407–10; Hurd to Littleton, 14 June 1760, in *The early letters of Bishop Richard Hurd, 1739–1762*, 356–57.

<sup>82</sup> See George Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, 18 October 1760, Montagu Papers, MO129.

<sup>83</sup> See dialogue 14, “Boileau—Pope,” in *Dialogues of the Dead*, 112–36.

<sup>84</sup> See “A letter from M. de Voltaire to Lord Lyttelton” and “Lord Lyttelton’s Answer,” *London Chronicle*, 28 February 1761. Reprinted as follows: “An original letter from M. de Voltaire to the Author of the Dialogues of the Dead,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* (February 1761); *Lloyd’s Evening Post and British Chronicle*, 4 March 1761; *Public Advertiser*, 11 May 1761.

<sup>85</sup> See [George Lyttelton, and Elizabeth Montagu], *Dialogues des morts: traduits de l’anglois, par professeur de Joncourt* (La Haye: P. de Hondt, 1760). The book, published by the Dutch bookseller Pierre de Hondt in the Hague so as to avoid French censors, was speedily imported “from Paris” by Becket at Tully’s Head in the Strand, where its sale was advertised the *Public Advertiser* on 29 September 1760. See also Paule Beaud-Ladoire, *Mancini Mazarin, dernier duc de Nevers, 1716–1798: une injustice de l’histoire* (Paris: Editions Christian, 2001).

<sup>86</sup> See George Lyttelton [and Elizabeth Montagu], *Dialogues des morts: composés par mylord Lyttelton; et traduits de l’anglois par Jean Des Champs* [Nouvelle edition, faite sous les yeux de l’auteur] (Londres: G. Seyffert, 1760).

<sup>87</sup> See Uta Janssens-Knorsch, *The life and “Mémoires secrets” of Jean Des Champs (1707–1767), journalist, minister and man of feeling* (London: Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1990), esp. 278, 282.

<sup>88</sup> See Elizabeth Montagu to George Lyttelton, 23 July? 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1396.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 6 August 1760, Montagu Papers, MO2384.

<sup>90</sup> Messenger Mounsey to Elizabeth Montagu, 16 August 16 1760, Montagu Papers, MO1601.

<sup>91</sup> *Scandal at Tunbridge-Wells. A fable* (London: T. Becket, 1760), 7.

<sup>92</sup> For a favourable review of this poem, see *London Chronicle*, 11 November 1760, 460.

<sup>93</sup> See Elizabeth Eger, “‘Out rushed a female to protect the Bard’: the bluestocking defense of Shakespeare,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 65 (2002): 127–51; see also Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason*, 127–41.

<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, undated [first section missing], Montagu Papers, MO4512. The Huntington Library dates this incomplete missive to 1761.

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, February? 1766, Montagu Papers, MO5837.

<sup>96</sup> See Elizabeth Montagu, *An essay on the writings and genius of Shakespear, compared with the Greek and French dramatic poets. With some remarks upon the misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (London: J. Dodsley, 1769).

<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth Vesey to Elizabeth Montagu, 23 May 1769, Montagu Papers, MO6287.

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Matthew Robinson, 10 September 1769, Montagu Papers, MO4767.

