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*'The Knot, that ties them fast together'*

‘The Knot, that ties them fast together’:

Personal proper name change and identity formation in English literature,

1779-1800

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## Abstract

This thesis addresses literary representations of personal proper name change from 1779 to 1800, arguing that these representations function as sites upon which cultural anxieties about social classification - in which notions of kinship, gender and class all play important roles - are negotiated. Reading imaginative prose literature by Frances Burney, Hester Thrale Piozzi, Charlotte Turner Smith and William Godwin alongside historical sources including journals and newspaper articles, tracts, letters, trial transcripts and legal judgments, I show that these representations of name change offer insights into how competing models of personal identity were envisaged to come into conflict.

The thesis contributes to studies of eighteenth-century theories of language, by examining how proper names were understood to exist in relation to common names within lexicography and philosophy of the period. It seeks to enhance understanding of identity formation in the eighteenth century by arguing for the importance of naming practices in constructing identities through social mediations. It modifies the history of personal naming in England by offering original qualitative and quantitative research concerning the practice of surname change by Royal Licence. It argues that the eighteenth-century novel interrogates competing models of personal identity in dialogue with the laxity of English common law around issues of personal naming, which enables individuals in England to participate in a rich variety of self-fashioning practices. Finally, it offers a contribution to studies of eighteenth-century fame within the commercialised public sphere by arguing that excavating the mutation and material circulation of the personal proper name is key to understanding how 'reputation' worked to confer value and status.



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### Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work, has not been submitted for any previous degree and does not include any material that infringes any third party's rights. Material from Chapters Five and Six, entitled "Men whose glory it is to be known": Godwin, Bentham and the London Corresponding Society', will be published in a special double issue of *Nineteenth-Century Prose* (Vol. 41, Nos 1/2, Spring/Fall, 2014). I am grateful to the editors for their permission to use this material in my thesis.



## Introduction

In the third book of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), John Locke suggests that the act of common naming performs the function of holding together “the loose parts of complex... Ideas.” The name that is given to an idea can be seen as a “Knot” binding together its various elements, “preserving” and “giv[ing them] lasting duration” rather than merely performing a representative function.

For the connexion between the loose parts of those complex Ideas, being made by the Mind, this union, which has not particular foundation in Nature, would cease again, were there not something that did, as it were, hold it together and keep the parts from scattering. Though therefore it be the Mind that makes the Collection, 'tis the Name which is, as it were the Knot, that ties them fast together.<sup>1</sup>

Over a century later in 1796-97, a series of five essays on personal proper naming practices was published in the London Corresponding Society's short-lived *Moral and Political Magazine*, written by the poet and pamphleteer George Dyer under the alternating pseudonyms ‘Vice Cotis’ and ‘Egroeg Reyd.’ Published pseudonymously in a magazine with a lifespan of just two years, and tempered by a satirical tone that dismisses its subject of enquiry even as it raises it for consideration, Dyer's playful essays stand in stark contrast with Locke's authoritative treatise in terms of register, literary authority and material circulation. Professing to be a “Semi-quaker” with an idiosyncratic “mode of address,” the narrator begins his series of dissertations

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<sup>1</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 434. All references are to this edition.

considering titles “historically, philosophically, politically [and] evangelically” by lamenting the volatile reactions of several of his acquaintance upon being called by their plain binomial names (given name and surname) instead of the various titles they prefer. A “wealthy man,” addressed in a letter as “Jeremiah Wiseman” without the suffix “Gentleman” returns an angry response: “Sirrah! Do you mean me or my groom?” A “female friend,” addressed as plain “Tabitha” without the prefix “Miss” indignantly forbids the hapless narrator from ever contacting her again. And the error of addressing a Lord with his honorific title contained in parentheses earns the narrator the following response: “This Lord returns my letter, calls me a jacobinical -----, [and] acquaints me, that ministers have long suspected me of carrying on a traitorous correspondence.” The bemused narrator declares his intention, in light of these “calamities,” to write “a regular dissertation on the language of equality.”<sup>2</sup>

Bookending the long eighteenth century, these two pieces of writing illustrate several continuities and shifts that I will address in this thesis. Locke’s use of the image of the abstract common name as a ‘Knot’ tying ideas together suggests that language has a performative rather than a merely representative function, and Dyer’s anecdotes bear testament to the resonance of this idea of performativity, and provide illustrations of its practical effects. However, where Locke only addresses common names, Dyer stakes a claim for the parity of “modes of address” – including given names, surnames and various forms of title - as valid objects of study alongside common names. This transition of focus between Locke and Dyer points towards one of this thesis’s central arguments: that over the eighteenth century, and especially in

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<sup>2</sup> George Dyer, ‘For the London Corresponding Society’s Magazine’, *The Moral and Political Magazine of the London Corresponding Society for December, 1796*. *London Corresponding Society, 1792-1799*, ed. Michael T. Davis, 6 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2002), 3:330–32, p. 330.

its final two decades, the question of what or how to call a particular person became as much the focus of cultural anxiety as the question of what or how to call a thing or idea. As Dyer's first essay implies, by the end of the eighteenth century bringing different personal proper naming models into conflict might be seen to confound class categories, transgress the boundaries of polite intercourse between the sexes, or even indicate political opinions that might render the namer the focus of disciplinary action by state authorities. Names create both stratifications and communities of class, gender, kinship, citizenship, and political opinion. They can both draw their bearers together, and impose distinctions upon them.

In this thesis, I address literary representations of proper personal name change from 1779 to 1800, arguing that these representations function as sites upon which writers negotiate cultural anxieties about social classification. Reading imaginative prose literature of the 1780s and 1790s alongside historical sources including journal and newspaper articles, letters, trial transcripts, government records and legal judgments, I show that the laxity of English common law on issues of personal naming enables individuals to participate in a rich variety of self-fashioning practices. Excavating the mutations and material circulations of personal proper names is key to understanding how value and status were conferred within a commercial public sphere, in which the term 'credit' recurrently links reputation to promissory value. The laxity of English common law opens up a space where personal names may mutate and circulate within an expanding commercial economy.

My engagement with notions of reputation within the public sphere is grounded in detailed examinations of how different forms of the personal proper name attempted to confer individuality or indicate various kinds of group belonging. These often lead me to place the act of naming upon the axes of two processes of

identity formation, which I call 'atomisation' and 'assimilation.' To borrow Dror Wahrman's terms when describing the synonymic split of the word 'identity' in *The Making of the Modern Self* (2004), I define atomisation as "the essence of difference: it is what guarantees my quintessential specificity in relation to others," and assimilation as "the obverse, or erasure, of difference: it is what allows me to ignore particular differences as I recognize myself in a collective grouping."<sup>3</sup>

The binomial personal name structure (consisting of given name followed by surname, sometimes with a title prefixed or suffixed) is seen by some commentators of the late eighteenth century to enable an understanding of identity as atomised and unique. But it was understood by other thinkers to benefit only the English, male, propertied citizen, who is able by virtue of his privileged position to control the circulation of his name and therefore also the terms by which his reputation is enhanced and transmitted. These thinkers, marginalised by their lack of enfranchisement within eighteenth-century models of citizenship, critique the naming practices and methods of circulation that work towards reputational atomisation. They realise that the binomial personal name structure contains the seeds of its own contradiction, and they explore the benefits of assimilative naming practices that define the bearer rather as a member of a community denoted by a linguistic sign.

The hereditary surname, for example, in gesturing towards the biological family as the prime arbiter of identity, poses problems for the idea of individualism itself. During the 1780s a range of cultural practices and literary texts interrogate its efficacy as an arbiter of cultural belonging, some of the most interesting of which are

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<sup>3</sup> Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), xii. For an earlier acknowledgment of this paradox, see Felicity Nussbaum, 'Heteroclitics: The Gender of Character in the *Scandalous Memoirs*,' in *The New Eighteenth Century, Theory, Politics, Literature*, eds. Laura Brown and Felicity Nussbaum (New York; London: Methuen, 1987), 144-68, pp. 146-147.

explorations by women writers of the relationship between their unstable marital names and the transmission of a reputation to posterity. Honorific titles and the democratic title 'Citizen,' on the other hand, gesture towards models of identity defined by broad and opposing notions of citizenship, and these come under particular scrutiny during the politically turbulent decade of the 1790s.

In showing how literary representations of proper personal name change enable these critiques and explorations, this thesis will contribute to several fields of eighteenth-century scholarship: the history of theories of language, identity studies, critical understanding of the novel, the historical study of naming practices in England, and scholarly understanding of 'fame' and 'reputation' within the public sphere. I see these fields of enquiry standing in close relation to one another, and my logic in addressing each of them is partially reliant on my logic in addressing the others.

## Theories of language

Scholarship addressing the history of theories of language over the long eighteenth century can be divided roughly into two movements. From the 1950s to the 1980s, critics emphasised broad shifts in the formal, self-consciously intellectual study of language.<sup>4</sup> These shifts include: an early eighteenth-century movement from an understanding of naming that depended on the idea of a 'motivated sign' to an arbitrary model of representationalism heavily influenced by Locke's *Essay*; a remarkable flourishing of interest in the field of etymology in the mid-century; and

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen K. Land, *From Signs to Propositions: The Concept of Form in Eighteenth Century Semantic Theory* (London: Longman, 1974); Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640-1785* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977); Robert Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

the influence of affectivism on concepts of naming during the 1760s and 1770s. The critical accounts that explore these shifts - by Stephen Land, Murray Cohen and Robert Essick, among others - focus solely on common naming, and exclude personal proper naming from their analyses.

The second movement, a flourishing of criticism over the last thirty years exploring the political appropriation and exploitation of abstract naming in Britain around the turn of the nineteenth century, builds upon earlier scholars' insistences that eighteenth-century British philosophy was preoccupied with the relationship between language, ideas and reality, and attempts to draw these theoretical discussions into the realm of eighteenth-century politics.<sup>5</sup> Scholars belonging to this movement focus less on self-consciously intellectual philosophical treatises, and more on the implications of particular dialects, grammars and vocabularies for the political climate of the 1790s in Britain. They explore, in John Barrell's words, "the notion that the political conflict of the period was to be regarded as a conflict, among other things, about the meaning of words."<sup>6</sup> This second wave of scholarship sometimes displays interest in the implications of proper naming practices during this period. Steven Blakemore, for example, briefly documents an "onomastic revolution" in France during the 1790s (including under this description changes of place names and calendar months alongside "the revolutionaries' onomastic obsession with the king's name") and

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<sup>5</sup> John Barrell, *English Literature in History: An Equal Wide Survey*, (London: Hutchinson, 1982), *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793-1796* (Oxford University Press, 2000) and *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford University Press, 2006); Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford University Press, 1984); Steven Blakemore *Burke and the Fall of Language: The French Revolution as Linguistic Event* (Brown University Press, 1988); Jane Hodson, *Language and Revolution in Burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Linda C. Mitchell, *Grammar Wars: Language as cultural battlefield in seventeenth and eighteenth century England* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, p. 1.

hypothesises a resultant “special linguistic self-consciousness that permeates both revolutionary and counterrevolutionary writing,” principally in the pamphlet controversy between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine.<sup>7</sup> John Barrell’s later work, by referencing the practice among certain members of the London Corresponding Society (LCS) of adopting ‘Citizen’ as a given name, indicates that Blakemore’s thesis of a French ‘onomastic revolution’ may have something of a reflection in Britain. In these studies, however, the interest in personal proper naming is still marginal to a linguistic project that generally concentrates on names for things – common names, whether concrete or abstract – rather than people. The topic of personal proper naming seems to stand as an awkward outlier to the development of linguistic philosophy; both part of language, and yet situated slightly outside it.

It is necessary to turn briefly to the field of linguistics for a full understanding of this exclusion in both these critical movements. In a recent overview of twentieth-century debates around the linguistic status of proper naming, Willy van Langendonck laments that “theoretical linguists have often treated proper names as the poor cousin of other grammatical categories,” seeing them as possessing “a kind of ad hoc status.”<sup>8</sup> The approach to which van Langendonck refers is exemplified by Paul Ziff’s extreme statement that proper names, not being ‘proper’ words, are subsequently “of relatively limited theoretic importance in the speaking and understanding of a language.”<sup>9</sup> Van Langendonck rightly identifies the circularity of the logic for this dismissal: theory and data about proper names is largely unavailable precisely because most grammatical descriptions and lexicographical reference works

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<sup>7</sup> Blakemore, *Burke and the Fall of Language*, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Willy van Langendonck, *Theory and Typology of Proper Names* (London; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), pp. 2-3. See also Eric Weber, ‘Proper names and persons: Peirce’s Semiotic Consideration of Proper Names,’ *Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, 44:2 (Spring 2008), 346-362 and Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Ziff, *Semantic Analysis* (Ithaca; New York: Cornell University Press, 1960), pp. 85-87.

do not include information about proper names. In the wake of recent interest by neurolinguists and neuropsychologists, however, proper names are starting to be recognised as “part of the system of natural languages... [they are] words which deserve linguistic attention.” Attending to the ways in which proper names can be used to perform a number of functions (including common naming) in collaboration with other linguistic units, van Langendonck rejects the idea that “onomastics is essentially a different viewpoint from linguistics,” arguing instead that “onomastics should be incorporated into linguistics in its widest sense.”<sup>10</sup>

In the first chapter of this thesis, I suggest that certain elements of the eighteenth-century understanding of naming are partially responsible for the fact that modern accounts of that very understanding neglect personal proper naming. British intellectual culture in the eighteenth century was remarkable for the distinction its dictionaries and commentaries gradually imposed between common and proper naming, and the unbalanced perception of the philosophical value or prestige of each of these two subjects. Where common naming was considered an appropriate subject for philosophical treatises, and accorded lexicographical prestige by means of the publication of dictionaries of common names, the discussion of proper names was restricted to genres perceived as fringe or frivolous, such as the novel, the satirical periodical article, and specialised onomasticons. The cross-hatched hierarchy between genres and types of linguistic debate that crystallised during the eighteenth century itself has, perhaps unwittingly, been replicated in the wide critical consensus among modern scholars that proper names are unworthy of enquiry in the same way as common names. The momentum of modern arguments about theories of language in

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<sup>10</sup> Van Langendonck, *Theory and Typology*, pp. 2-3.

the eighteenth century is, itself, still in thrall to the distinctions and dismissals made by eighteenth-century linguistic philosophers and lexicographers.

Only by returning to the roots of the exclusion of proper names from serious study, and by unpicking how their discussion was marginalized, can we start to reassess their importance. There is ample evidence that, across a range of textual sources, the way that proper personal names worked to tie ideas together was just as great a source of fascination to late eighteenth-century commentators as the way in which common names did so. These topics, however, were discussed in different textual arenas from common nouns, and their significance was mediated in different ways.

### Identity studies and literary onomastics

C.B. Macpherson's diagnosis of 'possessive individualism' as the common condition of seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophy, with its emphasis on the "belief of the value and rights of the individual" as "the proprietor of his own person or capacities,"<sup>11</sup> has exercised a profound influence over twentieth-century critics' understandings of eighteenth-century conceptions of personal identity. Until the 1980s, there was a critical preference for what Andrea Henderson calls the "depth model" in discussing eighteenth-century identity formation: that is, a conception of personal identity as founded on a bedrock of psychological depth, which view often implied a corresponding notion of isolation or alienation from other societal agents.<sup>12</sup> The tendency to view individualism as the backbone of eighteenth-century philosophy

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<sup>11</sup> C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Andrea Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity 1774-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 2-3.

was fortified by Lawrence Stone's study of 'affective individualism' in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1979). In arguing for "the emergence in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England of a different set of values, which placed the individual above the kin, the family the society, and even, in some eighteenth-century judicial pronouncements, the state,"<sup>13</sup> Stone provided a corollary tendency to Macpherson's stress on individualism, viewing it as increasingly important in everyday practices and relationships.

Over the last three decades, however, a rich succession of critical accounts has attempted to deconstruct the eighteenth-century 'individual' self and show it in relational perspective. In their introduction to a recent collection of essays addressing personal identity through the concept of mediation, Isabel Karremann and Anja Müller provide a helpful overview of this countermovement. They identify, first, a "turn away from an interior account of identity which claimed that there is a 'real I', an inner self and its outward expressions." Subsequently, identity theory has taken a "performative turn", a "spatial turn" and a "pictorial or visual turn."<sup>14</sup> Such has been the influence of these "turns" that Karremann and Müller - rightly, I think - explicitly define 'identity' for the purposes of their collection as "treated in terms of who we are *to each other*, that is, as a sense of self that is produced and communicated *socially* [My italics.] This process entails acts of mediation: identities are constituted, implemented, negotiated and validated through the conduit of media."<sup>15</sup>

I follow the principles of Karremann and Müller's account in assuming that the social and meditational aspects of identity formation are the most exciting terms in which, at this moment, a contribution to eighteenth-century identity studies can be

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> Isabel Karremann and Anja Müller, *Mediating Identities in Eighteenth-Century England: Negotiations, Literary Discourses, Topography*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) pp. 2-3.

<sup>15</sup> Karremann and Müller, *Mediating Identities*, p. 2.

offered. I would like to propose a new 'turn' to the discipline - an "onomastic turn."

In the key critical accounts that compromise the recent development of identity studies,<sup>16</sup> the personal proper name has generally escaped attention as a legitimate site of enquiry, an elision that I find puzzling. In a recent overview of approaches to the study of English forename use, John Corkery shows that interest among psychologists in the relation of proper names to personal identity has flourished significantly over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Corkery calls the name "the most important anchor point of an individual's self-identity," arguing that it can "establish the person *named* as belonging to a predefined class, that is, as a member of a social group within a system of groups, or having a status by birth within a system of statuses" but can also "be the wilful invention (whether positive, for example, imitation, or remembrance, or negative, for example, avoidance) on the part of the person *naming* and as such reveal a temporary subjective state of mind through the person named."<sup>17</sup> Given the eighteenth-century fascination with the resonant dictum of Locke's *Essay* that language reflects thought, and the continued interest it seems to hold for twenty-first century scholars, it seems strange that studies of identity formation in the eighteenth century have not embraced the topic of personal proper naming.

The novel has been one of the principal forms to which critics have turned in order to understand conceptualisations of personal identity. In criticism of the eighteenth-century novel over the last thirty years, it is possible to trace a similar

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<sup>16</sup> The most important recent studies in developing my thinking about personal identity include: Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-century England* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Peter De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics, and the Subject* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell), 1989; and John Barresi and Raymond Martin (eds.), *Personal Identity* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> John Martin Corkery, 'Approaches to the Study of English Forename Use', *Nomina* 23, 55-74, pp. 72-73.

movement to that identified by Karremann and Muller in their discussion of interdisciplinary identity studies – one from the individualistic ‘depth model’ toward a pluralistic approach to the social mediation of personal identity. More than fifty years ago, Ian Watt argued that the ‘rise of the novel’ - as exemplified by the fiction of Defoe, Fielding and Richardson - can be seen as exemplified by a shift whereby the usage of “types” in novels gives ground to the portrayal of “particular people in particular circumstances.” Foreshadowing Macpherson and Stone’s studies, Watt saw individualism as the founding organisational principle of the eighteenth-century novel. Moreover, he singled out for attention “the way that the novelist typically indicates his intention of presenting a character as a particular individual by naming him in exactly the same way as individuals are named in ordinary life.”<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently, many aspects of Watt’s thesis have been challenged from numerous critical angles. Against the grain of his assertion about individualism, Michael McKeon insisted that the “questions of truth” and “questions of virtue” with which the novel is preoccupied both in fact concern the principle of categorisation, whether in relation to genre or social group.<sup>19</sup> The valuable studies of Jane Spencer, Janet Todd and Nancy Armstrong drew attention to the vast number of novels written by women (which were practically excluded from Watt’s argument), and insisted that the ways in which the eighteenth-century novel mediates competing notions of personal identity must take into account the challenges of expression and assertion particular to women’s legal and cultural circumscriptions.<sup>20</sup> Catherine Gallagher and

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p. 16, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (London: Radius, 1988), pp. 20-21.

<sup>20</sup> Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, (Oxford; New York: 1986); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (London: Virago, 1989).

Deidre Lynch, who are also concerned with the novel's negotiation of gender, have located the notion of 'character' within a matrix of shifting notions of value, commerce, labour and authorial self-presentation, attempting to sketch out a relational history of character rather than assuming we can talk about it as a fixed and unitary concept.<sup>21</sup>

Watt's emphasis on naming characters, however, has been less effectively challenged than many other aspects of his argument. The scholars I mention above have seemed largely content to accept Watt's founding principle that the eighteenth-century novel's treatment of personal names can best be bent to the cause of individualism. By and large, their accounts only focus on acts of what I call 'literary naming': the process by which an author names their characters one by one, and what these acts might tell us, in a hermeneutic sense, about the characters themselves. I do not mean to imply that the literary naming approach cannot be valuable, but I think that such a focus has omitted an important step, in presupposing that the ways in which authors name their characters is important but in omitting to consider *why*. What were the philosophical, political, social and commercial implications of naming a person at the specific historical point at which an author wrote? Why did they take so much care in naming their characters - in Frances Burney's case drawing up an *aide-memoire* of 'Names to Avoid,' for example, and in Jane Austen's reproducing in detail the genealogies of Britain's aristocratic estates?<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> For Frances Burney's manuscript list of 'Names to Avoid,' see misc., Berg Collection, New York Public Library. For a consideration of Austen's character names, see Janine Barchas, *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location and Celebrity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012).

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary first to survey some of the philosophical literature around naming, in order to gain an idea of the cultural weight that the act of naming bore for these writers. Second, it is necessary to pay attention to the kind of naming almost entirely ignored by Watt and construed as marginal to the projects of the critics who have challenged his work; the acts of naming or of name change around which the plots of eighteenth-century novels themselves revolve, rather than the authorial naming of the characters within those plots.

Acts of naming in eighteenth-century novels have received almost no sustained and methodical critical attention. There is, to my knowledge, only one extensive critical study devoted to the topic: Michael Ragussis's *Acts of Naming: The Family Plot in Fiction* (1986).<sup>23</sup> This study spans the best part of two hundred years of English and American literature, ranging from Richardson to Nabokov. Across this field, Ragussis argues: "While fiction recharges with power the names of people, it does so most profoundly by claiming not that names are natural or that destinies are shaped by a powerful name, but that people shape destinies - others' and their own - by the immense power they accord to names."<sup>24</sup> Ragussis's general premise, and the earliest chapters of his work in which he addresses the relationship between Enlightenment philosophy and the 'naming plots' of Samuel Richardson's fiction, have been extraordinarily useful in shaping the argument of this thesis. In particular, his contention that fiction of the eighteenth century "cross[es] the border from philosophy's names for things to people's names for each other" and "constitutes itself as that field of discourse which defines what it is to be "human"<sup>25</sup> has been instrumental in helping me to formulate my own ideas about the disjunction between

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Ragussis, *Acts of Naming: The Family Plot in Fiction* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>24</sup> Ragussis, *Acts of Naming*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ragussis, *Acts of Naming*, p. 4.

philosophy and imaginative literature in discussing common and proper naming.

However, I do not think that the cultural import of a name is best addressed by linking together, as Ragussis does, literary negotiations of very different sorts of naming that take place decades or even centuries apart, and attempting to extrapolate a conclusion about how 'fiction' treats 'names' as if this is a constant, fixed relationship. And here Ragussis's study is symptomatic of a wider problem with the field of literary onomastics.

Some trends in this field can be summed up by turning briefly to W. F. H. Nicolaisen's keynote address to the fortieth annual meeting of the *Names Institute* in 2003. Nicolaisen stakes a persuasive claim for fiction as the field where "the widely accepted dictum that names thrive chiefly through their relationship with other names" experiences a "special flowering": "More than anywhere else in this world of ours which is structured and made habitable by naming processes, is the fruitful notion of onomastic fields more acutely and persuasively applicable than in the realm of fiction." But in outlining – indeed, celebrating – a movement from "an almost exclusive focus on the roles names play in individual works by individual authors to the distillation of general, much less restricted and restrictive, essential principles,"<sup>26</sup> I think Nicolaisen encapsulates the polarity between studies of how individual authors use personal proper naming (which offer little awareness of the wider cultural context within which authors write)<sup>27</sup> and a chronologically broad study like Ragussis's

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<sup>26</sup> W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'Use of Names in Fictional Narratives', *A Garland of Names: Selected Papers of the Fortieth Names Institute*, eds. Ashley, Leonard R.N. and Wayne H. Finke (Ashley, Cummings and Hathaway, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> For individual author studies, see Elizabeth M. Rajec, *The Study of Names in Literature: A Bibliography* (New York: K.G.Saur, Publishing Inc., 1978). Individual studies I have found useful in writing this thesis include Margaret Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Christina Lupton, 'Naming the Baby: Sterne, Goethe and the Power of the Word,' *MLN*, 118: 5, (Dec., 2003), 1213-1236, Min Song, *The Problem of the Name: A Culture-Oriented Eclectic Approach to the Issue of Identity in Frances Burney's World* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2005) and Barchas,

(which, in attempting to encompass such an ambitious period, sacrifices any meaningful link between the use of proper names in literature, the historical, social and spatial contexts in which these usages take place, and the implications for our understanding of fiction's place in the process of identity formation). This polarity misses a potentially fruitful third site for literary onomastics.

There is space, I think, for an approach that seeks to join literary texts up more meaningfully than isolated studies of individual authors, but which also resists the temptation to ascribe any degree of inherent meaning to a phenomenon without taking into account the cultural context of its precise historical moment and geographical situation. This approach, best grounded within a deep interdisciplinary understanding of a specific and manageable chronological period, would examine various representations of naming across a variety of texts of that period, in the interests of both examining the "onomastic turn" of identity formation and clarifying the function of fiction within this turn. I aim to follow this approach in this thesis.

I want to stress that I will not generally be paying attention to the naming of characters in novels by their authors. The distinction between the construction of plots predicated on name change and the names selected for characters by authors themselves is often elided by scholars of literary onomastics, but it is an important one. For example, the fact that Frances Burney chooses to structure her novel *Cecilia* around a controversial name change is a different subject of consideration from the fact that she calls her hero the particular name 'Mortimer Delvile'. The two things are related, and a longer project would enable me to consider how. But the scope of this thesis simply did not allow for such a consideration. I could have contributed towards the tendency prevalent in much criticism of the eighteenth-century novel of adding a

paragraph or two here and there reflecting on the connotations of character names as support for whatever wider argument the critic wishes to make, but I do not think this approach does justice to the important subject of character naming. I have therefore left the topic of literary naming entirely to one side, concentrating instead on how naming is used as a plot device, and how its philosophical terminology infiltrates literary texts. This will, I hope, provide a foundation for a future consideration of literary naming; one that puts more firmly centre stage the practices by which novels, characters and authors are themselves named.

### The history of personal proper naming in England

It is necessary at this point to ground my investigation within a historical framework - that is, to explain something about the reality of what people actually called themselves during my period of enquiry before I go on to discuss how those choices were framed and interrogated. In doing so, I draw on several broad social histories and bibliographic accounts of personal proper naming in Britain published within the last fifteen years, of which Stephen Wilson's *Means of Naming: A Social History* (1998) has been particularly useful.<sup>28</sup> What are now often considered to be fixed categories such as 'given name', 'surname' or 'title' were significantly more permeable in Britain two hundred years ago than they are today, and this permeability is, at certain points, a key component of my argument over the thesis. However, it is nonetheless desirable to establish certain broad historical consensuses – and identify

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<sup>28</sup> See Stephen Wilson, *Means of Naming: A Social History* (London: UCL Press, 1998); Scott Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England: 1538-1700* (Oxford University Press, 1997); Patrick Hanks 'Dictionaries of Personal Names', in *Oxford History of English Lexicography*, ed. A.P. Cowie, Vol.II, *Specialized Dictionaries*, (OUP, Oxford, 2008); David Postles, 'Negotiating Bynames', *Nomina* 27 (2004), 41-70; Gregory Clark, *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014); Alastair Fowler, *Literary Names: Personal Names in English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

common critical fallacies – about naming patterns in Britain before and over the course of the eighteenth century. Doing so will help to clarify what types of naming were truly unusual or controversial, and thus to draw out the implications of these instances.

It is generally agreed that given names (otherwise known as ‘first’ or ‘Christian’ names) are much older than bynames (‘second’ or ‘family’ names). Dominant influences on given name choice throughout English history include religious affiliation (particularly the disciples, saints and martyrs of Christianity), royalty and aristocracy, Celtic history and legend, classical names, and the names of family members or godparents. Patrick Hanks contends that “it is only at the end of the nineteenth century that we see the emergence of large numbers of conventional names without a religious motivation,” but plenty of fashions and fads for given names - sometimes controversial ones – emerged over the late eighteenth century, and were often critiqued by commentators resistant to such onomastic innovation.<sup>29</sup>

Although bynames are a more recent phenomenon than given names, the binomial naming pattern has still been standard throughout many European territories since the Middle Ages. In Britain, the oldest hereditary surnames originated not in English but in Norman French during the eleventh century, whereby addition of hereditary surnames to unstable bynames enabled taxpayers and malefactors to be identified with greater precision. Although these additional names were at first patronymics, therefore ephemeral and variable (whereby, for example, John Harrison’s son would be called William Johnson, or ‘son of John’ rather than inheriting his father’s patronym ‘Harrison’ derived from his grandfather Harry), they gradually stabilised over the late medieval period, and by the fourteenth century had

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<sup>29</sup> Hanks, ‘Dictionaries of Personal Names’, 138-9. See also Fowler, *Literary Names*, pp. 13-14, 20-21.

generally – though not exclusively - come to be handed down from parent to child as hereditary surnames.<sup>30</sup>

One crucial feature of this process is that hereditary surnames generally descended, in England, through the paternal line. Surprisingly little detailed scholarly work has been carried out concerning the origins of the custom by which women started to adopt their husband's surname upon marriage, replacing their own family name, or on the exact process by which it became the English standard convention that children inherited the name of their father rather than their mother. The scholarship that has mentioned this subject to date, usually in relation to work on early modern marriage, indicates that these conventions were consequences of the legal doctrine of coverture, the originally Norman legal principle by which on marriage a woman's legal identity was subsumed into that of her husband.<sup>31</sup> In a recent volume of essays exploring coverture, Sara Butler dates the custom by which women started to adopt their husband's surname upon marriage, replacing their own family name, as becoming popularised between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries (when, of course, bynames for men as well as women were often still unstable). In 1340, Butler shows, justices from King's Bench ruled that a wife cannot have a last name at all "because when she took a husband, she lost every surname except "wife of,"" but by 1421 it was possible for women to be seen, in some

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<sup>30</sup> Hanks, 'Dictionaries of Personal Names', 124; Postles, 'Negotiating Bynames', pp. 41-43, Clark, *The Son Also Rises*, pp. 71-72; Fowler, *Literary Names*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> For references to the custom, see Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press), 1988; Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson. *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400-1900*. (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011); Tim Stretton and Krista J Kesselring. *Married Women and the Law: Coverture in England and the Common Law World* (Montreal, Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? : England 1540-1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

contexts, as sharing the surname of the man they had married.<sup>32</sup> Both Butler and Amy Louise Erickson have argued convincingly that the convention of English women being clerically designated by their husband's surname during the medieval period was a direct consequence of the implementation in England of the legal doctrine of coverture.<sup>33</sup>

One part of this speculative history that I want to stress, because it is important for my own argument in my third chapter, is that the gradual attribution of a shared surname for married women - rather than no surname at all - corresponds to a specific shift in the way that the principle of coverture was perceived over the early modern period. A fluid concept that was interpreted differently in different jurisdictions at different times, one of the principal paradoxes of coverture was whether it could best be interpreted as signifying a feudal relationship (whereby the husband was 'baron' and the wife 'feme') or a 'unity of person' between the two partners, a scriptural idea which held that husband and wife were, in the words of Henry de Bracton, "a single person, because they are one flesh and one blood."<sup>34</sup> Butler indicates that over the late medieval period the prevalence of the latter interpretation, though far from universal, was becoming gradually more popular in legal judgments. One interpretation of the gradual popularisation of the wife's adoption of the husband's surname, therefore, might be that it represents the linguistic manifestation of this shift. No longer a vassal, by which the married woman was deprived of a surname altogether, she came to share the surname of her husband as a symbol of their legal and spiritual unity. My third chapter addresses the zenith of the 'unity of person' doctrine in the mid-eighteenth

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<sup>32</sup> Sara Butler, 'Discourse on the Nature of Coverture in the Later Medieval Courtroom', in Stretton and Kesselring, *Married Women and the Law*, pp. 24-44, 37.

<sup>33</sup> See Amy Louise Erickson, 'Coverture and Capitalism', *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005), 1-16, p. 4; 'The marital economy in comparative perspective,' in Ågren and Erickson, *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>34</sup> Butler, 'Discourse on the Nature of Coverture', p. 25.

century, with a particular focus on the influence of William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769).

It is important to realise that some parts of Britain, not to mention other European countries, were slower than others to adopt all the surname conventions outlined above. In eighteenth-century Wales, as mentioned in my second chapter, the older 'patronymic' system (e.g. Rhys ap Rhydderch 'Rhys son of Rhydderch') continued in use well into the nineteenth century and beyond. Jewish communities also used a patronymic system of family names.<sup>35</sup> And as for the convention of marital surname change, women in Scotland retained their own names upon marriage throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries - and even in England there were, as my third chapter shows in detail, cases of elite women compelling a male heir to take their surname by Royal Licence or Act of Parliament. Although the subject of this thesis is naming practices in literature written in dialogue with the particular onomastic laxity of English common law, Celtic and other minority practices provide an important counterpoint to English practices, and cannot be dismissed as irrelevant in terms of either practising populations or cultural significance.

The term 'Master' can be traced back to 1297, and the corruption 'Mr.' started to be used in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> By the eighteenth century it had come to signify what I call a civil title; unrelated to marital status or profession, it was used simply as a term of politeness. 'Mrs.' forms a similar corruption of the word 'Mistress,' but has a somewhat more contested history. Contrary to popular usage today, Amy Erickson has recently argued that in early modern England the term 'mistress' most commonly designated the female equivalent of 'master' - that is, a

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<sup>35</sup> Hanks, 'Dictionaries of Personal Names', p. 122; Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 243.

<sup>36</sup> Fowler, *Literary Names*, p. 12.

person with capital who directed servants or apprentices, rather than a woman who was necessarily married. Prior to the mid-eighteenth century, therefore, “Mrs. applied to any adult woman who merited the social distinction, without any marital connotation,” and “Miss was reserved for young girls.” Erickson’s argument is generally compelling, but she may overstate the chronological influence of ‘Mrs.’ as a professional rather than a marital title when she contends that it still designated a social or business standing, and not the status of being married, until at least the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1770s one finds unmarried women referred to as ‘Mrs.’, for example the scholar Elizabeth Carter, and the elderly, unmarried Mrs. Rayland in Charlotte Turner Smith’s *The Old Manor House* (1793) which is also set during the 1770s; but in my work around novels of the last two decades of the eighteenth century, I have found ‘Mrs.’ fairly comprehensively used to refer to a married woman, and not always a person with any social distinction at all.<sup>37</sup> I therefore refer to it as a ‘marital title.’

The titles to which I refer as ‘honorific’ are those that are conferred by royalty and imply some sort of honour or social elevation. The barony system in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the original source of these titles, gradually developed into a more complex network of hereditary and non-hereditary honours, with and without legislative privileges and by the eighteenth century comprising titles such as ‘Lord’, ‘Lady’, ‘Baron’ and ‘Baroness’, ‘Sir’, ‘Viscount’ and ‘Earl.’ Lawrence and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone point out that numbers of titled aristocracy in Britain “fluctuated more according to the whims of royal policy in granting them than to the merits or status of

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<sup>37</sup> Amy Erickson, ‘Mistresses and Marriage: or, a Short History of the Mrs.’, *Cambridge Working Papers in Economic & Social History* 8, forthcoming in *History Workshop Journal* 77 (Spring 2014). See, for example, Frances Burney’s character Mrs. Hill in *Cecilia: or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782).

the recipient,<sup>38</sup> and Michael W. McCahill emphasizes that while during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century the size of the British peerage remained almost unchanged, in the 55 years from 1776 the House of Lords practically doubled, swelling in size from 199 peers to 358. At the same time, however, the proportion of the landed elite who were peers declined, while men with little or no landed estates were increasingly being ennobled instead. In several of the texts this study addresses, this proliferation of hereditary honours among unlanded men had a substantial impact on public perceptions of the peerage, with a sense among some that 'mushroom nobility' was swamping the old families of real rank and dignity.<sup>39</sup>

These, then, are my founding assumptions about naming patterns and usage in eighteenth-century England. But even the naming acts that drew on these principles subjected names to a degree of semantic overlap and fluidity that they do not generally possess today. The terms by which a person might be known, often in quite codified official discourse, might range between place names, common nouns, honorific titles, and various different kinds of proper name. In 1779, for example, Hester Thrale recorded that her sister-in-law understood Sir Philip Jennings-Clerke's first name to be 'Colonel.'<sup>40</sup> In 1780, Charles Burney Jr. could write to his sisters of "the [aristocratic] Scotch custom, which speaks of every one by the name of his estate - which indeed is very necessary, where there are 30, or 40 of a name, very near Neighbours - a thing not uncommon in the North."<sup>41</sup> Given names could be used as surnames, and surnames for first given names: in 1783, Corbet D'Avenant changed

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<sup>38</sup> Lawrence and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 260.

<sup>39</sup> Michael W. McCahill, 'Peerage Creations and the Changing Character of the British Nobility', 1750-1830. *The English Historical Review*, 96: 379 (Apr. 1981), 259-284; Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 262.

<sup>40</sup> *Thraliana; the diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*, ed. Katherine C. Balderston (Michigan: University of Michigan Library, 2005), p. 373.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Burney Jr to Susan Elizabeth Burney, July 1780, Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

his name to 'Corbet Corbet' by Royal Licence – an occurrence that was far from unique, and called into question the distinction between the familial given name and the hereditary surname.<sup>42</sup> In 1794 the radical pamphleteer James Kennedy could call his son 'Citizen' as a given name, and in 1795 Richard Lee could start professionally and personally styling himself as 'Citizen' rather than 'Richard'. Proper names are used as common names and common names as proper names: Mary Wortley-Montagu could speak of "a Bess, a Peg or a Suzy,"<sup>43</sup> and Puritans could call their children "Search-the-Scriptures" or "The-Peace-Of-God."<sup>44</sup>

The period under discussion, which begins in my first chapter at the dawn of the long eighteenth century but is largely concentrated in my subsequent chapters on its closing two decades, is of interest precisely because it exists between the early modern era in which recognisable conventions of naming had not yet settled, and the nineteenth century, when the impending efficiency of bureaucracy led to a pressure to standardise acts of naming for official convenience. The late eighteenth century is the point at which disparity in naming practices is still observable, but the norms are sufficiently fixed that meaning can be read into these very disparities.

### Personal proper naming and the law

It is crucial, however, not to confuse the gathering pace of initiatives to *record* the name as data with attempts by British state authorities to *control* the precise names chosen for or assumed by individuals. Since early modern times, the English common law system has never attempted to control precisely what a person should call him or herself - a respect in which, at least compared to European neighbours, it is rather

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<sup>42</sup> Fowler, *Literary Names*, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> To the Editor of the *Literary Journal*, *Literary journal, or, Universal review of literature*, 2:3 (Aug 16, 1803), 173-177, pp. 173.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 194.

unusual. All processes of officialisation of name change have always been, and are still, strictly voluntary. District Judge Nasreen Pearce, the foremost legal authority on name change, summarises the situation succinctly in a recent practical guide: “In England and Wales any adult person may legally change his or her name by simple assumption and usage so long as the intention in so doing is not fraudulent. Change by usage and reputation is the only way in which a name can be changed.... A change of name by deed poll and by various other ways... are merely ways of evidencing and advertising the change.”<sup>45</sup> The first British legislation exercising any influence over name bestowal or change was, in fact, the *Births and Deaths Registration Act* in 1953. Since then, although the principle that an adult may call themselves whatever they like without legal requirement or procedure remains inviolate, a raft of legislation around the naming of children has sprung up. Drawing a clear twentieth-century line between the adult capacity to self-name and the capacity of a minor to self-name, this distinction simultaneously indicates the potentially powerful effect that name change might have on an individual and the preservation of the ancient English principle that, as long as the name-changer is an adult, naming is not a matter for state control.

Where state authorities did find themselves discussing acts of naming during the eighteenth century, one can observe an interesting tension between the ‘truth’ of a name and the extent to which it enables its bearer to be ‘known’. The phrasing of one particular piece of legislation in the mid-century brought these different conceptualizations of the personal proper name’s primary function into sharp focus. In 1753, Lord Hardwicke’s *Act for the better preventing of clandestine Marriages* declared that those wishing to be married should “deliver or cause to be delivered to such Parson vicar, Minister or Curate, a Notice in Writing of their true Christian and

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<sup>45</sup> Nasreen Pearce, *Change of Name: The Law and Practice*, (Great Britain: Wildy, Simmons & Hill, 2010), p. 63.

Surnames” as well as “the House or Houses of their respective Abodes.”<sup>46</sup> But the adjective ‘true’ was to prove problematic for successive judges over the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, faced with the task of attempting to define what was a person’s ‘true’ name, often in relation to a contested marriage. And in general, examples of case law from this period in which the ‘true name’ was at stake show increasing judicial robustness in defending an individual’s right to call him or herself whatever he or she wished.

In *Walden v. Holman* (1794), for example, the judges disagreed on the context within which a ‘true’ name existed, with one judge asserting that one can have but one name of baptism,” but the others arguing that “it is a good plea in abatement for a defendant to say that he was known and called by such a name, though he never was baptised, as many thousands in England never were.”<sup>47</sup> A more definitive expression of this principle emerged from the 1805 case of *Frankland v. Nicholson*: “Now it has been argued that the true and proper Christian and surname of the party cannot be altered but by proper authority, by the King's licence, or an Act of the Legislature: yet there may be cases, where names acquired by general use and habit may be taken by repute as the true Christian and surname of the parties.”<sup>48</sup> By the time of *R. v. Billingshurst* (1814), the principle that an assumed name superseded a baptismal name was definitively established, when the judges held that “it cannot be doubted that both by the ecclesiastical and common law a name which a man has acquired by reputation may stand in the place of his true name.”<sup>49</sup> Discernible in the surviving records of all

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<sup>46</sup> *An Act for the better preventing of clandestine marriages* (London: Thomas Baskett, 1753), p. 472.

<sup>47</sup> *Walden against Holman*, 1794. 6 Mod 115. Courts of King’s Bench, Chancery, Common Pleas, Exchequer, 87 E.R. 873.

<sup>48</sup> *Frankland against Nicholson falsely calling herself Frankland*, May 29<sup>th</sup> 1805, 3 M & S 259. Consistory Court of London, 105 E.R.60.

<sup>49</sup> *King against the Inhabitants of Billingshurst*, Nov 19<sup>th</sup> 1814. 3 M & S 250. Court of King’s Bench, 105 E.R. 603.

these cases is a sense of uneasiness about the ability of state authorities to intervene in a private dispute involving the arbitration of a name. State recognition that the link between a proper personal name and 'repute' could lead to abuses of justice, especially in the field of marriage, was pitted against a disinclination to meddle with the private matter of what to call oneself.

The increasing robustness with which judges defended this latter prerogative over the course of the eighteenth century might be linked to a notion of English justice that arose in opposition to French legal reform taking place after 1789. As John Barrell has pointed out, ideas about the freedom of the English language were often related to a cherished notion of the particular political and legal liberty of the English people: "This relation could be invoked, and often was, to argue against the superimposition of foreign, especially French, words on the purity of the Anglo-Saxon mother tongue."<sup>50</sup> The laxity of English law on onomastic issues can be seen to offer a corollary to this narrative.

In making this last suggestion, I want to invert the assumption of many theorists of surveillance studies - a recently emergent sub-discipline of identity studies - that the permissiveness of British law in the eighteenth century as regards onomastic issues suggests that there is somehow less to say about how the personal name arbitrates identity in Britain than in other European states.<sup>51</sup> Theorists of surveillance studies have often preferred to focus on France in the 1790s, where legislative prescription of names was a key feature of the revolutionary regime. On 19 June 1790, for example, the newly formed National Assembly enacted the abolition of

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<sup>50</sup> Barrell, *An Equal Wide Survey*, p.121.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Jane Caplan's overview of the comparative field in "This or That Particular Person": Protocols of Identification in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, eds. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 49-66, pp. 63-65.

aristocratic titles (British responses to which I discuss in my fifth chapter), and the Act of 6 Fructidor II (23 August 1794) forbade citizens from adopting any name other than the one recorded at their birth.<sup>52</sup> Faced with this clear legislative prescription, it has perhaps seemed easier for social historians to consider the political importance of the personal name in France than to consider its cultural weight and mediation in Britain, where the law is silent on the issue of naming.<sup>53</sup>

I argue, however, that it is precisely this statutory laxity that facilitates the richness of onomastic self-stylings across a variety of British literature of the 1780s and 1790s. Moreover, the fact that, unlike their French counterparts, British political administrations of the late eighteenth century never acted to regulate the naming process does not mean that thinkers of the era – who constantly had one eye across the Channel – did not consider what the implications might be if they did act. Both fictional sources and historical records contain multiple examples of the personal name's potential, both as collected or withheld data and as meaningful choice, to act as a site of struggle between the state and its individual subjects.

In highlighting so emphatically the laxity of English law on the subject of name change, I will invert the guiding logic of a rich body of literary criticism addressing the ways in which the British eighteenth-century novel reflects and problematizes contemporary British legal structures. Whether concerned with common law or equity, critics involved in this movement have generally looked for robust legal governance as the stimulant for significant negotiations of identity in the novel, rather than considering what effects legal *laxity* might stimulate. In *Family and the Law in*

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<sup>52</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Gerard Noiriel, 'The Identification of the Citizen: The Birth of Republican Civil Status in France', *Documenting Individual Identity*, eds. Caplan and Torpey, pp. 28-48.

*Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (1993), John P. Zomchick argues: “juridical discourse... structures personal and social relations in the narratives,” compelling protagonists to “internalise the juridical norms of public life and then to externalise them in the governance of self and - if male - family.”<sup>54</sup> And in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property* (2002), Wolfram Schmidgen, building on J.G.A. Pocock’s work on the importance of the distinction between mobile and immobile property to eighteenth-century civic identity, uses legal, political and imaginative texts to emphasise the permeability of the boundaries between persons and things. Arguing that “the possessive is one of the essential modes by which we conceptualise and shape our relationship to things,” Schmidgen suggests that English common law’s preoccupation “with the seemingly endless ways of holding and conveying property”<sup>55</sup> finds analogues in “the eighteenth-century novel’s continued and sometimes laborious rehearsal of plot lines that turn on issues of property - dramas of lost and found heirs, of the right succession, the propriety of ownership, and of the “proper” marriage.”<sup>56</sup>

Where I want to diverge quite sharply from the methodology illustrated by Zomchick and Schmidgen’s assertions is in asking the questions: what happens when the law is silent instead of vocal? And, as a site upon which identity formation takes place, might what happens in the case of silence be more interesting than that of vocalization? Although the change of the personal proper name is by convention a corollary to all those culturally sensitive areas - kinship, marriage, property, crime - that were governed by a complex mass of legal instruments, it is precisely the laxity

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<sup>54</sup> John P. Zomchick, *Family and the law in eighteenth-century fiction: the public conscience in the private sphere* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. xi-xii.

<sup>55</sup> Wolfram Schmidgen, *Eighteenth century fiction and the law of property* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 7-8.

<sup>56</sup> Schmidgen, *Eighteenth Century Fiction and the Law of Property*, p. 11.

of English law in this area that makes examples of its modulation and negotiation, in both imaginative and non-imaginative discourses, so interesting. The silence of the English common law - especially in comparison to the quite sudden legal regulation of personal names in France - enables the English individual to speak up through their onomastic self-fashionings. And this leads to the question: if in England the bestowal, mutation and circulation of names is construed as free of state control, what is the model by which names were understood to operate?

### Fame, names and the public sphere

In a wide-ranging overview of fame in the Western world, Leo Braudy singles out the eighteenth century as an era when fame took on a new aspect or dimension:

“Economic, social, and political revolution had produced so many new ways of naming oneself that what had been an urge in few, in many became a frenzy, a “frenzy of renown,” as Matthew G. Lewis’s novel *The Monk* (1796) calls it.”<sup>57</sup> In this thesis, I locate these “new ways of naming oneself” produced by eighteenth-century “economic, social and political revolution[s]” within the context of several influential models of critical thought concerning participation in the public sphere. The idea of ‘fame’ or ‘reputation’ plays a key part within these models, and I argue that enhanced understanding of these concepts in turn can be achieved by considering the importance of circulations of the personal proper name.

Jürgen Habermas’s exposition of the structural transformation of the public sphere, first translated into English in 1989, continues to exercise significant influence over scholarship of most aspects of eighteenth-century culture. In Habermas’s

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<sup>57</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 7, 14.

formulation, the man of commerce and manners can be understood as figuratively enfranchised by means of the circulation of opinions: “The public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society.”<sup>58</sup>

Burgeoning discursive institutions of print and sociability created a space between the intimate sphere of the family and the official sphere of the state, where the literate ‘bourgeois’ public might hold authority up to scrutiny.

Habermas’s formulation has raised numerous questions over the last two decades about the possibility of multiple publics outside the bounds of privileged literacy. Kathleen Wilson, for example, points out: “The accessible, homogenized national identity cultivated by newspapers was in fact a delimiting one that recapitulated the self-representations of the urban upper and middle classes, and especially their male, white, and English members”<sup>59</sup> and provides a host of examples whereby “women frequently acted like political subjects within the commercialized world of extra-parliamentary politics.” Lawrence Klein objects more widely, critiquing the binary nature of Habermasian discourse, to the “domestic thesis” by which women were understood to be confined to the “private sphere,” contending that “at least in some sense, women had extensive public lives in the eighteenth century and that language was available to discuss and sometimes even legitimize this fact.”<sup>60</sup> And Harriet Guest has theorized a “third site” taking a form derived from Habermas’s

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<sup>58</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962). Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 30.

<sup>59</sup> Kathleen Wilson, ‘Citizenship, Empire and Modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720-1790’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29:1(Fall, 1995), 69-96, p. 74.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence Klein, ‘Gender and the Public / Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29:1, (Fall, 1995), 97-109, pp. 97-98, 100.

public-within-the-private, and reminded us of the importance of remembering “that the relation between public and private may be permeable, may be fluid.”<sup>61</sup>

I am interested in the role that ‘fame’ and ‘reputation’ play in both Habermas’s model and in proposed counter-models that seek to consider how the unenfranchised may have also participated in public life. The emergence of the public sphere dependent on opinion has been understood by all these scholars, in one way or another, to be linked to the development of a culture of commercialisation. And this culture, in turn, has been understood to be dependent upon the circulation of reputations. John Brewer has succinctly summarised the importance of reputation for the man of commerce: “One needed to be or, at least, needed to appear to be a man with [certain] characteristics in order to carry on trade: to ‘keep up your reputation’, ‘preserve your integrity’, ‘maintain your credit’. Presentation of self as sober, reliable, candid and constant was not merely a question of genteel manners, but a matter of economic survival.”<sup>62</sup> Leslie Richardson, in turn, hypothesizes that the discourse of reputation was more important for women than men, by showing how early eighteenth-century women novelists invoke “both the new discourse of finance and

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<sup>61</sup> Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2000), 11. For other important challenges to Habermas, see Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (eds.) *Shifting the Boundaries - Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995); Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1992); Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton, (eds.), *Women Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2001; Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (eds.), *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>62</sup> John Brewer, ‘Commercialization and Politics’, in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H.Plumb, eds. *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 195-262, p. 214.

the web of obligation within which all citizens lived, emphasising women's peculiar subjection to social control, their perpetual indebtedness."<sup>63</sup>

The specific intervention I would like to make here is to insist that the study of 'fame' and 'reputation' in the eighteenth century needs to be understood as directly related to contemporary forms and circulation of the personal proper name. What are the functions of circulating material names - the literal words, spoken or written - in the creation of reputation? How is the personal proper name understood to act as an agent of either state control or free economic exchange? And how do different forms of naming that might be applied to the same individual affect their reputation or 'credit'? In this study I consider, for example, how 'Mrs. Thrale' confers a different reputational charge from 'Hester Lynch' or 'La Piozzi'; how 'Kit' works differently to 'Caleb'; and how 'Lord Newminster' differs from 'Mr Grantham.' I examine how names' abilities to affect reputations differ when they are engraved on stone monuments, printed in peerages, or written in private journals; when they are bandied about drawing rooms or inscribed in Royal Licences; when they are peppered with blanks or stars and when they are written in full; when they are formalised and circulated by state authorities and when their usage is seen as something close to (but never quite) a criminal offence.

In my second chapter, I show that in the late eighteenth century proper personal names, free from state control, are sometimes understood to circulate freely between individual agents in a way that can be understood to affect the perceived 'value' of the bearer. In Jacques Dupaquier's words, they can be seen as a "free commodity, the

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<sup>63</sup> Leslie Richardson, 'Who Shall Restore My Lost Credit? Rape, Reputation and the Marriage Market.' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 32 (2003), 19-44. Pp. 21-22.

consumption of which is obligatory.”<sup>64</sup> The binomial name, constituted of given name and surname, is often understood to confer individuality and enable its bearer to participate within this circulatory reputational economy. But this model does not go unquestioned. It co-exists with another model of naming, one stressing that personal proper names locate the bearers within taxonomies of gender, class, nationality, religion and political affiliation. Imaginative fiction questions the individuality that can be symbolised and publicised by the binomial name. In bringing these models into conflict, it disrupts the reputational economy and has significant implications for understandings of social order.

## Methodology

A project of this length requires a precisely defined scope. Several decisions for which it may be useful to explain my rationale include: my approach to genre, my chronological period, my focus on ‘English’ literature, my decision to exclude proper names such as place names and the names of the months from my enquiry, my concentration on representations of name change rather than name bestowal, and my focus on gender and class as organizing categories of identity.

I regard myself as a historicist scholar of literature. Imaginative literature is inseparable from the multi-textual context in which it is produced, circulated and consumed, and history is primarily constructed and understood through textual and social exchanges, many of them imaginative. My strongest interest is in the novel; a capacious form that broadly reproduces a range of dialogic registers and is uniquely valuable in doing so, particularly for a study that focuses so insistently on a unit of

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<sup>64</sup> Jacques Dupaquier, ‘Naming-practices, Godparenthood and Kinship in the Vexin, 1540-1900,’ *Journal of Family History*, 6 (1981), 135-155, p. 135.

language and its oral and legible circulations. But recent critical reassessments of genre and readership have shown that to read eighteenth-century novels in exclusion from other discourses is to miss a plethora of rich intertextual undercurrents. As Harriet Guest argues, “eighteenth-century novels themselves participate in debates that cut across genres; they assume readers who are also immersed in periodical literature, in poetry, in histories, readers who discuss plays and parliamentary debates, who perform music, and peer into the windows of print shops. Novels echo debates and discourses the implications of which may only be spelled out in, say, polemical essays, or conduct books, or private letters.”<sup>65</sup> Each of the following chapters, therefore, takes at least one imaginative text of the period as its organising focus and places it in context of other textual discourses that ground it within its historical moment.

Critics of identity studies have sometimes seen the last quarter of the eighteenth century as a period when identity categories in Britain experience some particularly interesting upheavals. Dror Wahrman argues with reference to gender, race and class that “in the closing two decades of the century, this relative porousness, which allowed eighteenth-century categories ... to be imagined as occasionally mutable, potentially unfixd, and even as a matter of choice, disappeared with remarkable speed.”<sup>66</sup> Wahrman names the American Revolution of the late 1770s, perceived by many Britons as a “civil war,” as key to the shift he describes, arguing “The ideology of the American Revolution could be - and was - associated with the subversion of every basic identity category, thus shading easily into concerns about the protean and inadequate nature of these categories.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Harriet Guest, *Small Change*, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>67</sup> Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, p. 238.

Over the course of my research, I found that the main three categories of the personal proper name – given name, surname and title – each experienced a period of particularly heightened interest in imaginative literature of the eighteenth century, which movement can be read as related to the ways in which key foreign and domestic political upheavals shaped the national psychology. My thesis is structured accordingly. The given name could be seen as the ‘true’ name up until the middle of the eighteenth century, and I explore some of its resonances in my first and second chapters. Around the time of the Wars of Independence, however, I argue for the ‘supersession of the surname,’ a remission of concern about the given name’s ability to represent uniqueness and an increasing anxiety about the surname’s efficacy as an arbiter of cultural belonging. This anxiety is explored in my third and fourth chapters, which address literary interrogations over the 1780s of the relationship between the surname, kinship, gender and posterity. After the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, I observe a second shift, away from considering the efficacy of the surname and towards exploring that of honorific and democratic titles.

While following Wahrman and others in seeing the Wars of Independence and the French Revolution as central to the shifts I outline, my main concern is to give due attention to the importance of earlier schools of thought to late eighteenth-century formulations of personal identity. Hence the title of this thesis, which offers a quotation from Locke’s 1689 *Essay* as a gloss on the ways in which people in Britain conceptualized the relationship between their names and their identities at a much later date. Specifically, these take the form of considerations on the socially mediated aspects of personal identity; the ways in which names signal community belonging rather than individualism; the ways in which they work as “Knots” to “tie [their bearers] fast together.”

It might be argued that this is a thesis about British, rather than English, literature. The reason why I have not described it in this way is because the texts in which I am interested were all written in dialogue with the English common law; one which might or might not have been practiced to a greater or lesser extent in the Celtic territories. I hope that it will be clear that I do not describe these texts published in England as 'English literature' out of any tendency to dismiss their Scottish, Irish or Welsh authorship, expatriate or not. Rather, I want to draw attention to the fact that, wherever their place of birth or ancestry, the writers I address engaged with the distinct and particular laxity of the English law under which, for the most part, they lived.

From my second chapter onwards, common names, place names and chronological names are all excluded from my enquiry (with the exception of cases where they are used with a proper personal naming function). I have made this decision largely because I feel there is something about the personal proper name that is more central and germane to the study of identity formation than any of these other categories of language. There may be interesting implications for identity formation in the language we use to denote our things, our ideas, and our places, but surely there is nothing more revealing than the language we use to denote *ourselves*. I have, however, adopted an unusually expansive definition of what I consider to be a 'personal proper name', including baptismally bestowed Christian names, patrimonially or maritally bestowed surnames, and civil, marital and honorific titles (including 'Lord', 'Sir', 'Countess', 'Mrs.', 'Monsieur' and 'Citizen'). In doing so, I have emulated van Langendonck's approach towards the study of proper names, believing that they are not defined so much by their grammatical operation within wider structures, or by typological practices (which shift across languages, and indeed

in England are remarkably different in eighteenth-century texts from those in popular use today), but instead by the semantic function they perform when spoken or written. I am concerned, to borrow Ferdinand de Saussure's terms, with the *parole* rather than the *langue* of names: the individual speech acts by which people were addressed in my period of interest, rather than the decrees of a modern grammar.

My six chapters share an underlying thematic concern with the relationship between gender and social class as organizing categories of identity, and the point at which these (sometimes competing) categories of identity intersect in discussions of naming. The texts and cultural tendencies upon which I focus have been guided by my interest in these intersections, and encouraged by the rich variety of available sources that address them. Moreover, my argument is structured around several instances of *voluntary name change*. I have been reluctant to limit my discussions of representations of bestowing a name upon another person, since these can tell us much about the namer's organisational conceptualization of social order, but I am most interested in a process of self-fashioning in which individuals display agency through modifications of their onomastic identities. The moments at which agency is most apparent are those when people change their own pre-existing names, since the transition from one onomastic signifier to another is that at which the attachments pertaining to corresponding identities are most openly declared or disavowed. The structure of my thesis will, while gesturing outwards towards broader states of naming and being named, focus for the most part on this actual process of onomastic transformation.

I have been reluctant to exclude from my study the relationship between racial difference and slave naming practices. The practice of renaming slaves in accordance with ownership, and the ways in which freed slaves reclaimed old onomastic

identities or forged new ones would have offered many fertile resources for research. I found, however, that there was so much to say about the framing context from which I started my investigation into the relationship between proper personal naming and identity – that is, gender and class – that to attempt to add a consideration of racial identity would have resulted in superficial observations across all categories and rigour in none. I hope, in developing this thesis into a monograph, to incorporate a consideration of slave naming and re-naming practices into my argument – perhaps, as addressed in my Conclusion, with significant implications for its overall shape and emphasis.

### Structure of the thesis

My thesis is divided into three sections, each consisting of two chapters. The first part provides an overview of the broad contexts within which the rest of the thesis is situated, suggesting wider trends within which to view my later detailed textual readings. The second part addresses treatments of the hereditary surname in the 1780s, with an emphasis on the ways that the relationship between gender and posterity is mediated in these treatments. The third part focuses on ideas about how acts of naming re-defined the relationship between the state and the individual in the 1790s, focusing on honorific and democratic titles, and the name as a unit of data used in the service of state surveillance.

#### *Section One: Contexts in the long eighteenth century*

My first chapter sets up the context for subsequent analyses by tracing discussions of common naming and of personal proper naming over the first eighty years of the eighteenth century. Showing that discourses of common and proper naming both

engage with theories of representationalism, etymology and affectivism, I take each of these categories in turn to underscore similarities in how the two discourses developed over this period. I argue, however, that a striking generic split can be observed in terms of the register, literary authority and conditions of material circulation of these two discourses. Common naming is frequently discussed in intellectually prestigious generic fora, including philosophical treatises and lexicographical dictionaries. Conversely, discussions of proper naming are restricted to genres often described as fringe or peripheral, distorted by satire or marginalised by means of the physical media in which they were represented; the novel, the tale, the ephemeral magazine article, and the specialised onomasticon. Using texts by Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and several lexicographers and anonymous essayists, I consider why and how this split takes place.

In my second chapter, I move to focus more closely on the overview of proper naming. I explain my focus on personal proper naming, and show that the eighteenth-century philosophical commonplace that personal proper names refer only to individuals was challenged by writers of fiction and periodical essays who realised that they locate their bearers within taxonomies of class, gender and nationality. I examine the idea that by the mid-eighteenth century the given name was largely seen as a private form of address and the surname as a public one, and show how texts that transgress this model provide evidence of its fluidity. I then declare my main interest, from the 1770s until the end of the 1780s, in the surname as the component of the name that seemed to generate the most interest in writers of imaginative literature. Its ability to be read representationally (as an arbitrary category), etymologically (as a link to ancestry) and affectively (as a symbol of one's social station and kinship ties) gives rise to a stock character in imaginative fiction of the later century, which I

identify as the 'amateur genealogist'. Providing readings of this character in texts by Elizabeth Craven, Charlotte Turner Smith and Jane Austen, I interrogate the ways in which these characters are shown to derive affective pleasures from oral and legible circulations of their names, and relate my observations to Edmund Burke's theory about the relative effects of visual art and of language, and to the proliferation of peerage directories in the late eighteenth century.

*Section two: The hereditary surname: gender and posterity in the 1780s*

My third chapter interrogates the relationship between marital name change and the transmission of a married woman's reputation to posterity in the 1780s. I first consider how notorious women with multiple or inaccessible names who exploited their onomastic ambiguity – such as Elizabeth Hervey/Chudleigh/Pierrepont and Letitia Darby/Smith/Lade - were treated in public discourses of the period, arguing that anxieties about their unnameability often stand metonymically for anxieties about their sexual subversion of the conventional categories of daughter/wife/mother. I then move to consider the multi-generic writings of the multi-named Hester Lynch Salusbury / Thrale / Piozzi. Thrale Piozzi, as I choose to call her, displays acute awareness of the reputational dangers of an ambiguous onomastic identity, and attempts to publicise her marital name as an indication of her respectability. This desire, however, sits in uneasy tension with her wish to transmit a stable reputation to posterity, both literarily and genealogically. I track Thrale Piozzi's usage of her own various names throughout her writings, parsing her strategies of conformation and resistance to the defining power of her name, and the ways in which she attempts to create durable legacies, most notably by means of her *Three Dialogues on the Death*

of *Hester Lynch Thrale*, her composition of her own epitaph, and textual evidence of her determination that her adopted heir would inherit her own maiden name.

Where my third chapter examines responses to an entrenched custom, in my fourth I move to examine a controversial practice that subverted that very custom, arguing that the early 1780s witnessed a remarkable degree of anxiety among elite social groups about the hereditary surname's efficacy as an arbiter of cultural belonging. The eighteenth century saw a general rise in the expensive and technically unnecessary phenomenon of requesting a surname change by Royal Licence, and it appears that the years 1780-1783 saw a particularly sharp increase in the number of requests for such a change. In 1782 Frances Burney published her second novel *Cecilia: or, Memoirs of an Heiress*, in which the plot is predicated upon exactly such a surname change, obliged by testamentary injunction. Burney admitted that her whole 'End' in writing the novel was to "point out the absurdity & short-sightedness of those Name-Compelling wills," and her novel ignited debate and dissension among its polite metropolitan readership about the ethics of surname change, which can be seen as a process of self-reflection about both the composition of a social elite and the relationship between gender and posterity. I argue that Burney uses the hereditary surname as a metonymic representative of the urge to 'bind posterity', a trope that had already acquired political significance in Locke's writings and went on to bear considerable further hermeneutic weight during the Wars of Independence in the 1770s.

*Section Three: Titles and surveillance: Class, property and reputation in the 1790s*

My fifth chapter continues to address how naming practices reflected an intersection between discourses of class and gender, but it moves to new ground by addressing the

treatment of honorific and democratic titles in the politically turbulent 1790s. I argue that the French National Assembly's abolition of honorific titles provides a site upon which English reformist discourse (specifically Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and the essays of George Dyer) attempts to situate democratic identity upon a foundation of assimilative naming, but is hamstrung by older traditions of political radicalism that rely on the importance of atomised individual identities. Further paradoxes within reformist discourse are illustrated by the attempts of Charlotte Turner Smith to structure her novel *Desmond* (1792) around the question of what an English revolutionary man should call himself. Various models of naming are subject to different pressures within Turner Smith's novel, and disparate degrees of representationalism are conferred upon honorific and marital titles. Gesturing back towards the findings of my previous chapters, I suggest a reading of Turner Smith's text as a challenge to the male reformist who fights for selective reform of a patriarchal system without considering similar liberty for women in the onomastic arena.

My final chapter addresses the relationship between the English state and the individual subject through an onomastic lens. It reads William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams: Things as they Are* (1794) alongside Jeremy Bentham's manuscript proposal *Indirect Legislation* (1782), which suggests tattooing individuals' names on their wrists to facilitate the detection of criminals. I argue that both texts engage with the ethics of onomastic atomisation, with a particular focus on the efficacy of 'reputation' as a motivating force: distinguishing signs of individuality must, whether driven by oral or legible forms of circulation, ultimately lead to the fetishisation of reputation. Godwin sees this fetishisation as ultimately destructive, whereas Bentham sees one of the principal advantages of his proposal as the fact it would confirm and

officialise individuality, enabling people to exercise ownership of their own 'name' in the reputational sense. Where Godwin and Bentham coincide, though they approach the issue from different perspectives, is that they both see contemporary forms of onomastic circulation as advantageous to the propertied classes, whose "glory it is to be known", and open up the possibility – though it is treated by Bentham with trepidation and Godwin with ambivalence – that onomastic obscurity might benefit those of the lower classes.

## Terminology

In this introduction, I have already found it necessary to lean on certain terms that are far from uncontroversial. The terminology around naming varies between writers in both primary and secondary sources, and seems to lack a clearly authoritative referential standard. For the reader's convenience, a glossary of onomastic terms, and a precise description of the ways in which I have used them, is provided.

But a choice that cannot be explained within a glossary has been that of what to call the writers I address. While 'Laurence Sterne' and 'William Godwin' are reasonably unproblematic formulations, the question of what to call married women writers, who went under at least two different names during their lifetimes, is far more vexed. How should one name Mrs. Hester Lynch Salusbury/Thrale/Piozzi, Miss/Madame Frances/Fanny Burney/D'Arblay, Mrs. Charlotte Turner/Smith/~~Smith~~, Mrs. /Lady Letitia Darby/Smith/Lade, Elizabeth Berkeley / Craven / Margravine of Brandeberg Anspach and Bayreuth / Princess Berkeley, and Elizabeth Chudleigh / Hervey / Pierrepont Duchess of Kingston-upon-Hull and/or Countess of Bristol? I write these series of onomastic permutations in full to emphasise the point that, as many critics have already noted, the question of how to transmit a reputation to future

generations when the names by which one is known are fluid and unstable was - and still is today - an intractable problem for women attempting to establish or negotiate a public reputation.<sup>68</sup> Biographies, epitaphs and other commemorative discourses must select a dominant identity for married female subjects who have changed their surnames. At its very simplest, this choice equates to a selection between pre-married or post-married identity. Where women have married and changed their names more than once, the task becomes even more difficult.

A brief overview of the debate over what to name Hester Lynch Salusbury/Thrale/ Piozzi can give a good idea of the issues at stake. The early nickname of 'Dr. Johnson's Mrs. Thrale', lent authority by the epitaph that Orlando Butler Fellowes commissioned to be engraved on her memorial in Tremeirchion, implies that the most important or definitive stage of its subject's life were the Streatham years, when she was known as a literary hostess, rather than the far longer period in which she published herself, often very successfully, as Hester Lynch Piozzi. Subsequent editors and critics have attempted to redress this imbalance: Edward and Lillian Bloom, in their authoritative edition of her letters from 1784 to 1821, cut out the Thrale years entirely and called their subject 'Piozzi'. Felicity Nussbaum and William McCarthy, two of the most perceptive critics of Hester Piozzi's writing, attempt to encompass both her subject's married identities - and the middle name of 'Lynch', her mother's

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<sup>68</sup> For a general account of the problem, see Diane Dugaw, 'Introduction', *Memoirs of Scandalous Women*, 5 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), 1:3. For a consideration of the problem of naming Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, see William McCarthy, 'The Repression of Hester Lynch Piozzi; or, How We Forgot a Revolution in Authorship,' *Modern Language Studies*, 18:1 (Winter, 1988), 99-111 and 'Preface' in *Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman* (Chapel Hill; London: North Carolina Press, 1985.) For a consideration of Frances Burney's names, see Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, 6. For a consideration of Charlotte Turner Smith's names, see Jacqueline Labbe, 'Introduction', in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London; Brookfield: Pickering & Chatto, 2008).

family surname, which she used throughout her life as a moniker of interchangeable status between middle name and surname - within the formation 'Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi.' The only problem with their choice is that it omits the name 'Salisbury,' Piozzi's maiden name - which, however, was the name that she was most keen to see transmitted to posterity when she adopted her second husband's nephew John Salisbury Piozzi in 1794, renaming him John Piozzi Salisbury.

The debate over what to call this multi-named subject may, to some, seem faintly absurd. But I think it is important to acknowledge that the patrilineal naming system, combined with the practices by which Western society facilitates the transmission of literary fame - notably the practice of referring to subjects by their surnames - intrinsically disadvantages and excludes married women from becoming those subjects. This difficulty is particularly problematic given, by this period, the increasing remission of the given name as a public and official name and the corresponding importance of the surname, which shift is outlined more fully in my second chapter. The given name was, in this period, the only part of a married woman's onomastic identity that could remain inviolate throughout her life. Some biographers have chosen to call their subjects accordingly – Loraine Fletcher, for example, refers to Charlotte Turner Smith as 'Charlotte' throughout her literary biography. This seems equally problematic to me though, since as I show in my second chapter, in the late eighteenth century the given name was generally seen as a private unit of address, with ominous connotations for women when used in a public manner.

Following Nussbaum and McCarthy, I choose to refer to my subject as 'Thrale Piozzi'. This formation is not unproblematic; she used the second name of 'Lynch', hovering in its usages between given name and byname, at all periods of her life, and

her maiden name 'Salisbury', as previously noted, was sufficiently important to her that she insisted upon her adopted son and heir taking and using it, even above his family name (and that of her own cherished second husband), Piozzi. But the formation I have selected is short enough for convenience and it covers the two dominant bynames by which she generally referred to herself during the period of her life on which this chapter concentrates. I have applied similar synchronic logic to the other married women writers upon whom I focus most closely. As I focus only on Frances Burney D'Arblay's novels published before her marriage, I call her 'Burney'; since I focus on Charlotte Turner Smith's writings after her marriage, and separation from her husband, I call her 'Turner Smith' to reflect these two developments. I refer in passing to Elizabeth Craven (as she was when she wrote the text I discuss), Elizabeth Hervey and Letitia Darby. I have submitted to the imperative to be succinct in naming these figures, but not without anxiety that in doing so I collaborate with the very naming practices I critique. I offer these uneasy solutions not in the hope that they adequately represent my subjects, but as part of an acknowledgement that the naming system within which my subjects wrote, and within which I now write, is fundamentally inadequate.

All terminological choices, common and proper, have been made for my own convenience and that of the reader, but I hope also to retain a sense of the permeability of these concepts during this period. The choices outlined above have enabled me to aim for the best compromise between clarity and precision of analysis, while trying to avoid the pitfall, as so many eighteenth-century commentators recommended, of excessive generalization under the despotic classificatory apparatus of names.



## Section One

Contexts in the long eighteenth century



## Chapter 1: Discourse and genre: Common and proper naming, 1689-1779

This chapter addresses broad trends in discussions of common naming and of proper naming, from the publication of Locke's *Essay* in 1689 until the late 1770s. My argument is organized thematically to examine how certain concerns or schools of thought – namely the ideas of representationalism, etymology and affectivism – developed across discourses of common and of proper naming. Each of the sections in this chapter addresses one of these movements across both these discourses, reading selected texts closely and gesturing out towards wider trends. My intention is to show throughout the rest of the thesis that one of the most important sources of the late eighteenth-century fascination with personal proper names is an inherited disposition among thinkers of this era to regard language in particular critical ways; as divine instrument, as historical and cultural artefact, and as cognitive process. Novels, tales, and essays that use the transformation of a personal proper name as their organising trope can be read differently, in important ways, when one is aware of how frequently they draw on the terminology of different philosophies of language.

But if the topics of common naming and proper naming are united by mutual concerns in this period, they are separated by the genres in which each is presented. I show that proper names were perceived, unlike common names, to be inappropriate for discussion in the arena of self-consciously philosophical letters. Instead, they were a common subject for novels, tales, and periodical essays. Discussions of proper names took place on generic sites that were perceived by the literary elite to be peripheral, ephemeral or somehow low-status, with a marked propensity to be

addressed through the distorting, displacing lens of satire. I read this generic distinction as related to a certain shift in the proper name's treatment in lexicography, whereby concepts of common and proper naming share certain conceptual ground at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but by its end have parted ways. Early eighteenth-century dictionaries often listed proper and common names alongside one another or else contained substantial appendices of proper names. As the century wore on, however, these appendices were increasingly construed as marginal to the principal project of a 'common, or appellative' dictionary, and the lexicographical study of proper names was shunted into specialist biblical or classical onomasticons.

I try, in this chapter, not to score too heavy a distinction between different types of proper name except where absolutely necessary, because it would complicate my focus on the broader relationship that I am trying to sketch out. Here, my intention is to show the similarities and the differences between discourses of common and proper naming over the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in order to prepare the ground to consider how the late eighteenth-century novel draws on these earlier discourses, and makes the discussion of personal proper naming peculiarly its own. My second chapter separates out how different kinds of proper naming were treated from the mid-century onwards.

A word on terminology is necessary at this point, since the ways in which various critics name certain schools of linguistic thought often differ, with considerable implications for a reader's understanding. For example, Stephen Land's broad category of 'representationalism', the idea that language literally represents something rather than enacting or enabling something, covers two schools of thought which in one respect are practically oppositional; the seventeenth century tradition of a God-given language with innate correspondence to things, and the Lockean

evaluation of subjectivity whereby words can only be understood to represent ideas arbitrarily. Robert Essick on the other hand, highlights these two narrower categories within the category that Land calls the 'representational', drawing on relatively modern semiotic theory to distinguish the 'motivated' from the 'arbitrary' sign. Other critics prefer to talk of 'Cratylan' and 'Hermogeneous' approaches, or to refer to 'Adamic' and 'secular' naming when they wish to emphasize adherence to, or departure from, religious influences. In the field of study relating to the origins of language, the terms 'etymology' and 'philology' are often used overlappingly, and we can also choose to refer to 'theoretical histories' or 'the genetic issue'. When it comes to the study of the emotional effects of language, some theorists simply refer to 'rhetorical' qualities, others to the more precise 'affective' qualities, whereas still others shroud this field of enquiry in the vocabulary of associationism or refer to the discourse of the sublime.

My logic in determining which terminology to use when discussing theories of language has been dictated by a desire to draw the most productive and meaningful links possible across the fields of common and proper personal naming. The thematic categories used in my first chapter and referred to throughout the thesis – the motivated sign and Lockean arbitrariness, etymology, and affectivism – are unable to cover the whole corpus of eighteenth-century literature devoted to the topic of naming with any degree of comprehensiveness; this has been the subject of many full-length studies and could usefully be the subject of many more. My thematic categories also imply divisions that are far from unproblematic, and there is often some foreshadowing and overlapping involved in my narrative. These categories enabled me, however, to streamline and make manageable an unwieldy range of observations

with what seemed to me the best compromise between clarity and precision of analysis.

It is difficult to discuss 'genre' in this period without acknowledging the terminological and conceptual problems at stake. Recently, several scholars have argued against attempts to understand eighteenth-century intellectual history according to the implied dichotomies of modern disciplines such as the 'arts and sciences' or 'literature and politics'. Generally, these accounts have sought to draw attention to the fact that categories a modern thinker might perceive as oppositional were in fact mutually located discourses, often sharing an underlying logic or perceived *raison d'être*. Jon Klancher, for example, has traced the emergence of new arts-and-sciences institutions in London, and called for a reassessment of the supposedly dichotomous relationship of these disciplines.<sup>69</sup> Paul Keen, taking a narrower focus by challenging the fallacy that 'literature' referred merely to works of imaginative expression, points out that the *British Critic* in 1795 considered 'Divinity, Morality, History, Biography, Antiquities, Geography, Topography, Politics, Poetry, British Poets Republished, Translations of Classics, Natural Philosophy and History, Medicine, Translations of Learned Societies, Law, General Literature' all to fall under this encompassing category.<sup>70</sup>

My argument in this chapter replicates these critics' insistence that we should challenge modern assumptions about the emergence of intellectual disciplines. It does so by showing how imaginative literature, philosophy, grammar and lexicography demonstrate mutual structural and rhetorical influences over this period. However, it also attempts to maintain awareness of the more granular generic categories (some of

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<sup>69</sup> Jon Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 3.

which are listed in Keen's example) that were in many cases subjected to rigorous hierarchical rankings and scales of distinction. I do not think these two objectives are incompatible; indeed, I find it convenient to use terms such as 'philosophy', 'periodical article' and 'novel' with a general assumed understanding of what these terms mean, precisely in the service of making broader points about how these categories shared intellectual sources, influences and preoccupations.

The main distinction upon which I rely is one between texts that seem to view themselves as serious and deliberate contributions to a field of intellectual enquiry and those that, by virtue of their imaginative nature, do not make such a claim. There seems to be no accepted critical term for this particular distinction. J.G.A. Pocock drew attention many years ago to the "appearance of the fully self-conscious linguistic performer" who "seeks to explicate and justify all his moves and innovations, and to propose a radical reordering of language and philosophy."<sup>71</sup> More recently, in calibrating the emergence of new models of personal identity in late eighteenth-century Britain, Dror Wahrman rejected the historian Charles Taylor's focus on precisely these "self-aware, articulate reflections... on the topics of identity, categories of identity, or self" in favour of a diverse array of cultural materials containing "the unselfconscious traces, the unintended marks, the signs of those "unstructured intuitions" that underlay people's fundamental assumptions about who they were and who they could be."<sup>72</sup> I follow these critics in perceiving such a distinction, but lacking a set of convenient names for its constituent parts. When I refer to 'philosophy,' 'grammars' or 'lexicography' on the one hand, and 'imaginative

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<sup>71</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, 'Introduction: The state of the art,' *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 16-17.

<sup>72</sup> Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, pp. xv.

literature' (encompassing novels, novellas and periodical essays) on the other, I hope this ill-defined but important distinction will be borne in mind.

### The decline of the motivated sign, and the rise of arbitrary representationalism

In contemplating discussions of both common and proper naming, a distinctive shift can be traced over the first half of the eighteenth century, which can be summarised as the supersession of the theory of language as a 'motivated sign' by theory regarding it as fundamentally arbitrary. Classical and biblical concepts of common naming as divinely motivated, still popular in the seventeenth century, came under attack from a Lockean school of philosophical thought that viewed the process of common naming as the arbitrary representation of ideas. Similarly, in the seventeenth century proper names were often understood as divinely motivated, but as the eighteenth century wore on, this idea was gradually subjected to satirical disparagement. Representations of baptism, examples of which I parse in an anonymous periodical article written by Henry Fielding and in Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*, provide illustrations of this disparagement.

Robert Essick, in his study *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, offers a brief history of "the myth of the motivated sign, the word or gesture or image bearing more than an arbitrary relationship to its referent."<sup>73</sup> Essick identifies Genesis 2:19 as providing the most resonant mythological expression of the motivated sign over two millennia; the reference to Adam's naming of the beasts was cited frequently as early as the first century AD in discussions about the origins and character of language, and

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<sup>73</sup> Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, p. 28.

by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “the motivated character of Adam’s speech had become a commonplace among both Biblical exegetes and secular spectators on the original language.”<sup>74</sup> A special relationship was hypothesized – sometimes simply assumed - between Adam’s words and the things they designated, which relationship was allegedly lost when language was fragmented at Babel. This hypothesis, which also drew intellectual authority from some sections of Plato’s dialogue *Cratylus*, provoked numerous attempts to recapture or re-formulate a language of nature by seventeenth-century philosophers who, in Land’s words, “demand[ed]...that the sign should somehow embody the logical status of its referent.”<sup>75</sup> The seventeenth-century philosopher John Wilkins, for example, mused in 1668 on the “advantage” that would be achieved “if the Names of things could be so ordered, as to contain such a kind of affinity or opposition in their letters and sounds, as might be some way answerable to the nature of the things which they signified... we should by learning the Character and the Names of things, be instructed likewise in their Natures, the knowledge of which ought to be Conjoined.”<sup>76</sup>

From the late seventeenth century, however, this form of motivated representationalism began to be subjected to critical attacks. Murray Cohen gives a succinct overview of this epistemological change: “By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the idea of language study had shifted from the taxonomic representation of words and things to the establishment of the relationship between speech and thought. Seventeenth century linguists sought to establish an isomorphic relationship between language and nature; in the early eighteenth century, linguists assumed that language

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<sup>74</sup> Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, p. 32.

<sup>75</sup> Land, *From Signs to Propositions*, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> John Wilkins, *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, 1668, p. 21. Quoted in Land, *From Signs to Propositions*, p. 2.

reflects the structure of the mind.”<sup>77</sup> Cohen, like most other critics making some form of this argument, identifies the key figure in this trend as Locke, whose *Essay* argues that the relationship between words and things is arbitrary rather than motivated. Words, says Locke, “come to be made use of by Men, as the Signs of their Ideas... not by any natural connexion, that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain Ideas... but by a voluntary Imposition, whereby such a Word is made arbitrarily the Mark of such an Idea.” (405)

Of course, this argument was not new to Locke: the dialogues in *Cratylus* had included Hermogenes’ attack on the myth of motivated names. Still, with this statement Locke made a link between language, perception and identity that was definitively secular in its implications, became a staple link of Enlightenment rationalism and remains one of the foundational principles of much modern linguistic, literary and psychological theory. Essick, who calls the *Essay* “almost sacreligious,” suggests “perhaps [Locke’s] most important contribution was to make an explicit principle... that the study of language was a branch of philosophy, not theology.”<sup>78</sup> Cohen argues that the primary difference in linguistic philosophy after Locke is the insistence that the primary end of speech is communication, rather than accessing divine meaning: “The difference between Adam and modern man is that there is already for each man an established language; we must adjust our ideas to the established language because the end of speech is communication with our fellows.”<sup>79</sup>

The after-effects of the secularization pointed out by Essick and Cohen are clearly observable in philosophical writing throughout the eighteenth century. For example, Essick has noted the “important development in the study of language

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<sup>77</sup> Cohen, *Sensible Words*, p. xxiv.

<sup>78</sup> Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, p. 55.

<sup>79</sup> Cohen, *Sensible Words*, p. 38-40.

origins and changes” represented by William Warburton’s *Divine Legation of Moses* (1737): “[Warburton] refers in passing to Adam naming the beasts, but dismisses it ‘as groundless as any’ other speculation on how speech began. Similarly, he denies the notion that alphabetic writing was given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. For these tales of sudden and transcendental origin Warburton substitutes gradual evolution, and in place of divine inspiration as the source of primary motivation he offers pictorial mimesis. Further, he replaces human pride and divine wrath as the causes of language change with the complex interactions of cultural forces.”<sup>80</sup> Warburton’s ability “thoroughly [to] secularize... the genesis and exodus of language” owes a direct debt to Locke’s work. In a similar vein, Cohen has invoked a wealth of examples of grammarians or language theorists from the mid-eighteenth century who, like Locke, stress that the social and communicative function of language is of primary importance.<sup>81</sup> “The ability of men to understand one another, not the power of language to represent things or ideas, is [by the mid-eighteenth century] the gift of language,” Cohen hypothesizes. “The new linguistic perspective on man puts interpersonal communication at the beginning of social development and distinguishes among societies.”<sup>82</sup>

Certainly, there were ideas in popular circulation about motivated theories of naming until the end of the eighteenth century and beyond. But they were predominantly expressed in forms such as annotated bibles (where one might reasonably expect ideas that underline innate God-given meaning to take precedence)<sup>83</sup> or else, where submitted for serious philosophical consideration,

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<sup>80</sup> Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, p. 38.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen cites Daniel Farro in 1754, Daniel Fenning in 1771 and George Brown in 1779. *Sensible Words*, p. 120-121.

<sup>82</sup> Cohen, *Sensible Words*, p. 120-121.

<sup>83</sup> Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, p. 10.

dismissed as eccentric. The Welsh antiquarian Rowland Jones, for example, could argue as late as 1764 in *The Origin of Language and Nations* “that language ought not to be considered as mere arbitrary sounds, or any thing less than a part, at least, of that living soul, which God is said to have breathed into man,”<sup>84</sup> but his theories were largely subjected to critical ridicule. One review in the *Critical Review* remarked, “The author talks like a druid rising out of the grave after eighteen hundred years sleep.”<sup>85</sup>

A similar movement, from viewing names as ‘motivated signs’ to viewing them as the arbitrary signs of ideas, can be traced with regard to discussions of personal proper naming. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, superstition about the motivated quality of personal proper names was just as rife as the motivated approach to common naming. The parental bestowal of a name at a religious ceremony operated as a nexus between theories of agency and religiously tinged determinism, and a raft of advice was available about the best names to bestow, and those to avoid. After the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, for example, the Vatican declared that children should be given the names of canonized saints, so that those saints might act as models and as special protectors and advocates before God.<sup>86</sup> The Reformation, too, left its mark on personal naming practices, since Protestant parents (Calvinists and Puritans especially) rejected non-Christian and later on Catholic saints’ names and preferred those taken from the Bible. The English Puritan divine Thomas Cartwright advised in 1565 that “the names of God, or of Christ, or of angels, or of holy offices, as of Baptist or evangelist, should be avoided, and also all

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<sup>84</sup> Rowland Jones, *The Origin of Language and Nations*, quoted in Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, p. 78.

<sup>85</sup> *The Critical Review*, 18 (1764), p. 303-6.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, *Means Of Naming*, p. 191; Corkery, ‘Approaches to the Study of English Forename Use’, p. 56.

such as savour of paganism or poetry.” Instead, names should be taken from “the Holy Scripture,” choosing especially “those who are reported... to have been godly and virtuous.”<sup>87</sup>

However, in these statements the belief that proper names correspond to things in nature is already perceptibly on the wane. There is instead a burgeoning interest in the “savour” of a name, to appropriate Cartwright’s vocabulary; the connotations that it might call to mind for those denoted by the name or those around them. By 1654, the English Puritan minister William Jenkyn was able to declare “a good name is a thread tied about the finger, to make us mindful of the errand we came into the world to do for our Master.”<sup>88</sup> The key phrase here is surely “to make us mindful.” The sentiment is rooted in religiosity, as were most seventeenth-century pronouncements concerning personal proper names, but nonetheless it views the name primarily as a cognitive trigger, the main significance of which is that, by virtue of its connotations, it can inspire a modification in behaviour in the individual who bears it.

By the mid-eighteenth century, pronouncements viewing the personal proper name as a motivated sign were fair game for satirists. An article published in the *Champion* in 1740, written by Henry Fielding under his pseudonym ‘Hercules Vinegar,’ declared that “There is nothing more ridiculous than the Superstition concerning Names,” equally condemning “the foolish Fondness which we are apt to entertain for our own” and “the Antipathy, which History acquaints us, that Men have often taken to Names,” and marvelling that “Very grave Authors have condescended to Remarks on this Head, which might make a Reader even of a saturnine Complexion smile.” Fielding depicts the absurdity of superstition concerning

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<sup>87</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 193.

<sup>88</sup> Corkery, ‘Approaches to the Study of English Forename Use’, p. 56.

Christian names by envisaging the fanciful speculations taking place at a christening, a vignette that initially appears calculated to provide gentle mockery of superstitious folk, but in the final clauses inverts its focus to include the most respectable classical authors within its satirical compass: “The good Women who quarrel about particular Names at a Christning, some contending to give this, some that to a Child, as it belongs to themselves, as they approve its Sound, as some Wearer of it in the same Family hath been lucky, or other good Reason, little know that they have no less an Authority than Pliny the Elder in their Favour, who seriously advises Parents to give pretty Names to their Children.”<sup>89</sup>

By the mid-century, Laurence Sterne was therefore contributing to an established tradition in depicting a christening as the key moment in which attitudes towards personal proper naming are invoked and problematized as symptomatic of different philosophies of language. In the famous baptism scene in *Tristram Shandy* (1759), Tristram is accidentally christened by the one name to which his father has an unconquerable antipathy. The reader has been told already, earlier in the narrative, of Walter Shandy’s “opinion...That there was a strange kind of magick bias, which good or bad names, as he called them, irresistibly impressed upon our characters and conduct.”<sup>90</sup> From the moment of baptism forth, therefore, from Walter Shandy’s perspective Tristram is damned to a life of misfortune. But in Tristram’s own view, and probably the reader’s, the real damnation is that of Walter, the ultimate proponent of the motivated sign, to a lifetime of disappointment.

Christina Lupton has argued convincingly that the christening scene in *Tristram Shandy* can be seen as part of an emergent trend in eighteenth-century

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<sup>89</sup> “Untitled Item,” *Champion* 2 (June 7, 1740), pp. 307–13.

<sup>90</sup> Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Everyman’s Library, 1991), p. 55. All references are to this edition.

fiction, whereby the possibility is considered that “names reveal language as a meaningful system of human signs rather than a divine or natural transcript.”<sup>91</sup> Lupton points out Walter’s failure “to adjudicate over what it means to give a name” and argues that Sterne’s text draws attention to a comparison between Walter’s flawed perception of himself as a namer and the narratorial operations of Sterne himself as a far more effective one, in order to suggest that “fiction is provisionally exempt from the Lockean rule which says that words cannot govern reality.”<sup>92</sup> The dynamics of Walter’s philosophy of language, however, are more complex than those of straightforward investment in the ‘motivated sign’. The uncertainties and hesitations in Tristram’s apology for his father indicate that Walter’s position on names arises from awareness of the potential of names to also be read etymologically and affectively, two linguistic approaches that, in the mid-century, were widely seen as more credible than that of the motivated sign.

The immediately striking thing about the terms in which Tristram explains his father’s approach to names is that, rather than Walter Shandy’s hobbyhorse providing evidence that superstition about the import of Christian names was rife at the time, the exact opposite is apparent. Walter’s superstition is ridiculed by Tristram; it is “so out of the common track” that he imagines the reader “immediately throw[ing] the book by”, “laugh[ing] most heartily at it” or “condemn[ing] it as fanciful and extravagant.” (55) Walter is envisaged in conversation with a sceptical antagonist, and is forced to own that his belief, “to those... who have not carefully sifted it to the bottom, has an air more of fancy than of solid reasoning in it.” (56) As was the case in Fielding’s anonymous article, the narrator in *Tristram Shandy* seems unable to discuss the

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<sup>91</sup> Christina Lupton, ‘Naming the Baby: Sterne, Goethe and the Power of the Word’, *MLN*, Vol. 118, No. 5, Comparative Literature Issue (Dec., 2003), 1213-1236, p. 1214.

<sup>92</sup> Lupton, ‘Naming the Baby’, p. 1225.

possibility that names have intrinsic representational meaning without distancing himself from ridicule by explicitly imagining the reader's scornful response and aligning himself with it implicitly. The reader is encouraged to sympathise with Corporal Trim's assessment of Walter's superstition about Tristram's name: "I would not give a cherry-stone to boot... 'Tis all fancy, an' it please your honour – I fought just as well... when the regiment called me Trim, as when they called me James Butler... does a man think of his Christian-name when he goes upon the attack?" (60)

However, Walter Shandy's theory of naming is worth parsing in some detail, as it foreshadows many of the overlaps between representational, etymological and affective logic that characterize discussions of personal proper naming around the middle of the eighteenth century. His attachment to the name 'Trismegistus', for example, derives from the existence of an admired namesake, which fact implies an acceptance of the role of historical actions and events in determining a name's connotations – an approach which, as we shall see in the next section, broadly corresponds to the etymological movement in the field of common naming. A name's 'meaning' is historically determined. However, this logic is inverted when it comes to Walter's aversion to the name 'Tristram'. Walter demands of his putative auditor whether he had ever "heard tell of a man, called Tristram, performing any thing great or worth recording? – No – he would say, *Tristram!* – The thing is impossible." (61) The self-supplied answer to Walter's question is contained solely in the exclamation of the name; the impossibility of achieving greatness is assumed to lie intrinsically within the combination of letters or sounds. Walter's logic seems to be here that the name 'Tristram' is inherently so base that nobody can surmount it to achieve greatness, whereas he earlier contends that the name 'Trismegistus' is great because somebody great once bore the name, thus recognising the importance of historical

association. Walter's error is not simply one of wild or random superstition; in its inconsistency, it reflects contemporary controversies about the relationship between representationalism and etymology associated with both common and proper naming.

Moreover, Tristram gives due acknowledgment to the fact that most people accept the literalism of Christian names on an emotional level. In other words, he accepts that logic and instinct work counteractively with regard to personal proper naming. He does so by quoting his father's argument to a naysayer: "Your son, - your dear son, - from whose sweet & open temper you have so much to expect. - Your *Billy*, Sir! - would you, for the world, have called him *Judas*?" And he concludes meekly, despite his earlier embarrassment about Walter's beliefs, "I never knew a man able to answer this argument." (56-57) In this statement, Tristram acknowledges the effectiveness of an appeal to the affective quality of the nuclear name 'Judas': the effect on the addressee is so unanswerable that it needs no recourse to explanation. The name 'Judas' derives its power from its history; without the Biblical precedent, the word would be like any other.

The extent to which Tristram gives his father credit for his nomocentric value system, then, is contingent upon Walter's ability strategically to allude to the historical origins and cultural associations of proper names in order to make their full affective force felt. The source of his success as "an orator", in Tristram's view, is that "the elements of Logick and Rhetorick were... blended up in him." (57-58) The 'blending up' of logic and rhetoric - or of representative and affective discourses - in the field of personal proper naming are responsible for Walter Shandy's success as an orator, just as they would be ultimately responsible for much of the resonance of the personal proper name as a trope in literature of the later eighteenth century. Tristram, still firmly positioning himself in the anti-motivated camp, nonetheless finally feels

the need to warn his readers against the insidious power of onomastic superstition, a warning surely unnecessary if they were likely to be as immune from its powers as his first treatment of the subject implied: "I mention this... as a warning to the learned reader against the indiscreet reception of such guests, who, after a free & undisturbed entrance, for some years, into our brains, - at length claim a kind of settlement there, - working sometimes like yeast; - but more generally after the manner of the gentle passion, beginning in jest, - but ending in downright earnest." (58-59)

Over the course of the eighteenth century, then, the 'motivated sign' model for proper personal naming - which bears a broad correspondence with the 'motivated sign' view of common names - becomes a focus for satire in both periodical writing and in fiction. But this satirical treatment of a motivated naming model exists alongside the complicating factors of first, an increasing interest in the etymological origins of proper names alongside those of common names, which often looks rather like a secular attempt to get back to a 'real' meaning; and secondly a burgeoning awareness of the emotional potency of language both in common and proper naming models. These complicating factors induce a mass of hesitations and contradictions in treatments of personal proper naming.

### Etymology: Johnson and Fielding

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a remarkable surge of interest in an etymological approach to language, which was firmly secular and heavily influenced by Lockean thought. Olivia Smith provides an overview of "the acceleration of the study of language" around the 1750s and 1760s, "evidenced by the publication within one decade of Bishop Lowth's *Comprehensive Grammar*, Samuel

Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*, and James Harris's *Universal Grammar*.<sup>93</sup> Stephen Land defines the aspect of the "study of language" that was subject to increased interest as the 'genetic issue'; the question of the origins of language.<sup>94</sup> This acceleration of interest in the genetic issue is important because it implies a developing conceptualization of the meaning of common names as historically determined. This trend was also broadly reflected in the study of personal proper names.

It is easy to feel that the publication and success of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) has been allowed to tyrannize the field of eighteenth-century scholarship around lexicography. For modern critics, part of the appeal of Johnson's *Dictionary* may result from the fact that its Preface contains such a lucid founding statement of the principles of linguistic prescriptivism that it is tempting to neglect other actors in the contemporary lexicographical field and assume that Johnson speaks for them all. Olivia Smith notes the continued influence of the *Preface*'s emphasis on the "original import of words", and its castigation of those writers who "use them with colloquial licentiousness, confound distinctions, and forget propriety"<sup>95</sup> crediting it for the pervasiveness of not only linguistically prescriptive but also politically conservative ideas throughout the later decades of the eighteenth century: "The *Dictionary*, by its long-lasting and extensive distribution, gave to the conservative ideology of the 1750s an enduring and influential life. The evasion of the political; the belief that language pertains more to literary texts than to

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<sup>93</sup> Smith, *Politics of Language*, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Land, *From Signs to Propositions*, p. 19.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Johnson, 'Preface' to *Dictionary of the English Language*, (London: Knappor, Logman, Hitch, Hawes, Millar, Dodsley), 1755.

speech, and the demarcation of pure and corrupt usage along class lines became more commonly held assumptions due to their currency in Johnson's dictionary."<sup>96</sup>

In its discussion of common names, Johnson's *Preface* ridicules the model of the motivated sign, and yet acknowledges both the importance of etymology and the affective potency of names; exactly the kind of conflation that I noted in my discussion of Sterne. Johnson protests that his "recommendation of steadiness and uniformity [in the use of language] does not proceed from an opinion, that particular combinations of letters have much influence on human happiness, or that truth may not be successfully taught by modes of spelling fanciful and erroneous: I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven. Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas." However, this firm anti-motivated standpoint is then compromised and complicated by the qualifying line that justifies Johnson's entire enterprise: "I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote."<sup>97</sup> Firmly subscribing to a Lockean version of representationalism in which "words are but the signs of ideas," Johnson ascribes ideas themselves a degree of permanency that he wants to see reflected in the words that denote them. Imprecise use of words might otherwise cause imprecision of ideas.

John Barrell is right that in the *Preface* Johnson is uninterested in recovering a perfect Adamic language; however, his "willing[ness] to look at least as far back as to the Elizabethan age to find 'the wells of English undefiled'" is a key component of his shrewd conflation of custom with currency, that works in the service of a political

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<sup>96</sup> Smith, *Politics of Language*, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> Johnson, 'Preface.'

notion of language, “in which the majority should be idle and helpless spectators while the customs of the polite are converted into law.”<sup>98</sup> Like Locke, Johnson sees the primary purpose of common names as facilitating communication; but he nonetheless argues for a precise and stable knowledge of the origins of words as the best tool to enable this communication. The logic of this argument implicitly attributes performative power to words, even as Johnson protests that they are strictly arbitrary.

Again, a parallel movement – though with an interesting disparity – can be noted in the discussion of personal proper names. In the same article of 1740 that I cited above, as well as satirizing the ‘motivated sign’ approach to personal proper naming, Henry Fielding also satirizes the vaunted credibility of the idea that names might derive their current cultural standing from etymological associations. His satire is aimed at an imagined philologist called “N.B. Philol’, with whom he initially appears to engage in intellectual dialogue. At the beginning of the essay the narrator, having dismissed the model of the motivated sign, appears to argue for an etymological approach as the correct method of determining meaning of proper personal names: “... as to [Montaigne’s] Observation of the general Dislike which some Nations have for particular Names, it is most certainly founded on Truth, tho’ he doth not give himself the trouble to examine into the Reason of it, which is not, I apprehend, as some think, from any greater Agreement, than certain Sounds bear with this than that Language, nor from any of the other chimerical Reasons ludicrous Persons assign; but it is, indeed, because the Name hath been made odious by some Person who hath borne it, and hath transmitted it to Posterity with his Iniquity annexed.”

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<sup>98</sup> Barrell, *An Equal Wide Survey*, p. 137, 148.

As the article proceeds, however, the narrative voice's earnestness increases in proportion to the fancifulness of the origins he posits for the common given names he offers as his objects of study. In considering as a test case the given name "Will", the absurdity of the argument becomes clear: "By the Name with which we have christened, that dancing Light which constantly deceives and leads People out of their Way, I mean a Will with a Whisp, which the Great N.B. PHILOL tells us is evaporated out of a FAT SOIL, we may conclude that some very light insignificant Fellow was formerly known by that Appellation, famous, it is probable, for Tricking and Deceit... Tho', if I might offer my Conjecture, I should rather chuse to derive it from VIOLIN, which might probably typify some nonsensical, talkative Fellow, who abounded much in Sound, or might allude to some One who might not improperly be played upon with a good Stick." By the end of the article, on the strength of many examples such as these, Vinegar is nominating himself for enrolment in "that learned and useful Body, the R---- S-----y" on the strength of the examples that he has "already with great Labour fished out of the bottomless Pool of Antiquity."<sup>99</sup>

It is possible to read a telling disparity into a comparison of Johnson's *Preface* and Fielding's article. Despite hints of Johnson's qualms about such an absolute commitment to lexicography,<sup>100</sup> an etymological approach to the study of common names was - and still is - treated as a serious intellectual movement, whereas the same logic applied to personal proper names is a subject for ridicule in Fielding's anonymous satire. Yet the question remains: if, upon the strength of Fielding's satirical logic, representationalism and etymological investigation into origins are both inadequate means of determining the import of personal proper names, what is a

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<sup>99</sup> Fielding, "Untitled Item," pp. 307–13.

<sup>100</sup> Barrell, *An Equal Wide Survey*, p. 149.

credible explanation for the emotional significance of names, and the importance with which people invest them?

### Affectivism: 'strong' and 'clear' words in Burke's *Enquiry*

Book Three of Locke's *Essay* depicts language as a powerful mediating force, the most apt metaphor for which is an opaque mist. Words 'interpose themselves so much between our Understandings, and the Truth, which it would contemplate and apprehend, that like the Medium through which visible Objects pass, the Obscurity and Disorder does not seldom cast a mist before our Eyes, and impose upon our Understandings.'" (488) Locke's anxiety about the potential of language to corrupt direct communication would be inherited, though treated very differently, by a multiplicity of commentators over the course of the next century, one of the most important of whom is Edmund Burke. In this section, and in my next chapter, I will discuss Burke's analysis of affective language in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and consider how his exposition of 'strong' as opposed to 'clear' language influenced the discussion of personal proper names. The 'genetic question,' with its focus on antiquity and origins, will be an important part of this discussion since, as Burke makes clear, affective feelings are sometimes intimately intertwined with elements of personal or cultural nostalgia.

In the fifth book of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, a radically innovative understanding emerges of the potential power of naming, and the uses that might be made of it. Like Locke - whose influence he acknowledges explicitly - Burke is discussing common names (particularly what he calls 'compounded abstract words', abstract names that refer to

qualities “such as virtue, honour, persuasion, docility”<sup>101</sup>) rather than proper names. He accepts most of Locke’s premises, particularly the notion that the mind’s arbitrary selection of words (“mere sounds” (188)) has no intrinsic relation to the ideas represented. Burke’s innovation derives from his description of the semantic role of words in terms of their *effects* rather than their representational clarity or exactitude. He challenges Locke on the ability of compounded abstracted words, unlike aggregate words or simple abstract words, to represent ideas: “Of these I am convinced, that whatever power they may have on the passions, they do not derive it from any representation raised in the mind of the things for which they stand.” (188) Instead these “mere sounds” raise emotions and affections by association: “they are sounds, which being used on particular occasions... they produce in the mind, whenever they are afterwards mentioned, effects similar to those of their occasions... they at last utterly lose their connection with the particular occasions that gave rise to them; yet the sound without any annexed notion continues to operate as before.” (188-189)

The “affection of the soul” produced by either the sound of the word or the picture triggered by it – but not necessarily by both – is considered as a crucial effect of language in its own right. A “clear expression... [which] regards the understanding” is distinguished from a “strong expression... [which] belongs to the passions... The one describes a thing as it is; the other describes it as it is felt.” (198) Furthermore, Burke – unlike Locke – does not necessarily see this blockage to communication of ideas as a cause for concern. As Jane Hodson has noted, “where Locke is deeply concerned by this ‘abuse’ of words and suggests a number of remedies, including definition, Burke considers it to be one of the most useful characteristics of

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<sup>101</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. David Womersley (Penguin Classics, 1998), p. 188. All references are to this edition.

language.”<sup>102</sup> Affective language is even accorded a degree of primacy over representative language in its ability to move and to motivate: “We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description.” (198)

Burke’s distinction represents an important modification to Lockean thought, which would prove crucial to some of the categories invoked later in the century when commentators discussed the import of personal proper names. Although it would be overstating the case to imply any clear binary between Locke and Burke, between reason and emotion, between arbitrary language and affective language, the terms of the semantic theories of these two writers are frequently raised and modified by those who discuss proper naming from the mid-century onwards. If they do not exactly imply two antithetical positions exactly, they set the terminology and frame of reference for a discourse that would appear, at times, to be polarised.

The parallel movement within discourses on personal proper naming to Burke’s exposition of affective language is so significant to my overall argument in this thesis that it is addressed in its own chapter. In Chapter Two, I show how in periodical essays, novellas and especially the novel, writers are deeply concerned with the affective power that can be exercised by the least clear of words, but the strongest; the personal proper name. I suggest, in my discussion of works by Elizabeth Craven, Charlotte Turner Smith and Jane Austen, that emotional over-investment in the personal proper name is shown to have significant consequences for both private relationships and the public welfare. This affective over-investment is often concentrated in a kind of stock character I identify as the ‘amateur genealogist’ – and, most often, its particular focus is the hereditary surname.

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<sup>102</sup> Hodson, *Language and Revolution*, p. 76.

## Dictionaries: broadening the discourse

Before I move on to that discussion, however, I want to indicate the broader context within which the modification of the relationship between common and proper naming that I have outlined in this chapter took place. I therefore conclude this chapter by showing that dictionaries gradually impose, over the course of the eighteenth century, an increasingly firm distinction between common and proper names. This can be understood to reciprocally prepare the ground for, and to be a result of, the disparity of prestige accorded to common and to proper naming.

In the volume of the *Oxford History of English Lexicography* devoted to specialized dictionaries, Patrick Hanks asserts that there were no dictionaries of personal names published in between 1605 and the middle of the nineteenth century: “Between Camden and the Victorians, no names dictionaries were compiled... No serious work in onomastic lexicography appeared between Camden (1605) and Nichols (1859).”<sup>103</sup> This statement is extremely misleading. In fact, inclusion of appendices of proper names in British spelling or lexicographical dictionaries that were predominantly ‘common or appellative’ was not at all unusual throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the second half of the eighteenth century several standalone dictionaries were published that contained proper personal names and their ‘meanings’ exclusively.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps a clue to why Hanks erases these publications from lexicographical history lies in his usage of the word ‘serious’, which gestures towards the idea that there was something frivolous or embarrassing

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<sup>103</sup> Hanks, ‘Dictionaries of Personal Names’, p. 127, 141

<sup>104</sup> Fowler lists several from the seventeenth century, including John Penkethman’s *Onomatophylacium; or, the Christian names of men and women, now used within this realme of Great Britaine* (1626), Edward Lyford’s *The True Interpretation and Etymologie of Christian Names* (1655), and Stephen Skinner’s *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae* (1671). Fowler, *Literary Names*, p. 25.

about the etymological study of proper names. This does not excuse the omission though, since many of these dictionaries, whether appended or standalone, contain at least as much information about the origin of the proper personal names they list as Camden's 1605 survey, which Hanks does regard as 'serious'.

In eighteenth-century dictionaries, it is possible to observe a hardening distinction between common and proper names as the century proceeds. In early eighteenth-century dictionaries, lists of proper personal names are often attached as appendices or even included within the main body of entries alongside common nouns, indicating that they are seen as important to the lexicographical project. But Johnson's influential exclusion of proper names from his *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755 can be seen to set the tone for their exclusion from intellectual considerations of language for the rest of the century and beyond. In the second half of the century, proper name dictionaries start to be separated from common name dictionaries and produced as standalone onomasticons, the marginal status of which may go some way to explain why modern lexicographical reference works ignore them so entirely.

Two important early pioneers of English lexicography are John Kersey and Nathan Bailey. Kersey edited three dictionaries (*A New English Dictionary* (1702), a revised version of Edward Phillips's *The New World of English Words* (1706) and the *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* (1708)). Bailey's influence was even greater; his *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721) went through nearly thirty editions over the course of the century. Indeed, a copy of the folio edition, the *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730), was used by Johnson as a foundation for his own project.

Crucially, these early dictionaries include appendices of proper names as important parts of their enterprises, and advertise them as such. Kersey's 1708

*Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum: Or, A General English Dictionary*, defines itself on the title page as ‘A Brief, but Emphatical and Clear Explication of all sorts of difficult Words, that derive their Original from other Ancient and Modern Languages,’’ but it also boasts “an Interpretation of the proper Names of Men and Women, and several other remarkable Particulars mentioned in the Preface.”<sup>105</sup> Similarly, the 1730 edition of Nathan Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum: Or a more Compleat Universal Etymological English Dictionary Than any Extant*’ a huge volume full of costly woodcuts and dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, defines itself primarily as “Explaining hard and technical Words, or Terms of Art, in all the *Arts, Sciences, and Mysteries* following’, but also advertises an ‘added... Collection of Proper Names of Persons and Places in Great-Britain, with their Etymologies and Explications.’<sup>106</sup> This ‘Added Collection’ takes the form of an appendix at the back, entitled ‘*An Alphabetical Table Of The Names of Persons and Places in Great Britain, With their Several Etymologies*’. The table includes entries for the names of both persons and places, with varying degrees of detail. For example, we have, ‘AARON, Heb. i.e. An inhabitant or frequenter of mountains or a mountain of strength, the brother of Moses and first high-priest of the Jews’ but less fulsome entries for ‘AGNES, a proper name of women’ and ‘KEMP, a Sirname’.

The logic of Bailey’s *Dictionary*, by which proper names were an important part of an etymological project, was replicated in some spelling dictionaries of the mid-century. For example, James Buchanan’s 1757 *A New Pocket-Book For Young Gentlemen and Ladies: Or, a Spelling Dictionary Of The English Language*’ includes a ‘subjoined... Catalogue of the most usual Christian Names of Men and Women’.

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<sup>105</sup> John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum, Or, a General English Dictionary*. (London: J. Phillips), 1708.

<sup>106</sup> Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum*. (London: T.Cox), 1730.

Some spelling dictionaries go even further in their perception of the importance of proper names to a project designed to ease linguistic communication, by giving proper personal names joint billing on the title pages with common names, and mixing these two kinds of word in one alphabetically arranged body. A good example is the fourth edition of Thomas Dyche's *'The Spelling Dictionary: Or, A Collection Of all the Common Words and Proper Names of Persons and Places, Made use of in the English Tongue.'*<sup>107</sup> The intention of this volume, the title page of the fourth edition announces, is "*Whereby Persons of the meanest Capacity may attain to Spell and Write English true and correctly.*" In the alphabetically arranged contents, in which the accents are marked but there are no meanings or etymology, Dyche mixes common and proper nouns together, so that 'Alderstoke' sits between 'Alderman' and 'Ale'.

Johnson, however, chose to omit proper personal names from his lexicographical enterprise. His reasons for this omission in the Preface are vague: "As my design was a dictionary, common or appellative, I have omitted all words which have relation to proper names; such as Arian, Socinian, Calvinist, Benedictine, Mahometan; but have retained those of a more general nature, such as Heathen, Pagan." Johnson's confident implication that since his dictionary is "common or appellative" the omission of proper names is a natural decision implies a widely recognized distinction between common and proper naming, which lexicographers in the first half of the eighteenth century had not recognised. From the mid-century, however, the dominance of Johnson's *Dictionary* meant that mainstream lexicographical works generally exclude proper names from their dictionaries.

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<sup>107</sup> Thomas Dyche, *The Spelling Dictionary*. (London: Richard Ware), 1737.

Instead proper names, with etymological histories attached, are from the mid-eighteenth century generally relegated to dictionaries addressing a particular discipline for the specialised practitioner: notably either the classics or the Bible. For example, Lempriere's *Bibliotheca Classica; or, a Classical Dictionary, containing a Full Account of all the Proper Names mentioned in Antient Authors*, aims, according to its Preface, to give "the most accurate and satisfactory account of all the proper names which occur in reading the Classics, and, by a judicious collection of anecdotes and historical facts, to draw a picture of ancient times, not less instructive than entertaining."<sup>108</sup> That understanding proper names could provide an insight into an intellectually inaccessible but important arena is also assumed in the anonymous 'Dictionary of the Bible: Or, an *Explanation* of the Proper Names and Difficult Words *In The Old and New Testament*, Accented as they ought to be pronounced. Together with other Particulars, equally useful to those who would understand the *Sacred Scriptures*, And read them with *Propriety*,'<sup>109</sup> published in 1766.

It is important to stress that I am not trying to argue that Johnson's decision is solely responsible for this shift in the status of proper names within the lexicographical field; rather that his decision can be seen as a symptom of the broad separation of common and proper names that I have outlined in this chapter. Early eighteenth-century lexicographers and publishers were able to identify, and thought it worth providing for, a market of readers interested in the origin of personal proper names as well as common names. However, the relocation after the mid-century of proper names from general dictionaries to onomasticons demonstrates that the etymological study of proper names was increasingly conceptualised as a more

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<sup>108</sup> J. Lempriere, *Lempriere's 'Bibliotheca Classica; or, a Classical Dictionary, containing a Full Account of all the Proper Names mentioned in Antient Authors'* (London: Cadell and Davies), 1747.

<sup>109</sup> *A Dictionary of the Bible*, (London: J. Newbery), 1766.

marginal or frivolous project than that of common names. This re-conceptualisation provides a corollary to the disparity I have outlined whereby common names were seen as an appropriate subject for philosophy, and proper names for imaginative literature.

A brief anecdote about the writer I address in my next chapter can highlight how *outré* onomasticons of given names were considered to be by the early nineteenth century. In 1815, Hester Thrale Piozzi attempted to publish an onomasticon: a manuscript she called the 'Name Book', more formally entitled *Lyford Redivivus: Or, a Grandame's Garrulity*. This project, according to Piozzi's friend Edward Mangin, was based on an idea "taken from a diminutive old volume, printed, if I do not forget, in 1657, and professing to be an alphabetical account of the names of men and women, and their derivations."<sup>110</sup> The text to which Mangin refers is Edward Lyford's *The True Interpretation and Etymologie of Christian Names* (1655). Judging by her book's title, Hester Piozzi intended to become Edward Lyford reborn, replicating his onomastic enterprise with one of her own. But the project was doomed to failure. Mangin recounts how she "desired me to mention the MS. to some London publisher. This I afterwards did, and sent the work to one alike distinguished for discernment and liberality, but with whom we could not come to an arrangement. I have heard no more of "Lyford Redivivus" since, and know not in whose hands the MS. may now be." Publishers could not be tempted to take a punt on *Lyford Redivivus*, and it remains unpublished to this day.

Moreover, in the manuscript of *Lyford Redivivus*, Thrale Piozzi reflects upon the scornful reception that onomasticons were likely to meet with in the late eighteenth century: "There came out a book some twenty-five years ago, about 1790, giving an

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<sup>110</sup> Edward Mangin, *Piozziana: or, Recollections of the Late Mrs. Piozzi, With Remarks, by A Friend* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833), pp. 13-14.

account of the tribes of North Wales, where these long departed princes were faithfully recorded by the names of Ma'doc, and Fa'-doc, and Cur-ogie, but a wicked wag from London crying out, 'What's here? A history of mad-dog, and fat-dog, and cur-ogey, drove names, and book, and all away.'<sup>111</sup> The title of Thrale Piozzi's own work itself seems to anticipate this disparagement: in half-apologising for itself as a 'Grandame's Garrulity' it points towards the associations of superstition and whimsy that an etymological approach to proper names held by the end of the eighteenth century.

This distinction between common and proper names across several types of discourse should be seen as a framing context for the chapters that follow, in which personal proper naming in imaginative literature will be my principal focus. Having established the different ways in which common and proper naming were discussed, I rely on this difference to show why it is meaningful that imaginative discussions of personal proper naming nonetheless insistently refer back to the terminology of philosophical common naming. In other words, they work against the grain of the generic distinction imposed on different types of naming over the course of the eighteenth century. In this respect, imaginative literature such as novels, novellas and imaginative periodical essays can be seen as deeply engaged with philosophical discourse. Separated from its explicit concerns by the distinction I have outlined, they nonetheless reach out to bridge this gap by means of drawing on the language of representationalism, etymology and affectivism in their negotiations of personal proper naming.

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<sup>111</sup> Mangin, *Piozziana*, p. 18.

Chapter 2: "What mischiefs have arisen!" Onomastic taxonomies  
and the supersession of the surname, 1779-1818

In this chapter, I consider the contexts within which imaginative literature of the late eighteenth century applied the idea of affective language to personal proper names, in particular the hereditary surname. I begin by addressing the influence and limitations of the principle that personal proper names refer exclusively to individuals, showing that all units of the personal proper name in eighteenth-century England, considered semantically, suggest membership of wider communities defined by biological kinship, class, gender, marital status and national citizenship. Moreover, eighteenth-century writers were often acutely aware of this tension within the personal proper name between individuality and group belonging. I compare periodical essays of this period that interrogate the relationship between particularity and generality in both the given name and the hereditary surname, and see them as indicative of taxonomies of class, gender and nationality. Bearers who seem to transgress the bounds of these taxonomies provoke anxiety about social mobility and about the inability of language to express and consolidate the social order adequately.

However, I locate a disparity in the treatment accorded to the given name and the surname by imaginative literature of the period. I review broad movements in the history of naming practices to hypothesise that by the mid-century the given name is seen as the form of address most appropriate for the private domestic sphere, and that to use it in public polite discourse is to subject the addressee to troubling implications concerning their class or sexuality, or both. The surname, on the other hand, is the public name *par excellence*, by which the bearer places him or herself within a class

framework in the eyes of the public, and frames him or herself as a participator in polite social discourse.

I am aware of the potentially problematic nature of this approach, which seems to rely upon a dichotomous model of private and public spheres that has been complicated over recent decades, and I emphasise that it should be seen as a broad model of norms that can be, and are, complicated on numerous sites. I proceed to focus more closely on the public name, exemplified although not exclusively represented by the surname, and to examine some strategies of circulation and withholding that can help us to understand how it is used as part of a reputational economy.

I then move to speculate how these tensions, between individual/group naming and public/private naming, are addressed in imaginative texts from the 1770s onwards. I argue that the novel of this period generally treats the given name as a stable and relatively unproblematic signifier for its bearer, whereas the fluctuating surname is increasingly the focus of plot-driving acts of naming. Characters in novels may have odd or idiosyncratic given names conferred upon them by an older generation (parent or godparent) whose choice is seen as a result of excessive sensibility, but this tells us as a reader more about the namer than the person named, whose character and fortunes it appears to affect very little. The surname, however, locates the bearer within a biological family and a public network of kinship that is affectively potent, and is therefore seen as a more powerful arbiter of their identity.

How, then, do writers of imaginative literature reconcile anxiety about the affective potency of surnames with the cultural tendency with which I concluded my last chapter, to see acknowledgement of the power of personal proper names as superstitious or antiquated? I argue that this is often done, particularly in fiction

written by women, through the introduction of a stock character I call the 'amateur genealogist'. The amateur genealogist, engaged in a fetishistic relationship with the names of his or her ancestors, enables the authors of these texts to satirise the tendency to over-invest affectively in surnames while also showing the ability of this over-investment to have disastrous social consequences. I offer short readings of the function of this figure in Elizabeth Craven's novella *Modern Anecdote of the Ancient Family of the Kinkvervankosdarsprakengotchderns: A Tale for Christmas 1779* (1779), in Charlotte Turner Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793), and in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818). In parsing depictions of these characters, I am interested in the material means by which the amateur genealogist interacts with oral or legible manifestations of their own name, and I offer some thoughts about how this trope might relate to the increasing publication and popularity of peerage directories in the second half of the eighteenth century. I conclude this chapter by observing that, due to the convention that a woman changes her surname upon marriage, the hereditary surname has a different sort of potency for women of the period than for men (both writers and their characters). This observation sets up the contexts for the second section of this thesis in which I address how, during the 1780s, the surname as an arbiter of identity is treated in the writings of Hester Thrale Piozzi and Frances Burney.

Some of the observations in my previous chapter conflated personal proper names with other forms of proper name, such as place names and names of the months. While this was useful in order to concentrate my argument on the broad distinction between common and proper naming, from hereon these other kinds of proper naming are excluded from consideration and I adopt the personal proper name as my sole focus. The reason for this exclusion is that I am primarily interested in the

voluntary shaping of subjects' social identities, and this can best be achieved through a focus on the names subjects called *themselves*, rather than those by which they named places or understood and organised time.<sup>112</sup> As the mechanism by which we identify ourselves, the personal proper name is uniquely positioned to illuminate aspects of identity formation that other kinds of language cannot. As I acknowledged in my introduction, however, there are some intriguing nexuses between scholarship around place names and chronological names and my own study; for example, the practice of English nobility often calling themselves by the names of their estates.<sup>113</sup> Where these practices arise, I draw these other kinds of proper naming into my discussion.

I also exclude civic, marital, honorific and democratic titles from my discussion in this chapter even though these, too, point towards modes of belonging. The civic title 'Mr.' and the democratic title 'Citizen,' for example, gesture towards models of kinship defined more than the binomial name by broad categories of politeness, citizenship or political affiliation. The marital title 'Mrs.' comes to define women by marital status, rather than professional standing or citizenship. Honorific

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<sup>112</sup> For work on place names, see Simon Varey, *Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Erik Bond, *Reading London: Urban Speculation and Imaginative Government in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Ohio State University Press, 2007); Angela Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North: Science, Antiquarianism and Travel, 1790-1830* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); George Dekker, *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism: Radcliffe, Scott, and Mary Shelley* (Stanford University Press, 2005); Barchas *History, Location, Celebrity*; Lilian R. Furst, *All is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (Duke University Press, 2005); Eudora Welty, 'Place in Fiction', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 55 (January 1956), 57-72. For work on naming time, see Sanja Perovic, 'The French Republican Calendar: Time, History and the Revolutionary Event,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35:1 (March 2012), 1-16; Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton, *The Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010); Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time / Making History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010); Penelope Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).

<sup>113</sup> As Stephen Wilson points out, peers and peeresses often signed with a short version of their title (which was also that of their estate) rather than with a hereditary surname. Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 278.

titles, such as 'Lord' or 'Comte', occupy a particularly interesting place poised between the atomising and the assimilative, since according to the context in which they are used, they can either distinguish a person from his or her untitled fellows, or absorb them into a collective category of similarly ennobled peers. But this chapter aims to set up the contexts for my study of literature written during the 1780s, and the moment at which writers of imaginative literature turn to the title as the most problematic onomastic arbiter of identity would only arrive with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. I therefore turn to address it in the third section of this thesis.

### 'Distinct denominations'? Categories of naming

The internal tension between individuality and generality within the binomial name structure can be addressed by turning briefly back to Locke's *Essay* and considering his model of how categories are cognitively created. Locke reflects on the impracticality of maintaining particular names for each individual thing in existence, implying that general or grouped naming is a regrettable necessity: "It is beyond the Power of humane capacity to frame and retain distinct Ideas of all the particular Things we meet with: every Bird, and Beast Men saw; every Tree, and Plant that affected the Senses, could not find a place in the most capacious Understanding." (409) It is, he acknowledges, necessary to group things together and to label these groups by a common name. Locke argues that the divisions that we make when we classify by group naming have no necessary connection with the 'essence' - "the very being of any thing, whereby it is, what it is" - of the things that our ideas represent. That is, the very classification of things that we perform when we name is, itself,

arbitrary: “Nor indeed can we rank, and sort Things, and consequently (which is the end of sorting) denominate them by their real Essences, because we know them not....Therefore we in vain pretend to range Things into sorts, and dispose them into certain Classes, under Names, by their real Essences, that are so far from our discovery or comprehension.” (444,462)

But proper names are not considered to be subject to this process of arbitrary classification. The one throwaway mention of proper names that Locke makes in the *Essay* appears to assume that “distinct Individuals”, unlike the non-human objects represented by common names, “have distinct Denominations.” “All (except proper) Names are general, and so stand not particularly for this or that single Thing, but for sorts and ranks of Things...And therefore in their own Species, which they have most to do with, and wherein they have occasion to mention particular Persons, they make use of proper Names, and there distinct Individuals have distinct Denominations.” (404, 410)

Locke’s assessment of proper naming neglects to consider that practically all individuals share all components of their names with others. The assumption that they can “mark particularly,” and the resulting exclusion from examining them as categories, has been uncritically accepted in some of the most influential glosses on the taxonomic culture of the eighteenth century. In *The Order Of Things*, for example, Michael Foucault offers a “history of resemblance,” outlining the conditions under which “classical thought” was, by developing systems of tabulating and classifying things, “able to reflect relations of similarity or equivalence between things, relations that would provide a foundation and a justification for their words, their classifications, their systems of exchange.” But Foucault defines the proper noun as “leav[ing] each being its strict individuality and express[ing] neither the table to

which it belongs, nor the area surrounding it, nor the site it occupies. It is designation pure and simple... For natural history to become language, the description must become a 'common noun'."<sup>114</sup>

Claude Levi-Strauss's anthropological work, however, has reminded us that this approach to proper names is selective at best.<sup>115</sup> In *The Savage Mind*, Levi-Strauss argues: "the dynamics of individual names derives [sic] from... classificatory systems,"<sup>116</sup> and he traces the operations of different components of the personal name, within various cultures, to show how they indicate belonging. His approach even goes so far as to announce the "impossibility of defining proper names otherwise than as a means of allotting positions in a system admitting of several dimensions."<sup>117</sup> In seeing personal proper names as practically interchangeable in their usage within different contexts, Levi-Strauss perhaps overestimates the 'classifying' function at the expense of considering how people feel about their names, and how identities are constructed in relation to them. Nonetheless, the principle is valuable that names, far from conferring individuality, in fact point to communities of belonging.

Locke's assumption that "distinct" proper names confer individuality is challenged by imaginative writers over the second half of the eighteenth century, who highlight instead the problematic tension within both the given name and the surname between particularity and generality. In periodical and novel writing from the middle of the century, a tendency emerges to interrogate the inefficacy of the given name or the surname as marks of individuality – especially with regard to social class.

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<sup>114</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Taylor & Francis, 2001), <<http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=13868>> ( 11 May 2014), p. xxvi.

<sup>115</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), pp. 167-216.

<sup>116</sup> Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 176.

<sup>117</sup> Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 187.

‘A spirit of new heraldry’: Class taxonomies of personal proper naming

Alastair Fowler has suggested that ideas about ‘natural’ social stratifications of names find one expression in the tendency of the social elite, from the seventeenth century onward, to re-name their servants. “Ambitious gentry keen to make a good showing have generally wished their servants to have impressive, or at least not inappropriate, names... servants might have to relinquish their own names and take instead those associated with their household office.”<sup>118</sup> This custom can be read as reflecting the widespread association of particular names with certain aspects of class and occupation, which can in turn be read as an attempt to make language fit and represent perceived social reality. In this section, I read several periodical essays of the late eighteenth century that reflect on the relationship between naming and class. Both given names and surnames are sometimes perceived as indicative of class taxonomies, and bearers whose names seem to transgress the bounds of these taxonomies provoke anxieties about social mobility and the limits of language in being able to adequately express and consolidate the social order.

In a letter to the Editor published in the short-lived *Literary Journal: or, Universal Review* of 1803 under the name ‘Nominalis,’ for example, the writer reviews the establishment, over the second half of the eighteenth century, of a “spirit... of new heraldry” in the field of given names, by which “we began to consider certain names as more honourable than others,” which has led to an almost complete “system of nomenclature for the parlour, the hall, and the kitchen.” He sketches out a class taxonomy of given names, mainly for women - those that “remind us of tubs and kettles” and those “admitted into the parlour” or “calculated for the

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<sup>118</sup> Fowler, *Literary Names*, p. 161, 163.

coach, the chariot or the curricle.” Moving on from describing this accepted taxonomy, Nominalis then examines how it is transgressed by names going in and out of fashion and rising or falling up and down the class hierarchy over time, and by the “importation or invention” of new sentimental names as women attempt to escape lower-class connotations. He concludes: “A taste for new nomenclatures is stirring among us. I think in a late Journal you gave us an account of a new *anatomical* nomenclature. Whether bones, arteries, and muscles, will be the better for this, I know not. Not many years ago, likewise, the whole science of chemistry was revolutionised by a new set of names. I cannot, therefore, if all this be proper and requisite, see any reason why men and women should not be gratified by a similar process.”<sup>119</sup> The conclusion locates personal proper names within other taxonomical discourses, those of anatomy and chemistry, but the ambivalent tone of the narrator becomes clear in the final lines. In insisting “a Betty has as good a title to become a Matilda” as an organ or a chemical has to change its name, Nominalis not only satirises the introduction of gendered “sentimental names” but questions the credibility of the entire practice of re-naming so prevalent in natural histories and sciences.

An essay published in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* in 1792 also reflects on the tendency of some name-givers to transgress social codes of naming, and draws the discourse of sentiment into this discussion. The narrator, ‘Patrick Pipkin’, argues that “the business of standing god-father and god-mother to children is a matter of much more serious consideration and consequence than is generally conceived” and is not always carried out responsibly. “Among the middle and lower orders of tradesmen, we find few Joans, Hannahs, Sarahs, Rachels, or Elizabeths - but Anna Marias, Charlotte Matildas, Eliza Sophias, and such other romantic and royal appellations...

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<sup>119</sup> ‘To the Editor of the Literary Journal’, *Literary journal or, Universal review of literature*, 2:3 (August 16, 1803): 173-177.

High-flown names of this kind sound ludicrously when directed to perform the ordinary household drudgery. It would be next to impossible to refrain from smiling on hearing Clarissa ordered to wind up the jack, and Catherine-Ann-Maria to empty the ash-tub, or fetch a pail of water.”

‘Pipkin’ ascribes this “rage for fine names” to an excess of sentiment in the godparent, caused by reading novels: “But I find now that *sentiment* prevails so universally in all our thoughts, words, and actions, that a new kind of character is sprung up, and universally prevails, that of men and women of *sentiment*. I was very much puzzled to find where this character was drawn from; but I have at length discovered that it is to novels we are indebted for our *sentiment*, and that no person, he or she, has a claim to the character of *sentimental*, whose mind is not completely stored from those valuable repositories of incident and character, called Novels.” He ends by confessing, “with all the fondness of a foolish old fellow, that I could wish before I die, to see a few more Tobys, Zacharys, Olivers and Pauls; and to dandle on my knees a few more Margerys, Bridgets, Barbaras, and Pattys. Alas! sir, that we should go to France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, for names, while so many good old English Nicholas’s, Richards, Thomas’s, Dorothys, Deborahs, and Cicelys, are unemployed, or confined to the vulgar employments of carrying out parcels, or trundling the mop.”<sup>120</sup>

This essay, then, places emphasis on the duty of the namer to preserve both national and class identities by naming appropriately, and lays inappropriate names at the door of excessive sentiment. The satire against problematic naming practices, however, is complicated by the fact that the satirical persona of the writer himself is

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<sup>120</sup> Patrick Pipkin, ‘On the Passion for high sounding Christian Names.’ *Walker’s Hibernian Magazine, or, Compendium of entertaining knowledge*, (Aug 1789) pp. 407-408.

depicted as an out-of-touch “foolish fellow” or “warm old dog” whose sentimental passion for “good old English” names indicates that his reason is compromised by his own onomastic preferences.

A similar tendency to view names as taxonomic can be noted in articles addressing surnames from the same period. But the fact that the surname is a heritable name, rather than one imposed at the whim of a parent or godparent, complicates the argument that they should reflect social station. Shifting the focus from the responsibility of a godparent to name appropriately, essays on this subject place emphasis on the name-bearer’s responsibility to ‘live up to’ the original derivation of their hereditary surname, especially where the surname indicates an occupation (eg. ‘Smith’, ‘Cartwright’, ‘Baker’). There is an interesting chronological disparity at work, however, as regards how periodical essayists address disruptions between the origin of the surname and its current usage. In two periodical essays from 1748 and 1769, the disparity between some names and their current bearers’ occupations leads the essayists to conclude that names themselves are at fault and call for an onomastic re-structuring. However, in an essay from 1783, occupational names are held up as evidence of ‘natural’ taxonomies, and the essayist laments that the import of these names are being transgressed by bearers whose occupations do not reflect their surnames.

An essay published in the *Newcastle General Magazine* in 1748 argues that names used to be “Connotatives of some singular Event, in regard to the Person they were applied to; and thus became not only proper but useful.” In comparison, the namer laments the fact that “as Matters go at present, where the Name is continued from Father to Son, and so on from one Generation to another, there can be no doubt, but that, however applicable it might be to the first Person who had it, it cannot but be

absurd in regard to many of the succeeding ones". This writer views the ideal function of names as "expressive", drawing a comparison between the relationship of a surname and two different inheritors, and the relationship between a set tune and two different verses: "I have often thought a whole Generation named in this Manner represented an English Ballad; where, if the Composer set the first Stanza well, the Musick is extremely expressive of the sense of that Part; but, however much merit it has in that, it becomes extremely ridiculous in the Sequel." Like those etymologists who attempted to trace the origin of a word and shed new light on its meanings by delving into the past, the writer of this article claims we cannot understand proper names free from their historical origins. But, unlike them, this writer sees something damaging in the retention of a name where a meaning has changed; he argues that language should keep pace with the evolution of meaning in order to retain the desirable quality of expressiveness. Tellingly, the writer appears to conceptualize the notion of expressiveness primarily in terms of the occupation of the person named, thus implicitly proposing that social mobility be reflected in the name by which a personage is known.

The Head of a Family seems, in short, in our Way of giving Names, to be the only Person properly signified by them; and all that we can possibly value them for, is, that they serve as a sort of Mark of artificial Memory; by which, when we only hear a Man named, we immediately recollect who was his Great Grandfather: but while we remember this, every honest Man cannot but be grieved at the Heart to see how ill they sit upon the Descendant. Thus if a Huntsman had a mind to name his Son Stag, or Hare, or Fox, or by any similar Denotative of his Profession, it might suit the Youth very well, while he followed his Father's Occupation, and would have no violent Impropriety

while it went from him to a Footman; but it must needs sit so extremely ill upon his Descendants, if a King should please to make Lords of them, that, doubtless, a new Name would be absolutely necessary with the new Dignity.

Giving a number of examples of inappropriate matches between name and occupation, the author laments “the extreme Absurdity of continuing Names from Father to Son; which, as ‘tis only a barbarous Custom of later Times, and has plainly no Origin in Reason, I most humbly move may be laid aside; and that as there are Changes enough upon the four-and-twenty Letters, to form distinct Names for every Man that ever was, or shall be born, that hereafter, at least, every Man may have a Name of his own.”<sup>121</sup> An extract from Tobias Smollett’s *Adventures of an Atom*, reprinted in the *Royal Magazine* in 1769, declared in a similar vein: “Nothing can be more preposterously absurd than the practice of inheriting cognomina, which ought ever to be purely personal. Reviewing a series of surnames that are comically inappropriate to their bearers’ social stations or occupations, the narrator asks “whether a sensible foreigner, who understood the literal meaning of these names, which are all truly British, would not think ye were a nation of humorists, who delighted in cross-purposes and ludicrous singularity.”<sup>122</sup>

A 1783 article from the *Hibernian Magazine*, however, takes an antithetical approach to hereditary names. Conflating a broadly etymological approach with a Burkean awareness of the potency of affective language, the essayist ‘A.B’ concludes that there is social value in living up to hereditary names rather than demanding that names themselves adapt to “express” the current holder’s occupation. He declares “How conducive ... would it be to the regulation of society, and the happiness of

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<sup>121</sup> ‘On the Nature and Origin of Names.’ *Newcastle General Magazine* 9 (September 1748): pp. 472–475. See also “‘Names Expressive of Real Characters’.” *British Magazine* (August 1748), p. 350.

<sup>122</sup> ‘On SUR-NAMES’. *Royal Magazine* (April 1769): pp. 158–9.

individuals, would every one acquire a knowledge of the true derivation of their names, and where they tend to promote victorious actions, and establish an honourable character, have them continually in view, and carefully conform to their documents; cautiously avoiding, on the contrary, the influence of such as happen to be of an opposite tendency". A.B. views names as an enforcer of the *status quo* and is clearly a believer in natural taxonomies; rather than following the occupations of their bearers, he recommends that newly-imposed names should be "such as are not only happy and fortunate, but of such as are apt, and adapted to the professions and employments children are intended to pursue". The hereditary occupation of a family should be signalled by its hereditary name, to which its bearers should look in order to inspire their present behaviour and actions. A.B. concludes by lamenting, "From a want of attending to a proper imposition of names, and after that to a due observance of the tenor of them, and the obligations they lay us under, what mischiefs have arisen!"<sup>123</sup>

It is possible to view these 'mischiefs' within the context of a broad discourse of anxiety about the transgression of social categories, which is related to a commercial boom in the eighteenth century which, "by the third quarter of the century, [had] reached revolutionary proportions." Neil McKendrick has pointed out how the "closely stratified nature of English society, the striving for vertical social mobility, the emulative spending bred by social emulation, the compulsive power of fashion begot by social competition," which "offered exciting opportunities for the entrepreneur," were also productive of anxiety about social emulation. "Dress,"

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<sup>123</sup> A.B. "On Names." *Hibernian Magazine, or, Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge* (December 1783): pp. 712–715.

McKendrick asserts, “was the most public manifestation of the blurring of class divisions which was so much commented on.”<sup>124</sup>

These essays enable us to view the perception of the taxonomic function of personal proper naming as an aspect of this anxiety. The association between names and dress was a common trope over the eighteenth century, but unlike dress, names are, as Jacques Dupaquier has pointed out, “a free commodity, the consumption of which is obligatory” which display “in a pure form the function of identification and of distinction proper to the consumption of fashionable commodities.”<sup>125</sup> Scott Smith-Bannister has located the “purity” of naming in this respect in the fact that choices around naming were “not constrained by the limits of an individual’s wealth, as was the expression of social differentiation by other means, such as clothing, education, and so forth.”<sup>126</sup> When the essays I have addressed in this section express anxiety about a lack of proper correspondence between name and social class, they can be seen to feed into this discourse about the blurring of boundaries occasioned by the “tightly packed” stratification of society and the possibilities for social mobility that were raised by the eighteenth-century consumer boom.

### Private and public names: gendering the discourse

Having shown some of the ways in which eighteenth-century periodical essayists reflected on the implications of both given names and surnames for social class, in this section I want to address some of the *differences* between usages of the given

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<sup>124</sup> Neil McKendrick, ‘The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England’, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, eds. McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, p. 9, 11, 20, 53. See pp. 34-99 for the commercialization of fashion.

<sup>125</sup> Dumarquier, ‘Naming-practices, Godparenthood and Kinship in the Vexin’, p. 135.

<sup>126</sup> Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England*, p. 186.

name and the surname. I sketch out several historical trends in patterns of name usage that suggest a perception, by the middle of the eighteenth century, that the given name is the form of address most appropriate for the private domestic sphere. To use it in public polite discourse is to subject the addressee to troubling implications concerning their class or sexual behaviour, or both. The surname, however, is seen as the name by which the bearer places him or herself appropriately in the eyes of the public, and frames him or herself as a participator in polite social discourse.

I would like to offer two caveats to my argument in this section. The first is that this will be, necessarily, an impressionistic and partial overview of the public and private usages of the given name and the surname. No extensive study has been carried out addressing usages of the personal proper name on the scale of, for example, Naomi Tadmor's study of common kinship terms, though one could very usefully be undertaken.<sup>127</sup> Until this has been done, it is necessary to rely on piecemeal observations to contextualise textual readings of the proper personal name. The second caveat is that I am aware my argument in this section might be read as relying on the very model of rigid and dichotomous public and private spheres that has been so richly complicated by eighteenth-century scholarship over recent decades. I offer this overview of trends not to attempt an argument that given names were *always* used in the home and surnames in public; such an argument would be partial, reductive and easily disproved by any of a wealth of counter-examples. Instead I am interested in sketching out broad trends of usage, within which the most interesting incidences of naming are the ones that transgress that dichotomous model and thus

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<sup>127</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.)

complicate it. It is in these transgressions that we can most illuminatingly view the trends.

Various historical scholars of naming practices cite a range of developments in how given names and surnames were used to show that by this period, the given name was largely construed as a private unit of address and the surname as its public counterpart. Historians of the family have drawn on information about given naming practices to argue for the decline of the late medieval 'open lineage family' and, by the eighteenth century, the corresponding development of the 'closed domesticated nuclear family.' As part of this project, Lawrence Stone has hypothesised that the parental practices of calling siblings by the same given name and of calling a new child by the name of a dead sibling, for example, had generally died out by the late eighteenth century, "indicating a recognition that [given] names were highly personal and could not be readily transferred from child to child."<sup>128</sup> Stephen Wilson argues that in the eighteenth century public listings of personal names such as trade dictionaries begin to take the surname as the primal unit of classification, as opposed to earlier catalogues of authors or lists of legal protocols that list people in alphabetical order of first names.<sup>129</sup> He also identifies another "gauge of the emphasis accorded to the second name" as "the substitution of initials for first names... By the eighteenth century, the practice of signing with initials was well established... It was a derivative of written culture and bureaucracy, a label attached to second names in milieus where the first name was irrelevant or unimportant."<sup>130</sup> The Stones concur with the thrust of this argument in *An Open Elite*, when they note that in the

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<sup>128</sup> Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, p. 257.

<sup>129</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 251.

<sup>130</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 252.

eighteenth century “families... regarded the last name as the critical one and ... the coat of arms of the last name was always placed first.”<sup>131</sup>

Of course, it was possible to defy these general conventions and to use the surname in the private domestic sphere and the given name in public forms of address. But to do so was seen to be lacking in politeness, and in the latter case, it could carry quite a stinging charge, with particularly ominous connotations for elite women when used in a public manner. Examples of this charge can be observed across a number of discourses. As Cindy McCreery points out in her work on visual satires on women, the public use of the given name in the late eighteenth century, particularly in its abbreviated form, connoted sexual depravity or lower class occupations: “Most prints, poems and songs of lower-class prostitutes, sailors, sweethearts, fishwives and market vendors used common, one-syllable names (which were often contractions of longer names) such as ‘Moll’, ‘Nan’, ‘Poll’ and ‘Sue.’ These names denote the familiarity between subject and viewer, and by extension between prostitute and customer, in an often affectionate and occasionally dismissive way.”<sup>132</sup> In the satirical 1794 print ‘A Lesson for Spendthrifts - by Dr. Johnson’ (Figure 1), for example, the young addressee is satirically advised to pursue the acquaintance of the “Betsies, Kates and Jennys” who are obviously supposed to represent prostitutes. Numerous novels of this period, too, bristle with awareness of the implications of a woman being called publicly by her given name: in Charlotte Turner Smith’s *Desmond*, for example, it signifies either a boorish and presumptuous man assuming a familiarity to which he has no title, or else an adulterous

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<sup>131</sup> Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 136

<sup>132</sup> Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 173-6.

relationship.<sup>133</sup> The following chapter will provide a study of how Giuseppe Barretti uses Hester Thrale Piozzi's given name against her in their paper wars of the 1780s. All in all, to be referred to by a given name was, for a woman, to jeopardize one's reputation in terms of class, or morals, or both.

### Public naming: Libel, Civility, Tactility

I would now like to focus more closely on public usages of the name, invoking some criticism that has been particularly helpful in organising my ideas about how public names were both circulated and restricted. The majority of criticism to date that addresses the material circulation of written names has focused on forms of anonymity, and this can offer a helpful way into a wider consideration of the circulation of names, and a sense of what it meant to name a person in the public sphere.

In 1975, C.R. Kropf published 'Libel and Satire in the Eighteenth Century,' a still-useful essay that offers a partial key to the visual appearance of names in printed texts of "a particularly litigious age."<sup>134</sup> Offering an overview of the early eighteenth-century offences of defamation, libel, slander, and scandal, Kropf identifies strategies used by writers to evade prosecution centring around the personal proper name - or rather, its absence. Kropf identifies the legal device of the 'innuendo', "one very crucial loophole in the libel laws", as primarily responsible for the distinctive appearance of personal proper names in many eighteenth-century texts. In legal terminology an innuendo was "any word the referent for which was not immediately

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<sup>133</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, ed. Antje Blank and Janet Todd, (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), pp 68-69.

<sup>134</sup> C.R.Kropf, 'Libel and Satire in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8:2 (Winter, 1974-1975), 153-168, p. 153.

obvious when the word was taken out of context”, so it could be an allegorical pseudonym, an ambiguous pronoun, or initials.<sup>135</sup>

One particularly distinctive form of innuendo is the blanked name, the device whereby personal proper names are peppered with dashes or stars so that their meaning is not immediately obvious to the reader. It is to this practice that Addison refers when he writes that the satirist Tom Brown, “having gutted a Proper Name of all its intermediate Vowels, used to plant it in his Works, and make as free with it as he pleased, without any danger of the Statute.”<sup>136</sup> It would be giving Kropf’s argument too much emphasis, however, to argue that by the end of the eighteenth century a blanked name was still used as a device primarily intended to pre-emptively evade legal action for defamation. Although this was indeed the point of origin for the practice, I think that by the late eighteenth century the blanked name had taken on its own hermeneutic weight, one that could be exploited by the author in different ways. As Catherine Gallagher has argued, the various forms of innuendo “took on a life of their own, leaving behind the context of political controversy (to which the techniques were generally irrelevant anyway) and resulting in the invention of the purely literary.” Moreover, Gallagher inverts Kropf’s logic to speculate that, rather than masking political commentary, “they [innuendoes] *indicate*, although in a supposedly arbitrary way, illicit political intentions... Thus we might conclude that to view allegory as a crime (not an alibi), wholly identified with political transgression, encouraged the development of techniques we now call fictional by giving them greater weight.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Kropf, ‘Libel and Satire in the Eighteenth Century’, pp. 159-160.

<sup>136</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 567, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford, 1965), IV, 537.

Quoted in Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*, p. 160.

<sup>137</sup> Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, p. 98, 101.

Gallagher's astute point is certainly key to how I read the offering/withholding of the proper personal name signified by blanks in some of my texts of interest. But It does not tell the whole story; there are at least two other kinds of weight that the blanked name bears by the end of the eighteenth century. The first fits in rather paradoxically with Gallagher's argument that a blanked name could be construed as signifying a political charge. At the same time as it drew attention to the controversial implications of publishing a person's name for circulation abroad, it also signified a sort of respect or deference in withholding it. Even though to all practical purposes blanked names were generally interpretable, the dash or star acts as an acknowledgment that the author is not entirely comfortable 'making free' with the name they simultaneously offer and withhold.

A good example of this blend of respect and insolence at play in the process of blanking can be found in the letters of Hester Thrale Piozzi. When preparing her *Letters* of Johnson in 1787, she wrote to Samuel Lysons in April, "No need to *expunge* with Salt of Lemons all the Names I have crossed – let the Initials stand: 'tis enough that I do not name them out; Civility is all I owe them, and my Attention not to offend is shewn by the Dash."<sup>138</sup> In October, she wrote again: "I enclose you some trifling Letters from Johnson ... Write me word what you do with *my* Stuff, and pray take care to scratch Names out. Yours is a very serious Trust."<sup>139</sup> In these letters, Piozzi is acutely aware of the implications of failing to 'scratch Names out'. Her decision to do so reflects an attitude towards the bearers of those names poised between a desire to 'let the Initials stand' - by naming names, to insert herself into a

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<sup>138</sup> Hester Thrale Piozzi, 'To Samuel Lysons, [5 April 1787], *The Piozzi Letters, Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi (formerly Mrs. Thrale)*, 6 vols, eds. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (London and Toronto; Newark: University and Delaware Presses, 1989-2002) 1:234.

<sup>139</sup> Hester Thrale Piozzi, 'To Samuel Lysons, [ca. 10: October 1787]', *PL*, 1:245.

public sphere characterised by declining to treat with names in terms of total anonymity' - and a desire to show Civility' and 'Attention'. She was not always so civil, though. As I show in my third chapter, a primary source of Giuseppe Barretti's indignation about Thrale Piozzi's treatment of him in her *Anecdotes* was that, in these works, Piozzi made so free with his name by *not* blanking it.

The second sort of weight that I think the blanked name bears by this point is that of a ludic invitation to the reader to interact with the text; to place their own mark on it by mentally or physically filling in the blanks within the tantalisingly half-offered name. Ann C. Dean, in a sensitive analysis of the "customary language" of the court, coffeehouse and Parliament in the 1760s and 1770s, draws attention to the "typographical emphases and evasions"<sup>140</sup> of newspaper passages that discussed Parliament's deliberations, which was illegal before 1771. "The dashes and nicknames serve partly to protect the printer from libel charges. But they also serve to mark insider knowledge and provide readers with opportunities for showing off their interpretive skills... Coffeehouse or tea-table readers could fill in the blanks, identifying Pitt and reconstructing the Duke of Newcastle's conversation with the Marquess of Rockingham about taking the office of first lord of the treasury."<sup>141</sup> In the chapters that follow, I discuss texts - Herbert Croft's poem *The Abbey of Kilhampton*, for example - in which surviving copies show that a reader has filled in by hand the names that the author has offered to the imagination. Texts featuring blanked names, then, might be seen as eliciting a particularly interactive response from the reader - positioning them, with the author, 'in the know.'

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<sup>140</sup> Ann C. Dean, *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press), 2007, p. 19.

<sup>141</sup> Dean, *The Talk of the Town*, p. 64.

This function of the blanked name as literary device can be seen, of course, to have a powerful reflection in the concept of authorial anonymity itself. Two recent collections of essays have started to pay overdue attention to the functions of authorial anonymity in this period (a movement that I mention in my Conclusion),<sup>142</sup> and undoubtedly one of the most important functions, in a way similar to the blanked name *within* the text, was to get the reader guessing. Both the blanked authorial name and the blanked name as literary device might, as David Brewer has suggested in a perceptive recent essay on the tactility of authorial names, be understood as 'tactile.' "Grasping this tactility, as it were, can help us better understand both the centrality and the peculiarity"<sup>143</sup> of not only authors, but of fame in a more general sense.

### Novels and novellas: the amateur genealogist

Fiction of the late eighteenth century responds to both the types of tension I have tried to outline above; the first between particularity and generality in personal proper names, and the second between their public and private usages. In this section I argue that in the last decades of the eighteenth century there is a noticeable development in the kind of personal proper name that attracted imaginative attention in the novel; surnames are increasingly construed as more likely to provoke an affective reaction than given names. I relate this development to my argument above, that the surname was increasingly understood to be the public component of the name throughout the century. In particular, I reflect upon the ways in which the novel perceives the

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<sup>142</sup> Robert Griffin (ed.), *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 2003; Janet Wright Starner and Barbara Howard Traister (eds.), *Anonymity in Early Modern England: 'What's in a Name?'* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate), 2011.

<sup>143</sup> David A. Brewer, 'The Tactility of Authorial Names', *The Eighteenth Century*, 54:2 (Summer 2013), 195-213, p. 195.

surname to hold special significance for women, whose marital identities were defined by the surnames they held.

Franco Moretti's statistical research into novel titles can give us a helpful way into considering the novel's preoccupation with the woman's surname during this period. Proper names in novel titles, Moretti explains, become more common as the century nears its close, and the standalone proper name title becomes more common too; between 1786 and 1790 one in twelve titles consist of only a proper name, between 1791-1795 it is one in ten, and between 1796-1800 it is one in seven. Moreover, these names are far more often female than male, and they are far more often the given name alone than the given name plus surname. Women's names in titles outweigh men's by a ratio of two to one throughout the 1770s, 1780s and 1790s, and during the 1780s we can see the number of novel titles including only a woman's given name overtaking those containing a woman's surname as well.

At first glance, this may seem to indicate that the given name was in fact the more important name for the novel during this period, but in fact the opposite is the case. The given name is what it is safe to call the female protagonist, and therefore to name the novel; it is, as I noted in my Introduction with regard to the problem of what to name a woman as a biographer, the stable unit of the name that remains inviolate throughout her life. What is at stake in the novel is what her surname *will be*, which is thus the focus of the reader's anxiety. Moretti puts it succinctly: "Heroines who lack a last name [are] a very simple, very crude hint, typical of the British marriage plot (which reaches its apex in these decades): they lack a husband."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Franco Moretti, 'Style, inc.: Reflections on 7,000 Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850)', *Distant Reading* (London; Brooklyn; Verso Books, 2013), 179-210, pp. 196-199.

In Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, damage could be caused by Walter Shandy's overinvestment in the significance of the given name. But in fiction from the 1770s, nomocentric fiction focuses increasingly on the hereditary surname as the more likely component of the name to provoke affective overinvestment, with potent consequences for the narrative. Novels of this period generally use the given name as a stable and relatively unproblematic signifier for its bearer, whereas the surname is increasingly the focus of problematic and plot-driving acts of naming. Characters in novels may have odd or idiosyncratic given names conferred upon them by an older generation (parent or godparent) whose choice is often affected by excessive sensibility of one kind or another. But this is not perceived to be particularly important, and it tells us as a reader more about the namer than the person named. The surname, however, locates the bearer within a consanguineal or conjugal family, and is therefore a more powerful determinant of their social station.

In particular, a staple figure of satire emerges that is used by numerous novelists to satirise representational views of the surname but also to acknowledge the affective potency of such surnames and to gesture towards the social effects of their fetishization, preservation or eradication. This figure can be described as an amateur genealogist, who traces his or her ancestry back to time immemorial and fetishizes the family surname as motivated proof of a host of qualities that it manifestly does not signify or enact. I want to indicate the pervasiveness of this trope, and to call attention to one particular way in which it changes between 1779 and 1818, by offering readings of its usage in three texts: in Elizabeth Craven's 1779 novella *Modern Anecdote of the Ancient Family of the Kinkvervankosdarsprakengotchderns: A Tale for Christmas 1779*, Charlotte Turner Smith's *The Old Manor House*, and Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

“In the centre of Germany,” Craven’s *Anecdote* begins, “lived a Baron, the only male survivor and heir to the ancient family of the Kinkvervankosdarsprakengotchderns, whose respectable name has sunk with him into the grave. His pedigree might have been valued by the ell, and vied in antiquity with some of the superb Welch, who trace their forefathers up to Adam, “who was the son of O”; meaning by that round O, the Supreme Being.”<sup>145</sup> This introductory paragraph contains a wealth of allusions to the debates around the motivated sign. It can be read, for example, to make a sly reference to the Welsh philologist Rowland Jones, whom I briefly mentioned earlier, who argued throughout the 1760s and 1770s for certain dialects of Celtic as retaining a close semblance to the language of Eden, and who, in *The Origin of Language and Nations*, had defined the letter ‘O’ as “the indefinite circle of time and space... representing the globe, the sun, a wheel, &c. in a primary sense... and in a secondary sense, motion, heat, light, &c.”<sup>146</sup> Craven might also be read to reference the Welsh practice of accumulating patronymics instead of transmitting a stable hereditary surname. This was a common focus of satire on the Welsh, as indicated by prints of the period, which sometimes depict Welsh characters carrying about a list of ancestors’ names with them. A good example is Richard Newton’s ‘On a journey to a Courtship in Wales’ (1795, Figure 2.) Two Welshmen ride goats through a mountainous landscape, carrying bags of leeks and cheese. The man at the rear carries a scroll of his ancestors’ names, entitled ‘Pedigree Before the Flood’: the inside reveals a long list commencing ‘Ap Davis / Ap Jones / Ap Thomas.’ The Baron, whose written pedigree “might have been valued by the ell” (a unit of measurement about the length of a cubit), is seen, like these Welshmen, to

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<sup>145</sup> Craven, Elizabeth, *Modern Anecdote of the Ancient Family of the Kinkvervankosdarsprakengotchderns: A Tale for Christmas 1779* (London: Printed for the Author, 1779), p. 1.

<sup>146</sup> *Critical Review*, 18 (1764), pp. 303-6.

have a tactile relationship with the legible record of his ancestry, which he measures in terms of his bodily dimensions.

Craven, however, distances herself as narrator from the genealogical pride of both the Welsh and of the German Baron, positioning herself as an English narrator who can reflect with good-humoured common sense on the absurdity of foreign naming practices. She immediately and bathetically moves to demonstrate how unfit this surname is for the purposes of communication, declaring “That my reader may not break his teeth by articulating the name of our Baron; nor my readers hurt the tympanum of their ears, by listening to its uncouth sound; we will call him only, the Baron.”<sup>147</sup> Foreshadowing the plot of Burney’s *Cecilia*, she recounts how the Baron has trouble marrying off his daughter Cecil despite her beauty, since “the German nobility, like all other in Europe, for reasons best known to themselves, preferred a long purse to a long pedigree” but “the Baron was an exception to this modern way of thinking, and would not have consented to his own daughter’s contaminating her blood with one more ignobly born than herself.”<sup>148</sup>

When Cecil and the humble young Franzel fall in love, the Baron forbids the match and imprisons Cecil in a room bedecked with ancestors’ portraits, from which she eventually escapes by piling up the portraits and clambering up them to exit from a window. “In her hurry, indeed, now and then, she subverted the order of things; she made by turns, the ladies support the gentlemen, and the gentlemen the ladies; here a father’s head rested on a daughter’s feet; there a mother’s face met a son’s buskins.... In short, heads and tails were jumbled together; and parts never intended by nature or good manners to meet, kissed each other. Thus, one by one, the noble family, as fast

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<sup>147</sup> Craven, Elizabeth, *Modern Anecdote*, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Craven, *Modern Anecdote*, p. 9.

as she could heap them upon each other, made a pile which reached to the windows.”<sup>149</sup> Cecil refuses to perpetuate the appellation of Kinkvervankosdarsprakengotchdern by marrying an odious cousin, preferring to swap it for the name of Franzel, thus condemning her line to extinction. Her ludic vandalism of the family portraits, in which the “order of things” is “subverted” has a comically bawdy tone, with “heads and tails jumbled together,” which mirrors the sexual motivation for Cecil’s rebellion against the family name.

Many novels of the 1780s and 1790s would echo this trope of an amateur antiquarian whose pride is inordinately stirred by contemplation of their family surname, crest or portraits. Frances Burney’s Compton and Augusta Delvile in *Cecilia* and Charlotte Turner Smith’s Comte D’Hauteville in *Desmond* are further examples of the type, and will receive detailed attention in later chapters of this thesis. Here, however, I would like to touch on Smith’s depiction of Mrs. Grace Rayland in her later novel *The Old Manor House* (1793). This is a particularly apt example because we can observe, in Mrs. Rayland, an example of an amateur genealogist who over-invests in both given names and surnames. It is therefore possible to compare the influence of both these behaviours on the narrative, thereby calibrating their performative power.

In Turner Smith’s narrative, the orphan Monimia has her onomastic identity cloven by two whims, that of her aunt Mrs. Lennard and of Lennard’s employer Mrs. Rayland. Lennard, the narrator tells us, who “with all her starched prudery had a considerable air of odd romantic whim in her composition, had given the dramatic and uncommon name of Monimia” to the child.<sup>150</sup> The name Monimia derives from

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<sup>149</sup> Craven, *Modern Anecdote*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>150</sup> Turner Smith, *The Old Manor House*, p. 45.

Thomas Otway's play *The Orphan* (1680), and Lennard's choice for it reflects her own sentimentality and the strongly hinted likelihood that Monimia is in fact her own illegitimate daughter. But Lennard's employer Mrs. Rayland makes the name "an incessant occasion of approach." "Why," said Mrs. Rayland, "why would you, Lennard, give the child such a name? As the girl will have nothing, why put such romantic notions in her head, as may perhaps prevent her getting her bread honestly? - Monimia! I protest I don't love even to repeat the name; it puts me so in mind of a very hateful play, which I remember shocked me so when I was a mere girl, that I have always detested the name. Monimia! - 'Tis so very unlike a Christian's name, that if the child is much about me, I must insist upon having her called Mary."<sup>151</sup>

Monimia, then, is caught between two onomastic identities dictated by the opposing whims of two old women – one of excess "romantic whim" and the other of prudery. Crucially, though, these given names have no effect whatsoever on her character. "The little girl then was Mary in the parlour; but among the servants, and with the people around the house, she was still Monimia." Mrs. Rayland attempts to fit her maid's daughter into the class taxonomy that we saw in periodical essays earlier in this chapter, citing her social station in life and the danger of inappropriate expectations as reasons why this is necessary, as well as her own prudery at the memory of Otway's play. But, importantly, Monimia's given names never affect the narrative at all. She is content to be "Mary in the parlour," but this usage of her name is in fact quickly dropped by the narrator and she proceeds as Monimia.

Mrs. Rayland's fetishization of the surname, however, is the governing force behind the novel and the misfortunes that befall its hero and heroine. We are told early on that "The name [of Rayland] had been before of great antiquity in the county

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<sup>151</sup> Turner Smith, *The Old Manor House*, p. 46.

– and the last baronet having only daughters to share his extensive possessions, these ladies had been educated with such very high ideas of their own importance, that they could never be prevailed upon to lessen, by sharing it with any of those numerous suitors who for the first forty or fifty years of their lives surrounded them.”<sup>152</sup> Over-investment in the value of the hereditary surname is depicted here as working against, rather than for, the propagation of a bloodline, and the Raylands’ sterile pride foreshadows the obstacles that Mrs. Rayland will put in the way of Orlando and Monimia’s union.

A scene from early in the novel can demonstrate how Turner Smith metaphorically pits the amateur genealogist as a symptom of superstitious prejudice against Lockean arbitrariness. Mrs. Rayland, the last of her line, has “peculiar satisfaction” in parading up and down her portrait gallery with Lennard, “relating the history of the heroes and dames of her family, who were represented by these portraits. – Sir Roger de Coverley never went over the account of his ancestors with more correctness or more delight.... The little withered figure, bent down with age and infirmity, and the last of a race which she was thus arrogantly boasting – a race which in a few years, perhaps a few months, might be no more remembered – was a ridiculous instance of human folly and human vanity.”<sup>153</sup> Mrs. Rayland’s perambulations and lists of names are interrupted, however, by “a sudden and violent bounce towards the middle of the gallery.” This is, literally, a ball thrown through the open window by Mrs. Rayland’s young relative Orlando, to catch the attention of his playmate Monimia. Figuratively, it represents the younger generation’s intrusion into and disruption of Mrs. Rayland’s meditations on her ancestors (Orlando with his threatening surname of Somerive and Monimia with no legitimate surname at all).

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<sup>152</sup> Turner Smith, *The Old Manor House*, p. 37.

<sup>153</sup> Turner Smith, *The Old Manor House*, p. 49.

Lennard underlines the point when scolding Monimia for her part in the disturbance:

“Suppose he had broke the windows, shattered the panes, and cut us with the glass! - or what if he had beat the stained glass of my Lady’s coat of arms, up at top there, all to smash!”<sup>154</sup> Such is the power of the Rayland name, however, that Orlando will never be able to ‘smash’ it: his life with Monimia can only be brought about by a secret will of Mrs. Rayland’s bringing him within the Rayland fold, and requiring him to change his surname to hers.

The trope of the amateur genealogist remained popular well into the following century, when Jane Austen would satirise the power of surnames in her portrayal of Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall and his favourite book, the *Baronetage*, from which he derives various affective pleasures. “There he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt, as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century – and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed.”<sup>155</sup> Austen reproduces the names of Sir Walter and his “issue” as they stand in her fictional *Baronetage*, “but Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of himself and his family,” several facts that bring the Elliots’ marriages, deaths and lines of succession up to date.

In Sir Walter’s hereditary nomocentrism and failure to engage with economic and social realities, there is more than a shade of Craven’s Baron, who, as his daughter loses her virginity, “sat up that night, writing an abridgment of his pedigree,

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<sup>154</sup> Turner Smith, *The Old Manor House*, p. 51.

<sup>155</sup> Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 9.

to reduce it into the size of a small pocket volume, which he intended that Cecil should always carry about her, as a charm against ignoble connections or acquaintances.”<sup>156</sup> But in the Baronetage, we might also note the co-existence of two forms of textuality that call attention to the public and private circulations of the name Elliot.

I want to suggest that Austen’s portrayal of Sir Walter Elliot, and his fetishistic relationship with the baronetage, calls attention to the proliferation of printed peerages over the second half of the eighteenth century. Numerous listings of the baronets of England and accounts of their genealogies were issued and reissued from the late seventeenth century onward. I have been unable to locate any authoritative account of the number of peerage directories (encompassing baronetages, heraldries and peerages) that appeared in the eighteenth century, since most overviews of the peerage directory as a genre seem to take their cue from the establishment of *Burke’s* and *Debrett’s* in the early nineteenth century. But the popularity of publications such as *Kearsley’s Complete Peerage*, which went through five editions in the 1790s, can be seen as an interesting phenomenon in several respects. Firstly, they pose a contrast to the recession of the onomasticon for which I argued in my previous chapter. As dictionaries of *given* names became more specialised and less popular, we can observe a rise in publications organised around alphabetically organised *surnames* that take a broadly etymological approach to their subjects.

We might also note that in the three texts that I have just addressed, representations of the amateur genealogist increasingly figure the relationship between the over-sentimental character and their ancestors as mediated through an act of reading, writing or pronouncing names, rather than looking at pictures. I think in

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<sup>156</sup> Craven, *Modern Anecdote*, p. 45.

this we can read a consciousness of Burke's exposition of the relationship between painting and words in his *Enquiry*, whereby visual imagery is aligned with 'clear' ideas and abstract words with 'strong' ones. "In painting we may represent any fine figure we please," Burke admits, "but we never can give it those enlivening touches which it may receive from words."<sup>157</sup> The Baron's private writing of a "pocket volume" of his genealogy in Craven's text is presented as a futile enterprise, the symbolic importance of which is subordinated to the practical potency of Cecil's piling up of the family portraits. In Turner Smith's novel, Mrs. Rayland's perambulations through her portrait gallery are accompanied by her running commentary on her pedigree, both of which are rudely disrupted by the "violent bounce" of Orlando's ball. In Austen's narrative, however, the printed and publicly circulated name of Elliot, annotated by private additions, is depicted as the exclusive site upon which Sir Walter Elliot derives his affective pleasures. These observations are, of course, highly selective, and I do not want to place too much weight upon them in isolation. But I think they can contribute to the collective weight of the tendencies I have tried to outline in this chapter: the increasing importance for imaginative writers of a sense that personal proper names can be seen as indicators of social taxonomies; the way that the surname operates as the public name *par excellence*; and the way in which imaginative writers consistently refer back to the terms of philosophical discourse around common naming, even as they make the personal proper name their own subject of consideration.

It is significant, I think, that all these texts are written by women. In my next chapter I will argue that, due to the custom of marital surname change, the hereditary surname has a special resonance for women writers, above and beyond what it holds

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<sup>157</sup> Burke, *Enquiry*, p. 197.

for men. The acts of 'auto-commemoration' of Hester Thrale Piozzi, private in terms of circulation but in form and content apparently destined for a public audience, often put the public/private dichotomy I have outlined in this chapter under pressure. I locate these writings within the context of wider public treatments of ambiguously named women, which will draw out the implications of gendered naming.

## Section Two

Gender and posterity in the 1780s

‘Nata Nupta Obiit: A kind of satire’:

Marital surname change and Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi’s epigraphical  
epitaph

In the John Rylands Library, in a volume of largely unpublished miscellanea taken from the papers of Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, there is a fragment that appears to be the beginning of an autobiography. The epigraphs selected for this piece, along with its opening paragraphs, offer insights into the significance of the epitaph for Thrale Piozzi as a microcosmic form of life writing. They also provide a tantalising suggestion of how she viewed the discourse of commemoration to which she sought to contribute as intrinsically gendered.

*Pallida mors aequo pede pulsat pauperum Tabernaculumque Turres -*

*Le Pauvre en la Cabane ou le Chaume le couvrir*

*Est sujet a ses Loix;*

*Et la Garde qui veille aux Barrières du Louvre*

*N'en defend pas nos Rois.*

Nata Nupta Obiit seems the natural Epitaph for every Female. Yet Addison holds it as a kind of Satire to register even in a Churchyard Names of which nothing can be recorded but that they were born & died – or perhaps married: their whole History being comprehended in those Circumstances which are common to all Humankind – nor could I ever forget since I first read it, the sly scorn with which he surveys Tombs that contained Dust marked by no

Character whilst filled with Animation – Names made like those of Aeneas's companions – to fill up the Verse, - or like those of Homer's Heroes to be knocked on the Head.<sup>158</sup>

This introduction invokes a well-established literary tradition of using the symbolic apparatus of death as a tool to define or enshrine the life that preceded that demise, and to reflect on the inefficacy of fame in the face of death. Thrale Piozzi opens her autobiography by quoting Horace, whose *Odes* castigate the desire for glory and praise, and who contrasts the power of poetic talent to ensure fame with a futile reverence for genealogies.<sup>159</sup> The quotation from Francois de Malherbe continues the theme, subjecting both the king and the peasant to the inevitable 'law' of death beyond the distinctions that separate them in life. When Thrale Piozzi's own voice enters the text, it is to place her thoughts on gender, posterity and remembrance in context of Joseph Addison's essay *Reflections in Westminster Abbey*, a key contribution to the early eighteenth-century trope of using a decease, an epitaph or a churchyard scene to inspire reflections on the fame of the living (a genre called the 'post-mortem' by Clare Brant<sup>160</sup>, and used also by Swift in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, and Gray in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.)

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<sup>158</sup> Hester Thrale Piozzi, Thrale-Piozzi Manuscripts, John Rylands Library, Manchester University, Rylands GB 133 MS 629, 20. The Latin translates as "Pale death knocks at the doors of all alike, be it the pauper's garret or the king's tower" (Horace). The French translates as 'The poor in thatched houses / are subject to its laws / And (even) the king's guards of the Louvre / Can't fight against it' (Francois de Malherbe). Thrale Piozzi mistakenly substitutes 'pas' for 'point' in the latter. Both translations are mine.

<sup>159</sup> Brady, *The Frenzy of Renown*, pp. 129-31.

<sup>160</sup> Clare Brant, 'Varieties of Women's Writing,' *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800* (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 285-305, p. 300.

Even as she quotes these men of letters, however, Thrale Piozzi insists that the sentiment expressed is peculiarly appropriate to women. “The natural Epitaph for every Female” is ‘Nata, Nupta, Obiit’, the Latin – and, in the case of the first two words, the feminine past participle – for ‘Born, Married, Died.’ In making this assertion, Thrale Piozzi feminizes Addison’s original observation in ‘Reflections in Westminster Abbey’: “Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried person, but that *he* was born upon one day, and died upon another: the whole history of *his* life being comprehended in those *two* circumstances, that are common to all mankind.”<sup>161</sup> [My italics.] In adapting Addison in this way, Thrale Piozzi demonstrates awareness of a literary tradition of defining women in death principally by means of the familial, and especially the conjugal, roles they filled while alive. This assertion, however, is qualified by ambivalence. The word ‘seems’ is important – the three participles *appear* together to form the natural epitaph for every woman, but is this a fair summary of all that is achieved in a woman’s private history?

This ambivalent ‘seems’ turns the attention of the reader back on the form of the epitaph and away from the deficiency of its subject. Thrale Piozzi modifies Horace, Malherbe and Addison’s observations – that death comes to all regardless of social status, and that a scanty epitaph implies a life devoid of incident – to describe the bare minimalism of the epitaph that she cites as “a kind of Satire” upon feminine life. She links the limited scope of the epitaph to the notion of perceived ‘Character,’ a difficult thing to do in this period without in some sense recalling or echoing Pope’s famous statement in *An Epistle to A Lady* that “most Women have no Character at all.” She furthermore indicates that the narrative given to women after death, being “comprehended in those Circumstances which are common to all Humankind,” is

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<sup>161</sup> Joseph Addison, ‘Reflections in Westminster Abbey,’ *Essays of Joseph Addison*, ed. John Richard Green (London; New York: Macmillan, 1898), 374-377, p. 374.

deficient, since it records and celebrates only a marriage, which the logic of the paragraph links to the passive subjection of “fill[ing] up the Verse” or “be[ing] knocked on the Head.”

The next paragraph of the fragment draws attention to the transferability of the surname as a framework by which the ephemerality of a married woman’s fame, and the difficulty of composing an epitaph that encapsulates that fame, may be understood. Weighing the value of a maiden name against that of the surname conferred by marriage, Thrale Piozzi offers an insight into the network of loyalties - and the resulting problems for self-definition - caused by the matrilineal naming system under which married women must self-define:

My Name was not made for me certainly: tho’ rationally proud of it I kept it but a short Time nor ever regretted the Change. My Father — and when I heard some one the other Day mention how few People there were, who could tell the Maiden Names of their own Four Great Grandmothers upon a sudden Inquiry: I thought how angry he would have been with me could I not have called over Bridget Percival Daughter of Lord Egmont as Mother to my Paternal Grandfather & Mary Pennant of Downing Mother to his Wife. Hester Salusbury of Llewenev as Mother to my Maternal Grandfather who married a Daughter of Vere Herbert Heiress to Lord Tonington by Sir Thomas Lynch then Go’ of Jamaica.

Thrale Piozzi laments the consignment to oblivion of female ancestry, before remarking her own unusual tenacity in determining to preserve and invoke their memories through means of the recollection of their maiden names. The

determination is complicated, however, by being set in the context of a father's displeasure, which invokes the context of the patrilineal naming system.

This piece of writing, in considering the intrinsically satirical nature of the married woman's epitaph and indirectly linking it to the erasure of a woman's name, indicates a complex relationship between naming, commemoration, gender and genre. In this chapter, I want to consider some of the anxieties peculiar to women about the marital sublimation of identity signified by the change in surname upon the point of marriage, the implications of this sublimation for the transmission of reputation to posterity, and the problems women writers have with discussing these implications within traditional genres. In my Introduction, I outlined the problematic issue of the married woman's inability, under a naming system that demands the eradication of her surname, to transmit a stable surname to posterity; a difficulty that acts as corollary to the way her name is erased in those of her genealogical offspring. In my last chapter, I indicated how address by the given name, which might be seen as a solution to this difficulty, was in fact fraught with reputational hazard. In this chapter, I show that Thrale Piozzi conceptualised female identity as a fragmented entity indicated by shifting onomastic formations linked to marital status. As she wrote to Edward Mangin in 1819:

Life is a Magic Lanthorn certainly, and I think more so to Women, than to Men: who often are placed very early in a Profession which they follow up regularly, and slide on; - Labetur et labetur almost unconsciously: - but We Females (myself for Example,) I passed the first 20 Years in my Father and Uncle's Houses, connected with their Friends, Dwelling Places and Acquaintance; and fancying *myself at home* along them: - No such Thing. Marriage introduced me to A *new* Set of Figures, *quite* new ... another

Marriage drove that Set of Figures quite away, and I began the World

Anew.<sup>162</sup>

Thrale Piozzi's frank acknowledgement that women's lives are defined by their set identities as daughters and wives - by the men whose 'Protection' they are under or whose 'Name' they 'wear,' exists in tension with her desire to transmit a professional reputation as a writer to posterity. This tension is most evident in texts reflecting her preoccupation with forms of commemoration. I show in this chapter that the epitaph acts as a male-dominated form from which women were proscribed from presenting their own portrayals of lives and characters. But Thrale Piozzi employs the structural integrity and register of the epitaph in some ingenious ways, and uses it to commemorate *herself*, a move that is doubly transgressive in laying claim to both authorship and to being a fit subject for commemoration.

I pre-empt my discussion of how Thrale Piozzi does this by considering the pervasiveness and significations of marital surname change in late eighteenth-century England, considering in particular how certain scandalous women who seemed to have mutable surnames stood, during the last decades of the eighteenth century, as sites of anxiety about sexual and social subversion. I apply a particularly close eye to intersections between satires on nameless and multi-named women and discourses of death and commemoration, and I extract a common understanding of woman as an ephemeral subject for commemoration due to her onomastic fluidity in life. I pay particularly close attention to the onomastic mutability of the courtesan Letitia Smith, née Derby or Darby, later Lade, also known as 'Mrs Nominative', in the context of visual satires that portray her as a reverser of proscribed social and sexual roles.

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<sup>162</sup> Hester Lynch Piozzi to Edward Mangin, 4 September 1819, *PL*, 6:319.

Hester Thrale Piozzi, though she used a shifting series of permutations of surnames throughout her life, staunchly resisted the connotations of sexual impropriety that multi-named women such as Elizabeth Chudleigh and Letitia Darby were likely to invoke. Her auto-commemorations, therefore, can be read as attempts to balance dutiful commitment to the marital name with attempts to transmit a stable authorial identity to posterity, while evading accusations of sexual or social impropriety.

Within a broader chronological overview of her self-naming practices, I focus specifically on Thrale Piozzi's negotiations of the relationship between name, reputation, gender and posterity in her writings of the late 1770s and 1780s - the period when her onomastic identity underwent its most rapid and dramatic alterations. The common factors to the texts that I discuss - her letters, *Thraliana*, manuscript epitaphs and her unpublished *Three Dialogues on the Death of Hester Lynch Thrale* - are that they are composed in response to a public negotiation of her names and their meanings that took place in newspapers, satirical prints and reviews of her work, and that in many of them she uses discourses of death to make literary innovations, specifically innovations with regard to genre. Ultimately I argue that, as indicated in the linked logic of the two forms in the fragment with which I opened this chapter, Thrale Piozzi's epitaph is transformed into its close etymological relative, the epigraph. Employing various strategies to exploit the defining power of her married name, she stakes a claim to be remembered as a writer as well as a married woman. Piozzi's miscellanea attempts to show, in other words, how anticipating future death and controlling onomastic identity can enable women to establish authorship over the present.

## Contexts: Civic erasure, satire and posterity

## 'Threatening unnameability'

As I mentioned in my Introduction, the gradual popularisation of marital surname change in England was a consequence of the prevailing influence of the interpretation of coverture that implied 'unity of person', which undergoes a particularly important development in the mid-eighteenth century. Scholars of coverture agree that the moment at which the interpretation implying unity of person authoritatively gained ground over the 'baron'/'deme' model in English legal discourse was inaugurated by William Blackstone's influential assessment of the doctrine in *Commentaries on the Laws of England* in 1765-1769.<sup>163</sup> Though he refers to the baron/feme model of coverture, Blackstone subordinates it, in the final analysis, to the unity of person model: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: ... Upon this principle, of a union of person in husband and wife, indeed almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities that either of them acquire by the marriage."<sup>164</sup>

Gillian Skinner has argued that depictions of marriage in women's imaginative literature of the mid-century might be related to Blackstone's legal redefinition of coverture.<sup>165</sup> My parsing of Thrale Piozzi's letters will show that the conviction of

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<sup>163</sup> Tim Stretton and Krista J. Kesselring, 'Introduction', *Married Women and the Law*, 3-23. 7; Angela Fernandez, 'Tapping Reeve, Nathan Dane, and James Kent: Three Fading Federalists on Marital Unity', *Married Women and the Law*, 192-216, p. 208.

<sup>164</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England, in Four Books; With an Analysis of the Work*, eds. Edward Christian et al, London: W.E. Dean, 1838. 1:355

<sup>165</sup> Skinner names Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), Sarah Fielding's *The Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), Frances Sheridan's *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph* (1762) and Elizabeth Griffin's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771) as works that lay bare the "political and economic bones" of eighteenth-century marriage. 'Women's status as legal and civic subjects: "A worse condition than slavery itself"?' *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. Jones, 2000, 91-110.

English society post-Blackstone that women were legally 'one' with their husbands has important implications for the ways in which married women conceptualised their own identities. I argued in my last chapter that by the late eighteenth century the surname had become the public name *par excellence*. While there has never been any legal provision that a woman must change her surname upon marriage, the pervasive cultural understandings that she would do so, and that this alteration reflected a literal transformation of her legal identity, were entrenched by the late eighteenth century and lent recent authoritative enforcement by Blackstone's remarks.

To change one's name in the expected ways was a method of demonstrating propriety and belonging, and was therefore particularly important in elite society, where a woman's financial security depended upon her reputation and marriageability, her reproductive rather than productive labour. Conversely to allow any hint of uncertainty or confusion around the status of one's name - to stray from the clearly defined categories of daughter and wife, as signalled by the surname - could trigger serious anxiety about one's sexual propriety. Women who subverted or exploited onomastic categories, who seemed to hover indefinably in the space between the simple dichotomy of daughter and wife, were considered models of impropriety and sexual deviance, and suggestions of adultery or bigamy seemed to shadow women of ambiguous, hidden or multiple names.

Gillian Russell has shown, for example, how in commentary around the Duchess of Kingston's trial for bigamy in 1775 the Duchess's "threatening unnameability" and "capacity to manipulate her name" were fixed upon by her critics as apt tropes for her subversion of the "categories by which women were known and 'named': this is, as daughters, wives and mothers." Horace Walpole speculated in March 1775, "How it

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would sound! “Elizabeth, Countess of Bristol, alias Duchess of Kingston, comes into court!” and the Countess of Gower complained in October of the same year, “One knows not wt to name her: alias, alias, alias.”<sup>166</sup>

To develop these observations, I would like to turn to a brief consideration of the career and public representations of Letitia Darby, also known as ‘Mrs Smith’ and later in life awarded the more stable identity of ‘Lady Lade’ when she married Sir John Lade, a nephew by marriage of Hester Thrale Piozzi. Charles Pigott’s *The Female Jockey Club* (1794) provides the fullest account of Letitia Darby’s life. It claims that she was raised in Lukner’s Lane, St. Giles - a notorious area for prostitution - and that she rose to prominence first as the mistress of the notorious highwayman ‘Sixteen-String’ Jack Rann, then after his execution as the consort of the Duke of York, and finally as the mistress and then the wife of Sir John Lade, the errant son of John Lade Inskip and Lady Anne Lade, sister of Henry Thrale. At the time of writing, Pigott claims, Letitia Darby was a favourite (and, it is strongly implied, a mistress) of the Prince of Wales, “her whole ambition gratified in viewing lords, and dukes, and princes at her side, paying that homage which superior virtue and attractive manners generally exact.” This promiscuity has both brought her into an entirely new social environment, Pigott explains in language reminiscent of Lynch Piozzi’s ‘magic lantern’ passage, and served to exclude her from some ‘fastidious’ sections of polite society: “Her former haunts are totally forsaken, her former companions no longer remembered; she now blazes a comet in the bright regions of taste and fashion. But no felicity in this world is without alloy. Some new fastidious females there are, who still adhering to their foolish prejudices, refuse to acknowledge

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<sup>166</sup> Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 157, 173.

the resplendent attractions of this fair paragon; nay, who even persist to exclude her from their circles.”<sup>167</sup>

These ‘new fastidious females’ had, some years before Pigott wrote *The Female Jockey Club*, included Frances Burney and Hester Thrale Piozzi. Burney, in a letter to Thrale in 1782, ponders how politely to decline an invitation from ‘Mrs Smith,’<sup>168</sup> and around the same time, Thrale tells Burney how their mutual friend Sophia Byron actually turned her out of the Thrales’ house when she called: “Mrs Byron turned Mrs Smith out of my House to the Horror & Amusement of them all,” which occasions Burney to exult, “Ha, Ha! Ha! Poor Mrs. Nominative! Admirable Mrs. Byron.”<sup>169</sup>

The names by which Burney and Thrale refer to Letitia Darby - Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Nominative - are worthy of some close attention. ‘Smith’ was not an unusual name for a woman of uncertain marital or hereditary station to take - what could be so inoffensively common, so typically English? But Burney and Thrale’s coinage of ‘Mrs. Nominative’ is more interesting. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces three main meanings to the word at this historical moment: “the case used for nouns, pronouns, and adjectives qualifying them, when functioning as the subject of the verb,” “nominated; appointed by nomination,” or “of or related to the giving of a name or names.” Burney and Thrale Piozzi, then, use a telling pun to designate the object of their sexual and social disapprobation; a woman who is ‘nominated’ - but not officially sanctioned - as a wife; whose station is highlighted by her name - or lack of the right name; and whose strenuous activity - whether it be in whoring, horse

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<sup>167</sup> Charles Pigott, *The Female Jockey Club*, (London: D.I. Eaton, 1794), pp. 43-49.

<sup>168</sup> Frances Burney to Hester Lynch Thrale, February 1782, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (1768-1783)*, ed. Lars Troide. 5 vols. (Montreal, Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queens University Press), 1988-2012. 2:46.

<sup>169</sup> Frances Burney to Hester Lynch Thrale, February 1782, *EJL*, 5: 1, 8.

riding or swearing, the activities for which she was best known - renders her nominative rather than accusative, active rather than passive. Autonomy, marital liminality and an abundance of names are all yoked together in the nickname.

Onomastic ambiguity, with the accompanying reservations about sexual promiscuity, appeared to shadow Darby throughout her life, even once she was wedded to Sir John and established as Lady Lade. Two visual satires from around the turn of the nineteenth century indicate that she was still represented as a figure who tapped into cultural anxieties about sexual deviancy, onomastic mutability and gender inversion. In Isaac Cruikshank's 1797 print *'Hints towards a Change of Ministry'* (Figure 3), for example, she is included with the Duchess of Gordon, the Duchess of Rutland and seven other notorious female figures as one of the women likely to secure a Cabinet post in a reshuffle. As Harriet Guest has pointed out recently, the print portrays "actresses, playwrights and political commentators, sportswomen, gamblers and the mistresses of royal princes, jostl[ing] in uneasy assortment,"<sup>170</sup> with the more scandalous figures such as the Countess of Jersey and Letitia Lade colouring representations of genuine political players. As 'Ranger of Hyde Park,' Lade carries a whip – shorthand for a dominant woman whose threatening sexuality inverted the gender roles in her relationships - and adopts a masculine stance, her legs planted far apart and clearly visible beneath her dress. The office of 'Ranger of Hyde Park' may well bear a sexual overtone; as well as meaning to rove, roam or wander," the word "range" was common parlance meaning to change from one attachment to another, or to be inconstant, and Hyde Park was a notorious area for prostitutes.

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<sup>170</sup> Harriet Guest, 'Luck be a lady: women writers in the 1790s,' in Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730-1830* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 254-276, pp. 259-262.

The accusations against Lade of gender inversion are even more marked in 'A Brighton Breakfast, or Morning Comforts' (Figure 4). In this etching of 1802, Lady Lade breakfasts with Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Prince Regent's wife. Both women are portrayed as obese, with short tousled hair and shading on the faces and arms strongly indicative of hirsuteness. Bottles stand on the table labelled 'Brandy' and 'Hollands' (gin). "Won't you take another comforter?" Mrs Fitzherbert asks, pouring herself liquid from a bottle labelled 'Hollands' into a glass labelled 'Comforter'. "I think your Comforters are bigger than my Johns," replies her companion. The double play on 'comforter' as an invigorating cordial and a dummy teat put into a baby's mouth to quiet it raises a host of interpretations as to the exact nature of these women's depravity. Not only are they drinking at breakfast, but given their masculinised appearances and Lady Lade's lewd observation on size, is the observer supposed to infer a sexual relationship between them where the 'comfort' offered dwarves the Prince of Wales and Sir John's own offerings? As if to underscore the gender confusion, a portrait hangs overhead of a couple driving a coach and pair, captioned 'Darby and Iohn', though the 'h' has been scored out and replaced by an 'a' so it spells 'Darby and Joan." The eighteenth-century topos of Darby and Joan as an old couple celebrated for their mutual affection and attachment, is here sunk in gender bending irony. The figure in male dress holds the whip, but given the male name and appearance given to Letitia Lade (formerly Darby) and the feminine characteristics attributed to Sir John (Joan), it is difficult to tell which is which. Lady Lade, despite her marriage, is still referred to by her surname 'Darby', and Sir John Lade is subjected to the usually feminine treatment of colloquial address by the given name.

These images of Letitia Lade trade in what would appear to be the stock imagery in visual culture of the ambiguously named woman who subverts the sexual

dynamic of her relationship. One can observe parallels with, for example, visual depictions of Mary Robinson. In “Perdito and Perdita – or – the Man and Woman of the People” (1782, Figure 5), Lisa Wilson shows how Robinson’s charms “allow her to dominate the relationship. The caricature’s moral is underlined by the fact that it is she, and not he, who drives the carriage, whip in hand. Perhaps most importantly, the title suggests that Robinson’s bid for celebrity status has been more successful than Fox’s. After all, it is he who has taken her name, playing “Perdito” to her “Perdita”, which suggests that his public identity has been subsumed in hers.”<sup>171</sup>

### *Satirical commemoration*

Having considered the different models by which both the scandalous and the ideal eighteenth-century woman were named in life, I want to turn now to consider how it was understood that they should be commemorated in death. In this section I argue that in terms of commemoration, married women were caught in a double bind restricting the effective transmission of their reputations to posterity. The virtuous ideal woman, commemorated under her once-married name, was defined by the epitaph fully in terms of that marriage and the consequent domestic role; they provide instances of the ‘Nata, Nupta, Obiit’ tendency that Thrall Piozzi critiques in her draft autobiography. Women who subvert these sanctioned categories by means of exploiting different names are often denied the privilege they seek by satirist who use the device of the innuendo to withhold the sought-after onomastic identity in question.

Stephen Howard has recently shown how, while the space London newspapers devoted to female obituaries increased tremendously over the eighteenth century, “the degree of wide agreement over which aspects of women’s lives best merited

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<sup>171</sup> Lisa M. Wilson, ‘From Actress to Authoress’ Mary Robinson’s Pseudonymous Celebrity.’ *The Public’s Open To Us All: Essays on Women and Performance in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Laura Engel (Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 2009, pp. 157-158.

commendation resulted in a corpus of biography and obituary that possessed relatively little individual identity. One piece was often indistinguishable from the next." Familial relationships, Howard contends, were "the principal means by which women's lives were defined.... Large numbers of women were simply presented in terms of their husbands (or indeed, not themselves directly named at all)... [and] many others were imbued with a coherence in their accounts through their portrayal as wives, mothers and daughters - whatever roles they might have filled besides."<sup>172</sup>

This tradition of commemorating women according to their marital status rather than their other achievements or activities is exploited by a number of satires of the period that take female commemoration as their subject, but deliberately pick women of ambiguous marital or sexual status - and therefore names - as their subject. One example of the broad trend of satirically commemorating women through their sexual deviancy is *The Ladies Church Yard* (Figure 6), published in 1783 as a companion piece to the earlier print *All Alive in the Political Churchyard*. It depicts twenty-one tombstones - all but one (belonging to the Prince of Wales) inscribed with the name and epitaph of a woman. The women represent a wide selection of elite society, and include foreign and British royalty, aristocrats, courtesans and actresses and singers. As Cindy McCreery suggests, one thing that links these diverse women together is their supposed passion for men, and in particular for the Prince of Wales: "The Prince's tombstone lies near the centre of the design, and the epitaphs of five of the women refer to their devotion to him, while another five refer to women's desire for other men, or to adultery."<sup>173</sup> A flavour of the kinds of epitaphs supplied for these latter women can be given by a couple of examples: "Tho on my back Death / Has me

<sup>172</sup> Stephen Howard, 'A bright pattern to all her sex': Representations of women in periodical and newspaper biography', *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, eds. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (Longman: London & New York, 1997), pp. 233-236.

<sup>173</sup> McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, pp. 102-3.

laid / I might remain / For Him a Maid” (Lady Melbourne); “Cease Kissing Death / You stop my breath” (the Duchess of Devonshire); and “If with thee / You’d have me Dwell / Go Death & bring me / Florizell” (Mary Robinson). In comparison, of the twenty-seven tombs for male politicians in the companion piece *All Alive*, only one refers to a sexual rather than a professional activity. The names on the epitaphs of the women in *The Ladies Church Yard* have been blanked out, and in the British Museum’s copy, an unknown owner of the print has apparently enjoyed filling them in.

An even more interesting example of this type of satire is Sir Herbert Croft’s *The Abbey of Kilkhampton: or, Monumental Records for the Year 1980*, first published in 1780. Croft produces a series of satirical epitaphs describing the lives of notorious men and women of the 1770s drawn mainly from the aristocracy, commenting acidly upon the activities of their lifetime and fabricating inventive and often bizarre future deaths for them. Although there is a fair amount of commentary on the sexual improprieties of the male subjects addressed, it is significantly outweighed by that addressing the women. The names on the epitaphs have been blanked out, sometimes with a capitalized letter to hint towards the referent’s identity, but often not even with that concession. Perhaps this was part of the text’s appeal; again, in the copy of *The Abbey of Kilkhampton* held by the British Library, almost all the blanks are carefully filled in by an unknown hand. The ‘threatening unnameability’ that Gillian Russell has argued was one of Elizabeth Hervey/Chudleigh/Pierrepoint’s defining characteristics in life is particularly pointed in this context. The epitaph designated ‘Duchess of Kingston’ by this unknown hand reads as follows:

At the Entrance of a private Cloister.

To the Ignominy of her,

Who, after disgracing the Name of \_\_\_\_\_, rejected that of \_\_\_\_\_,

And courted with shameless Avidity the nominal Distinction of

\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_,

Is this Monument erected by one, who valued the amiable

\_\_\_\_\_ whom she dared to make the criminal Tool of

her insolent Ambition.

Her Life, like her Manners, was a wretched Composition of

every Thing disgraceful.

The fair Form Nature had endowed her with, she disdained to

value even with the outward Guise of Chastity;

She fell a Sacrifice, on the Third of October 178-,

to the Resentment of \_\_\_\_\_:

Three Ruffians, engaged for the Purpose, wounded her in several

Places, and being discovered, impeached their Abettor, but

without any Molestation to his Person.<sup>174</sup>

The key offence of the Duchess, according to Croft, is in her cavalier treatment of names: disgracing one, she rejects another and courts 'with shameless Avidity' a third. Her refusal to defer to the naming systems imposed upon her, and her insistence

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<sup>174</sup> Sir Herbert Croft, *The Abbey of Kilkhampton, or, Monumental Records for the Year 1980* (London: G. Kearsly, 1780), pp. 50.

on manipulating and exploiting her names according to her own prerogatives, is construed as symptomatic of her sexual deviancy. But the commentary on the Duchess's onomastic fluidity is complicated by the tension between the epitaph's prerogative to display names and the satirical tendency to erase them. Croft seems to enjoy the activity of erasing the very names that the Duchess "courted with shameless avidity." He commemorates her by implying she should be forgotten, erased by the tactic of blanking three names as she is, in his fantasy, murdered by 'Three Ruffians, Engaged for the Purpose.'

In their representations of ambiguously named women, these two texts draw attention to one of the more surreal aspects of this particular intersection between satirical and commemorative discourse; its consternation about how to name the people it satirically commemorates. In his *Essay on Epitaphs* (1740), an influential text in the instructional literature of commemoration of the earlier eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson highlights the importance of naming subjects in his epitaph, a "first rule" that would be "very superfluous" if it were not "that it has not been sufficiently regarded." Johnson locates the disregard of this precept in the fact that epitaphs are often originally "prefixed on the monument," in which the name is engraved in its own spot: the epitaph being copied, the name is sometimes omitted. "To expose the absurdity of this omission, it is only necessary to ask how the *Epitaphs*, which have outlived the stones on which they were inscribed, would have contributed to the information of posterity, had they wanted the names of those whom they celebrated."<sup>175</sup> Johnson's instruction draws attention to the personal name's centrality to the transmission of "information to posterity." Moreover, it poises the epitaph between a culture of monumental craftsmanship and an ephemeral print culture in

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<sup>175</sup> Samuel Johnson, 'Essay on Epitaphs' (1740). *The Idler, by the Author of the Rambler*. 2 vols (London: J. Rivington et al, 1783.) Fourth edition. 2:287-301, pp. 296-297.

which the name can be divorced from its endlessly reproduced commemorative epitaph – to the detriment, Johnson believes, of “posterity.”

*Satirical* epitaphs, then, are poised between two imperatives. As epitaphs, they must display names. As satire, they must ‘scratch’, ‘gut’ or ‘blank’ them, in the parlance of the satirical innuendo, for one or more of the reasons (depending on the precise charges made by the satirical attack on the ‘deceased’) that I addressed in my last chapter. They might be erased, especially where royalty or nobility were concerned, as a genuine measure to avoid pursuit for defamation. They might, on the other hand, draw on this practice to *call attention* to the text as defamatory. Or they might be meant to invite the reader to match the public personality to the epitaph. There are traces of all these motivations in *The Ladies Church Yard* and *The Abbey of Kilkhampton*. But I think the namelessness of the women satirized has a particular resonance that is not true of parallel treatments of male subjects. They are primarily defined through their sexual duplicity or promiscuity, and attention is drawn to the tautological relationship between their numerous names and their blanked namelessness. These two factors – the ambiguity of their names and their sexual transgressions – seem to be yoked together by the pen of the satirist.

#### *Auto-commemoration*

Hester Thrale Piozzi remarks in her *Thraliana*: “A Mistress is to a Wife what a Pronoun is to a Noun I take it – that is a Substitute & a Representative.”<sup>176</sup> Like the creators and the readers of satires like Croft’s, she understood there to be a linkage between a woman’s sexual respectability, her reputation and the stability of her literal name. A woman of respectable married status, a ‘Mrs. His Name,’ could be figured as

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<sup>176</sup> Thrale Piozzi, *Thraliana*, 1:36.

a “Noun” because, fitting into the categories that society prescribed for her, her identity is, in the terms of eighteenth-century grammars’ entries for nouns, “substantive.” Her name acts as a sign of both this compliance and this substantiveness. A mistress, a woman whose name might often be hidden, false or mutable in order to confuse the public as to the nature of her adulterous relationship, can only be figured as a promiscuous pronoun – a “Substitute & a Representative” with infinite referents – indeed, in Kropf’s terms, an “innuendo.”

Around the time she wrote this, Thrale Piozzi was also starting to engage in writing epitaphs of various sorts, which often reflected on gender and the stability of the name. In turning to these texts, I want to think about how a woman for whom ‘reputation’ is paramount - and who would have scorned association with scandalous women of mutable names - reconciles commitment to the maritally bestowed surname with a desire to control the terms of her own commemoration. One of the ways Thrale Piozzi does this is by laying claim to the character of commemorator as well as commemorated, conflating two controversial roles in exercising control over her posthumous reputation.

As I noted briefly above with reference to Johnson, a large variety of instructional literature of commemoration was produced in the first half of the eighteenth century, some of which focused specifically on the epitaph and much of which was implicitly or explicitly gendered. For example, the essay by Addison to which Piozzi refers in her autobiographical fragment argues for the significance of epitaphs to a healthy exercise of public patriotism, and envisages a male intellectual elite functioning to ensure that commemoration is appropriately carried out, at least in public places; “As a foreigner is very apt to conceive an idea of the ignorance or politeness of a nation from the turn of their public monuments and inscriptions, they

should be submitted to the perusal of men of learning and genius before they are put in execution.”<sup>177</sup> The exclusion of women from this realm of critical judgment over epitaphs is replicated in Johnson’s *Essay on Epitaphs*. “Every man,” Johnson proclaims, “may expect to be recorded in an epitaph, and therefore finds some interest in providing that his memory may not suffer by an unskillful panegyric.” Johnson also uses a gendered vocabulary to describe the difference between the epitaph and the elegy: “In writing *Epitaphs* one circumstance is to be considered, which affects no other composition; the place in which they are now commonly found restrains them to a particular air of solemnity, and debars them from the admission of all lighter or gayer ornaments. In this it is that the stile of an *Epitaph* necessarily differs from that of an *Elegy*.”<sup>178</sup> As writers like Johnson accepted, the elegy with its “lighter or gayer ornaments” was an appropriate arena for women to broach subjects like nationalism and the transmission of certain values to posterity. But the epitaph was a different matter, and so Hester Thrale Piozzi’s burgeoning interest in the form is unusual and worthy of close consideration.

Thrale Piozzi began to become interested in discourses of commemoration, in the late 1770s. Between September and November 1776, she records the first epitaph that she ever composed, for her friend Dr. Fitzpatrick. As well as those in *Thraliana*, several other epitaphs in her hand survive, which are clearly original and written for her friends or for her friends’ relatives when they actually died: Philip Jennings in 1788,<sup>179</sup> Sophia Byron in 1790,<sup>180</sup> and Susan Adams in 1804.<sup>181</sup> It is possible that many more have been lost.

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<sup>177</sup> Addison, ‘Reflections in Westminster Abbey’, p. 376.

<sup>178</sup> Johnson, ‘Essay on Epitaphs’, p. 292.

<sup>179</sup> Rylands GB 133 MS 629, 14.

<sup>180</sup> Rylands GB 133 MS 546, 31.

<sup>181</sup> Rylands GB 133 MS 629, 23.

It is not Thrale Piozzi's epitaphs for others that I want to address here, however, but those she wrote for herself. Felicity Nussbaum shows in *The Autobiographical Subject*, as well as in several articles, how Thrale Piozzi's biographical tussle over Dr. Johnson's death and the control of his memory acted as a space in which Thrale Piozzi was able not only to court literary celebrity, but also to publish an account of her own 'Wit' that fulfils an autobiographical function.<sup>182</sup> In doing so, Nussbaum argues, Thrale Piozzi is able to resist what Daniel Cook and Amy Culley have called "the cultural anxieties surrounding the publication of life-writing" that might be "compounded by an author's sex," and which include accusations of "egotism, vanity, self-adulation, indecency and treachery."<sup>183</sup> Biography and autobiography, according to this reading of Thrale Piozzi's published work, overlap and intersect. Nussbaum has also considered Thrale Piozzi's more private life writing, such as *The Family Book*, to argue that for her "the crucial point of difference from men rests in formulating the identity of a bourgeois mother, the educator of her children and the caretaker of their health, as well as a wife to a brewer and the frequent hostess to Samuel Johnson. For Thrale, resistance to these prescribed identities came in insisting, however ambivalently, on the importance of the "unimportant."<sup>184</sup>

I want to situate my examination of Thrale Piozzi between Nussbaum's two poles - the published biography of Johnson and the private fragmentary writings not meant for publication - to focus on works that were written privately and never published but which nonetheless, in their form and subject matter, appear to invite

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<sup>182</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989); 'Sociability and Life Writing: Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi' in *Women's Life Writing, 1700-1850: Gender, Genre and Authorship*, ed. Daniel Cook and Amy Culley, (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2012; 'Hester Thrale: What Trace of the Wit?' in Eger, *Bluestockings Displayed*, 187-209.

<sup>183</sup> Cook and Culley, *Women's Life Writing*, 'Introduction: Gender, Genre and Authorship', p.4.

<sup>184</sup> Nussbaum *The Autobiographical Subject*, pp. 139-140.

posthumous publication and a public commentary on the life of their author. With the exception of the text with which I opened this chapter, I look at not the fragmentary autobiographies that Thrale Piozzi wrote throughout her life, or the cohesive five-volume autobiography that she prepared for Sir James Fellowes near her death (though there is much to be said about these), but instead at texts that more insistently appropriate the literary apparatus of death in their invocations of posthumous publication. I call these texts acts of 'auto-commemoration'. I choose this focus because it is in these auto-commemorative discourses that the tension I have already flagged, between acquiescence to a married woman's onomastic mutability and the desire to transmit a stable reputation to posterity, stands out most clearly.

### Hester Lynch Salusbury Thrale Piozzi: A case study

#### *'Hes, H, Hester': Being Hester Salusbury*

There is little extant writing available from the period before Thrale Piozzi's marriage to Henry Thrale in 1763, when she was still Hester Lynch Salusbury. But some of what is available shows that the young bride understood the marriage as an act of duty to her parents that would validate her status as daughter.<sup>185</sup> It also suggests that she mediates uncertainty about the prospect of a married identity through experimental mutations of her own name. In two drafts of a remarkably laboured letter written to her aunt probably in 1762, for example, the young Hester Salusbury asks for permission to marry Henry Thrale, clearly at her mother's behest and as part of a campaign to drum up family support for the union after her late father's opposition. In the first draft, she writes that she seeks strength to "fortify her hand" to compose the letter she has "undertaken" to write; in the second, she remarks, "With what Spirits I

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<sup>185</sup> McCarthy, *Portrait of a Literary Woman*, p. 21.

us'd to sit down to write to my Dear Aunt Sidney, & how slowly my Pen moves this Even: how kind would it be in you to guess the Cause & spare the cruel Explanation!" The cause, of course, is to ask consent for the union with Thrale. "Your Heart is surely too nearly allied to that of my Dear Mother [blot] dislike what is so entirely the object of Her Approbation indeed Affection; & your Knowledge of Her Judgment will not I dare say leave you a doubt of Mr. Thrale's Defects."<sup>186</sup> In these and other letters, one can see Thrale Piozzi signing herself 'H:L:S', where 'S', of course, stands for her maiden name Salusbury. In a draft of a letter to Henry Thrale in which she discusses her dowry, however, awareness of the impending marriage is negotiated through a hesitancy about her own onomastic identity, which is about to change so radically. References to 'my Mother' throughout the letter have been revised to read 'my mother *Sal*' or 'my Mother *Salusbury*' [italics mine], aligning the Salusbury name firmly with the parent from whose protection she was about to pass. When it comes to signing her own name, however, she appears to be unable to write a surname at all.

Your  
Hes

Obl            H  
Hester

These letters, brief though they are, offer an insight into how the young Hester Salusbury saw her marriage: as a dutiful action that was almost her contractual obligation as a daughter. Moreover, they display her awareness of the onomastic

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<sup>186</sup> Rylands GB 133, Eng MS 533, 1.

transformation that would act as a corollary to her legal subjugation to her husband, and gesture towards the perceived erasure of identity that seemed to result.

*'Poor Mrs. Thrale'*

During her marriage to Henry Thrale over the years 1763-1781, Thrale Piozzi signed her name 'Hester Lynch Thrale', 'H:L:Thrale' or (most frequently) 'H:L:T'. The abandonment of her own family name in order to take that of Henry Thrale, despite her mixed feelings about the man himself, was the linguistic symbol of a transaction that Thrale Piozzi regarded as natural and appropriate. As she herself says in the passage with which I opened this chapter, "My Name was not made for me certainly: tho' rationally proud of it I kept it but a short Time nor ever regretted the Change."

However, she was watchful for the dangers involved in her legal subordination to the husband. In a variety of recollections written later in life, she displays acute awareness of the legal framework within which her status as 'wife' existed. "With Mr Thrale," she writes, "I was ever cautious of contending, conscious that a Misunderstanding there could never answer; as I have no Friend or Relation in the World to protect me from the rough Treatment of a Husband shou'd he choose to exert his *Prerogatives*."<sup>187</sup> A piece of miscellanea of uncertain date, possibly the start of a novel or tale told in epistolary form (since the narrator, whose mother died in childbirth, is clearly not supposed to be Thrale Piozzi herself), puts the case more bluntly: "Marriage was a Madness; every Compliment I consider'd as a Prelude to Robbery and in the conduct of the most finished Gentleman my eyes only endeavoured to discern a present Fortune Hunter & a future Tyrant."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Thrale Piozzi, *Thraliana*, 1:43.

<sup>188</sup> Rylands GB 133, Eng MS 629, 22.

Some fuller indications as to how Thrale Piozzi viewed her marriage, and particularly the public persona she projected as 'Mrs. Thrale,' can be gleaned from her first form of auto-commemoration, written in 1779 when she was recovering from a difficult childbirth: *Three Dialogues on the Death of Hester Lynch Thrale*. This is a series of imagined conversations between Thrale Piozzi's family and friends following her death, headed with a short Preface. As in the aspirant autobiography with which I began this chapter, Thrale Piozzi begins by looking back to a canonical male writer for inspiration for her own composition – but, this time, a master of satirical poetry rather than the reflective essay. "One of Dean Swift's happiest Compositions is certainly the little Poem on his own Death. My Death would be a slight Event indeed compared with his – it would I think just bear three Dialogues among the people I chiefly lived with, & some of them are insignificant enough too."<sup>189</sup>

Thrale Piozzi's explicit invocation of a readership raises interesting questions about the intended audience for the Dialogues. The manuscript in the John Rylands is a neat fair copy, unlike the scribbled, crossed and blotted fragments that surround it, suggesting that the *Dialogues* were, at least to some extent, prepared for circulation. However, they were not published in Thrale Piozzi's lifetime – in fact, they have only ever been published in the 1932 volume of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* – and despite their polished presentation, whether they were ever actually shown to Thrale Piozzi's social acquaintances is unlikely. The main reason for this is that the *Dialogues* are heavily satirical, and that the targets of their satire are those to whom Thrale Piozzi's writing was generally most likely to be shown. The cast list includes Henry Thrale, Queeney Thrale, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Elizabeth Montagu,

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<sup>189</sup> Rylands GB 133 TPM.

William Weller Pepys, Giuseppe Baretti, John Cator, William Seward, Sir Richard Jebb, Sir Philip Jennings-Clerke, a Mr. Norman, and Lady Anne Lade. Each dialogue is set in a specific social location – “At Mrs Vesey’s Assembly,” “At Lady Lade’s” etc. Following on from Swift, in other words, Thrale Piozzi envisages the epitaphs that those who actually knew her might give her. In doing so, through an act of literary ventriloquism, she is composing both her own epitaph, and also passing judgment on those into whose mouths she puts these epitaphs.

The nature of Thrale Piozzi’s satire in the *Dialogues*, and the form in which she chooses to express it, can be illuminatingly contextualized by comparison with the model she cites in her Preface. Swift’s ‘Verses’ satirise “my special friends,” who “try to find their private ends” within his death’; Pope, Gay, Bolingbroke and Arbuthnot are all castigated as unfeeling or hypocritical. Thrale Piozzi emulates this specificity of acquaintance in her *Dialogues*, but she also deviates from the Swiftian template by means of selecting the dramatic, rather than the narrative poetic, form. For when Swift envisages “A club assembled at the Rose, / Where, from discourse of this and that, / I grow the subject of their chat,” he is able to include “One quite indiff’rent in the cause,” who “my character impartial draws.”<sup>190</sup> The famous character sketch that follows – “Fair Liberty was all his cry; / For her he stood prepared to die”<sup>191</sup> – is unashamedly heroic. The supposed impartial speaker is really just a tool to enable the author to commemorate himself directly. Thrale Piozzi uses the dramatic form instead, unlike Swift declining to establish an authorial narrative voice that is able to point out indifference or impartiality. Although of course the author is as much in

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<sup>190</sup> Jonathan Swift, ‘Verses on the Death of Doctor Swift, D.S.P.D. Occasioned by reading a Maxim in *Rochefoucault*,’ *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, eds. Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 514-530, p. 523.

<sup>191</sup> Swift, ‘Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift’, p. 525.

control of a dramatic composition than one in poetry or prose, the illusion is presented that the words, and the ideas they express, come straight from the characters' mouths without narrative mediation, and I think this is important for the way that it enables Thrale Piozzi to reflect on female identity.

Few critics have paid sustained attention to the *Dialogues*, with even Thrale Piozzi's most authoritative biographer only devoting one page to her "brilliant and cutting parody" of her social acquaintances' modes of speech.<sup>192</sup> One of those few, Clare Brant, has described the *Dialogues* as "a sort of revenge fantasy," and drawn particular attention to Thrale's "exposure of men's thoughts about women as casually utilitarian or misogynist." In the second dialogue, for example, Cator, Norman and Barretti manage to criticize both Hester Thrale's extravagance and stinginess, with Barretti concluding that only "the most impenetrable Blockhead that ever the Almighty has given Permission to infect the Earth with his Folly" will "be governed by his Wife." "The men don't remember Thrale as a real woman at all," Brant states. "Instead, they close up the discursive space left by her supposed death with misogynist misrepresentations... For Thrale, men's failure to mourn her death is shockingly connected to their failure to value her sex when alive."<sup>193</sup>

Brant is right to draw attention to the negotiations of gender at work in the *Dialogues*, but I think that in light of the framing contexts I have outlined above, it can be read, rather than a 'revenge fantasy', as a supple and self-reflexive satire on how a married woman's reputation is mediated to posterity, with an ultimate emphasis on the act of authorship as the only way by which this can be achieved. Comparing the two 'Mrs. Thrales' mediated within the text – the one represented by the

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<sup>192</sup> McCarthy, *Portrait of a Literary Woman*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>193</sup> Brant, 'Varieties of Women's Writings', pp. 300-301.

characters featured in the *Dialogues*, and the other representing those characters themselves – reveals a disparity in identity formation with telling implications.

The name 'Mrs. Thrale' echoes through the three *Dialogues* almost like a mantra.<sup>194</sup> In the first *Dialogue*, 'an Assembly at Mrs. Vesey's', 'Mrs. Thrale' is figured primarily as a social acquaintance: "Our lost friend Mrs. Thrale," "our amiable friend Mrs. Thrale" and "poor Mrs. Thrale" are the terms used to describe her. There is, among the cast, a striking interplay between silence and volubility, the characters' willingness to comment on Mrs. Thrale's death providing an index as to their sensitivity and politeness. Burke and Johnson are taciturn and restrained on the subject of 'Mrs. Thrale's' demise, in comparison to the voluble approaches of Pepys, who harps on the topic with ghoulish exaggerated sorrow and displays his insensitivity in comparing the "mere Galaxy of Wits" at Mrs Vesey's assembly to "too many good Dishes like poor Mrs Thrale's Dinners," drowning any semblance of serious mourning in petty criticism of what he perceives as female domestic excess.

Like Pepys, Montagu appears to delight in using the death of her lost friend as a site for displaying her own learning and for the use of absurdly overwrought similes. "& now Mr Pepys, if we Witches had but the Power of conjuring up into this Circle again our lost Friend Mrs Thrale, I do verily believe that you would think Enchantment so used, might be legally defended even in the Courts of Juriscature, where I believe there has not been a Cause of Witchcraft now subsisting these many many years." Indeed, the Dialogue closes by contrasting Montagu's self-indulgent and self-aware eulogy and Pepys's obsequiousness with Johnson's abrupt departure: "Bless me! Yes," Montagu exclaims, "She had Remarkable good Nerves, & yet

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<sup>194</sup> Zamick, M. 'Three Dialogues of Hester Lynch Thrale', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 16 (1932), 77-114.

carried off so suddenly – pounced by Death like a partridge upon the Wing – caught in one of her Flights, Mr Pepys!” Pepys is ecstatic at the delicacy of the simile: “Charming! Charming! Bravo! Bravo!” he cries, and the stage directions add, “And now he runs about telling everybody what Mrs Montagu said last – while Johnson, enquiring what the happy Sallie was & hearing it repeated – leaves the Room, & the Conversation is changed to a worthier Subject.” Use of ‘Mrs. Thrale,’ then, operates in this scene as a verbal indicator of a character’s lack of sensibility. Johnson and Burke’s dignified mourning is characterized by silence – “I do not like to talk of Mrs. Thrale sir” – while Pepys and Montagu’s promiscuous broadcasting of the name is figured as a means by which they fashion their own social image. ‘Mrs. Thrale’ herself, a friend and socialite, exists only in absence and overwrought similes.<sup>195</sup>

In the second *Dialogue*, ‘at Beckenham Place after supper,’ Barretti, Norman and the Cators discuss the “News confirmed of the Death of Mrs. Thrale.” In this more private scene, ‘Mrs. Thrale’ is more robustly criticized, usually in her capacity as a wife. Cator blames her for her own death, which “proceeded as I have been *tould* entirely from want of Care,” and criticizes her reading: “Books will never teach the use of Books.” Barretti proceeds to impugn her sexual virtue: “Mrs. Thrale however knew the World well enough too; She had not always a rich Husband; she had wheeled about and about a good deal.” Cator criticizes her “turn for expence” and Barretti her “*improper Influence*” over her husband. The men end the scene by toasting “a Good Wife to Mr Thrale & a good Husband to his eldest Daughter”, though Barretti adds: “Here is health and a good Husband to my Hetty Thrale ; as for her Father - he has had - I believe Wife enough.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Thrale Piozzi, ‘Three Dialogues’, pp. 98-101.

<sup>196</sup> Thrale Piozzi, ‘Three Dialogues’, pp. 102-105.

The third *Dialogue* is split into two scenes: the first taking place at Seward's lodgings and the second at a dinner held at Lady Lade's. In the first part, 'Mrs. Thrale' is figured in a newspaper read out by Seward as "The Wife of Henry Thrale Esq," but her death figures primarily as old news that irritates Seward by being passé.

What have the Ministry provided us no new publick Calamities for to Day's Entertainment, that these cursed printers keep up the bore with repetition of private Concerns. - (Reads) Last Week died at Streatham the Wife of Henry Thrale Esqr. - who if he had any Feeling now, would himself be affected by the incessant recurrence of the paragraph, but the Comfort is - no Man has any Feeling, sad Dogs to be sure, sad Dogs Mankind are; I am not as much hurt at it myself as I thought I should have been, but then I had taken an Emetick the Night before I heard the News-and a Man is so different after the Bile is gone off his Stomach.

The endless circulation of the phrase 'The Wife of Henry Thrale Esqr' is figured here as a holding paragraph while readers wait for something else to happen. Seward shrugs off the notion that the repetition of the name will 'affect' or 'hurt' those readers, bathetically ascribing his own indifference to an emetic that settled his stomach. At the entrance of Sir Richard Jebb, Seward uses the death to enquire into 'Mrs. Thrale's' medical habits and mortifications – but like Montagu and Pepys in the first Dialogue, he primarily uses the death to pursue his own salacious objectives in indulging his hypochondria. From this point on, the name 'Mrs Thrale' is actually not mentioned once. Queeney and Henry Thrale are shown, like Johnson, to be unusually taciturn at dinner, but the rest of the company appears to have forgotten that 'Mrs.

Thrale' has even died, talking of musicians and gossiping about other acquaintances. The company eventually exits to "Candles and Cards in tother Room."<sup>197</sup>

In all three dialogues, the absence of a stable identity for 'poor Mrs. Thrale' reflects a notion of the self as unstable and shifting, different through the eyes of each observer and devoid of impartiality. And yet, this lack of a stable centre is complicated by the deft and pointed satire on the behaviour of others that is the most notable feature of the *Dialogues* and implies a sharp organizing authorial presence. The 'Mrs. Thrale' whose name is repeated frequently throughout the *Dialogues* exists only in the jokes, sneers and silences of a number of characters pointedly satirized by a representing self; a satirical writer. It is possible to read the *Dialogues*, then, as locating identity within the subjective writing process, the right to critique and satirise, rather in the objective catalogue of virtues that an elegy would include.

*'The beloved and long-desired name of H:L: Piozzi'*

In April 1781, Henry Thrale died and his wife was left a wealthy widow. In a *Thraliana* entry of 26 September 1782, she anticipates the next onomastic transformation of her identity, one which would have extraordinarily pervasive ramifications for her view of her own identity, and the ways in which this identity was publicly constructed by critics and detractors.

Now! That dear discerning Creature Fanny Burney says I'm in love with  
Piozzi - very likely! he is so amiable, so honourable, so much above his  
Situation by his Abilities, that if  
Fate had'nt fast bound her

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<sup>197</sup> Thrale Piozzi, 'Three Dialogues', pp. 105-111.

With Styx nine Times round her  
Sure Musick & Love were Victorious.

The figurative presentation of death, or 'Styx', as a binding agent, restricting the conduct of the living, both echoes Thrale Piozzi's earlier use of discourses of death to reflect upon her decisions during life, and anticipates the way she would invert it in the future to justify more radical actions. She proceeds, in this piece of writing, to weigh Gabriel Piozzi's virtues against the factors that would make a union with him unacceptable to wider society. "I married the first Time to please my Mother, I must marry the second Time to please my Daughter," she recalls. "I have always sacrificed my own Choice to that of others, so I must sacrifice it again: - but why? Oh because I am a Woman of superior Understanding, & must not for the World degrade my self from my Situation in Life. but If I have superior Understanding, let me at least make use of it for once; & rise to the Rank of a human Being conscious of its own power to discern Good from Ill."

After concluding that the definitive factor controlling her choice in the eyes of her family and wider society is Piozzi's poverty - but that she has enough wealth to support them both - she concludes exasperatedly, "To what then am I Guardian? to their Pride and Prejudice?" This echo of the phrase used by Burney in Dr. Lyster's didactic verdict at the conclusion of *Cecilia* can hardly be a coincidence. In a startling inversion of the roles of Burney's novel, which are the subject of my next chapter, Thrale Piozzi figures herself as the young lover (Cecilia Beverley or Mortimer Delvile) and her daughters, insisting upon her acquiescence to the etiquette of remarriage, as the prejudicial Delviles. Thrale Piozzi goes on to admit that what in fact disturbs her personally about the prospect of a remarriage to Piozzi is the idea of

placing of herself under the control of another man - "...Is it wise to place one's Happiness on the Continuance of *any* Man's Affection?"<sup>198</sup> - once again displaying awareness of the perilous predilections in which marriage, *pace* Blackstone's definition of coverture, could place women.

However, she ultimately overcame both these objections and those of others, to wed Piozzi in 1784. Her letters during the weeks immediately before the marriage reveal her acute anxiety as practical obstacles arose to the union and she floundered in marital limbo. They are also remarkable for the degree to which she uses onomastic symbolism - the valuation and use of her surnames of 'Thrale' and 'Piozzi' - to express her feelings about this moment of mutable identity. On 27 June 1784, in a letter that was subsequently heavily mutilated, she foreshadows her forthcoming onomastic transformation to a disapproving Burney in the final standalone surviving line: "... high time for me to write to you while I yet sign myself *your* H:L:T."<sup>199</sup> She complains to Burney, too, that her daughters' strategy for signalling their opposition to the union is to withhold their mention of Piozzi's name - soon to be hers. "The separated Ladies write constantly, but ... they none of them name his Name, nor take the smallest Notice, just as if such a Creature had never existed!"<sup>200</sup> Once the impending nuptials were hit by impending practical obstacles regarding the publication of banns and Piozzi's Catholicism, she lamented that she must "live 26 Days more in hot water before she has a right to say She is wedded to the Man of her Heart." The difficulties this causes her are both concrete and abstract: "Meanwhile how are we to live? Together? And lose my Reputation so dear, so necessary to both? - Asunder? and be separately baited by Bulldogs, Curs and Puppies? We should

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<sup>198</sup> Thrale Piozzi, *Thraliana*, 1:545.

<sup>199</sup> Hester Thrale to Fanny Burney, [27 June 1784], *PL*, 1:67.

<sup>200</sup> Hester Thrale to Fanny Burney, 1 July 1784, *PL*, 1:76.

neither of us see the 26<sup>th</sup> Day.”<sup>201</sup> The magic lantern of her life was stuck between rotations: “I am not well but better – I am not married but I shall be. I write in the Dark.”<sup>202</sup>

During this period of marital limbo, however, as well as deploring the onomastic uncertainty forced upon her, Thrale Piozzi also exploited it. Alongside other influential friends including Burney and Montagu, Johnson’s opposition to the union with Piozzi is well known. In the summer of 1784 he wrote to her enquiring about her legal status and urging her to draw back from the marriage if it was not too late. In her letter of reply, the signature Thrale Piozzi uses is deliberately erased, and the editors of the *Piozzi Letters* suggest that this was done at a later date because she used the misleading signature H:L:Piozzi; they speculate that “HLT had wished SJ to believe that the marriage was consummated so that he would no longer interfere.”<sup>203</sup> If they are correct, Thrale Piozzi exploits her own onomastic mutability in a comparable way to that in which she, and wider society, had so deplored in the conduct of scandalous women such as ‘Mrs. Nominative’.

Eventually, the numerous objections to the marriage surmounted, Thrale Piozzi wrote triumphantly to Burney using her new name for the first time: “Wish me Joy my dearest Miss Burney, and let the Time of Circumspection and alarm be over ... be not sorry to see your Letter signed by the beloved and long desired Name of / Your Affectionate / H:L:Piozzi.”<sup>204</sup> During her ‘Time of Circumspection and Alarm’, it is possible briefly to see Thrale Piozzi, liberated from the restrictions of coverture but still bound under the onomastic identity of ‘Mrs. Thrale’, consider the negative

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<sup>201</sup> Hester Piozzi to Hester Maria Thrale, 4 July [1784], *PL*, 1:83.

<sup>202</sup> Hester Piozzi to Hester Maria Thrale, 12 July [1784], *PL*, 1:85.

<sup>203</sup> Hester Thrale to Samuel Johnson, 15 July 1784, *PL*, 1:94.

<sup>204</sup> Hester Piozzi to Fanny Burney, 25 July 1784, *PL*, 1: 96.

implications of once more placing herself under a husband's control, but ultimately avow allegiance to the hypothetical identity of 'Mrs. Piozzi'. Increasingly, her letters from this period express anxiety about the legal and onomastic limbo in which she found herself due to obstacles to the marriage (although she was not averse to exploiting this limbo for practical convenience), and treat the name of 'Piozzi' as a fervently wished-for haven that would confer respectability upon her once more.

Her optimism was misplaced, however. Once she was 'H:L:P' she would be subjected to an series of vitriolic public attacks that represent her adoption of the onomastic identity as a betrayal of the values that a sexually respectable English gentlewoman should cherish. She would use her burgeoning interest in epitaphs, and her by now formidable skill in appropriating a male-dominated discourse of commemoration, to defend herself and to assert her right to the onomastic identity she had selected.

*Signora Piozzi: A contested reputation post-1784*

Once embarked on her grand tour of the Continent with her new husband in late 1784, Thrale Piozzi wrote to her friend Samuel Lysons describing her reception in Piozzi's native land: "Al Merito Impareggiabile dell'Ornatissima Signora Donna Ester Thrale Inglese, condotta Sposa in Milano del Signor Don Gabriele Piozzi."<sup>205</sup> In playfully celebrating her own virtue, while emphasising the transition between her two names, Thrale Piozzi seems to be staking a claim for the absolute transition that she has made between one onomastic identity and another. The 'Time of Circumspection and

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<sup>205</sup> "In recognition of the incomparable virtue of the magnificent English lady Mrs Hester Thrale, conducted as bride in Milan to Mr Gabriel Piozzi." Hester Piozzi to Samuel Lysons, 7 December 1784, *PL*, 1:118. The translation is my own.

Alarm' was over, and her decision to write in Italian underlines her wholehearted embrace of her new identity.

By 1785, however, news was reaching Thrale Piozzi that scandalous rumours were being circulated back in London about her husband's mistreatment of her: "Ask Mr. Pepys do whether there is any Truth in the article we read here Journal Encyclopedique for last December about his Friend the famous Lord Lyttelton – how he wrote some Arguments for Suicide which perswaded a Man to murder himself. I suppose 'tis like their saying Mr. Piozzi has sold my Joynture and locked me up – but they should let the Dead alone, the Living may defend themselves."<sup>206</sup> As a member of the able 'Living', Thrale Piozzi developed several literary mechanisms in order to defend herself from the kind of slander that was being spread about her in her new identity as Mrs. Piozzi.

One of these mechanisms was the composition of her own epitaph. The fair copy is undated, but its title, 'Epitaph for Leghorn,' makes it likely that it was written in 1785 while the Piozzis lived in that city, and it reveals much about Thrale Piozzi's processes of identity formation at this time.

From this Tomb

Shall on the last Day rise

The reanimated Body of Hester Lynch Piozzi

Who

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<sup>206</sup> Hester Piozzi to Samuel Lysons, Milan, 20: January 1785, *PL*, 1:125.

Disgusted by Ingratitude

And

Allured by Curiosity

Left her Native Island to which

She was never permitted by Pro=

Vidence any more to return.

Here then

Her last Remains sought their

Last Asylum.

Where in sight of that Sea which

Submits to the Dominion of England,

And in Company of those who acknow=

Ledge her pure and truly Catholic Church,

She rests

In Faith thro' the Merits of her Redeemer,

In Hope of a blessed Immortality, &

In Charity with all Mankind.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Rylands GB 133, Eng MS 13.

The unusually choppy form of the epitaph evokes a tart and abrupt diction which, in conjunction with the pointed references to those who attempted to disparage her marriage, seems somewhat at odds with the protestation that Thrale Piozzi rests “in Charity with all Mankind.” In describing herself as “disgusted by Ingratitude” and “allured by Curiosity,” Thrale Piozzi strikes out from Johnson and Addison’s advice on the decorum of epitaph composition by figuring herself as responding to ill treatment, and as motivated by curiosity about geographical and sexual precincts beyond the remit of her earlier experience. There is even a dig at the widespread belief within Piozzi’s estranged social circle that Gabriel Piozzi’s Roman Catholicism meant he was likely to try to convert his new wife away from her religion. Piozzi claims defiantly in her epitaph that, though a voluntary exile from her homeland, she rests “in Company of those who acknowledge her pure and truly Catholic Church.” She presents Leghorn as the appropriate resting place for the exile she has become, referencing the inclusivity and religious tolerance that she emphasised in a roughly contemporary letter to Samuel Lysons: “Here are all Religions, Dresses, Customs and Languages. Armenian Christians, Greek Church, Turks, Jews, - and even the poor *Church of England* are all established at Leghorn.”<sup>208</sup> Nonetheless, she also attempts to maintain a form of patriotism, despite her temporary emigration, by insisting that Britain remains “her Native Island,” and that even though she is buried in Italy, the central fact of her grave’s location is that it is “in Sight of that Sea which Submits to the Dominion of England.” The tensions involved in maintaining these contrary allegiances are manifested by the odd enjambments of several words that are split, unnecessarily, between lines.

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<sup>208</sup> Hester Piozzi to Samuel Lysons, 21 September 1785, *The Piozzi Letters*, 1:168.

The epitaph enacts the fantasy of having the last word, of fortifying one's point of view with the solemnity of death and the permanence of an inscription in stone. Matthew Craske has argued in *The Silent Rhetoric of the Body* that visual commemorative culture of this period operated to reinforce notions of the appropriate behaviour for widows - "So entrenched was the understanding that widowhood was a state close to death that the artistic representation of widows and dead women is frequently conflated."<sup>209</sup> Thrale Piozzi can be seen to invert the conventional apparatus of death in order to justify her supposedly scandalous behaviour in widowhood. In firmly expressing the desire to be known and remembered as 'Hester Lynch Piozzi' - no longer 'Mrs. Thrale' - she sought to establish control over her public reputation.

Over the next few years, however, Thrale Piozzi's detractors would challenge her on her own ground by making her onomastic identity of 'Signora Piozzi' a key weapon in their battle to discredit her. Much scholarly attention has been devoted to her feuds with Giuseppe Baretti and James Boswell concerning the accuracy of her recollections about Johnson and the implications for gendered constructs of life writing, and I do not wish to rehearse those observations.<sup>210</sup> Rather I want to point out that there is an important onomastic component to the public contestations of her identity at this point, before going on to suggest that over the remainder of her life, whether as the wife of Piozzi or as a widow, she fought to contest, reclaim and declare allegiance to her second married name.

In his *Strictures on Signora Piozzi's Publication of Dr. Johnson's Letters*, published in the *European Magazine* in May and June 1788, Baretti's attacks on

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<sup>209</sup> Matthew Craske, *The Silent Rhetoric of the Body: A history of monumental sculpture and commemorative art in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2007, p. 267.

<sup>210</sup> See 'A Candle-Light Picture: Anecdotes of Johnson' in William McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman*, pp. 97-132 and Nussbaum, 'Sociability and Life Writing.'

Thrale Piozzi repeatedly take an onomastic angle. She is, in the *May Stricture*, the “frontless female who goes now by the mean appellation of Piozzi,” or “LA PIOZZI, as my fiddling countrymen now term her,” who has “degraded herself into the wife of an Italian singing-master.” Interestingly, Baretto justifies his attack by protesting that Thrale Piozzi, in her publication of Johnson’s *Letters*, “treats *my* name in print with as much freedom as if it were allied to that of the folks at Brescia, who call her sister, cousin, art and niece.”<sup>211</sup> [My italics.] In doing so, Barretti attempts to establish a sort of economy of names, in which his own is framed as a valuable commodity to be rationed and respected, whereas that of his target ‘Signora Piozzi’ may be circulated with abandon. As well as ‘Signora Piozzi’, he also frequently addresses her, directly, as ‘Hester Lynch’. The dual usage of these two names both cast aspersions upon her modesty and sexual integrity; ‘Signora Piozzi’ by attaching connotations of common breeding, foreign residence and the old charges of lust for a younger man; and ‘Hester Lynch’ by using the given name that I have already indicated connoted a sexually available woman of lower class status.

Baretto’s usage of Thrale Piozzi’s new onomastic identity to indicate that she was deficient as a genteel English woman of letters is replicated by Peter Pindar (*alias* John Wolcott)’s satirical poem *Bozzy and Piozzi: or, the British Biographers, A Town Eclogue*, also published in 1788. In the introductory stanzas to this text, Pindar introduces the antagonists: “At length, rush’d forth two CANDIDATES for fame; / A SCOTCHMAN *one*, and one a LONDON DAME. / *That*, by th’*emphatic* JOHNSON, christened BOZZY; / *This*, by the BISHOP’s license, DAME PIOZZI.”<sup>212</sup> Pindar lays emphasis on the similarities between their names; Boswell’s nickname ‘Bozzy’

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<sup>211</sup> ‘On Signora Piozzi’s Publication of Dr. Johnson’s Letters’, *The European Magazine and London Review* (May 1788), pp. 313-317.

<sup>212</sup> Peter Pindar, *Bozzy and Piozzi: or, the British Biographers, A Town Eclogue* (London: G. Kearsly, 1788), p. 8.

rhymes pleasingly with the surname 'Piozzi', foreshadowing the parity of inanity that the narrator perceives in their *Memoirs* or *Letters*. However, the provenances of the names are highlighted as a telling disparity between them. Johnson himself sanctioned Boswell's name, the narrator tells us, whereas 'Dame Piozzi's' was conferred by the Bishop's licence: the way that the dichotomy is set up surely stands as a reminder that Johnson himself, far from conferring it, was dead set against the change of Thrale Piozzi's name. Thus, from the beginning, her suit is placed at a disadvantage in opposition to Boswell's.

Her name is also subject to a far closer degree of scrutiny than her rival's, as the narrator traces its genealogy: "Whose *widow'd* name, by topers loved, was THRALE, / *Bright* in the annals of *election ale*; / A name, by *marriage*, that gave up the *ghost!* / In *poor* PEDOCCHIO\*, - no! - PIOZZI, lost!" In describing the surname 'Thrale' as "by topers loved" and "bright in the annals of election ale," Pindar delivers a sly joke about Henry Thrale's electioneering, but the semantic implications of his name are still resoundingly positive; "loved" and "bright." That name, however, has "given up the ghost" in the marriage of Thrale's widow and Piozzi; its extinction and "loss" is laid at her door. Most insultingly, the name for which she has abandoned the "bright" and "loved" 'Thrale' is easily confusable, as a footnote makes clear, with the Italian word for "that most contemptible of animals, a LOUSE."<sup>213</sup>

Visual satire on Thrale Piozzi, too, started to use the trope of onomastic absorption, or at least marital absorption, in their depictions of their subject. In James Sayers's 'Frontispiece to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of Dr J-n's Letters', published by Thomas Cornell in 1788 (Figure 7), Johnson's ghost is pictured reprimanding Thrale Piozzi for her audacity in publishing her recollections. Surprised in the act of forging a letter to

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<sup>213</sup> Pindar, *Bozzy and Piozzi*, p. 8.

publish under Johnson's name, Thrale Piozzi sits writing beneath a portrait of Thrale obscured by a violin, representing the overlaying of the name of Thrale as a part of her identity by that of Piozzi. In an open book, pinned open by a corner of Thrale's portrait, is the motto "...ua vae misera nimium vicuna Cremonae." The Italian city of Cremona was renowned as a centre of musical instrument manufacture, particularly violins. (The Latin translates as 'Alas, wretched woman too close to the region of Cremona.'<sup>214</sup>) I am particularly interested in the situation of Thrale Piozzi's writing desk beneath this visual depiction of the overlay of her second husband upon her first, implying that the supercession of her second husband over her first has implications for her identity as an author. Her right hand gestures towards the arrangement, drawing emphasis to it as critical to her creative process - which, if the handwriting on her page is to be believed, is one of forgery. This conflation recalls Thrale Piozzi's own wry recognition of the incompatibility, for some commentators, of female marriage with literary merit; her status as Mrs. Piozzi is seen to have a detrimental effect on her talents as a writer.

In the face of the public disparagement of "H:L:P," however, Thrale Piozzi remained committed to that onomastic identity, publishing under the name of Piozzi and staunchly defending her husband, both in life and after his death, against all charges and insinuations against him. A good example of her defence of the Piozzi name during later life can be given in a letter written to the wife of her nephew and adopted heir John Salusbury Piozzi Salusbury in 1819, criticizing him for sulking about a letter directed to him under the name of merely 'Piozzi'. And what Nonsense to fret over that foolish Direction! King Richard the 1<sup>st</sup> gave my Ancestor the Name of Salusbury, King George the 3<sup>d</sup> has given it *him*: whose Wife and Children have

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<sup>214</sup> Translation mine.

certainly nothing to do with the beloved Appellation *Piozzi*, which I have felt myself most blest to wear now 39 Years – and which – had I never worn – Your Ladyship would surely never have been *Salusbury*.”<sup>215</sup>

### Conclusions: Transmitting Salusbury by Royal Licence

This chapter argued in its earlier section that paying close attention to treatments of names in public depictions of married women – especially those concerned with seriously or satirically commemorating them after death - can tell us much about the complicated relationship between gender, sexuality, property, reputation and posterity. My case study of Hester Thrale Piozzi addressed this relationship from a different angle. By diachronically tracing the various onomastic strategies she employed, I have tried to show that she negotiates a precarious reputational balance. She attempts to protect herself against the charges of immorality implied by onomastic ambiguity by avowing her commitment to the maritally conferred surname of Thrale, followed by that of Piozzi. But she is aware of the limiting quality of this name, as her *Three Dialogues* demonstrate, and at certain moments, such as her letter to Johnson in 1785, she is not above exploiting her onomastic identities to achieve her ends. Thrale Piozzi locates a stable sense of self in the creative act of authorship rather than in any of the shifting pictures in the ‘Magic Lanthorn’ of her life.

I would like to reinforce this point, conclude this chapter and anticipate the next by briefly considering the fact that in 1813, after Gabriel Piozzi’s death, Hester Thrale Piozzi applied for a Royal Licence for her nephew by marriage and adopted heir to take her maiden name of Salusbury. Thrale Piozzi’s strained relationship with

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<sup>215</sup> Hester Piozzi to Harriet Maria Salusbury, 8 June 1819, *PL*, 6:274.

her four daughters by Henry Thrale, in the aftermath of her remarriage to Piozzi, has already been mentioned, and (for biological or personal reasons) she and Piozzi never had any children of their own. Around 1794, when the Piozzis were having particular problems with the youngest Thrale daughter, Cecilia, and her new husband John Mostyn, Thrale Piozzi recorded in *Thraliana* a plan to discredit the daughters of her first marriage by adopting a nephew of Gabriel Piozzi's and 'Naturalizing' him as their own son.<sup>216</sup>

What I find interesting about the onomastic fashioning of Hester Thrale Piozzi's heir is that, despite her staunch investment in the surname of Piozzi during her later life, she gradually works to entrench her maiden name of Salusbury as superior in significance for her posterity as defined by her adoptive kinship. John Salusbury Piozzi was always, to a certain extent, "a little boy with My *Name*, and my Husband's *Face*" as she wrote to Penelope Sophia Pennington in 1799.<sup>217</sup> In her letters he is always 'Salusbury' or 'My Salusbury', and the Royal Licence she procured for him in 1813 lays considerable emphasis on the fact that Salusbury is to be established as his surname, rather than the shadowy middle name/surname that 'Lynch' had always been, for example, to Thrale Piozzi herself.<sup>218</sup> If John Salusbury Piozzi Salusbury preferred the ancient Anglo-Welsh name of Salusbury to the more obscure Italian one of Piozzi, his snobbery was surely partly the fault of his aunt, since it was she who had insisted upon him adopting the name and arms of Salusbury by Royal Licence. Even in committing so staunchly to the onomastic identity of Piozzi, her engagement with the Royal Licence procedure shows that her maiden name still exercised significant influence over the kind of reputation she wanted to

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<sup>216</sup> *Thraliana*, 2:984.

<sup>217</sup> Hester Piozzi to Penelope Sophia Pennington, 5 April 1799, *PL*, 3:85

<sup>218</sup> Hester Piozzi to James Disney Cathrow, *PL*, 5:219.

transmit to posterity. In this paradox, we might read an interesting conflict between the competing claims of gender and class within Thrale Piozzi's sense of personal identity. The logic of the public surname dictated that she was Piozzi; the ancient pedigree of her father's family vied for Salusbury.

In my next chapter, I focus on a novel that takes, as its central premise, the exact mechanism that Thrale Piozzi used to invite John Salusbury into her family and thus express this paradox. This is Frances Burney's second novel *Cecilia: or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782), which I argue was written in response to a controversial fashion for Royal Licences among the very same social circle as that satirized by Thrale Piozzi in her *Three Dialogues on the Death of Hester Lynch Thrale*. In pitting the prerogatives of gender against those of a patrilineal hereditary naming system in her novel, Burney provoked divisive debates across literary London, careful analysis of which can help to develop an understanding of how the surname was perceived as an arbiter of cultural belonging that required a sensitive – sometimes problematic - negotiation between competing models of identity.



Chapter 4: 'Nothing the nearest our own hearts':  
The point of the name in Frances Burney's *Cecilia*

In a letter to her sister Susan of January 1783, Frances Burney related a recent conversation about her second novel *Cecilia*, which took place at the home of the elderly artist and court favourite Mary Delany. As well as Burney and Delany themselves, the assembled company included the botanical enthusiast and collector the Duchess of Portland, and Hester Chapone, author of the popular conduct book *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*. After speaking of Richardson's novels (which the Duchess declared she "never could read" as she was "disgusted by their tediousness"<sup>219</sup>) the company moved to discuss the recently published *Cecilia*, which received a more favourable reception. The Duchess then described another similar conversation about *Cecilia*, which took place at a recent gathering:

I only wish, said the Dutchess, Miss Burney could have been in some corner, amusing herself with listening to us, when Lord Weymouth, & the Bishop of Exeter, & Mr. Lightfoot, & Mrs. Delany, & I, were all discussing the point of the *name!* - So earnest we were, she *must* have been diverted with us. Nothing, the nearest our own Hearts could have been debated more warmly. The *Bishop* was quite as eager as any of us. But what cooled us a little, at last, was Mr. Lightfoot's thinking we were seriously going to quarrel; and while Mrs. Delany and I were disputing about Mrs. Delville, & he very gravely said,

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<sup>219</sup> Frances Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, January 1783, *EJL*, 5:290.

“Why, Ladies, this is only a matter of *imagination!* - it is not a *fact!* don't be so earnest.”<sup>220</sup>

The Duchess's phrase ‘the point of the name’ refers to Burney's resolution of the dilemma faced by her *nouveau riche* heroine Cecilia Beverley and aristocratic hero Mortimer Delvile as to whether or not they should marry, given that to do so would necessitate surrendering either Cecilia's inherited fortune or Mortimer's cherished family surname. This is the consequence of a clause in the will of Cecilia's uncle the Dean, which stipulates that she must lose her fortune when she marries unless her husband adopts her surname, Beverley. After extended agonising, Cecilia ultimately marries Mortimer and takes the Delvile surname, capitulating to his parents' demand and in the process surrendering her inheritance.

From July 1782 to January 1783, Burney's letters and journals are liberally scattered with reported conversations such as these, taking place between members of the elite metropolitan literati and revolving around her novel - specifically around what the Duchess of Portland calls ‘the point of the name’. The way in which Burney's dilemma was constructed and resolved occasioned “much discussion... about family names and family honour”<sup>221</sup> which, according to Hester Chapone, was often fiercely polarised: “I have heard many people... of high family themselves, say that nothing could have been so base and so dirty as for the Delviles to give up their Name: and others say nothing could be so preposterous as Cecilia's giving up her fortune to gratify them.”<sup>222</sup>

Those incredulous that a fortune really might be sacrificed for the continuation of a meaningless surname included Charles Burney's correspondents William

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<sup>220</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, January 1783, Troide, *EJL*, 5:290-291.

<sup>221</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, November 1782, *EJL*, 5:167.

<sup>222</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, January 1783, *EJL*, 5:291.

Bewley, who wondered if the novel did not contain “too great an offence against the *Costume* of this country, or indeed of the proudest German Baron, in the sacrifice which the Delviles make to a *name*”<sup>223</sup> and Thomas Twining, who criticised the “absurd degree & species of family pride” displayed by the Delviles as “so abominably foolish & unreasonable, that one’s interest in the story is now & then broken in upon & disturbed by an indignant retrospect on which it is founded. I don’t know how to bear with tolerable patience so much solid misery produced by so unsolid & fanciful a cause.”<sup>224</sup> Where some readers accepted that the degree of pride displayed by the Delviles was credible, they wished that it had been punished more harshly. Horace Walpole complained to the Countess of Upper Ossory that he was “most offended at the want of poetical justice. The proud gentleman and his proud wife ought to be punished and humbled,”<sup>225</sup> and Charles Burney’s friend James Hutton made the point somewhat more succinctly, exclaiming, according to Charlotte Ann Burney, “that old Delville shld be pumped upon with dirty water!”<sup>226</sup> However, the Delviles received staunch support from some quarters: Lady Ferrers told Burney that her husband “always says that old Delville was in the right not to give up a good family name... He owned that if he had been a Delville, he should have done the same with a *Beverley*,”<sup>227</sup> and the Duchess of Portland rubbished the claims made by Bewley and Twining that such conduct was unrealistic: “What most amazes me, said the Dutchess, is to hear people pretend to criticise the Character of Old Delville! Why

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<sup>223</sup> William Bewley to Charles Burney, October 21 1782, Burney Family Collection, Osborn Collection (OC), University of Yale, New Haven, OSB MSS3.

<sup>224</sup> Thomas Twining to Charles Burney, Sept 18 1782 (Copy viewed at Burney Centre, University of McGill, Montreal.) I am very grateful to Anna Lewton-Brain for her assistance in recovering this letter.

<sup>225</sup> *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford*, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee, 16 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 12: 1781-1783, p. 339.

<sup>226</sup> Charlotte Ann Burney to Frances Burney, [July or early August 1782], Barrett Collection, British Library, London. (Copy viewed at Burney Centre, University of McGill, Montreal).

<sup>227</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, November 1782, *EJL*, 5: 166.

I personally know three myself! And one is so very like, talks so exactly in the same manner of his occupations, his family, his Estates, & his importance, that I always have him present to me when I read old Delvile's speeches."<sup>228</sup>

Accounts of literary conversation have been accorded a fresh critical importance in the past decade. They have been praised by William St. Clair as "invaluable" for their ability to "help us to break out of the closed circle implicit in exclusively text-based approaches,"<sup>229</sup> and interrogated closely by Jon Mee, who argues that "analysis of the sites of difference where reading took place and judgments were discussed" can provide an important perspective for understanding the work of writers of the late eighteenth century.<sup>230</sup> Drawing upon Mee's emphasis on metaphors of friction in accounts of conversation, I am interested in how, by analysing reports of *Cecilia's* reception, we can observe the 'point of the name' acting as a particularly potent stimulant to conversational conflict in elite social circles in the early 1780s. Considering these conversations, in conjunction with the other approaches to Burney's novel that I also outline in this chapter, can develop understanding of how anxieties provoked by the idea of the hereditary surname as an arbiter of identity were articulated, as well as in the private writings of a writer like Thrale Piozzi, in public and sociable contexts.

It is tempting to read the reception of *Cecilia* as a contribution to the tradition of literary controversy outlined by Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor in their reception history of Richardson's *Clarissa*. It seems that to discuss Burney's novel in the early 1780s was, much like discussing Richardson's in the late 1740s, to "take a position,

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<sup>228</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, January 1783, *EJL*, 5:292.

<sup>229</sup> William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 5-6.

<sup>230</sup> Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 146.

whether consciously or not, on social and sexual politics."<sup>231</sup> However, in the early 1780s the subject of debate was not the marriage between a master and his servant as in *Pamela*, but rather the question of whether, within an elite marriage market, a hereditary name was more valuable than a chosen marriage partner with a considerable fortune. The apparently rather niche question igniting debate among elite conversationalists in the drawing-rooms of London in 1782-83 concerned the respective values of conjugal and consanguineal kinship models, where the consanguineal is specifically manifested as a linguistic sign. This was the topic compared to which "nothing" was "near[er] our own hearts" according to the Duchess of Portland; this was the issue on which Lady Ferrers apologised to Burney for constantly harping, "but when once one has begun, there is no dropping the subject."<sup>232</sup>

In this chapter I argue that the 'point of the name' in *Cecilia* should be read as a deliberate catalyst to debate about kinship, gender, conjugal decorum, social composition and the source and character of political authority to 'bind posterity.' The chapter draws upon three main sources; first, an awareness of the 'motivated' and 'arbitrary' schools of linguistic theory that I outlined in my first chapter, which are re-worked in the interests of outlining a conflict between 'old' and 'new' social orders; second, the rhetoric of the Wars of Independence, in which the language of familial ties is conflated with that of political theory; and third, the fashion for surname change by Royal Licence, which Burney saw taking place within the same social circle that her friend Hester Thrale Piozzi lampoons in her *Three Dialogues*. The 'point of the name' is used as a site upon which Burney represents the affective

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<sup>231</sup> Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>232</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, November 1782, *EJL*, 5:167.

appeal of different forms of kinship. She ultimately condemns the desire, to echo both the terms of Enlightenment debates about political authority and more recent topical discourse about the Wars of Independence, to 'bind posterity.'

### Critical contexts

Scholars reassessing Burney's authorship over the last forty years have demonstrated a consistent preoccupation with the question of her commitment to feminine propriety, and an increasing awareness of the complex character of this commitment when balanced against a desire to interrogate the legal and social restrictions upon women. Patricia Meyer Spacks's assessment of Burney in 1976 as "committed to propriety...[and] feeling that the most important question about novels concerned their moral influence"<sup>233</sup> has since been challenged and modified by numerous critics pointing towards the tensions in Burney's writing. Margaret Doody's literary biography emphasized how Burney draws heavily upon political terminology that conflates private and public relationships in order to explore politically sensitive concepts of tyranny and independence, often in relation to women.<sup>234</sup> Kristina Straub's assessment of the novels pointed to "an unresolved doubleness that, in [Burney's] fiction, reveals instead of masking its own contradictions" which she attributed to "honesty rather than hypocrisy: the desire to achieve two different kinds of contradictory value - as woman and artist." Julia Epstein emphasized in her

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<sup>233</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 158.

<sup>234</sup> Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, p. 139.

readings of Burney “the masked simmering rage of a conflicted but self-conscious social reformer.”<sup>235</sup>

These studies arguing for Burney as a novelist whose work offers rich and sometimes contradictory negotiations of femininity, added to the editorial work of the Burney Centre in producing a now almost complete edition of Burney’s *Letters and Journals*, and editions of her drama as well as her fiction, have paved the way for critics to address Burney with particular interest in her composition processes and the reception history of her work. In these areas *Cecilia* has perhaps, finally, overtaken *Evelina* as the novel of Burney’s that has generated the most critical interest, with the copious records of reception providing fertile material for discussion in Catherine Parisian’s reception history of that novel, and the vexed relationship between Burney’s composition of *The Witlings* and *Cecilia* generating parts of Jane Spencer’s study of kinship and the canon, and Francesca Saggini’s work on the relationship between Burney’s drama and her fiction.<sup>236</sup> This work has, in turn, provided a foundation upon which the newest generation of critics can offer fresh narratives of the ways in which Burney engaged with specific topics of heightened cultural interest

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<sup>235</sup> Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp. 6-7; Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women’s Writing* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 4. See also Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, p. 98; Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 289; Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters’ Fictions 1709-1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 131; Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, p. xvii; Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, p. 15.

<sup>236</sup> Catherine M. Parisian. *Frances Burney’s Cecilia: A Publishing History* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub), 2011; Jane Spencer, *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon 1660-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Francesca Saggini, *Backstage in the Novel: Frances Burney and the Theatre Arts*, trans. Laura Kopp (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2012); See also Stewart Cooke ‘Sweet Cecilia and Brown George: Editing Volume 5 of Burney’s Early Journals and Letters, 1782-1783’, *The Burney Journal*, 2:1999, 28-48; Janice Farrar Thaddeus ‘Sharpening Cecilia: Frances Burney as Professional Writer’, *The Burney Journal*, 4: 2001, 36-52.

in her work of the 1780s.<sup>237</sup> For example, Megan Woodworth recently offered an astute reading of *Cecilia* as a deliberate commentary on the American Revolution, arguing “Burney deftly demonstrates the public and private interest in these debates and their potential implications through the political debates between Mr. Belfield and Mr. Monckton and through the power struggles in the Delvile family.”<sup>238</sup> Melissa J. Ganz and Ann Campbell have both recently considered *Cecilia* as a response to the debates surrounding Hardwicke’s Marriage Act, which were still raging in Parliament in 1781.

This chapter aims to contribute to this final critical wave, by arguing that *Cecilia* addresses another divisive public controversy that is conceptually related to both the American Revolution and to debates about marriage. By Burney’s own admission, she wrote *Cecilia* in response to a specific cultural phenomenon of surname change by Royal Licence. In 1782 Samuel Crisp, Burney’s family friend and self-styled ‘Daddy’, expressed scepticism about the Delviles’ attachment to their name as a plot device and encouraged her to modify the draft of her novel accordingly. His suggestion - that Burney resolve Cecilia’s problem by making Mortimer take the surname Beverley but giving him a title to appease his parents - provoked the following reply:

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<sup>237</sup> See, for example: Megan Woodworth, “‘If a man dared act for himself’: Family Romance and Independence in Frances Burney’s *Cecilia*”, *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 22:2 (Winter 2009-10), 355-370, p. 366; Gillian Skinner, ‘My Muse loves a little Variety: Writing Drama and the Creative Life of Frances Burney’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34:2 (2011), 197-208; Melissa J. Ganz, ‘Clandestine Schemes: Burney’s *Cecilia* and the Marriage Act’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 54:1 (Spring 2013), 25-51, p. 26; Ann Campbell, ‘Clandestine Marriage and Frances Burney’s Critique of Matrimony in *Cecilia*’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 37: 2 (Spring 2013), 85-103; Eleanor C.L. Crouch, ‘Nerve Theory and Sensibility: ‘Delicacy’ in the Works of Fanny Burney’, *Literature Compass*, 11:3 (March 2013), 206-217; Victoria Kortes-Papp “‘Real Illness, Now? Or Only a Pretext?’ Malady in Frances Burney’s Novels”, in *A Celebration of Frances Burney* ed. Lorna J. Clark (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 2007, 210-217.

<sup>238</sup> Woodworth, ‘If a man dared act for himself,’ p. 356.

...I must frankly confess I shall think I have rather written a *Farce* than a *serious History*, if the whole is to end, like the hack Italian Operas, with a Jolly chorus that makes all parties good, & all parties happy! — The people I have ever met with who have been fond of *Blood & Family*, have all *scouted Title* when put in any competition with it: How, then, should these proud Delviles think a new [xxxxx *I word*] created Peerage any equivalent for calling their sons sons, for future Generations, by the name of Beverley? ...Besides, my own *End* will be lost, if I change the conclusion, which was chiefly to point out the absurdity & shortsightedness of those *Name-compelling wills*, which make it always *presumed* a Woman marries an *Inferior*, since *he*, not *she*, is to leave his own Family, in order to be incorporated into hers. You find, my dear Daddy, I am prepared to fight a good Battle here...<sup>239</sup>

Burney's frustration clearly derives partly from Crisp's insinuation that the organising principle of her narrative does not reflect social reality. Specifically, she objects to his scepticism that the "point of the name" could be as "near" the "hearts" of the aristocracy as the Duchess of Portland later confirmed. It was important to Burney that her characters were seen as consistent with the extremes of both family pride and materialism observable in eighteenth-century polite society; a point that she reiterated, at length, in a later triumphant letter to Susan in November 1782, upon hearing of Lord Ferrers' admission that he would have acted just like Mr. Delvile:

Is not *this* triumph for me, my dearest Susy? ... Neither my Daddy, my Father, nor Mr. Bewley are *here* judges to oppose to Lord De Ferrers, who, *being* a

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<sup>239</sup> Burney to Samuel Crisp, 6 April 1782, *EJL*, 5:43-44.

man of Rank, & having a cherished name himself, is more fit to decide upon *this* question than wit, understanding, judgment, & general knowledge, can make *any* others, who have not the power to so well feel the *temptation* of family pride in exciting such obstacles to reason & happiness. I never meant to *vindicate* old Delvile, whom I detested & made detestable, but I always asserted that, his Character & situation considered, he did nothing that such a man would hesitate in doing. Mrs. Thrale has, since, met Lord De Ferrers, & talked over all the Book to him, & he told her that he thought its great merit was the *reasonableness of the Delvilian Distress with respect to changing their Name!*...<sup>240</sup>

It appears that Burney wanted her readers to talk about her book, and to credit it with providing a realistic portrayal of contemporary culture. Rather than recording a solid preference for one position on the 'point of the name' or another, she felt vindicated when told that readers debated it, and (as noted by a range of commentators throughout her career, including William Hazlitt)<sup>241</sup> was always exultant when told that anybody said one of her characters – no matter which one - acted exactly as they would have done themselves. My previous chapters argue that to comment publicly on the significance of personal proper names in the late eighteenth century was to engage with a raft of philosophical and political discourses about identity and social classification. Now that it is more widely available, Burney's critics can surely no longer afford to ignore the wealth of material about *Cecilia's* composition and reception, which shows that Burney's second novel engages with

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<sup>240</sup> Burney to Susan Burney Phillips, November 1782, *EJL*, 5:166.

<sup>241</sup> Hazlitt, for example, noted in 'On Londoners and Country People', with reference to a linen-draper who "fanc[ied] [him]self a sort of second Mr Smith" that "the fair Authoress... was delighted to find that her characters were so true, that an actual person fancied himself to be one of them". 'On Londoners and Country People', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe. 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1931), 12: 82 – 93.

eighteenth-century political and linguistic theory, and also provides and invites critical judgment on the practice of surname change as Burney observed it taking place around her.

My argument, following this overview of Burney's treatment within recent criticism, engages particularly closely with one study that has come close to considering Burney in exactly the way I suggest. In her study *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818* (2004), Ruth Perry explains how in fiction of the late eighteenth century "an axis of kinship based on consanguineal ties or blood lineage" shifted "to an axis based on conjugal and affinal ties of the married couple. That is, the biologically given family into which one was born was gradually becoming secondary to the chosen family constructed by marriage."<sup>242</sup> Perry writes of *Cecilia*: "the tug-of-war [Cecilia experiences between her feelings of attraction towards Mortimer and obligation to his mother], couched in terms of love vs duty and individual happiness vs rectitude and higher principles, illustrates the antagonism between a conjugal and a consanguineal principle of marriage."<sup>243</sup> However, while she remarks that Burney was "obsessed by names and namelessness in all her novels" and notes briefly that the point of the name "was not a far-fetched plot device; making an inheritance contingent on a name change was not so unusual in the eighteenth century,"<sup>244</sup> I think that Perry's persuasive thesis about the conflict between consanguineal and conjugal orders of kinship could be enriched by a more detailed discussion of how the personal proper name functions in this complex interplay of loyalties. For example, she claims that with a shift away from consanguinity "the daughter's significance as the carrier of a particular bloodline

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<sup>242</sup> Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>243</sup> Perry, *Novel Relations*, p. 233.

<sup>244</sup> Perry, *Novel Relations*, p. 232.

became less important than her instrumental value to her new family of destination in aggrandizing their ambition or reproducing their lineage."<sup>245</sup> But in fact, Cecilia's value as the bearer of a fortune is viewed by the Delviles as irrelevant compared to her threatening presence as eradicator of the family name. The signifier, in their world view, is the ace that trumps all other considerations.

Burney's novel demonstrates precisely the shift for which Perry argues, but it is insistent about the ability of language – specifically personal proper naming – to complicate and stymie its progress. A hereditary surname is deliberately made the sole obstacle to the union of Cecilia and Mortimer, and is attributed enough power to overcome the principle of financial aggrandizement that Perry reads as central to changes in legal and social history over the course of the eighteenth century. Burney's novel is permeated with consciousness both of the affective power of the surname and of its ability to propagate fictional kinships fabricated for convenience or enrichment of powerful elders at the expense of those rooted in mutual affection among the new generation. In *Cecilia*, the hereditary surname is metonymic of consanguineal tyranny.

### Lockean unity in *Cecilia*

It has seldom been remarked that Burney was apparently very familiar with Locke's writings. A fragment held in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library in which she reflects on the concept of 'unity' shows that she thought about aspects of his philosophy in some detail, and provides a tantalising suggestion of her particular interest in his ideas:

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<sup>245</sup> Perry, *Novel Relations*, p. 50.

The term unity, or one, is applied to any thing taken by itself. Thus one tree, one house, one man, are expressions denoting the Simple idea of ~~the idea~~ a tree, a house, a man, ~~individually~~, without reference to any Surrounding object. Amongst all the ideas we have, says Locke, as there is none suggested to the mind by more ways, so there is none more simple than that of unity, or one. It has no shadow of vanity or composition in it; every object our Senses are employed about, every idea in our understandings, every thought of our minds, brings this idea along [with?]<sup>246</sup>

This fragment suggests that Burney may have been particularly interested in Locke's ideas about individuality and classification. John Barrell has pointed out how the concept of 'unity,' like those of 'consent' and 'custom,' underlies Locke's linguistic and political philosophies, and shown how this linkage was reproduced by other thinkers over the course of the eighteenth century. "By analogy with the unifying power of the law and the constitution, the language of Britain also was seen and was used as a means of impressing on the inhabitants of the country the idea of their unity, while at the same time it could be used... as a means of confirming, also, the divisions it pretended to heal."<sup>247</sup>

In this section, I insert *Cecilia* into a conversation about linguistic and political unity. I show that Burney exploits the terminology and modifies the implications of Lockean linguistic and political theory, by considering how personal proper naming practices encourage or complicate different kinds of kinship bonds. In doing so, I propose a modification to Perry's thesis about two social 'orders' of consanguineality and conjugality, arguing that Burney sees antithetical theories of language as key to the definition of these orders. Characters who view the surname as a 'motivated sign'

<sup>246</sup> Frances Burney, Misc. Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>247</sup> Barrell, *An Equal Wide Survey*, p. 111.

are classed as a member of the despotic *ancien regime* that self-defines on a consanguineal basis, whereas an empirical epistemology that views the surname as merely the expression of an idea indicates that a character belongs to a new order characterised by a desire for conjugal liberty. Theories of language and political philosophy are inseparable, and are filtered through the trope of intergenerational conflict and the metaphor of the surname.

In *Novel Relations*, Perry outlines an 'old order' in eighteenth-century England constituted by three overlapping social constructs that would be transformed over the course of the century: "a status-based society", "a land-based agrarian economy" and "a consanguineal... basis for family identity." She contrasts this with a 'new order' constituted by "class-based society" and "cash-based market economy" as well as the "conjugal basis for family identity."<sup>248</sup> The Delvile family in *Cecilia*, as Perry herself notes, can be read as neatly representative of the 'old order'. Their meagre funds come from semi-feudal estates; their family seat is a crumbling Gothic castle; and Mortimer's role as son and heir is repeatedly emphasized - almost fetishized - by both his parents who "rather idolized than loved him",<sup>249</sup> and mocked by his cousin Lady Honoria Pemberton, who calls "poor pretty dear Mortimer" "this tender chicken," (484) "the poor child," (488) and a "baby." (515) Cecilia, on the other hand, as middle-class heiress descended from farmers and independent of family restrictions, is representative of the new order constituted by Perry's "class-based society" and "cash-based market economy," as well as the "conjugal basis for family identity" into which Mortimer is continually tempted. A member of a "rising and prosperous family," the first reference to her in the narrative is the almost

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<sup>248</sup> Perry, *Novel Relations*, p. 29.

<sup>249</sup> Frances Burney, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, eds. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 462. All references are to this edition.

oxymoronic “orphan-descendant;” (5) she describes herself as “rich without connections” (129) without “any Relations to call me to account.” (382)

I want to modify Perry’s thesis to suggest that there is a fourth key feature to both ‘old’ and ‘new’ orders; antithetical theories of language. The Delvilles ascribe a motivated representational force to the hereditary surname, falling into the Lockean error of ‘confusing a name with a thing’. The same mistake is made by Cecilia’s uncle, the Dean, who despite his humbler background partakes of the same onomastic epistemology as the Delvilles. Both subscribe to a logocentric theory of language that views the surname as a ‘motivated sign’. Cecilia herself rejects this position, marvelling at Delvile’s scruples about changing his name as “strange infatuation of unconquerable prejudice!” (528) She acts rather as an ambassador for Lockean linguistic philosophy, regarding surnames as devoid of intrinsic meaning and attempting to negotiate social relationships based on empirical observation of character. Burney’s treatment of the ‘point of the name’ unites knowledge of the philosophical traditions of arbitrary naming and arbitrary government. At key moments of pivotal action within the text, the two registers intermingle.

At the beginning of the narrative, Cecilia is introduced as “the only survivor of the Beverley family.” Orphaned at an early age, her uncle now dead, she must go to reside with one of her three guardians for the rest of her minority. The Dean’s death has “made her heiress to an estate of 3000l. per annum” “with no other restriction than that of annexing her name, if she married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches.” (6) Even at this early point the word ‘annexing’ is striking, with its dual implications of attaching (as in Locke’s theory of naming being the ‘Knot’ that binds ideas together) and invasion or political appropriation. The nonchalant framing of the exception, however, lulls the reader into a false sense of security about the name

clause, an impression strengthened by the fact that it is not mentioned again until halfway through the novel. For the first five hundred pages or so, indeed, the name clause does not seem to have much to do with the narrative at all, which omission is perfectly consonant with the moral and linguistic epistemology of Cecilia, through whose consciousness the narrative is generally filtered. She thinks, and behaves, like an empiricist, endeavouring to base her judgments on observable instances of character, especially demonstrations or withholdings of philanthropy. Her disgust at Harrel is fixed when she hears of his treatment of Mrs. Hill (76), evidence of Mr. Arnott's "charity so sympathetic with her own, failed not to raise him greatly in her favour" (78), and her regard for Mortimer is cemented in a "moment of self-conviction" (252) when he shows her documentary evidence that he has been helping the wounded Belfield.

When the 'point of the name' makes its dramatic entrance, therefore, Cecilia's well-established empiricism is brought into stark confrontation with the logocentric value system represented by Mr. and Mrs. Delvile and, more reluctantly, by Mortimer. Previously Cecilia has pondered why Mortimer might be delaying his proposal, despite clearly being attracted to her: "Was the obstacle which thus discouraged him the condition imposed by her uncle's will of giving her own name to the man she married? This she herself thought was an unpleasant circumstance, but yet so common for an heiress, that it could hardly out-weigh the many advantages of such a connection." (477) But this sanguinity about the universality of her value system is erroneous. When Mortimer finally laments, "Oh cruel clause! barbarous and repulsive clause! That forbids my aspiring to the first of women, but by an action that with my own family would degrade me for ever!" (512) he marks the dividing line

between the Delvilian world-view and that which Cecilia has come to represent and uphold.

Initially, Cecilia is defensive of her own value system. Retiring to her room after Mortimer's revelation, "deeply offended, her spirits... supported by resentment," (515) she explodes in a tirade of terms that question and gauge the value of the name; of potency, properties, sufficiency and equivalence: "The dye, she cried, is at last thrown; and this affair is concluded for ever! ... How potent that haughtiness which to nothing will give way! ... Well, let him keep his name! since so wondrous its properties, so all-sufficient its preservation, what vanity, what presumption in me, to suppose myself an equivalent for its loss!" (515)

The force of this outburst lies in its mocking deference, the sarcasm of which would be entirely lost on the Delvile family, who genuinely do not consider Cecilia - or her fortune - an adequate compensation for the loss of their name. Mortimer's mother "regard[s] his name and his existence as equally valuable," (546) and his father "holds the name of his ancestors inseparably annexed" to the "honour of his house." (561) The Delviles, therefore, provide an interesting counter-argument to Perry's thesis that during this period, "with the shift away from consanguinity, the daughter's significance as the carrier of a particular bloodline became less important than her instrumental value to her new family of destination in aggrandizing their ambition or reproducing their lineage."<sup>250</sup> Cecilia's fortune is exactly what the Delviles need to restore their castle, bolster their estate and aggrandize their ambition. The only obstacle standing in the way of this happy vision – an obstacle that is never surmounted - is a change in signifier, a substitution of 'Delvile' for 'Beverley'.

Perry's analysis therefore perhaps underestimates the role of affective feeling - often

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<sup>250</sup> Perry, *Novel Relations*, p. 50.

centred in or triggered by the personal proper name – in the social and legal shifts for which she argues.

Where the Delviles can be read as having fallen into the cardinal Lockean error of confusing a name for a thing, Cecilia is “determined to think and to live for herself.... The system of her oeconomy, like that of her liberality, was formed by rules of reason, and her own ideas of right, and not by compliance with example.” (792) She values the fortune annexed to her name for its potential to engage in philanthropic projects, dreaming quite literally of saving the world: “In her sleep, she bestowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world.” Her outburst against Mortimer’s “hereditary arrogance” therefore, can be read as a rejection of his preference for the cherished name over the practical ability to effect positive social change. The irony that characterizes Cecilia’s register when she lambasts Mortimer’s decision stakes out the disparities between the two value systems, and gestures towards the magnitude of their implications. It is surely no accident that, immediately after the outburst, Mortimer’s cousin Lady Honoria bursts in upon Cecilia, crying, “A new scheme of politics!” (515)

‘Governed by the customs we condemn’: The rhetoric of independence

When Mortimer is converted to Cecilia’s theory of language and decides to give up his surname, a new line is drawn between the older Delviles and their son; one that derives not primarily from the political philosophy of the 1690s but instead from British foreign policy of the 1770s. A substantial body of criticism has enriched and

problematized the eighteenth-century novel's favourite trope of a young couple wanting to marry against parents' wishes, often reading novels of the 1780s as implicitly engaged with discourses used in the late 1770s to discuss the question of American independence. In a landmark study investigating "the American revolution against patriarchal authority,"<sup>251</sup> Jay Fliegelman shows how the "call for filial autonomy and the unimpeded emergence from nonage echoes throughout the rhetoric of the American Revolution. It is its quintessential motif. At every opportunity Revolutionary propagandists insisted that the new nation and its people had come of age, had achieved a collective maturity that necessitated them becoming in political fact an independent and self-governing nation."<sup>252</sup> Following on from Fliegelman, Harriet Guest has pointed out that the relationships between parents and children, and the rights and obligations within the family unit were rendered intensely political subjects by "discussion of the American war in the mid-to late 1770s as a conflict between an oppressive, anachronistic patriarchy and its offspring, which ... intertwined that political struggle with the languages of novels and other genres which were more obviously concerned with private and familial relations. In this context, in the later decades of the eighteenth century, the language of private relations between parents and children, husbands and wives ... acquires a specific political resonance."<sup>253</sup>

When Mortimer finally decides to defy his family and take Cecilia's name, Mortimer and Cecilia are forced to confront Mrs. Delvile in a powerful literalization of generational conflict. Burney deliberately draws attention to the fact that this

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<sup>251</sup> Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American revolution against patriarchal authority, 1750-1800*, (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 5.

<sup>252</sup> Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>253</sup> Harriet Guest, *Small Change*, p. 177.

meeting should be read as metonymic of a wider power struggle; Mrs. Delvile states that in asking Cecilia to renounce Mortimer, she comes "in the name of Mr. Delvile, and in the name of our whole family; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient." She should be considered, she says, "as its representative... its common voice, common opinion and common address." (638) The prospect of the name-changing marriage, Mrs. Delvile tells the couple, would "blot [Mortimer's] name from the injured stock whence he sprung." She is unprepared, however, for Mortimer – now almost a convert to Cecilia's linguistic and political philosophy - to rally so spiritedly: "What honour do I injure that is not factitious? What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary? In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the customs we condemn." (676) Faced with her son's stubborn insistence on the arbitrariness of the name, Mrs. Delvile's *coup de grace* is to activate the affective association that Mortimer has been trained all his life to make: "How will the blood of your wronged ancestors rise into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by the name of *Mr. Beverley!*" (677) But although oral articulation of the changed name with its implied gender inversion is the strategy that comes closest to convincing Mortimer to annul the engagement, even that ultimately fails. When he finally decides, "I cannot, I will not give her up!" Mrs. Delvile suffers an extraordinary reaction. Contemplating the eradication of her hereditary surname causes a blood vessel to burst in her brain; the consequences of linguistic disruption are neurological as well as psychological.

In a forthcoming article, Eleanor Crouch reads *Cecilia* in context of contemporary medical writings, showing that 'nervous constitutions' abound within Burney's novels and suggesting that "Mrs Delvile's delicate nervous constitution may be read as the underlying cause of her burst blood vessel in the face of emotional shock."<sup>254</sup> Victoria Kortes-Papp has argued conversely that illness acts, in this case and others in Burney's fiction, as "a sort of quiet tyrant that imposes a will entirely different from the wish or the good sense of the other characters, which proceeds from a character who continues to be perceived by others (though not always by the reader) as a benign, or even benevolent, force."<sup>255</sup> Whether the attack is read as sincere or as symbolically if not literally malicious, the precise nature of the emotional upheaval behind the burst blood vessel is important. I read Mrs. Delvile's near-fatal physical convulsion as a response to the envisaged replacement of 'Delvile' with 'Beverley', which onomastic coup symbolizes a son's rebellion against his parents. Reading this scene in context of the oft-cited parallels between familial discourse and political discourse in the wake of the Wars of Independence indicates that Burney places the personal proper name at the heart of the debate around political authority. The violence of Mrs. Delvile's physical response suggests a similar convulsion of the body politic, occasioned by a shift between naming models and all that this shift implies.

Burney herself considered this to be the most important scene in the whole novel. In 1782 she wrote to Crisp: "The conflict scene for Cecilia, between the mother & son, is the very scene for which I wrote the whole Book! & So entirely does my plan hang upon it, that I must abide by its reception in the World, or put the whole

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<sup>254</sup> Crouch, 'Nerve Theory and Sensibility: 'Delicacy' in the Works of Fanny Burney.' I am grateful to Ellie Crouch for sharing this essay with me pre-publication.

<sup>255</sup> Kortes-Papp, 'Real Illness, now? Or only a pretext?', p. 216.

behind the Fire... Your anger at Mrs. Delvile's violence & obduracy is nothing but what I *meant* to excite; - your thinking it *unnatural* is all that disturbs me."<sup>256</sup>

Moreover, many of Burney's readers, in surviving accounts of the novel's reception, display particularly violent affective responses to this scene. The Duchess of Portland disagreed with her companion Mary Delany about the ethics of Mrs. Delvile's insistence that Cecilia assist her in preserving the family name. In Burney's report of the meeting at Delany's house, with which I began this chapter, Delany describes Mrs. Delvile as "so elegant, so sensible, so judicious, so charming a Woman" and accuses the Duchess of being "hard" upon her. The Duchess retreats into staccato, impulsive exclamations as she struggles to express her objections to the character: "O I hate her! - Resisting that sweet Cecilia! - Coaxing her, too, all the Time!", "Ah! That silly name!-". Such was the Duchess's "earnestness," Delany tells Burney (note that word again, used by Mr. Lightfoot to shut down the increasingly violent debate between women readers about the novel) that "when we came to that part where Mrs. Delvile bursts a blood vessel; down dropt the Book, & just with the same energy as if your Grace had heard some real & important news, you called out 'I'm glad of it with all my Heart!'" The Duchess's energetic physical gesture of dropping the book and her verbal invocation of the feelings of the 'Heart,' recalls her declaration that nothing nearer "our own Hearts" could be debated more warmly, among her circle, than 'the point of the name.'

These kinds of responses – both Mrs. Delvile's burst blood vessel and the Duchess of Portland's violent heckling – can be read as drawing upon the figurative trauma of the Wars of Independence, which was reflected by the tropes of parental tyranny and rebellious posterity that Fliegelman and Guest argue were so common in

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<sup>256</sup> Burney to Samuel Crisp, 14 March 1782, *EJL*, 5:30-3.

numerous discourses of the late 1770s and early 1780s. The responses are even more telling, however, when viewed in context of the phenomenon of surname change by Royal Licence, which I address in the final section of this chapter. In *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, Lawrence and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone argue for a major demographic crisis among the English landed elite between about 1650 and 1740, which complicated the descent of property and seats from generation to generation. The Stones assert that ingenious strategies of indirect inheritance to save the principle of family continuity were adopted, which strategies were reliant upon “a series of pious fictions,” one of which was the practice of changing the surname of a husband or relative. Name changes were “introduced by the landed classes in the eighteenth century primarily in order to perpetuate the name of a forbear on the distaff side,” in which case there was of course an actual blood linkage between the name bequeather and the name recipient. Once established, they were also used to “perpetuate the name of a childless testator, whose relationship to the beneficiary might well be very remote” and “exploited by the nouveaux-riches, who when they married their daughters and heiresses into an impoverished elite family, now demanded the minimal psychic satisfactions of having their name attached by hyphenation to that of the ancient family they were rescuing.” Where “an ancient family, in order to lay hands on a mercantile fortune, was obliged to drop its famous surname in favour of some obscure *nouveau-riche*,” the Stones inform us that the experience could often be “painful.”<sup>257</sup> Burney’s novel provides the fullest illustration I have encountered of the various forms of “pain” this situation could produce. And, by positioning it within the context of the surname change phenomenon in 1782-1783, it is possible to understand

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<sup>257</sup> Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite*, p. 127, 133.

better why Burney thought it important to consider this “pain”, and the role of personal proper naming in considering it.

### Closer to home: Surname change by Royal Licence

Given the phrasing of Burney’s letter to Crisp about the ‘Name-Compelling wills’, it is difficult not to hypothesise that there was a particular case, or number of cases, that inspired her to exploit this particular trope with all its attendant anxieties. I have been able to identify seven people personally acquainted with the Burney family prior to 1782 (and many more afterwards) who appear as either name bequeather or name recipient in the records of Parliament or the College of Arms. They include Catherine Henley of Docking, whom Burney mentions in 1774 as a social acquaintance keen to hear about James Burney’s adventures abroad and who in 1778 requested that her (presumed) relation John Henley change his name to John Hare.<sup>258</sup> They also include William Petty, Earl of Shelburne, Garrick’s patron with whom Charles Burney dined in 1773,<sup>259</sup> whose father John Fitz Maurice took the name of his wife in 1750 in order to inherit her family’s estates. There is Charles Burney’s correspondent Brigg Fountaine (formerly Price) who in 1765 petitioned for the right to use the surname of his great-uncle Sir Andrew Fountaine, who was one of Charles Burney’s early patrons.<sup>260</sup> The Streatham circle brought Burney into contact with Lady Ann Lade, Hester Thrale’s sister-in-law and one of the characters in her *Three Dialogues*, whose deceased husband Sir John (formerly John Inskip) petitioned in 1754 to take the

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<sup>258</sup> *EJL*, 2:41.

<sup>259</sup> *EJL*, 1:311-12.

<sup>260</sup> Alvaro Ribeiro (ed). *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney*, 4 vols. Vol 4, 1751-1854, (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 206.

surname of Lade pursuant to the will of an earlier Sir John Lade, Baronet.<sup>261</sup> And according to Burney herself, there was even a surname change in the family: she mentions “a Relation of our’s, Mr. Thomas Burney Holt, (Which last name he has adopted at the request of an Uncle).”<sup>262</sup> Finally, there is Elizabeth Montagu, who in 1776 petitioned for a Royal Licence for her nephew Matthew Robinson to take her own surname.<sup>263</sup> Since Burney clearly wrote *Cecilia* with a specific phenomenon of contemporary surname change in mind, I think it is difficult to understand fully the implications of the text, or her readers’ responses to it, without having a reasonably clear idea of what, and whom, this phenomenon involved in the early 1780s. This section will examine the mechanism of surname change by Royal Licence, suggesting that acquisition of knowledge about this process enables the reader to read *Cecilia* with different emphases.

Despite the fact that it has always been possible in England to change one’s name at will, from the early eighteenth century through to the middle of the nineteenth century a significant number of people in Britain made use of three different processes by which they could register or publicise their name change, each of which necessitated substantial effort and expense. These three mechanisms were the Royal Licence, the Private Act of Parliament, and advertisement in the London or Dublin Gazette (usually a corollary practice to the first two). I choose here to focus on the Royal Licence (also known as obtaining ‘the King’s Sign Manual’). I have chosen to focus on this procedure firstly since it is the most common of the three, and secondly because the Earl Marshall’s Books, the records of the College of Arms

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<sup>261</sup> *EJL*, 3:90-91, 169, 171, 423, 438, 454.

<sup>262</sup> *EJL*, 1:110.

<sup>263</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Matthew Montagu, June 5 1776, Huntington Library, San Marino, Box 82 O 3868, 1776. I am grateful to Elizabeth Eger for sending me a transcript of this letter.

where Royal Licences are registered, are far more comprehensive than those of the Parliamentary Archives, and thus give a more easily accessible data set from which to draw conclusions.<sup>264</sup>

A significant increase in requests for surname change took place at almost the exact same time as Burney was writing *Cecilia*. Stone and Stone, in their broad overview of surname change based on a sample of an incomplete index, estimate that the overall number of name changes granted between 1780-1790 was over double the number granted from 1770-1780.<sup>265</sup> In my archival research focusing on Royal Licences only, I found that the number of Licences granted per year increased steadily throughout the period 1761-1780, with the five-year period 1781-1785 registering twice as many licences as 1771-1775 (Figure 9). However, since before 1783 it was not compulsory to address a petition to the College of Arms specifically, we must assume that the earlier records do not represent the full number of requests, since some would simply have been dealt with at the Home Office, the surviving records of which are in some disarray and offer no great likelihood of obtaining a reliable estimate of petitions submitted and granted. The precise increase is therefore difficult to quantify, but we can be certain that in the twenty-one years between 1761 and 1782, at least 157 people petitioned for a Royal Licence to change their surname or that of a consenting acquaintance, and that in just the three years 1783 to 1786, the same is true of at least 66 people.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> For full explication of my methodology, and full data sets, see the report attached as Appendix 1.

<sup>265</sup> Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 131.

<sup>266</sup> I say 'at least' because there are some examples of petitions for surname change addressed exclusively to Parliament, which bypass the Royal Licence mechanism altogether; though not as many as those which are addressed exclusively to the College of Arms and bypass Parliament. I have been able to locate 56 petitions to Parliament in the period 1761-1786. Conversely, in the same period there are 223 petitions by Royal Licence. Some petitioners address both.

Applying for a Royal Licence was an expensive process. Fees payable to the College of Arms for an exemplification of new arms consequent on a Royal Licence in this period (and new arms were requested in three quarters of cases of surname change) amounted to thirty pounds, though it is likely that this charge did not represent the full sum of fees payable, since solicitors, Home Office officials and scribes probably charged separately.<sup>267</sup> According to one estimate, thirty pounds was, in the mid-eighteenth century, a little under half the income of a farmer holding 13, 417 acres. It was a third of the annual income of a superior clergyman, one-fortieth of the annual income of a Knight, or one-ninetieth of the annual income of a Baronet.<sup>268</sup> Another study addressing the early nineteenth century estimates that a country curate earned forty pounds a year and that even for the genteel, thirty pounds was a not insignificant sum since “gentlemen... possessed a yearly income between £300 and £1000.”<sup>269</sup>

There are two obvious implications here. First, that the practice of surname change by Royal Licence was the exclusive province of the reasonably wealthy. Second, given that this was a sizeable amount of money even for wealthy petitioners *and* that it was legally completely unnecessary, that petitioners felt they were gaining something important from the College of Arms (with its empowerment to speak on behalf of the King and the government) in exchange for their outlay of thirty pounds. What was this?

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<sup>267</sup> College of Arms MSS ICB (papers of John Charles Brooke, Somerset Herald and Earl Marshal's Secretary 1784-1794). Cited in email between Clive Cheesman (Richmond Herald at the College of Arms and present Earl Marshal's Secretary) and Sophie Coulombeau, 22 April 2013.

<sup>268</sup> Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Revising England's Social Tables 1688-1867* (Department of Economics, University of California, 1983). I am grateful to Robert Hume for sharing a draft chapter from his forthcoming book with me, in which these figures are cited.

<sup>269</sup> Edward Copeland, *Women Writing About Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 32.

Analysing the data contained in petitions in the Earl Marshall's Books in the College of Arms can go some way towards answering this question, and this section of my chapter outlines my most important findings and their implications for a reading of *Cecilia*. Selected data tables are contained in my Appendix, and the figures in these headline findings are rounded to the nearest percentage.

### *Reasons for petitioning for a Royal Licence*

Fifty one per cent of petitions filed between 1761 and 1786 were the result of testamentary injunction; that is, of somebody specifying in a will that the heir could only inherit property or wealth on condition that they change their surname. Twenty six per cent of petitions state that they were made at the *request* of somebody who was not the name recipient (usually, but not always, the name bequeather) - either in their will, during life or on their deathbed - but do not state that surname change was compulsorily specified as a condition for inheritance. Sixteen per cent were made voluntarily from a range of motivations including 'gratitude', 'affection', 'respect' and 'regard' to the name bequeather. Very small numbers of petitions show other reasons.

So, superficially the reason for three quarters of petitions (testamentary injunction plus requests) seems quite clear: people changed their names by Royal Licence because somebody else, like Cecilia's uncle, asked that they do so. This probably stems from a desire on the name bequeather's part to perpetuate the onomastic sign of an unbroken lineage; the change of signifier it announces, whether compelled by will or marriage settlement, is the enabler for the 'fictive kinship' highlighted by the Stones. Often significant amounts of property or wealth depended,

from the name recipient's point of view, on a willingness to oblige. This figure seems to suggest that most people would not change their names unless they had a good (usually financial) reason to do so. However, it also suggests that where there was an appropriate incentive, many people *were* willing to surrender their surname. In the scores of cases where the cited reason is testamentary injunction, one can see validations of the assumptions of Twining, Bewley and Crisp; who on earth would really pass on a fortune in favour of a surname?

However, sixteen per cent of all petitions make no mention of either inheritance or the name bequeather requesting the change; instead they emphasise the attachment the name recipient bears to the bequeather or vice versa, or both, in one of the four terms 'gratitude', 'affection', 'regard' and 'respect'. It is also important to note that a full third of petitions do not cite transmission of property as a factor but show that the name recipient carried out the procedure anyway, at the cost of thirty pounds or more. Therefore we can infer that willingness to oblige somebody else, rather than the desire to inherit, did sometimes outweigh attachment to the recipient's own surname. Of course, it is probable that even where property had not been specifically promised, it was expected, given the price of the name change; but this was not true of all cases.

It is possible, then, that almost as many surname changes resulted from a strong emotional attachment to a person as resulted from a strong acquisitive attachment to their fortune. Interestingly, the proportion of incidences in which testamentary injunction is the reason for the petition decrease over time; three quarters of cases in 1761-1765 cite testamentary injunction as the reason for the petition, but by 1785 the figure is under fifty per cent. The increasing number of petitions citing emotional attachment are produced in commemoration of personal

affection rather than a desire to pass on a name to posterity and thereby to perpetuate language for language's sake.

These differing motivations demonstrate that during this period the function of the 'compelled' surname was mutable; it could act as the agent of a kinship system emphasizing heredity (whether real or feigned) as its organizing principle, or as that of a kinship system that used the name to make claims for emotional kinship where no blood or marital relation existed between bequeather and recipient.

### *Social class*

Stephen Wilson states in his social history of naming that "the practice [of surname change] was at first one of the nobility and gentry, but it spread in the nineteenth century to the middle classes."<sup>270</sup> But the College of Arms records show that only fifteen per cent of name bequeathers and nine per cent of name recipients 1761-1785 were titled, and the records reveal a host of professional occupations including 'Rector', 'Justice of the Peace', 'Cornet in our First Troop of Horse Guards', 'Doctor of Physick', 'Goldsmith', 'Attorney at Law', 'Vintner', 'Merchant', 'Druggist', 'Clerk', 'Shipbuilder' and 'Innholder'. There is a notable discrepancy between the social status of bequeathers and recipients, in that the average proportion of titled bequeathers is almost double the proportion of titled recipients.

What can be observed here, supporting the familiar narratives of the demographic crisis and the creation of 'fictive kin', is surname change being used (on a modest scale) to funnel property to recipients of a lower social class, the surname acting as passport to honorary assimilation within the socially superior family. The

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<sup>270</sup> Wilson, *Means Of Naming*, pp. 254-55.

frequency of this practice increased over time: in 1766-1770 nineteen per cent of petitions involved a noble recipient, but by 1785 this was reduced to just four per cent. Over the same period, twenty five per cent of titled name bequeathers was reduced in a similar manner to eleven per cent. Also notable is that, as time passes, the proportion of cases where the bequeather and recipient are related by blood decreases steadily. In 1765-1770, sixty four per cent of cases were between stated blood relations; by 1785, it was just forty four per cent.

As the decades advanced, then, surname change by Royal Licence became more popular among untitled bequeathers such as Cecilia's uncle, and became more likely to occur between people unrelated by blood – as is the case between Mortimer and the Dean. Under these circumstances, one can easily see how the surname change phenomenon might have become emblematic, in the minds of some, of the dilution of ancient families previously defined by consanguineal relation, and might have consequently come to generate doubt about whether a given person, apparently defined and validated in social terms by their surname, was the genuine article.

### *Binding posterity*

One hypothesis about why people went to such lengths to obtain a Royal Licence, and why the issue of surname change caused such agitation in Burney's readership, relates to the notion of posterity. In a large proportion of the licences – eighty two per cent over the entire period but eighty six per cent between 1783 and 1786 – it is specified that the "Issue", "Descendants" or "Posterity" of the name change recipient will be necessarily "bound" to use the surname that their ancestor took by the authority of the Royal Licence. The reason for this is obvious; a Dean or a Mr. Delvile would not

want his chosen name recipient to have an easy get-out clause from the name requirement by taking the new surname himself but calling his children by his original surname. The Royal Licence, therefore, attempts to ensure that future generations of the family will be just as tightly 'bound' to the new name as the original recipient. (Figure 10).

However, as a name recipient there was, of course, a perfectly easy (though expensive) way to cheat the 'Name-Compeller' and evade the legal requirement of a Royal Licence or Act of Parliament: simply obtain a second Royal Licence or Act of Parliament to invalidate the first. We can see this ingenious solution in records of both petitions by Royal Licence and Acts of Parliament. For example, the College of Arms contains a Royal Licence from 1784 in which George Bradshaw "represented unto us that for Family reasons he formerly added to his Surname of Smith that of Bradshaw which hath been used in like manner by his Children, and being now desirous that his Issue may omit the said Surname of Bradshaw and bear that of Smith only being the antient Surname of the Family the Petitioner humbly prays our Royal Licence and Authority" for them to do so.<sup>271</sup> His petition was granted. It is probable that 'family reasons' meant that George Smith formerly Bradshaw formerly Smith made the original change to inherit property, and then changed his name back either for another inheritance or simply because he preferred his initial name (to the tune of thirty pounds). It therefore follows that the act of obtaining the Royal Licence would also ensure that the new George Smith would not lose any property he gained by becoming George Bradshaw (as Cecilia does when the attorney Mr. Carn pays her a call), because he had invoked precisely the same authority twice over and its more recent expression took precedence. When some people petitioned for a Royal Licence,

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<sup>271</sup> Petition of George Bradshaw, 1 May 1784, Earl Marshall's Books, College of Arms, 1:33:57.

therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that they were playing a game of one-upmanship where the stake was nothing less than the question of whether posterity could be bound by a previous generation.

As scholars including Fliegelman and Caroline Gonda have pointed out, the question of 'binding posterity', posed by Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government* in 1689, recurred resonantly throughout British literature of the eighteenth century, especially in debates around the Wars of Independence and the French Revolution. Probably the most well-known and emphatic answer in the negative is Thomas Paine's famous assertion, in response to Edmund Burke's argument to the contrary in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, that "There never did, there never will, and there never can, exist a Parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the 'end of time.'"<sup>272</sup> But the social elite of mid-1780s London was considering the question a decade earlier than Burke and Paine by means of their engagement in the practice of petitioning for Royal Licences, and it is, to a large extent, what Burney's 1782 novel – neatly positioned between the American and the French Revolutions - is about, and the reason why her readers were so "earnest" and "quarrel[some]" in their discussions of the phenomenon it addressed.

### *Gender*

Over the period 1761-1786, just thirteen per cent of name bequeathers and four per cent of name recipients were female. With the necessary reservation that I was

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<sup>272</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 41.

working with extremely small samples of female name recipients and bequeathers, the figures suggest that as recipients, women were more likely than men to act on a request to change their surnames without the added motivation of property, and less likely to expect a man to take their surnames without the same motivation. Half of the cases where women were name recipients were motivated by a request, and only a quarter by testamentary injunction, whereas only a quarter of men applied for a Royal Licence on the strength of a request but over half obeyed a 'Name-compelling Will'. In addition, two-thirds of female recipients changed their name with no mention of property involved, whereas only two-fifths of male petitioners did so. As bequeathers, women were far less likely to ask somebody to take on their surname without the sweetener of inheriting property; only a quarter of female bequeathers did so, compared with forty-five per cent of men.

These rare examples of women acting as bequeathers or recipients give us some tantalising suggestions about the relationship between language, identity and gender. Women are more likely than men to agree to change their surname without a sweetener of an inheritance, and are less likely to expect somebody else to take theirs unless they are appropriately recompensed. In line with the key principle of primogeniture that women primarily acted as a conduit for property, and reflecting the English convention that women adopted their husband's surnames on marriage, this indicates that attachment to surname was predominantly seen as a male prerogative. It gives an understandable context to Burney's indignation at that rare woman who would expect a man to take her surname (even though the converse happened frequently), and throws the character of Mrs. Delvile, equally as attached to her surname as her cousin-husband, into a curiously anomalous light. Why, against the grain of the contemporary trend she sought to address, and in a novel that largely

interrogates a patriarchal tradition of authority usually symbolised by the father figure, did Burney make the most crucial resistance to name change come from a female character?

### Cecilia and Mrs. Delvile: Anomalous gender models in *Cecilia*

Augusta Delvile occupies a unique position as both the victim and the perpetrator of the consanguineal order that views the surname as a motivated sign. When she speaks of the “demands to which *we* must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon *us* to ratify” [*italics mine*], she indicates that she is just as bound by antiquity as her husband and her son, highlighting the fact that she is not the original compeller of the Delvile name. Indeed, in having earlier being given the backstory of her unsatisfactory marriage to her cousin Compton Delvile, the reader is invited to consider her, just as much as Mortimer, a victim of a motivated theory of language. Nonetheless, she is even more staunch than her husband in her opposition to the prospect of Mortimer losing his name. Eventually, disagreeing on the question of Cecilia’s virtue, the Delviles “parted without conviction and so mutually irritated with each other, that they agreed to meet no more” (815) and Mrs. Delvile, recovered from her burst blood vessel, announces that she will “no longer play the tyrant,” (821) giving a separate consent to the union of Cecilia and Mortimer.

In engineering this separation and ‘separate consent’, Burney allows Augusta Delvile partially to bridge the divide between the two orders outlined by Perry. However, critics have sometimes overstated the importance of her concession. Megan Woodworth, for example, in an otherwise impressive article explaining how *Cecilia* draws on the rhetoric of the Wars of Independence, states: “When Mrs Delvile finally

endorses Mortimer and Cecilia's marriage in the face of her husband's disapproval, it is a version of the Declaration of Independence, only with the wife rather than the child throwing off oppressive authority. She refuses to allow inherited principles to destroy the happiness of her son, to ruin his life as it has ruined hers.<sup>273</sup> Crucially, however, Mrs. Delvile never renounces her position on the point of the name; the 'consent' Cecilia eventually obtains from her is merely consent to marry Mortimer, take his name and abandon her own fortune. In this obstinacy, Mrs. Delvile stands as a rather unusual female figure since, as the College of Arms data suggests, women were generally not as attached to a surname as men.

Gender performs a complex function within the movement I have outlined in *Cecilia*, in which Burney implicitly condemns the wish to 'bind posterity'. Most of my focus in this chapter has been on how Mortimer's proposed name change invited male and female readers to evaluate their own responses to the subversion of *hereditary* norms, and I have proposed a reading of Burney as a socially engaged author strongly critical of the imperative of an 'old order' to 'bind posterity'. This position could be understood as, in some ways, politically progressive. However, Burney's text also negotiates the fact that women were constantly expected to change their name without question. And in this respect, the internal contradictions that so many Burney scholars have noted are far more apparent, and suggest a reading of her onomastic philosophy as rather more conservative.

The dilemma that Burney constructs is partly founded on a sense that it was particularly inappropriate for a woman to dictate that a man must change his name to hers, as is indicated by her letter to Crisp where she criticizes "the absurdity & short-sightedness of those *Name-Compelling wills*, which make it always presumed a

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<sup>273</sup> Woodworth, 'If a man dared act for himself', 355-370, p. 366.

*Woman* marries an *Inferior*, since *he*, not *she*, is to leave his own Family, in order to be incorporated into hers.” She might be read, according to this logic, as espousing a conservative doctrine about a woman’s identity within marriage and patrilineal succession. Indeed, the facts that at the novel’s conclusion Cecilia loses her name *and* her fortune, that she “hold[s] herself bound” to Mrs. Delvile, and urges Mortimer at the conclusion to “solicit a reconciliation with whatever concessions [Mr. Delvile] may require... thinking as we think of filial ties and parental claims, how can we ever hope happiness til forgiven and taken into favour?” (930) have been read by some critics as evidence of Burney’s innate conservatism. In the damning and still influential words of Terry Castle, she can be read, at least in terms of how she treats gender, as an “apologist for the *ancien regime*.”<sup>274</sup>

But it is not as simple as that. I think that this reading ignores the fact that Burney takes special care to draw attention to the private and public resonances of Cecilia’s decision. Like her close friend Thrale Piozzi, Burney seems, when it comes to the question of a woman’s onomastic identity, to pull two ways simultaneously. The tortures she inflicts upon her protagonist in the final third of the book, and the strikingly melancholic tone of the ending she defended so robustly to Crisp, indicate an awareness that, as the Stones remind us, the ‘point of the name’ is always founded within a system that erases female onomastic identity after marriage.<sup>275</sup> While Burney may not have thought or wanted to challenge this custom in her correspondence or conversations about her book, a close reading of the final third of the novel strongly indicates that the psychological effects of the loss of onomastic identity are harrowing.

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<sup>274</sup> Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 289.

<sup>275</sup> Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite?*, pp. 126-27.

Many critics have drawn attention to Cecilia's state of onomastic limbo as the aspect of the plot that ultimately causes her reason to "suddenly, yet totally fail her" (896) and triggers a phantasmagoric scene in which she runs around London, without money or companion, in search of Mortimer, ultimately ending up imprisoned in a room above a pawn shop. The people of the shop conclude at first "she was a woman of the town" (897) before ultimately deciding (based on her wild ramblings) that she is "broke loose from Bedlam"... escaped from her keepers." (898) In an effort to place her, they advertise her in the newspapers as "a crazy young lady" under the heading "MADNESS". (901) When Mortimer finally tracks Cecilia down, she informs him, in a neat stroke of truth-telling in the midst of insanity, that the fetishization of naming is at the root of her madness. In response to his question, "Is it me or my name you thus disown?" she replies: "'Tis a name I well remember to have heard, and once I loved it, and three times I called upon it in the dead of night. And when I was cold and wretched, I cherished it; and when I was abandoned and left alone, I repeated it and sung to it." (907) Delville concludes that "her reason is utterly gone," failing to realize that Cecilia's insane cherishing of his name reflects his family's deluded fetishization of it, which has caused the necessity for their secret marriage and the misunderstandings that have led to her plight. Her madness might also be seen to reflect the surrender of female identity upon marriage symbolized by the adoption of the male surname. In Harriet Guest's words, "The narrative direction of the novel indicates that Cecilia's feverish delirium is caused by her intense anxiety about the need to abandon her independent fortune and name."<sup>276</sup>

Moreover, as the text's conclusion invites the reader on the one hand to approve Cecilia's sense of filial duty, on the other it unflinchingly confronts the fact

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<sup>276</sup> Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 72.

that deference to consanguineal authority over the attractions of the conjugal has irreparable social consequences. When Cecilia renounces her fortune, "the affliction of [her] poor pensioners was clamorous, was almost heartbreaking; they could live, they said, no longer, they were ruined for ever; they should soon be without bread to eat ... the road was soon lined with women and children, wringing their hands and crying." (873) This passage insists that the abdication of Cecilia's linguistic theory and value system in favour of the Delvilian epistemology comes at a price that she will not necessarily be the one to pay. It demands that the reader consider consanguineal and conjugal loyalties, and affective attachment to hereditary surnames, as part of a wider social panorama.

Burney makes good on her intention to show 'the absurdity and short-sightedness of those Name-Compelling wills' by highlighting these negative social consequences and by finally having the "excellent" Dr. Lyster, "a man of sound judgment," (482) deliver an authoritative and contemptuous verdict on the affair that acts as a kind of epilogue: "Your uncle, the Dean, began it, by his arbitrary will, as if an ordnance of his own could arrest the course of nature! And as if he had power to keep alive, by the loan of a name, a family in the male branch already extinct. Your father, Mr. Mortimer, continued it with the same self-partiality, preferring the wretched gratification of tickling his ear with a favourite sound to the solid happiness of his son with a rich and deserving wife." (930) Burney is neither pro-Beverley nor pro-Delville as such, and her ending should not be read as endorsement of one dynasty over another. Instead, she is critical of the overinvestment in surnames, the 'amateur genealogy,' on which the aggressive proponents of both orders depend, and is acutely aware of its social consequences.

My chapters about Hester Thrale Piozzi and Frances Burney have, in one sense, provided interrogations of the same intersection in surname change – that between gender and a narrowly defined conception of ‘class’ – from different methodological angles. In my next two chapters, I will continue to examine this intersection, but using texts by writers of different political dispositions, writing under different conditions. Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi and Frances Burney’s negotiations of the intersection I have identified rest on a concept of ‘class’ that mediates solely between the social elite and the prosperous middle class. Their writings of the 1780s are perturbed by questions about authority and independence within a biological or national ‘family’ that the American war had forced into the British consciousness, but they shared a conservative valuation of the nobility as a key part of a hierarchical model of ‘rank.’ They never considered themselves anything other than political conservatives. However, with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, imaginative writers turn to address the onomastic models by which class is constructed in a far more radical way. In the writings of the authors on whom I choose to focus in my next chapter, honorific titles come to occupy the space that I have argued the hereditary surname fills during the 1780s; that of the kind of name that most forcefully and problematically ‘ties ideas together.’

### Section Three

Class, property and reputation in the 1790s

## Chapter 5. Thomas Paine, George Dyer, and Charlotte Turner Smith:

## Strategies of reformist naming in the 1790s

In this chapter I show that in the 1790s, the title succeeds the hereditary surname as the form of the personal proper name that causes the most acute anxiety about personal identity. The abolition of honorific titles by the French National Assembly acts as a stimulant for English thinkers attempting to define how naming practices might accommodate politically reformist ideology. But this enterprise is riven by divisions in opinion concerning the nature and inclusiveness of English reformism. These divisions are often signalled by self-contradictory approaches to proper personal naming in the publications and self-fashioning practices of writers who attempt to appropriate the terminology of naming to advance reformist causes.

The first part of this chapter surveys several treatments of the French National Assembly's decree of 19 June 1790, which abolished honorific titles in France. Newspapers responded to the decree in June and July 1790 in terms ranging from enthusiastic approbation to dismay, which reveal a complex variety of attitudes towards the honorific title as an onomastic classifier that might, in different circumstances, signal either heredity or personal merit. It is seen as a social classifier with a mutable function; it can be aligned with the motivated sign, read as an arbitrary Lockean signifier, or used for positive or negative affective ends. I then move to address how the radical movement in England attempted to appropriate the terms of the debate around the abolition of titles, focusing on Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) as a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). I argue that Paine's writings display a complex interplay of investments

between representative and affective theories of language, and between ideas of atomisation and assimilation. His vocabulary in this discussion is notably and problematically gendered. He constructs the radical subject as specifically male and genders the assimilative honorific title as feminising, and consequently degrading to radical identity.

I first complicate Paine's discussion by examining several publications and statements from members of the London Corresponding Society (LCS) from 1792 to 1796. Essays published in the LCS's *Moral and Political Magazine* by George Dyer qualify Paine's ideas by repeatedly referencing Quaker traditions of naming as an important radical precedent. In doing so, they suggest ways in which certain types of atomised naming, rather than assimilative naming, can be understood as progressive. But Dyer also draws on the assimilative practice of LCS members and sympathisers calling one another by the democratic title 'Citizen'. Originally an emulation of a French initiative, in England this practice took on a set of particular, sometimes contradictory, connotations. I examine the self-fashioning of Richard 'Citizen' Lee, the trial of Maurice Margarot and the arrest of Colonel Edward Marcus Despard, showing that in each of these instances the adoption of the assimilative moniker 'Citizen' became a site upon which the English state authorities' commitment to freedom of naming was put under significant pressure.

I then address Charlotte Turner Smith's attempt to structure her 1792 novel *Desmond* around the questions of what an English reformist should call himself and what he should call a woman. I read *Desmond* with an eye to the dialogues within the text about the abolition of titles, and ask how Turner Smith's treatment of democratic naming in these conversations differs from her treatment of the married woman's surname throughout the novel. Honorific and marital titles are subject to different

pressures in *Desmond*, and are treated with disparate degrees of representationalism. Gesturing back towards the role of coverture in my previous chapters on Thrale Piozzi and Burney, I suggest a reading of Turner Smith's text as a satirical critique of the male reformist who fights for selective reform of a patriarchal system without considering much-needed emancipation for women from the restrictions of coverture.

### 'Onomastic revolution': fame and virtue

In my Introduction, I briefly referred to Steven Blakemore's identification of an "onomastic revolution" in France during the 1790s. The months of the calendar year were re-named to erase religious connotations, and place names such as Place Louis XV and the Rue de la Couronne were re-cast with revolutionary names. Titles and rank were abolished and all French people were addressed under the democratic title of 'Citizen' or 'Citoyenne.' Revolutionary names such as 'Marat', 'Brutus' and 'Liberte' were given to children at baptism (Stephen Wilson estimates that from September 1793 to September 1794 twenty-five to thirty per cent of names given at baptism had revolutionary connotations)<sup>277</sup> and fervent republicans adopted new given names and surnames to reflect their revolutionary credentials (the most famous example being the ci-devant Duke of Orleans becoming 'Philippe Egalité.) Blakemore explains the logic thus: "If, according to the revolutionaries, the old language is based on elitist class lines, if it creates artificial distinctions, if it mystifies and terrorizes man, if it is the medium through which, as Robespierre complained, "aristocracy and moderation still govern through the murderous maxims they gave us!" then the Revolution had to destroy the old linguistic order." Its efficiency in doing so "marked

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<sup>277</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, pp. 209 – 210.

the first time people created a theory of language that coincided with the revolutionary changes they desired.”<sup>278</sup>

The particular form of re-naming on which I focus in this chapter is the abolition of honorific titles. I choose to do so because this is the form of re-naming that draws what seems to me the most interesting kind of attention in radical and conservative English commentary. By arguing for the abolition of honorific titles in England, and by introducing the alternative ‘democratic’ title of ‘Citizen,’ English radical thinkers attempted to use onomastics to re-shape the social model as horizontal (to “level” it, in the term used by their detractors) rather than the gradated hierarchy signified by various onomastic distinctions that is most famously exemplified by William Blackstone’s ‘pyramid’ model outlined in his *Commentaries*:

A body of nobility is also more peculiarly necessary in our mixed and compounded constitution, in order to support the rights of both the crown and the people, by forming a barrier to withstand the encroachments of both. It creates and preserves that gradual scale of dignity, which proceeds from the peasant to the prince; rising like a pyramid from a broad foundation, and diminishing to a point as it rises. It is this ascending and contracting proportion that adds stability to any government; for when the departure is sudden from one extreme to another, we may pronounce that state to be precarious.<sup>279</sup>

Blackstone identifies the principal benefit of honorific titles within this system as their ability to excite “an ambitious yet laudable ardour, and generous emulation in

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<sup>278</sup> Blakemore, *Burke and the Fall of Language*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>279</sup> Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 1:115.

others” which is untainted by commercial exchange or interest. He defines emulation as “virtuous ambition”, a “spring of action” which is “dangerous or invidious in a mere republic or under a despotic sway”, but “will certainly be attended with good effects under a free monarchy; where, without destroying its existence, its excesses may be continually restrained by that superior power, from which all honour is derived.”<sup>280</sup> In other words, titles encourage a love of fame, which leads to moral improvement; an argument that would be fiercely debated in 1790-1792 within a wide variety of newspapers and within radical publications and sociable circles. My next chapter, as well as this one, addresses the ways in which ‘fame’ and ‘reputation’ could be seen as advantageous, or not, for the unenfranchised man.

First, though, I want to argue that Blackstone’s foundational principle – that titles are atomising acts of naming that draw individuals out of society to form, if you like, the peak of a pyramid – is fraught with internal contradictions. The problem that any thinker considering naming models faces is that the act of ‘tying’ [the ideas of] people together, whether it be with an honorific title such as ‘Lord’ or a democratic title like ‘Citizen,’ is that this act can be seen as atomising or as assimilative from different perspectives. To introduce ‘my Lord Ferrars,’ for example, if one does it in a room full of shoemakers, is to distinguish him from the rest of the company, to atomise - or ‘exalt’ him in the common parlance – by means of that distinguishing sign. This can be seen as a commendable attempt to individualise him or, a lamentable move to undeservedly elevate him above his peers, depending on one’s political perspective. But to introduce ‘my Lord Ferrars’ in a room full of Lords at court something quite different; it is to subsume his unique identity in an assimilative category, which can also be seen as positive or negative. Blackstone, because he sees the bestowal of a

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<sup>280</sup> Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 1:114.

title as an act of individuation, contends that they are good for fame and good for virtue; but even he gestures towards their inherent paradox when he concludes his consideration of titles in the Commentaries by enthusing that they enable “every individual” to be “made subservient to the public good, while he principally means to promote his own particular views.” Other commentators would not view the assimilative and atomising functions of titles as axiomatically beneficial to all concerned. Either way, this ability of honorific titles to perform an almost tautological function on the axis of atomisation and assimilation may account for many of the problems of expression – the tangled metaphors, the silences, the awkward framing of gender - inherent within discourses of reformist naming.

### British responses to the National Assembly’s Decree

In late June 1790, news reached England of the National Assembly’s decree abolishing titles and distinctions. On 24 June, the *London Chronicle* reported that “the National Assembly, considering that hereditary nobility cannot exist in a free state, enact in consequence, that the titles of Duke, Count, Marquis, Baron, Excellency, Greatness, Abbé, and the like, shall be abolished; and that all the citizens shall take in future their family and patronymic names.”<sup>281</sup> As further details poured in, newspaper correspondents began to offer their own thoughts on the logic and implications of the decree. Many saw it as a positive decision. A writer in the *General Evening Post* called the decree “perhaps, the most memorable victory ever obtained by Reason over that Prejudice which has for ages clung closest to the human heart - *the pride of Rank and Ancestry*.”<sup>282</sup> The *London Chronicle*, in strikingly similar terms, described it as “perhaps the most memorable trophy ever erected by reason over the most cherished

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<sup>281</sup> *London Chronicle* (London, England), June 24, 1790 - June 26, 1790.

<sup>282</sup> *General Evening Post* (London, England), June 24, 1790 - June 26, 1790.

prejudices of the human heart."<sup>283</sup> The *English Chronicle, or Universal Evening Post* enthused that the National Assembly had "now completed what the followers of Oliver Cromwell durst not attempt in England - a perfect equalisation of people.... It may now truly be said of France, that it is, at present, the country of all others where *talents* bear their best and highest price: where pre-eminence of genius asserts itself, and where to be meritorious is to be great."<sup>284</sup>

Often these expressions of approbation took the form of meditations on how a system of titular distinction might inhibit, and its abolition might stimulate, 'ardour for fame.' A writer in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* argued: "The suppression of the titles of Nobility in France will rather invigorate than extinguish the ardour for fame among all ranks of the people."<sup>285</sup> And the *Public Advertiser* opined that, far from extinguishing "that generous ardour for fame which, properly directed, has been so beneficial to mankind," the abolition of titles might make "the competitors for the palm of public service... more numerous."<sup>286</sup>

Other writers, however, foresaw problems with the logic behind the decree. Although the French aristocracy found few overt sympathisers at this early stage in the Revolution, many objections were raised to the *general* principle of the abolition of titles and distinctions. A correspondent in the *Public Advertiser* argued: "There is no power, however, liable to abuse, unless connected with wealth. A poor *lord* is as harmless as any other poor man, while a citizen, with immense wealth, and who, by being deprived of the state of rank will not have the expense of keeping up that state,

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<sup>283</sup> *London Chronicle* (London, England), June 24, 1790 - June 26, 1790.

<sup>284</sup> *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post* (London, England), July 6, 1790 - July 8, 1790.

<sup>285</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, July 7, 1790.

<sup>286</sup> *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Monday, July 5, 1790.

may prove as dangerous without as with a title.”<sup>287</sup> Criticisms like this hinged on a dismissal of the effectiveness of recasting language, arguing that wealth and property were in fact the true indicators of inequality: this remark could even be read to suggest that the French reforms did not go far enough.

Many more commentators, however, did invest the onomastic reform with meaning. In ‘A Discourse on *Politicks* and *Philosophy*. Addressed to Dr. Price’ - published in the *Diary, or Woodfall’s Register* on 6 July, a correspondent argued that the “chimerical step” of “laying all titles in the dust”, which “might naturally be expected from a group of levelling, republican fanatics,” opened the floodgates to other, more damaging reforms: “The next which follows in order, is an enquiry how those titles, honours, and the *estates* by which they are supported, were acquired... such must naturally revert back to the people, to be disposed *as to them shall seem meet*.”<sup>288</sup>

The logic of this response to Richard Price’s recent *Discourse on the Love of our Country* (January 1790) rests on an assumption that enquiring too deeply into the origins of language will act as a sort of gateway vice to making enquiries about other, more material distinctions; implicitly, the ownership of property. Language is viewed as affective, and the abolition of titles is seen to trigger an association that may go on to cause real damage by attacking the property qualification that underlies the very foundations of the state. A similar point was made by the *Public Advertiser* on 30 June: “If the National Assembly have the power to deprive the Nobility of their titles, they may also have the power to deprive them of their property.”<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, June 29, 1790.

<sup>288</sup> *Diary or Woodfall’s Register* (London, England), Friday, July 6, 1790.

<sup>289</sup> *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, June 30, 1790.

Newspaper commentary on the decree of 19 June, then, demonstrates a variety of approaches to naming, ranging between Lockean arbitrariness and Burkean affectivism. By those who welcomed the decree, honorific titles are seen as remnants of superstition implicitly recalling the 'motivated sign' and their suppression is therefore consistent with reason. Others view titles as units of a language that works in itself as a transparent and harmless medium, but fear that their eradication might lead to the confiscation of property. Still others argue that titles perform an affective function, in either spurring individuals to compete for 'fame' or discouraging them from doing so. The fact that honorific titles could be seen to perform essentially opposite functions in terms of their effects on 'ardour for fame' is important. As I noted above, Blackstone identifies the principal virtue of titles as their ability to excite "an ambitious yet laudable ardor, and generous emulation in others." In their appropriation of this terminology, several reports of the decree implicitly invoke the oppositional terms of Blackstone's text. However, by querying whether the abolition of titles means the "ardour for fame" will be extinguished or stoked by the decree, they ask what kind of a state is forming in France.

The last thing I want to note about these newspaper articles is that, whatever their tenor, they are consistently concerned with the potential consequences for England of a decree that only exerted authority over French citizens. On 24 June both the *General Evening Post* and the *London Chronicle* reported Louis Marc Antoine de Noailles' explicit reference to England and America in his speech proposing the decree: "What honour, said M. De Noailles, greater than they already possess, would attach to the truly illustrious names of FRANKLIN, WASHINGTON, PITT, and FOX, from the addition of the words *Marquis, Count, Duke, or Prince?*"<sup>290</sup> The

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<sup>290</sup> *General Evening Post* (London, England), June 24, 1790 - June 26, 1790.

*Whitehall Evening Post*, two days later, asserted that the decree “proves that America is rather the model from which [the French] are copying, than from our Constitution.”<sup>291</sup> A writer in the *Diary, or Woodfall's Register*, expressed approbation of the decree qualified with a caveat that such an action would be unnecessary in England itself. “However improper it would be for us to follow the example of France, the people of France themselves were absolutely forced to act as they have done by a strong sense of the rigour of despotism, and the fear of national ruin.”<sup>292</sup> Though they express different opinions on the Decree's implications for the nature of the emergent French constitution, these writers all interpret the abolition of titles in France as a topic of acute interest for English readers. In doing so, they foreshadow the extent to which English reformist discourse would appropriate the terms of the Decree over the early 1790s.

### ‘Immured in the Bastille of a Word’: Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*

Over 1790 and 1791, the suppression of titles would be appropriated by English political reformers as one of the most important tropes by which the rationalism of the democratic regime in France could be contrasted to the superstitious and despotic government of England. Probably the most influential discussion of titles in published radical discourse, in terms of contemporary readership, is that of Thomas Paine in *Rights of Man*.<sup>293</sup> The relatively short passage in which he addresses the Decree, *pace*

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<sup>291</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post (1770)* (London, England), June 26, 1790 - June 29, 1790.

<sup>292</sup> *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (London, England), Friday, July 6, 1790.

<sup>293</sup> For general considerations of the centrality of Burke and Paine's debate to the political conditions of the 1790s, see Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Hodson, *Language and Revolution*; Blakemore, *Burke and the Fall of Language*; Pocock, ‘The political economy of Burke's analysis of the French Revolution’, *Virtue, Commerce and History*; Gregory Claeys; *The Political Writings of the 1790s: The French Revolution Debate in Britain* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1995) and *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Mark Philp, *The French*

Burke's more oblique reference to it in his *Reflections*, aptly demonstrates some of the contradictions of English radical discourse at this time.

I argue here that Paine's discussion of titles in *Rights of Man* equates emotional investment in titles with the 'motivated sign' school of thought, and instead endorses the Lockean representative philosophy by which titles are considered to be arbitrary and therefore devoid of intrinsic meaning. However, Paine's logic is undercut in the conclusion to his discussion, in which he confesses that titles are inseparably 'annexed' to harmful ideas, and therefore endorses the National Assembly's decision to suppress them. Once again, the affectivism of personal proper names complicates an attempt to dismiss them as a legitimate subject of political enquiry. I also show that Paine's description of adherents of titles is notably gendered; the ideal radical man is gendered male, whereas aristocracy is associated with overlapping notions of femininity, infancy and deformity. Finally, I show that the conflicted grammar of Paine's text foreshadows a tension between notions of the ideal radical man as an atomised individual and as part of a wider assimilative grouping, and draws attention to the problematic ability of a word such as 'lord' to act as both a common and a proper name.

Paine's treatment of titles in *Rights of Man* is, of course, written as a response to Burke's discussion of the decree of 19 June in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke describes the decree thus: "All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the super-added ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own

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*Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd and antiquated fashion."<sup>294</sup>

Burke here extends his doctrine of affectivism in common naming in his *Enquiry* to titles. Although ideas may be 'super-added', they are "owned" by the heart and "ratified" by the understanding. But even while he pleads for the affective importance of titles, in figuratively presenting them as clothing of a sort, and admitting that they may be seen as a "fashion," his choice invites the reader to associate titles with extrinsic and cosmetic qualities, to associate them with vanity or whim.

In *Rights of Man*, Paine takes Burke up on the implicit invitation.<sup>295</sup> He begins: "Titles are but nick-names, and every nick-name is a title. The thing is perfectly harmless in itself; but it marks a sort of foppery in the human character, which degrades it." Viewing the title as "in itself" harmless but possessing meaning as a "marker," Paine stakes a claim for an arbitrary philosophy of language. He tests out the title's "value" through a series of questions that place the title specifically within a commercialized context: "What are they? What is their worth, and 'what is their amount?'" In critiquing the idea of the title as possessing intrinsic value – that is, acting as a motivated sign – Paine draws on a longstanding discourse about the distrust of 'credit' which finds its roots in the seventeenth century: "If a whole country is disposed to hold them in contempt, all their value is gone, and none will own them. It is common opinion only that makes them anything, or nothing, or worse than nothing."

Paine not only condemns titles as arbitrary, but actually argues that they are emptier of affective associations than other words. "When we think or speak of a Judge or a General, we associate with it the ideas of office and character; we think of

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<sup>294</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L.G.Mitchell (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 77.

<sup>295</sup> Paine, *Rights of Man*, pp. 80-81.

gravity in the one and bravery in the other: but when we use a word merely as a title, no ideas associate with it.... What respect then can be paid to that which describes nothing, and which means nothing?" But Paine's logic here is undercut by his assertion, after dismissing titles as the emptiest and least meaningful of all words, that "If no mischief had attached itself to the folly of titles, they would not have been worth a serious and formal destruction, such as the National Assembly have decreed them." By this admission, Paine positions himself on the same ground as Burke. Jane Hodson has argued that in their treatments of titles "Burke and Paine's linguistic positions ... are almost identical: both are convinced that names are arbitrary,"<sup>296</sup> but I think this assertion over-simplifies the role of affectivism. Both Burke and Paine admit that the honorific title is no motivated sign symptomatic of intrinsic merit; but they do recognize its affective power. The difference is that Burke construes this power, in terms heavily influenced by Blackstone, as conducive to "dignity", whereas Paine sees it as performing "mischief".

What is the nature of this mischief? The answer can be found in Paine's paragraph that describes the "degrading" effect of titles in strikingly gendered terms. The internal dynamics of this passage are sufficiently complex to justify quoting at length:

It reduces man into the diminutive of man in things which are great, and the counterfeit of woman in things which are little. It talks about its fine blue ribbon like a girl, and shows its new garter like a child. A certain writer of some antiquity, says, 'When I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' It is, properly, from the elevated mind of France, that the folly of titles has fallen. It has outgrown the baby-

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<sup>296</sup> Hodson, *Language and Revolution*, p. 144.

clothes of Count and Duke, and breeched itself in manhood. France has not levelled; it has exalted. It has put down the dwarf, to set up the man. The punyism of a senseless word like Duke, or Count, or Earl, has ceased to please. Even those who possessed them have disowned the gibberish, and as they outgrew the rickets, have despised the rattle. The genuine mind of man, thirsting for its native home, society, condemns the gewgaws that separate him from it. Titles are like circles drawn by the magician's wand, to contract the sphere of man's felicity. He lives immured within the Bastille of a word, and surveys at a distance the envied life of man.<sup>297</sup>

In this passage, Paine equates honorific titles with femininity, with infancy, and with deformity. Titles render the wearer “the diminutive of man in things which are great” and “the counterfeit of woman in things which are little,” which vocabulary recalls Burke's own terms in his discussion of the sublime and the picturesque in his *Enquiry*. Picking up Burke's sartorial theme, Paine imagines the title as analogous to the “blue ribbon” of a “girl” and the “garter” of a “child”. Titles are “baby-clothes”, “punyism” “gewgaws” and a “rattle”: and a titled man is a “dwarf”. In opposition to these constructions, the untitled subject – the radical ideal, rationally eschewing the “circles drawn by the magician's wand” and liberated from the “Bastille of a word” - is established as intrinsically and uncompromisingly male.

The passage also demonstrates a complex interplay between the singular and plural: much of the passage refers to “the man”, “he” whose singular mind, for example, “condemns gewgaws”. But other parts of the paragraph refer to “man” as a plural, as in “mankind”: “those” who have possessed titles but now disown them, for

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<sup>297</sup> Paine, *Rights of Man*, pp. 80-81.

example. The final line conflates the two in an oddly divided sense: “man” in the singular, confined within the Bastille of a word, “surveys at a distance the envied life” of “man” in the plural. The slippage is disorientating, and begs the question, embedded within the grammar of Paine’s prose: is the rational subject singular or plural?

It is possible to push this sense of divided grammar in Paine’s discussion of titles further. The passage also draws attention to a slippage, not just between singular and plural senses of the common word, but between common and proper names themselves. The most grammatically supple of nouns, titles can act in either a common naming capacity (a lord) or a proper naming capacity (My Lord), by addressing either a collective category or a single person. Paine’s assertion at the beginning of his discussion, that with the suppression of titles in France, the peer is exalted into MAN,” indicates that Paine views “exaltation” as a process that happens when a man defined by a narrow distinction has his definition broadened to an all-encompassing category. But he goes on to address honorific titles in an unmistakably proper naming context, as ‘nick-names’, and to insistently identify his subject as singular. In letting this grammatical looseness pervade his discussion, Paine points towards a tendency in reformist discourse of the 1790s to blur the boundaries between common and proper naming; those very boundaries which I have previously argued had generally become more firmly entrenched over the course of the previous century. That blurring can be further illustrated by turning to several essays written by George Dyer and published in the LCS’s *Moral and Political Magazine*, which enrich and complicate the tendencies notable in Paine’s writing.

Contested citizenship: George Dyer and the LCS

Based on readings of the political pamphlets and poetry to which Dyer put his name, Nicholas Roe has argued that he was “as radical and militant as Tom Paine in his condemnation of the British government” and shown how he “follow[s] Paine’s ideas of natural rights and also set[s] out practical arguments for social change along lines advocated by Paine.”<sup>298</sup> Certainly it is true that Dyer was familiar with Paine’s writing, and largely endorsed his political arguments concerning hereditary legislators and aristocracy. In the preface to his *Complaints of the Poor People of England* (1793) Dyer states that he had planned to make further ‘copious remarks,’ connected with his subject, on the part of Burke’s *Reflections*, but that he had desisted, “recollecting... that as he had been sufficiently confuted on the subject of French politics by Mr. Paine... and others.” In this work, Dyer also recommends the distribution of radical political pamphlets among “the lower ranks of people” including “cheap editions of Mr. Paine’s *Rights of Man*.”<sup>299</sup> Dyer hovered at the fringes of radical societies, although he did not join them. He frequently attended committee meetings “formed by delegates from various societies” before their suppression,<sup>300</sup> and he openly expressed his support and admiration of radical figures standing trial in 1793 and 1794, including Winterbotham, Muir, Palmer, Walker, Gerrald, Hodgson, Hardy, Tooke, Thelwall and Holcroft. He also wrote essays for the LCS’s *Moral and Political Magazine*. Examining these essays in comparison with Paine’s far more famous discussion in *Rights of Man* can provide insights into the many shades of inclusivism at work in reformist discourse of the 1790s. They show

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<sup>298</sup> Nicholas Roe, ‘Radical George: Dyer in the 1790s’, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 1985, 17-26, p. 18. Also ‘Unremembered Kindness: George Dyer and the Poets’ in *The Politics of Nature: William Wordsworth and Some Contemporaries* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 19-42, p. 21.

<sup>299</sup> M Ray Adams, ‘George Dyer and English Radicalism’, *The Modern Language Review*, 35:4 (Oct 1940), 447-469, p. 455.

<sup>300</sup> *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson*, 249, quoted in Adams, ‘George Dyer and English Radicalism’, p. 452.

that Dyer treats titles, and the issues around radical identity that discussion of them provokes, quite differently to Paine.

Dyer's series of five essays for this magazine is one of the most sustained and comprehensive attacks on honorific titles published during the 1790s. As I noted in my Introduction, for the purposes of these articles he styles himself 'Egroeg Reyd' (a palindrome of his name) and 'Vice Cotis,' the Latin for 'like a grindstone.' Dyer's literary persona, Reyd, is described as a 'Semi-Quaker'. He tells the reader that his Quaker aunt taught him as an infant to abhor the distinctions imposed by titles, and that he has subsequently developed a series of treatises approaching the question of titles from historical, philosophical, political and evangelical perspectives.

The first article, published in the issue of the *Magazine* for December 1796,<sup>301</sup> details Reyd's obligations for his assimilative naming philosophy to his aunt, and, as I explained in my Introduction, consequently catalogues a series of mishaps occasioned by his addressing a set of acquaintance by inappropriate titles. The reader is clearly encouraged in one sense to sympathize with the common-sense 'Semi-Quaker' Reyd, who is baffled by honorific titles, rather than with his antagonists; but his solemn, rather over-earnest narrative voice complicates this sympathy; even in playing the opposite of the amateur genealogist figure, there is something archaic and over-literal in Reyd's interpretation of his aunt's words that encourages the reader to query his fixation.

The second article encourages this tension by delving deeper into the onomastic philosophy of the aunt, who read to her nephew from the Bible and who pointed out

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<sup>301</sup> George Dyer, 'For the London Corresponding Society's Magazine', *The Moral and Political Magazine of the London Corresponding Society for December, 1796*, in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 3:332.

to him that “in those days titles were unknown... there were no such proud names as your Majesty, your Excellency, your Grace, your Holiness, &c.” The aunt’s lesson incurs the wrath of Egroeg’s grandfather, who calls her a “weak silly creature” and forbids Egroeg his aunt’s acquaintance from that day. Nonetheless, he informs the reader, “her last conversation still plays on the drum of my ear; the impressions left on my sensorium are indelible; all my future intercourse with the world, all my acquaintance with the transactions of Europe, do but revive more powerfully the words of my aunt.”<sup>302</sup>

The last three essays, addressing titles “historically, philosophically, politically and evangelically,” bear testament to the extent to which the philosophy of Reyd’s aunt has monopolised his intellectual development. In the third essay, he draws upon authorities from various ancient civilizations, who make no mention of honorary titles: the names of Greek and Roman heroes are “all very different from the impertinence (I use a strong word, but it was my aunt’s) of modern distinctions.” Titles in Europe, Reyd contends, “originated in power, conquest, property, grants, courtesy, from the authority of princes, from the servility and adulation of subjects.”<sup>303</sup> In terms of natural history Reyd dismisses titles as “unnecessary” for the act of classification which is performed perfectly well by the binomial structure of given name and surname. In metaphysical terms he considers them unable to express the “Truth” of an individual – “profligate, lewd villains, called Holinesses” are offered as an example; and in ethical terms he considers them liable to “create in the highest orders pride, vanity, oppression, tyranny; a kind of feudal arrogance: and that they generate the opposite extremes of meanness &c. &c. in the lower ranks... they

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<sup>302</sup> Dyer, ‘For the London Corresponding Society’s Magazine’, in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 4: 7-10.

<sup>303</sup> Dyer, ‘On Titles’, Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 4:79.

destroy moral distinctions, and set up *verisimilias*, or something like truth, that is not truth: they weaken the force of the fraternal principle, "all men are brethren:" they lessen the sum of human happiness: they are therefore immoral."<sup>304</sup> In the final essay, Reid explicitly invokes and inverts Blackstone's pyramid, imagining a ludic inversion of the trope whereby titles seem to pad out the nobility so that they deserve to form the case of the pyramid, and be mounted by the slimline 'Thomas' and 'Mary': "Every body knows Judge Blackstone's admired comparison of a hereditary patent nobility to a pyramid... This idea might be easily improved upon: Emperors, Kings, &c. with their titles, might be made the base of this pyramid, &c. Princes &c. with their titles, the second in order; and so on, *gradatim*, till simple Thomas and Mary, the swinish Multitude, vanish into almost mathematical points."

One particularly interesting aspect of Dyer's *Essays* is his tendency to frame the abolition of titles as an initiative originally rooted in Quaker ideology. The aunt, of course, is a Quaker: the onomastic philosophy that has been so influential on Reid therefore derives from a tradition of religious nonconformism as well as female scholarship. In considering titles "evangelically" in his fourth essay, he quotes at length the Scottish Quaker Robert Barclay's argument that titles are unknown in scripture and blasphemous to God, and his first essay stakes the satirical claim that the origin of French titular levelling is actually rooted in English Quakerism, particularly the testimony of simplicity as expounded by the writers Barclay and Penn who proscribed the use of honorific titles.

Now observe, Citizen Editor, I mean to kick up no rumpus; to make no harangues on the principles of the French Revolution: my mind was made up

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<sup>304</sup> Dyer, 'On Titles', Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 4: 171-73.

on my peculiar sentiments long before the French abolished titles, and altered their calendar. I remember conversing with Brissot when in London, many years ago, in George-Yard, Lombard-street. I asked him if he had ever read Robert Barclay and William Penn on titles, he replied "No: but he would." After a considerable pause he proceeded thus: "Voltaire thought well of the Quakers. These things ought to be managed better in America, and in France."<sup>305</sup>

Given the recurring echoes of Quaker influence in Dyer's work, it is worth briefly considering Reyd's recommendation. The aspect of the Quaker inheritance that is most important is the conception of the good Christian as an *individual*. In *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Barclay wrote, "The Christian Religion admits not of respect of persons; neither are men to be esteemed because of their outward condition; but according to the disposition of the mind, to be esteemed either noble or base."<sup>306</sup> In *No Cross, No Crown*, William Penn stated "Honour was from the beginning: but hat-respects and most titles are of late: therefore there was true honour before hats or titles; and consequently true honour stands not in them."<sup>307</sup> Both Penn and Barclay's configurations of 'esteem' and 'honour' both ultimately depend upon an atomized conception of identity; the individual must be able to be known in order to be esteemed or honoured. And this depends – as implied by Reyd addressing his

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<sup>305</sup> Dyer, 'For the London Corresponding Society's Magazine', Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society* 3, 332.

<sup>306</sup> Dyer, 'On Titles', Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 4:209.

<sup>307</sup> William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown: A Discourse showing the Nature and Discipline of the Holy Cross of Christ, and that the Denial of Self and daily Bearing of Chris's Cross is the alone Way to the Rest and Kingdom of God*, (London: Society of Friends, 1930), Chap IX, Sect 3, p. 117.

acquaintances, in the first essay, as “Jeremiah Wiseman” and “Tabitha Dimples,” much to their chagrin - upon a system of onomastic circulation that depends on a unique binomial structure for each individual.

In his adherence to certain aspects of Quaker ideology around titles, then, Dyer conceives an appropriate model of reformist naming as one that represents each person as distinct, enabling them to exercise ownership over their personal reputation and attain ‘esteem’ and ‘honour’. However, this is complicated by Dyer’s habit, in his Essays and other works, of addressing his readers as ‘Citizen’, a group title that could be perceived as even more assimilative than honorific titles. In doing this, Dyer was drawing on a body of thought within the LCS about what it meant to call oneself ‘Citizen’. It is to this discussion that I now want to turn.

Struggle over onomastic control can be read as a crucial feature of the conflict between the LCS and William Pitt’s administration of the early 1790s. To read the surviving evidence of the LCS’s engagement with the issue of what a radical man should call himself is to understand a contemporary network of onomastic theories and practices that resulted in arrest, imprisonment, financial penalty, and transportation. The strand of radical onomastic theory by which honorific titles (which in one sense assimilate) are seen as corrupting by their very nature, is complicated by a simultaneous investment within the LCS’s publications and activities in the assimilative denomination of ‘Citizen’, usage of which term developed in France as a symbol of opposition to titles perceived as ‘aristocratic’

From their respective inceptions, the two official LCS publications *The Politician* and *The Moral and Political Magazine of the London Corresponding Society* were rife with usage of the term ‘Citizen’. A typical piece of published correspondence is

addressed 'To Citizen Ashley', headed '*Fellow-Citizen*' and signed 'in the name of sixteen citizens,'<sup>308</sup> and letters to the Editor are frequently addressed '*Citizen Editor*'. Records of the minutes of meetings of the LCS General Committee show that Maurice Margarot, Chairman of the General Committee of the LCS, argued for the adoption of the term 'Citizen' at meetings in 1793: the Journal of the LCS Committee for 11 July – 22 August 1793 records that he "prefaced the business of this Committee by proposing the Adoption of the word Citizen but owing to a diversity of opinions thereon in the Committee he declined pressing it any farther & withdrew his Motion." Mary Thale points out in her editorial apparatus to *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*: "On some of the vouchers for delegates Mr. has been crossed out, and on the draft of the letter to Leeds, approved at this meeting, Sir has been cancelled and replaced by fellow Citizen. Later, at a general meeting in 1795 there was discussion of addressing Earl Stanhope as Citizen Stanhope."<sup>309</sup>

Such was the attachment of some members of the LCS to the term 'Citizen' that it was sometimes even adopted as a given name, providing an English echo of Blakemore's French 'onomastic revolution'. As John Barrell and Jon Mee have pointed out, this was the case for the radical poet and pamphleteer Richard 'Citizen' Lee, a member of the LCS who was arrested in 1795 for publishing seditious pamphlets. Barrell also draws attention to James Kennedy's poem 'Treason!!! Or, Not Treason!!!' in which several stanzas are addressed to the poet's children Citizen and Margaret (potentially a play on Margarot, who is celebrated elsewhere in the

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<sup>308</sup> 'Correspondence of the Society', Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 3, pp. 72-73.

<sup>309</sup> *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, ed. Mary Thale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 77.

poem.)<sup>310</sup> Jon Mee has discussed how Lee engaged in various forms of religious, patriotic and radical “self-fashioning”, and I think that his onomastic reinvention, by which it appears he became widely known as ‘Citizen’ rather than ‘Richard’, should be considered as an important part of this activity. 1795, according to Mee, was the year in which Lee was “transformed from an anonymous ‘friend to the distressed patriots’, as he signed his poem to Mrs Hardy, into ‘Citizen’ Lee, the purveyor of the most flagrantly seditious poetry in London.”<sup>311</sup> When the Earl of Mornington spoke in Parliament of a particularly regicidal bookseller and printer, in debates on the *Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Bill* in 1795, he responded to shouts of ‘Name him, Name him!’ “from all parts of the House” by identifying the culprit as ‘Citizen Lee’ rather than ‘Richard’.<sup>312</sup>

As implied by Mornington’s use of the word ‘Citizen’, some considerations of the political implications of this term are evident on the part of various branches of government in England and Scotland, who became increasingly anxious about LCS activity throughout the 1790s, and more heavy-handed in attempting to restrict it. Concern about radical attempts at onomastic assimilation has an important part to play in the logic behind these disciplinary proceedings, and the early 1790s thus provides a point at which the time-honoured commitment of the English law to allow liberty in the activity of personal naming came remarkably close to buckling under the pressure of reformist onomastic activity.

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<sup>310</sup> James Kennedy, *Treason!!! Or, Not Treason!!! Alias, The Weaver’s Budget* (London: D.I.Eaton, 1795), p. 8.

<sup>311</sup> Jon Mee, ‘The Strange Career of Richard “Citizen” Lee: poetry, popular radicalism and enthusiasm in the 1790s’, Timothy Morton and Nigel Turner Smith (eds.), *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650-1830: From Revolution to Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 156-57.

<sup>312</sup> *Debates on the treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Bill* (1795), Davis, *London Corresponding Society*, p. 174.

In January 1794, for example, Maurice Margarot was charged with sedition and put on trial in Edinburgh. The transcript of the trial, which was in all likelihood a stitch-up by the Home Secretary Henry Dundas (his nephew took a leading role in the prosecution), displays a marked preoccupation with the meaning of certain key terms used by the LCS. A key feature of the prosecutor's case was that Margarot and his fellow defendants called one another 'Citizen'. "The very name they assumed, he declaimed, every thing verbal or written, demonstrated to my mind, demonstrated to Scotland, demonstrated to England, and to the Empire at large, that they were a set of French Conventionists."<sup>313</sup> Margarot refuted the charge spiritedly, arguing "By the word Citizen I mean a free man; a man enjoying all the rights and all the privileges, and paying his quota towards all the expence of Society."<sup>314</sup> The title, he pointed out, was already in wide circulation within both England and Scotland: "there is not a writ for the return of a Member of Parliament, but has the word Citizen in it: the word Citizen is in all the students cards; and even the Pinmakers of London, are obliged to have the word Citizen in their cards; therefore it is not an adoption of any thing new."<sup>315</sup> But the prosecution, while professing that he himself used the term "in a fair and legal sense" and admitting that "the [common] term citizen, taken by itself, is an innocent and a proper term", maintained that there was also a sense in which the (proper) title could be adopted unpatriotically, even seditiously: "This man has been guilty of apeing and imitating the French Convention, was acting upon that model and that principle...it is a proof of the animus and the intent of the persons concerned in that meeting, that they took for themselves the model and example of the present

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<sup>313</sup> Ramsey, *The Trial of Maurice Margarot, before the High Court of Judiciary, at Edinburgh, on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of January, 1794, on an Indictment for Seditious Practices* (London; New York: James Carey), p. 85.

<sup>314</sup> Ramsey, *The Trial of Maurice Margarot*, p. 20.

<sup>315</sup> Ramsey, *The Trial of Maurice Margarot*, p. 130.

Convention of France, imitating it in every way in their power".<sup>316</sup> Margarot was found guilty by the jury and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.

A year and a half after Margarot's trial, and mid-way through 'Citizen' Lee's year of notoriety, an incident took place at Charing Cross that neatly highlights the potential of performative naming processes to blur the boundary between the realms of semantic and physical discipline. A riot broke out on 14 July 1795 and an ex-superintendent of British Honduras and member of the LCS was observing proceedings. Approached by a constable and asked his name, he gave it, according to the *True Briton*, as "*Citizen Edward Marcus Despard*." He was accordingly arrested, and examined on a charge of "being found among the Rioters." While the charge against Despard was not explicitly related to his naming himself as 'Citizen' (no such charge, of course, existed), the *True Briton* makes it clear in its reportage that Despard's self-styling was the reason for both his arrest and the close interrogation he was subjected to by the magistrate. "MR. BOND observed, that under the very improper title Col. Despard had in the outset assumed, it was but proper to investigate every circumstance relative to him.... As it did not appear he was concerned in the riot, his abstaining from the assumption of the name *Citizen* would have considerably abridged his examination."<sup>317</sup> The magistrate admitted that Despard had not contravened the law as regards the charge brought against him; it was his determination to name himself in a manner that clearly signalled sympathy with the French revolutionary cause that caused umbrage.

These negotiations of atomized and assimilative naming demonstrate contradictions at work concerning reformist models of naming within the intellectual

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<sup>316</sup> Ramsey, *The Trial of Maurice Margarot*, p. 97.

<sup>317</sup> *The True Briton*, 15 July 1795. Also, see Barrell's account of this incident in *The Spirit of Despotism*, p. 45.

network of the LCS. The system of honorific titles favoured by the *ancien regime* seems to simultaneously perform both assimilative and atomising functions, both enabling undesirable behaviour by appealing to the affective connotations of a collective category, and drawing distinctions within a community whose members should ideally, in names as in social relations, be equal. Radical critiques of this tautology from within the LCS tend to pull in two opposite directions; those who argue for atomized and regulated individual onomastic identities, and those who, against the grain of onomastic individualism, consider the collective title 'Citizen' the identifier by which unenfranchised men can most advantageously associate to pursue their rights.

### Charlotte Turner ~~Smith~~: The 'lady defender of the Revolution'

In his landmark study of British radicalism, Albert Goodwin describes how, at a dinner held at White's Hotel in Paris on 18 November 1793 to celebrate Dumouriez's entry into Brussels, about eighty "English, Irish and Scottish residents" with "advanced democratic views" drank a series of toasts that "were chivalrous, egalitarian and treasonable". These toasts, a spy for the British government reported, were to "the speedy abolition of titles and feudal distinctions in England," "the coming convention of Great Britain and Ireland" and the "lady defenders of the Revolution, particularly Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Miss Williams and Mrs. Barbauld." In this report, Charlotte Turner Smith is grouped with Helen Maria Williams and Anna Letitia Barbauld, each of whom are onomastically distinguished as 'Mrs' or 'Miss'

according to their marital status, and praised as a semi-honorary member of the revolutionary cause.<sup>318</sup>

The place, or lack of it, for women in the reformist movement during the 1790s has come under increased critical scrutiny over the last decade or so. The demands of the LCS were limited to male adult suffrage. However, in investigating women's membership of philanthropic societies and debating societies, at the fringes of sociable LCS activities and even at some open air meetings, understandings of the roles of women in radical activity has recently been illuminatingly enriched by scholars including Mary Thale, Donna Andrew, Jane Rendall and Jon Mee. The place of gender in onomastic treatments of radical identity should be included in this welcome movement.

As many critics have noted, Turner Smith relied on her literary reputation as a virtuous, suffering wife and mother to support a large family throughout her life. At the very time that she was toasted, 'Mrs Smith' was separated from her husband Benjamin and she published under the name 'Charlotte Smith' without the prefix 'Mrs,' a self-naming act that Jacqueline Labbe sees as "reject[ing] her status as *feme covert* in an open and declaratory gesture towards individuality."<sup>319</sup> Indeed, her marital surname was so hateful to her that she sometimes signed '~~Smith~~' in her letters,<sup>320</sup> in a futile attempt to erase the onomastic signifier forced upon her by a marriage that Judith Phillips Stanton has described as "an almost textbook case of the

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<sup>318</sup> Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1979), p. 249.

<sup>319</sup> Jacqueline M. Labbe, 'Introduction.' Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House*, ed. Jacqueline M. Labbe (Peterborough; Omskirk; Sydney: Broadview, 2002), 9-29.

<sup>320</sup> See, for example, 'Charlotte Smith to the earl of Egremont, 26 February 1803', in *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Judith Phillips Stanton (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 556.

atrocities a man could legally inflict upon his wife and children in eighteenth-century England."<sup>321</sup>

I argue in this section of my chapter that in her most famously reformist novel *Desmond* (1792), Turner Smith's defence of the Revolution should be read as crucially qualified by an implicit argument that women continue to be defined by repressive onomastic categories even as the radical movement inveighed against the arbitrariness and harmful effects of honorific titles. *Desmond* has traditionally been read by scholars of Turner Smith's writing as an energetic refutation of Edmund Burke's argument for the conducive effects of titles in *Reflections*, and an endorsement of Paine's argument to the contrary in *Rights of Man*.<sup>322</sup> But while Turner Smith is broadly supportive of the radical cause, she also draws attention to the problems involved in reconciling a reformist naming philosophy with marginalization of the female radical subject, which is most potently signified by the onomastic erasure of female identity upon marriage.

Recently, some critics have started to recognise that *Desmond* is less an uncomplicatedly 'radical' or 'anti-Jacobin' novel than a complex weighing of the contradictions involved in different forms of radicalism. Anne Mellor's argument in *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1820* (2000) that Turner Smith "forces us to recognize that both the chivalric code and the new ideal of republican citizenship (or fraternity) openly advocated by *Desmond* entail the same

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<sup>321</sup> Judith Stanton, 'Charlotte Turner Smith and "Mr Monstroso": an eighteenth-century marriage in life and fiction', *Women's Writing*, 7:1, 7-22, p. 7.

<sup>322</sup> See, for example, Diana Bowstead, 'Charlotte Turner Smith's *Desmond*: the Epistolary Novel as Ideological Argument', in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, eds Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, 1986), 237-263; Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993) and Nicola Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Interpreted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford, 1994); Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (Essex: Longman, 1996); Barbara Tarling, 'The Slight Skirmishing of a Novel Writer: Charlotte Smith and the American War of Independence,' in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Labbe, 71-86.

erasure of female political autonomy” has been particularly influential in generating a wave of scholarship that tries to pick up the fault lines in Turner Smith’s reformism.<sup>323</sup> My argument in this chapter will contribute to this movement by showing how Turner Smith offers a troubling disjunction between representative naming theory for male and for female subjects in the novel. Many scenes and dialogues show aristocratic characters treating the honorific title as a motivated sign in dialogue with the democratic hero Desmond, who echoes Locke’s and Paine’s arbitrary philosophy of language and endorses the right of the state to exercise onomastic control to redress social injustice. But Desmond is also portrayed as failing to challenge those who treat the *marital* name as a motivated sign, and thus failing to challenge legal and social injustice for women. The text can be read, therefore, as a satire on the male reformist ideologue, who privileges male emancipation from onomastic superstition but marginalizes the female. As such, it can be seen to draw on Paine’s *Rights of Man* in a rather different way than critics have previously considered.

In his study of Romantic conversability, Jon Mee shows how Turner Smith “satirizes both the ‘delectable conversation’ of the sensualist Lord Newminster and the prejudiced political calculations of a circle of local tradesmen, ‘so expressive of the candour and disinterested conduct of British electors,’” thus identifying *Desmond* as one of the texts of the 1790s that “presented polite conversation as failing in candour.” These conversations in *Desmond*, Turner Smith asserts in her *Preface*, were ‘drawn from political conversations to which I have been a witness in England, and

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<sup>323</sup> Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women’s Political Writing in England, 1780-1820* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 119. See, for example, Kari Lokke, ‘Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond*: The Historical Novel as Social Protest,’ *Women’s Writing*, 16:1, 2000, 60-77; Fuson Wang, ‘Cosmopolitanism and the Radical Politics of Exile in Charlotte Turner Smith’s *Desmond*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 25:1 (Fall 2012), 37-59.

France, during the last twelve months.’<sup>324</sup> Like those detailed by Burney in my last chapter, these conversations are almost always centred around ‘the point of the name’: only, in Turner Smith’s novel, the name under discussion is the honorific title abolished by the National Assembly, not a family surname. In these conversations, French and English aristocratic sympathisers echo the arguments of Edmund Burke’s arguments about titles in *Reflections*, while Desmond articulates those of Paine’s *Rights of Man*. But Desmond’s rhetoric recalls not only Paine’s arguments but also his inability to satisfactorily reconcile investment in Lockean arbitrariness with awareness of Burkean affectivism in his attitude towards titles.

Take, for example, Desmond’s conversation with the Comte d’Hauteville. The Comte, smarting from the indignity of having his title abolished, argues: “the decree of the nineteenth of May<sup>325</sup> was subversive of all order, and ruinous alike to the dignity and happiness of a state.” Desmond retorts, quoting Voltaire: “*Le nom est indifférent; il n’y a que le pouvoir qui ne le soit pas.*”<sup>326</sup> He proceeds, in this somewhat conflicted passage, to argue both that titles mean nothing and that they mean everything. “If the name of noblesse was so connected with the power of oppression, that they could not be divided, the nation had a right to take away both; if otherwise, it might, perhaps, have been politic to have divided them, and have left to the French patricians, these sounds on which they seem to feel that their consequence depends; together with the invaluable privileges of having certain symbols painted on their coaches, or woven on their furniture; and of dressing their domestics in one way

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<sup>324</sup> Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 139-140. See also Angela Keane, ‘Gossip and Politics in *Desmond*’, in Keane, *Revolutionary women writers: Charlotte Smith and Helen Maria Williams* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2013), 21-31.

<sup>325</sup> This actually occurred on 19 June 1790.

<sup>326</sup> ‘The name is immaterial; it is the power only that is of consequence’

rather than another.”<sup>327</sup> There is a paradox within Desmond’s logic, with which by now we must be rather familiar. His balancing of the possibility that titles are “connected with the power of oppression” with the alternative possibility that they operate “otherwise” replicates Paine’s uneasy reconciliation of Lockean representationalism and Burkean affectivism. This paradox is highlighted by not only his tentative language but also the fact that he still addresses his opponent as “the Count.”

Despite this internal contradiction, Desmond’s overt disparagement of honorific titles is replicated by the way Turner Smith portrays them throughout the wider text. By highlighting the notion that titles, like any other commodity, are marketable, Turner Smith – like Paine – figures them as part of a commercial economy, and in doing so further pries open the gulf between name and essence. The text is rife with aristocrats who have less than lordly characters, and with charges that they purchased their titles or gained them by a corrupt system of patronage. The subplot detailing Sir Robert Stamford’s rise (despite his unscrupulous practices) from country attorney to Member of Parliament divorces name from either virtue or aristocratic lineage. Similarly, we might consider Lord Newminster, who has neither the blood nor the manners to justify his title. Under Revolutionary conditions, Newsminster might be “unhappily compelled to be called, as was his father before he bought his title, Mr Grantham.” (74) The last character of whom the reader hears with respect to a potential peerage is the vacillating buffoon Waverley, whose mother and mother-in-law are scheming over ways to get him ennobled. The lack of not only distinction or lineage but even effort on Waverley’s part effectively hammers the final nail in the coffin of titular distinction. Fanny Waverley, his sister, cynically supposes

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<sup>327</sup> Turner Smith, *Desmond*, pp. 140-41.

that “in the plentiful showers of coronets which daily fall, one, I doubt not, will find its way to his head,” and wonders only which name will be superadded to his title, expressing a wish for a stronger and more “*proper*” correspondence between name and character: “Every pretty name, and words of elegant termination, in *ville*, and *wood*, and *ton*, and *ford*, and *bury*, and *wick*, seem to be already monopolized and engaged: but, if he were not my brother, I should venture to propose the very *proper* appellation of Baron Weathercock.” (317)

Turner Smith treats honorific titles as arbitrary but still affective. The characters influenced by their affectivism are shown to be over-sentimental reactionaries such as the Comte d’Hauteville, or the English Mrs. Fairfax, who laments “how my sympathising heart bleeds” for “amiable people of rank, compelled thus to the cruel necessity of resigning those ancient and honourable names which distinguished them from the vulgar herd! And who are no longer marked by their titles from that canaille with which it is so odious to be levelled.” (71) Mrs. Fairfax’s language of “marking” and “distinguishing” recalls Blackstone’s pyramid structure, and “levelling” recalls conservative rhetoric against the National Assembly, who were perceived to be striking at the pyramid’s base. But her overwrought discourse of suffering, and the bathetic nature of her complaint, puts her in a camp with the amateur genealogist as a figure whose over-investment in certain forms of personal proper names shows that she is deficient in rationality and sympathy.

Conversely, Turner Smith depicts naming practices in relation to the ownership of and restrictions upon women as treated with sentiment even by the political reformers who ridicule this very same attitude towards honorific titles. Desmond’s project to assist the stripping of names in revolutionary France bears testament to his political progressivism, but his observance of naming rituals in

spheres of romantic and marital etiquette suggest that in these spheres he does not advocate parallel emancipation for the woman who is forced to consider herself the “slave” (331) and “property” (333) of her husband. His choice of language pertaining to marriage, adultery and sexual intimacy demonstrate not only a marked respect for names as a motivated sign with inherent meaning, but also a propensity to actually perpetuate rituals of naming. On the very first page of the novel, Desmond introduces his rival with the words, “Her husband – I hate the name – Verney.” (48) But the name ‘Verney’ is not despised, like ‘Comte’, because it is a “tarnished and contemptible” piece of tinsel; on the contrary, it is hateful because of what Desmond perceives as its strict and binding legitimacy. In his correspondence with Bethel, Desmond treats Geraldine’s name almost ritualistically, now rationing it, now dwelling upon it, now regarding its use as portentous for his conduct and his fate. “What attractions for me has her very name!” (90) he laments in one letter, and in another he assures Bethel, “nor do I ever breathe her name to any ear but yours.” (67) In yet another, he refers to her as ‘Mrs Verney, for I will try to break myself of calling her Geraldine (because I always long to add *my* to that beloved name).’ (108) His conduct towards her is frequently thwarted and restricted by deep concern for her “virtuous name.” (23)

Within the narrative, Turner Smith depicts onomastic addresses to women that flout propriety as symptomatic of moral degeneracy. Male characters who name women familiarly, or female characters who are content to be named familiarly, are seen as correspondingly familiar in their sexual relations or else devoid of politeness. For example, Desmond disapprovingly recounts how Lord Newminster shakes “the two young ladies’ hands and [calls] them familiarly by their Christian names.” (58) The presumptuous use of nicknames, in particular, is a sure sign of unreliable

character, as when Newminster calls the Fairfax daughters 'Peggy' and 'Statia'. (68-69) Verney displays his want of *savoir faire* by joshing Fanny as "Little Fanny," (175) and only using her formal name in mockery (Fanny herself, in her one letter to a male correspondent (Bethel) signs herself formally as 'Frances' Waverley). Desmond himself learns the price of not observing names rigorously enough when he learns "from [Josephine de Boisbelle's] brother, and at her own desire, to drop the formal appellation of Madame de Boisbelle." (111) The relation of this transition in their relationship conveys a subtextual current that Bethel would have recognized all too well: Geraldine herself taps into precisely the same frequency in another letter, where she notes sadly, "Mr Bethel says he [Desmond] calls her Josephine." (191) Desmond and Josephine are on first name terms, and the ultimate result is a liaison and a nameless child.

In highlighting this disparity between Turner Smith's treatment of civil and marital titles, I do not mean to imply that she is a political reformist in terms of her attitudes towards rank but a conservative in terms of her attitude towards gender. Instead, I read her depiction of this disparity as engineered to draw attention to the partial nature of Desmond's political progressivism. Smith depicts even the protagonists whom the reader is most clearly supposed to endorse and approve, and who are most zealous in the 'spirit of reform', as colluding in binding the woman to a patriarchal name, and thus denying her not only sexual but also legal and financial freedom. Consider, for example, Desmond's friend Montfleuri's references to his fiancé Fanny Waverley in his letters to Desmond near the novel's end, which underline and reinforce the fact that patriarchal possessiveness is the controlling factor in the relationship of even the most ardent reformist with his wife. "I have secured the fair Fanni," he writes triumphantly, and later repeats that he has "secured

my sweet little English woman,” concluding, “My Fanni is a little angel, and I must have her.” (371-372) Indeed, Montfleuri, “whose morality borders, perhaps, a little on epicurism,” (115) displays throughout the novel faint but troubling echoes of the libertinism that the reader has come to associate with characters such as Newminster and Verney. Like Newminster, who declares marriage a “damn folly, and nobody in his senses will commit it,” (174) Montfleuri has “vowed a hundred times never to marry, but this beautiful little Englishwoman who can resist?” (371) He even articulates a direct echo of Newminster’s credo, describing a speedy proposal: “When I determine to commit a folly, I like to have it over at once.” (371) There are also intimations in his letters, near the novel’s end, that the marriage may not be a happy one: “I hope I shall not repent it – but I have doubts about the wisdom of it sometimes. – If my wife should be ill tempered, I shall run away from her. – If she should be dull I shall grow weary of her – fatigued, if she have the folly to be jealous of me – and if she be a coquette, I shall be jealous of her. – How many rocks are here, in this perilous voyage, on which to wreck one’s happiness!” (372) One is uncomfortably reminded, by Montfleuri’s concentration on Fanny’s physical attractions, and acknowledgement that he may well “run away from” or “grow weary of” her, of Richard Verney’s answer when asked why he married: “Because I was a green-horn, drawn in by a pretty face, and a fine figure.” (173) All this might foreshadow the possibility of a marriage as unhappy as that of Geraldine Verney.

Anne Mellor has drawn attention to the troubling use of the possessive pronouns used in the final paragraph of the novel, in which Desmond, writing to his friend Bethel, envisages a “beloved group assembled at Sedgewood”. The group is cosmopolitan, domesticized, and subject to a troubling patriarchal symmetry: “Heavens! Dare I trust myself with the rapturous hope, that on the return of this

month, in the next year, Geraldine will bear *my* name – will be the directress of *my* family – will be my friend – my mistress – my wife! I set before me these scenes – I imagine these days of happiness to come – I see the beloved group assembled at Sedgewood : - My Geraldine – You, my dear Bethel – your sweet Louisa – my friend Montfleuri, and his Fanny.” (414) Mellor points out that the deliberately emphasized possessive pronouns evoke the laws of coverture and “undercut a positive reading of the end of the novel.” I would add the observation that Turner Smith makes Desmond emphasise that every woman in this passage will bear the name of the man who owns her. Mellor’s persuasive case can be strengthened and supported by considering how Smith applies different forms of pressure to honorific and marital titles.

There is, then, a dislocation at work within *Desmond*. Turner Smith’s incisive arguments against Burkean primogeniture and privilege are weighted with a Lockean assumption that the titles allocated to nobles are arbitrary, which recalls Paine’s logic in *Rights of Man*. But the situation of women oppressed by the institution of marriage is represented more pessimistically, as a consequence of the recognition that names can be particularly performative in the realm of sexual politics. Even such a man as Desmond who is wholly committed to political emancipation, Turner Smith implies, has a long way to go before recognizing and challenging the legal fetters that bind married women, represented by her surname. In a sensitive reading of the “superficial” and “uncritical” manner in which, near the beginning of the narrative, Desmond reads and recapitulates Paine’s argument in *Rights of Man*, Fuson Wang argues that “although Smith advocates a type of radical politics, she also embeds a subtler critique of ad hominem approaches and the self-reflexive formation of opinions that can only see truth in arguments that square with already ingrained

beliefs.”<sup>328</sup> *Desmond* is most profitably read as a satire against the political ideologue, whether Burkean or Paineite, who worships freedom in the abstract, but adheres strictly to the codes of behaviour enshrined in marital titles.

The question of whether and how the eighteenth-century English state was construed to have legitimate authority over naming processes has been central to my argument in this thesis so far. Thrale Piozzi’s writings, though they display an acute awareness of the relationship between coverture and marital naming practices, ultimately consider the implications of a voluntary practice. Burney’s novel addresses a phenomenon in which the British elite were actually petitioning their state authorities to officialise their name changes, and paying lavishly for the privilege. Turner Smith, along with other radical thinkers addressing onomastic identity in the turbulent political climate of the 1790s, comes closer to interrogating the relationship between the individual and the state with the ambiguous statement of her protagonist Desmond that “If the name of noblesse was so connected with the power of oppression, that they could not be divided, the nation had a right to take away both.” But it is only in 1794, with William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*, that this question is explicitly addressed. Perhaps this development is the result of two factors: the cultural percolation of longstanding ideas about crime, anonymity and reputation such as those I will discuss, alongside Jeremy Bentham’s *Indirect Legislation*, and the ‘onomastic revolution’ in France with its seemingly irresistible invitation to British radical discourse to imply a similar logic to Britain.

I want to conclude this chapter, and lead into my next, by considering that in their explorations of the relationship between the state and the individual, Bentham and Godwin both represent the individual, exclusively, as male. Bentham reflects

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<sup>328</sup> Wang, ‘Cosmopolitanism,’ p. 45.

upon how the state can “punish a man” and what might be “done to a man to make him known, and give you a clue to find him by,” and insists that British liberties are maintained not by “men whose shame it is, but by men whose glory it is, to be known: by the general concurrence of persons of all ranks, magistrates and gentlemen as well as yeomen.” Godwin shows Caleb pitted against a metaphorical “million of men, in arms against me,” and his unease with anonymity is expressed in his injunction that “man... never deserves the name of manhood but in proportion as he is erect and independent.”

While the term “man” or “mankind” would have been understood in some contexts to axiomatically include women, the extent to which Bentham and Godwin’s writings are filtered through masculinist ideals has, I think, implications for the questions I posed in this chapter about the relationship between gender and radicalism. In its equation of femininity with disguise and false names, *Caleb Williams* demonstrates another example of the tendency I noted in Paine’s writing to define reformist identity as exclusively masculine. Godwin is uninterested in considering what a woman’s place might be in a society that contemplated a fundamental redistribution of property and attempted to create the conditions whereby merit alone would incur rewards. Brought into the reformist conversation along with the writings of Paine, Dyer and Turner Smith, *Caleb Williams* stands as further testament to the internal divisions within reformist thought that have been the subject of this chapter.



## Chapter 6: 'Men whose glory it is, to be known':

Crime, reputation and anonymity in Jeremy Bentham's *Indirect**Legislation* and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*

In *Caleb Williams*, the eponymous protagonist is repeatedly assailed, in the course of his flight from the law, with orally or legibly transmitted repetitions of his own name. These moments of naming operate as sites upon which Caleb's identity is disputed, his sense of selfhood altered, and the direction of his peregrinations modified. But the precise effects produced upon Caleb by an encounter with his name vary dramatically. For instance, when he first arrives in London and hears his name bawled by a hawker selling papers detailing "the Most Wonderful and Surprising History, and Miraculous Adventures of Caleb Williams" he is "petrified" at "these amazing and dreadful sounds" and becomes convinced that the circulation of his name signifies "the consummation of my misfortune." This confirmation of his name's written dissemination prompts him to commit what is, given the number of handbills circulating throughout the capital, a practically pointless but symbolically significant action: "I carefully and deliberately destroyed the paper I had been reading, by tearing it into a thousand pieces."<sup>329</sup> Conversely, overhearing a group of labourers discussing "my history, whom with a slight variation of circumstances they styled the notorious housebreaker, Kit Williams", Caleb undergoes an almost antithetical process: "My soul seemed to expand; I felt a pride in the self-possession and lightness of heart with which I could listen to the scene; and I determined to prolong and heighten the

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<sup>329</sup> William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. Pamela Clemit (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 260. All references are to this edition.

enjoyment.” In both instances, the mention of his name acts as a cue for Caleb actively to solicit further information about his own identity; in the first case by purchasing and reading the pamphlet in order to discover to whom he is “equalled”, and in the second by enquiring of the hostess of the tavern “what sort of man this Kit Williams might be?” (228-230)

Many critics have argued that *Caleb Williams*, in engaging so intensively with the ethics of surveillance, should be understood as responding to the political conditions of the 1790s.<sup>330</sup> I find James Thompson’s approach, which rather than seeing the text as a direct response to any particular political incident, identifies its primary concern as dramatizing “the penetration of state apparatus into the everyday lives of individuals,”<sup>331</sup> particularly convincing. However, despite the fact that Thompson and others draw heavily on Foucauldian theory about the development of this state apparatus to support their claims, they have placed disproportionate emphasis on methodologies of visual observance, and relatively little on Foucault’s insistence that data collection also formed an important pillar of the new regime of punishment. Data collection, Foucault asserts in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), “lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination,” rendering legible description of personal data such as proper names “no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use.”<sup>332</sup> I want to attend in this chapter to Godwin’s depiction

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<sup>330</sup> See, for example, Ian Ousby “‘My Servant Caleb’: Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* and the Political Trials of the 1790s’, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 44 (1974), 47-55; Mark Philp, ‘Caleb Williams and the Treason Trials’, in *Godwin’s Political Justice* (Ithaca; New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 103-19; James Thompson, ‘Surveillance in Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*’ *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*, ed. Kenneth W. Graha (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 173-98.

<sup>331</sup> Thompson, ‘Surveillance in *Caleb Williams*’, p. 192.

<sup>332</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 191.

of the dissemination and mutation of the personal name as data, and to consider the function it might exercise within this negotiation of surveillance methodologies and the roles that atomisation and assimilation play within it. Theorists of surveillance studies have occasionally considered how usages of the personal name might suggest new readings of the relationship between the state and the subject: Jane Caplan, for example, addressing the history of identity documentation practices, has drawn attention to the personal name's ability to "appear either as alienation or threat, or as a confirmation of identity."<sup>333</sup> I want to place *Caleb Williams*, alongside Jeremy Bentham's *Indirect Legislation* (largely compiled during the early 1780s), within the field of surveillance studies, and simultaneously to bring the methodologies of surveillance studies to bear on the substantial body of criticism that has advanced understanding of Godwin's writings to date from a literary perspective.

In *Indirect Legislation*, Bentham proposed a new universal nomenclature, in which individuals' unique names might be tattooed on their wrists. Paradoxically, Bentham insisted that as well as facilitating the detection of crime, his system would also be "highly favourable to personal liberty"<sup>334</sup> by reducing the necessity of imprisonment and enabling a more accurate and invested ownership of personal repute. Bentham's proposal conflates the right of state authorities to control the retention and circulation of an individual's personal name with the right of those same authorities to determine what that name will be; one without the other is construed as useless for the purposes of subduing an unruly population.

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<sup>333</sup> Jane Caplan, "'This or That Particular Person", p. 65.

<sup>334</sup> University College London collection of Bentham manuscripts lxxxvii, 9. All further references are to the transcript of this manuscript held by the Bentham Project (University College, London) and kindly shared with me by Dr. Michael Quinn.

In contrast, Godwin's portrayal of Caleb's psychological undulations seems to gesture towards the potential for liberty in pluralities of naming – both in circulation and composition. But the gloomy logic of the narrative ultimately reduces each particular instance to a moment of political repression, which I read as a symptom of Godwin's lack of confidence in a circulatory system that depends upon the atomised binomial name. Like certain strands of reformist thought that I explored in my last chapter, Godwin's text seems to imply that radical identity can only be safely situated in an assimilative onomastic category that resists individuation. Despite the political differences their texts suggest, both Godwin and Bentham imply that ownership of the atomized personal name and corresponding repute benefits the man of property 'whose glory it is to be known', but that assimilation into group names or titles might prove more advantageous for the unpropertied and unenfranchised classes.

It is highly unlikely that Godwin actually read Bentham's essay before he published *Caleb Williams*. Although Godwin's diaries record that he did meet Bentham a number of times, the first relevant occurrence (an unsuccessful attempt to call on him) takes place in 1814. In addition, Bentham's *Indirect Legislation* was first published, in French and in significantly abridged and altered form, only in 1802. While Godwin had not met Bentham in the early 1790s when he was writing *Caleb Williams*, he read Bentham's published work and may have known his ideas by repute; however, there is no reason to suspect any actual familiarity with his work on tattooing.<sup>335</sup> *Indirect Legislation* and *Caleb Williams* should be read, therefore, as expressions of common cultural anxieties rather than any kind of dialogue. They can be seen as contributions to an eighteenth-century discourse of anxiety among the

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<sup>335</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Tim Causer and Dr. Michael Quinn, research associates at the Bentham Project based at University College London, for helping me to clarify the bibliographic history of Bentham's proposal on marks of personal identity.

propertied classes about the relationship between property, plebeian crime, anonymity and reputation.

A key argument of my thesis so far has been that the synonymic split between the 'name' as reputation and the 'name' as a variously mutated and materially circulated unit is no coincidence; rather that the former is contingent upon the latter. This argument will emerge more strongly in this chapter than in any other. Much Godwin scholarship to date has already addressed Ferdinando Falkland's fetishization of reputation as the motivating force behind his persecution of Caleb Williams. Mark Philp, for example, has pointed out how "the values and prejudices praised by Burke and modelled by Falkland... rely on such selfish motives as the love of fame and a concern for one's honour and reputation... Godwin's moral is that men like Falkland, immersed in a chivalric code and a concern for reputation, are unable to avoid falling into evil."<sup>336</sup> I want to historicize Philp's astute identification of concern for 'good name' as a crucial factor in the power struggles between Barnabas Tyrrel and Falkland in the first place, and Caleb and Falkland in the second, and in so doing to ground it firmly in the material conditions of contemporary name circulation. The notion of repute cannot be comprehensively understood without taking into account the material methods by, and contexts within, which Godwin and Bentham understood personal names to circulate, mutate, represent and connote.

More insistently than any of my other chosen texts, Godwin's novel also contends that the circulation of 'reputation' and the authority of the state are directly related. By parsing the movements and mutations of names as data, I show that Godwin depicts the propertied squire as the only kind of citizen able to exercise effective control over the material circulation of his name, and therefore control the

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<sup>336</sup> Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice*, p. 108.

terms of his reputation. In doing so, he is aided and abetted by state authorities, which, of course, are made up of men exactly like him. Godwin's paralysis in the face of this fact, and his failure to offer Caleb the refuge of an assimilative identity – no 'Citizen'ship or political association for him – can perhaps be traced to Godwin's complex attitude towards association as a concept, the treatment of which in *Political Justice* has recently been usefully explained by Gregory Dart.<sup>337</sup> But it might also be traced to a troubled awareness of the impending bureaucratization of the state that had already begun in France with the nationalization of responsibility for demographic information. In the words of Jane Caplan and John Torbey, the late eighteenth century "was the epoch of political development inaugurated by the French Revolution's creation of a specifically national citizenship that stimulated the spread of both the resources and the need to subject entire populations to large-scale documentary inventories, and hence the adoption of elaborate systems for tracking and verifying individual identities."<sup>338</sup> This need would shortly be felt in Britain, too, and satisfied by the introduction, in 1801, of the first British census. The age of data collection was imminent.

### Disguise and anonymity: identificatory practices and problems

In 1782, Bentham wrote a body of proposals under the title *Indirect Legislation*, which would not be published in English until 1838, and then only in dramatically abridged form. One chapter of this body of work, subtitled 'Exposing the person of the offender to discovery', considers the difficulty of detecting criminals, surveys a

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<sup>337</sup> Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 86.

<sup>338</sup> Caplan and Torpey, *Documenting Individual Identity*, p. 7.

range of contemporary practices that strive towards this end, and ultimately makes a case for the state regulation of personal names as a panacea for the ills that previous mechanisms have failed to redress.

The problem faced by the law enforcer, Bentham asserts at the beginning of his chapter, is that there is no reliable link between a crime and the offender who committed it. "To punish a man in almost any way whatever, you must know who he is: you must know not only that such and such an offence has been committed, but that it was such an [sic] one that committed it." (1) The criminal attempts to evade punishment by concealing his identity after an offence has been committed, and therefore pre-emptive identificatory action is the law enforcer's only solution: "If any thing then be done to a man to make him known, and give you a clue to find him by, it must be done beforehand: by fixing on him some mark which may enable you to find him, in the event of his doing any thing which may call for the research." Subjects, then, must be marked with the assumption that they might offend against the state; their visual ordering must reflect the future possibility that the state may need to identify and punish them.

Bentham distinguishes two categories of identification practices already in use: "A man may be known either directly by his person; or indirectly by means of some external article he is attached to such as his apparel or the implements of his profession." (1) This distinction replicates the broad practices that Valentin Groebner has argued constitute the history of identity documentation up until the eighteenth century: "the prehistory of the wanted poster [by which the suspect is identified, though often ineptly, 'by his person'] and the pass [an 'external article he is attached

to']<sup>339</sup> Bentham notes the existence of a number of contemporary practices that facilitate identification by means of the second category, including various conventions of dress that symbolise professional, marital or social distinctions; military, naval, academic, professional, servants' liveries, wedding rings, constables' staves, badges to signal that the wearer is a recipient of poor relief, and "various marks... to distinguish working convicts." However, he notes that these expedients are unsatisfactory from the perspective of the law enforcer, since they indicate only collective categories and not unique individual identities: "[T]he determination of the class is of use no otherwise than in as far as it leads to the determination of the individual." (4)

There are certain systems underway, Bentham adds, which are more successful in allocating unique marks of identity to individuals: the germ of a vehicle registration system in the wake of the 1694 Act for Licensing and Regulating Hackney Coaches and Chairs, an embryonic system of house numbers in London, and the practice in Bridewell Hospital of charity children having "each a number by way of a badge." (5) The problem with all of these practices, from Bentham's perspective – even the ones that signify individual rather than collective identity - is that the mark of identity is transferable: "A Coach, a chair, a cart, a waggon, a wherry will point a man out, so long as he stands by them: so may his regimental coat point out a soldier so long as he thinks fit to keep it on. But it is possible for a man to throw off his coat: it is possible for him to sally forth without his coach, or if hard pressed to run away and leave it. It takes time to go and make enquiry at the office, and in the mean while, if it be a serious affair, the man is gone." (7) Unique bodily characteristics that cannot

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<sup>339</sup> Valentin Groebner, 'Describing the Person, Reading the Signs in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe: Identity Papers, Vested Figures, and the Limits of Identification, 1400-1600', in *Documenting Individual Identity*, eds. Caplan and Torpey, pp. 16-17.

easily be altered, such as facial features, are of course more reliable – or at least less transferable - signs of identity than items of clothing or badges. But these bodily marks, Bentham complains, are subject to a different inadequacy than their transferable counterparts; it is much more difficult to describe them accurately: “But of the nice particularities that discriminate the human form — verbal descriptions are very inadequate *indicia* in comparison of graphical representations. Who ever from the minutest and exactest verbal description that was ever given formed so precise an idea of the person described as he might have drawn from the most transient glance?”

(6)

*Caleb Williams*, in its depiction of Caleb’s attempts to evade the authorities, offers a striking dramatization of Bentham’s sketch of the law enforcer’s problem. Following the circulation of the handbill describing his appearance, Caleb understands “that one of the principal dangers that threatened me was the recognition of my person... It seemed prudent therefore to disguise it as effectually as I could.” Accordingly, he slips between classes, races and professions by means of modifying his clothing, posture and accent. Initially emulating a beggar, he adapts his vestments accordingly, selecting “the worst apparel I could find, and this I reduced to a still more deplorable condition, by rents that I purposely made in various places” along with a “peculiar slouching and clownish gait” and “Irish brogue.” Subsequently, he disguises himself as “the son of a reputable farmer of the lower class”, and finally as a Jew, with altered “complexion,” “countenance” and “new habiliments.” (245, 226)

Caleb is rather proud of his talent for disguise and mimicry: immediately after his first transition, he assures the reader, “I had rendered my appearance complete, nor would any one have suspected that I was not one of the fraternity to which I assumed to belong,” and after putting the finishing touches to his Jewish guise he

exults that, “when my metamorphosis was finished, I could not upon the strictest examination conceive, that any one could have traced out the person of Caleb Williams in this new disguise.” Although to a modern readership many of Caleb’s ploys seem a little bizarre (tying a handkerchief around the lower part of his face, for example, which doesn’t immediately suggest itself as something a farmer’s son might do), we can perhaps read this gap between our own parameters of recognition and Godwin’s as a signal of the tectonic manner in which mechanisms of recognition have shifted over the last two centuries, mostly due to the invention of photography. Godwin’s earliest readers, I think, were certainly expected to take Caleb’s ability to shape-shift seriously. When Falkland’s agent Jones finally traps Caleb at Mr. Spurrel’s lodgings, his reaction to being brought face to face with his quarry seems to validate Caleb’s confidence in his disguise. Still unsure whether he has really cornered the right man, Jones instructs him to dismember himself: “Why, said Jones, our errand is with one Caleb Williams, and a precious rascal he is! I ought to know the chap well enough; but they say he has as many faces as there are days in the year. So you please to pull off your face; or if you cannot do that, at least you can cut off your clothes, and let us see what your hump is made of.” (261)

Jones’s semantic conflation of unmasking with mutilation recalls Bentham’s observation that where an individual engaged in a criminal act has clearly attempted to conceal his identity, “we may expect to find him animadverted upon by the law with aggravated severity. Accordingly a British statute punishes with death any one of a great multitude of offences many of them of a very trivial nature, in the case of their being committed by persons in disguise.” (4) Here, Bentham refers to the draconian Black Act of 1723, which, as the work of E. P. Thompson has demonstrated, acted as a legislative manifestation of the anxiety with which lawmakers drawn from the

landowning classes viewed disguise, dissimulation and anonymity in the lower orders. As Thompson points out, thanks to successive judgements enlarging the scope of the Act over the mid-eighteenth century, the fact of persons 'having his or her faces blacked' could stand by itself as a capital offence even where they were not armed with offensive weapons, and it was only in the early nineteenth century that more humane judicial decisions started to render this offence null and void.<sup>340</sup> It is probable that neither Bentham nor contemporary readers of *Caleb Williams* found the idea of a man slipping from disguise to disguise comical. One potential reason why the novel's first readers found it "sublimely horrible – captivatingly Frightful"<sup>341</sup> is because they were reading and writing from within a culture within which "themes of disguise and confusion, the alias, and shifting identities,"<sup>342</sup> most often manifested in the stock form of the shape-shifter, stood for a range of acute anxieties about class violence, fraud and social displacement. Caleb, with his "considerable facility in the art of imitation" and "talent for mimicry," and Bentham's unmarked offender slipping between coats and carriages both represent a popular figure of anxiety in a wider cultural discourse.

Indeed, Caleb himself participates in this anxiety. Despite boasting about his talent for mimicry, he criticises disguise as an "unmanly" pursuit, and his own disgust at the "figure I seemed to exhibit" is partly responsible for his eventual surrender to Jones and his onomastic declaration of identity: "At last, tired with this scene of mummery, and disgusted beyond measure with the base and hypocritical figure I

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<sup>340</sup> E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act*, (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 22. See also Thompson's account of Lord Hardwicke's 1736 verdict in which he directed the jury that "appearing in the high road with faces blacked, and being otherwise disguised" was "a single crime", *Whigs and Hunters*, p. 250.

<sup>341</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald to Godwin, [1794], Bod. [Abinger] Dep. C. 509, cited in Clemit's Introduction to *Caleb Williams*, p. viii.

<sup>342</sup> Groebner, 'Describing the Person', p. 25.

seemed to exhibit, I exclaimed, "Well, I am Caleb Williams; conduct me wherever you please!" (261) But he places the blame for the necessity to disguise himself with his social superiors: "Such are the miserable expedients and so great the studied artifice, which man, who never deserves the name of manhood but in proportion as he is erect and independent, may find it necessary to employ, for the purpose of eluding the inexorable animosity and unfeeling tyranny of his fellow man!" (230) Where Bentham's representation of the sartorial impostor is fraught with criminality, Godwin's – in offering the reader the perspective of the shape-shifter – temporarily suggests the modification of dress as a valid instrument to avoid state repression. Ultimately, however, it is depicted as an inadequate measure for the purposes of a protagonist wishing to assert his identity as an "erect and independent" man.

Moreover, Godwin indicates that once an individual has engaged in the ethically problematic process of visual disguise, he has surrendered the moral right to assert his identity in a way that may backfire upon him. One of the problems of using visual self-styling to evade the law is literalized in an encounter with precisely the kind of non-pictorial handbill description that Bentham criticizes as inherently inaccurate. Arrested just as he is about to escape to Ireland, Caleb learns (to his relief) that he has been mistaken for a wanted highwayman. He assumes he will be able to prove his innocence easily by pointing out the discrepancies between the description and his own appearance. However, this isn't as easy as he had anticipated:

They had a description of his person which, though, as I afterwards found, it disagreed from mine in several material articles, appeared to them to tally to the minutest tittle.... I referred to the paper, and shewed [the magistrate] that the description neither tallied as to height nor complexion. But then it did as to years and the colour of the hair; and it was not this gentleman's habit, as he

informed me, to squabble about trifles, or to let a man's neck out of the halter for a pretended flaw of a few inches in his stature. If a man were too short, he said, there was no remedy like a little stretching. (234-235)

The conflation of disciplinary mutilation with disguise is striking. The gallows humour of the magistrate literalizes Bentham's observation that the law acts to punish mutations of visible appearance with its own work on the integrity of the body. Once the individual becomes a shape-shifter, the law recognizes this as a legitimate cue to mutilate in its turn.

### Solutions: marking out the man

Suspecting the inadequacy of visual self-styling to ensure a clear correspondence between offender and deserved treatment by the state, Godwin and Bentham both move to consider the potential of the personal name to ensure a more effective correspondence. Bentham links anonymity with plebeian crime, insisting that a unique atomised name benefits "men whose glory it is to be known" and that these men are those who maintain the liberties of a country. Godwin is more sensitive to the possibility that property plays an important role in enabling certain men to control the terms of their name's circulation, and that therefore the system is rigged from the beginning for an unenfranchised protagonist such as Caleb Williams. His unease at the prospect of anonymity, however, is signalled by his frantic switching between endorsement of oral and legible forms of name circulation, and the ambivalent ending of his novel reflects an awareness that the unenfranchised man must suffer under the current system of onomastic circulation, but puts forward no cohesive solution as to how his lot can be improved.

For Bentham, the solution is a proposal to tattoo subjects on the wrist with their own unique and regulated names. This scheme, he believes, would unite the uniqueness and legibility of a number or 'mark' with the permanence of a facial profile. He was inspired to suggest this system, he explains, by taking notice of a mark on the wrist of a naval friend: "It consisted of his name at length, exhibited in characters of a deep blue. It had been imprinted in his childhood, and he was then verging to old age. The idea struck me: and why, said I to myself, should not the practise be universal? What stronger preservative could there be for purity of morals and obedience to the laws?" (8)

But the personal name as currently circulated, Bentham contends, is just as transferable as a garment, and therefore equally open to abuse: "Thieves and sharpers are very apt to change their names: when a man's name is grown dirty he throws it off as he would his shirt, and takes another. The changing of one's name accompanied with the change of abode and without any known reason openly assigned is as reasonable a presumption as can well take place, of delinquency either perpetrated or designed... Yet in no body of laws which I rather wonder at, have I ever found it penal." (12) Given this, Bentham makes a prescient case for moving to regulate names statutorily, just as – within a decade or so – the French revolutionary government would move to do: "The institution of marking would render it utterly impracticable... you may see at any time what a mans name [sic] is at that time; and the name he bears once he bears for ever. I shall hereafter have occasion to propose the making it penal for a man to change his name without taking such steps as shall ensure the notoriety of it." (13)

A potential objection to his scheme "confined to British ground", which Bentham insists "would hardly be thought of any where else", is that "the institution

[of tattooing] it might be said would be favourable to tyranny, by throwing too much power into the hands of government, and rendering the political sanction too independent of the moral.” In anticipating this objection, Bentham can be seen to reference the robustness of English common law in maintaining that the individual is free to name himself as he pleases. But, never one to be bound by precedent, Bentham mentions this objection only in order to give it rather short shrift: “I mention this as deserving to be attended to an even respect, not as deserving to be conclusive.” He conceptualizes liberty, as far as it can be used as a term, as a physical freedom rather than a right not to be known by the authorities. “It might render plots and secret conspiracies somewhat more difficult to form. But it is not by plots and conspiracies that efficacy is given to the constitutional claims of a large body of the people. The liberties of a country real or pretended are maintained not by the intrigues of a few but by the corroboration of the many: not in holes and corners but in the face of day: not by men whose shame it is, but by men whose glory it is, to be known: by the general concurrence of persons of all ranks, magistrates and gentlemen as well as yeomen.”

(21)

In line with this conception of liberty as a primarily physical state of being, Bentham insists that the practice of universal tattooing would ultimately be “highly favourable to personal liberty.” He points out that in many cases imprisonment upon *mesne* processes (preliminary imprisonment before trial, such as that experienced by Caleb Williams) is a hardship only necessary in order to avoid the possibility of the accused absconding, and suggests that since it would be impossible for the accused effectively to disappear once marked, this imprisonment could be disposed of altogether. Bentham’s proposal offers the hypothetical law-breaking individual an increase in physical liberty that is set firmly within a framework of onomastic

submission. It is precisely Bentham's conceptualization of liberty that Foucault argues is modified as the eighteenth century draws towards a close; which modification, as we will see, is fictionalised in Godwin's depiction of Caleb's flight and his inability to escape Falkland's surveillance: "The body as the major target of penal repression disappeared [to be replaced by] the development of a knowledge of the individuals."<sup>343</sup>

But who is this hypothetical law-breaking individual? Bentham states in the passage quoted above that "the liberties of a country real or pretended are maintained... by men whose glory it is to be known, by the general concurrence of *all* ranks" [italics mine]. But at the same time, he only includes "magistrates", "yeomen" and "gentlemen" within the bounds of "all ranks". And as his argument develops, a striking class dimension becomes apparent to Bentham's descriptions of the criminality that his suggested system might prevent. His proposal is founded upon the primarily political understanding of anonymity that E.P. Thompson has placed at the heart of eighteenth-century studies of crime. "In England," Bentham states, "where the general laxity of the law gives a particular degree of malignity to most of the diseases of the body politic, every body knows but too well to what a degree the higher and middling classes of the people are exposed to the outrages of the lower, who if they can but maintain a superiority for the instant have nothing to apprehend for the future, conscious of being unknown and deriving security from their meanness." (15) Bentham here replicates the class logic of Lord Hardwicke's radical 1736 extension to the Black Act, in which he directed a jury that "appearing in the high road with faces blacked, and being otherwise disguised" was "a single crime"

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<sup>343</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 8, 125.

and thus fell under the Act's remit.<sup>344</sup> This logic, however, which was being applied to turnpike rioters, was never applied to more genteel practitioners of anonymity or disguise. As Thompson notes, "it is by no means the case that anonymity was the refuge of the poor alone." To the examples he provides of letters petitioning for favours or advancing proposals for the public good, we might add the phenomena of masquerade or blanked names in newspapers, which were often viewed as more ludic than threatening, and certainly not matters for prosecution. Although in Thompson's words, "the free-born Englishman crept about in a mask and folded in a Guy Fawkes cloak," only plebeian anonymity was punishable.<sup>345</sup>

Bentham, then, overwhelmingly sees both 'blacking' and 'blackmail' - as did eighteenth-century British law - as an offence against property.<sup>346</sup> Not only is anonymity styled the refuge of those who have offended, but also those who have offended are explicitly conceptualized as members of the 'lower' orders. Anonymity is not only the enemy of law enforcement; it is also styled as the refuge of those who do not have the importance or social status to control the circulation of their proper names.

Since it is related from the perspective of one of the disenfranchised 'lower orders', one might expect *Caleb Williams* to provide a direct antithesis of Bentham's critique of anonymity. It puts forward no direct proposal, however, but instead offers a series of undulating expressions of confidence – or scepticism – in various different modes and models of naming. The complex manner in which the narrative tempo of *Caleb Williams* responds to pivotal moments at which names are exposed, modified

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<sup>344</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity', in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, eds. Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, Cal Winslow. (London: Allen Lane, 1975), p. 250.

<sup>345</sup> Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity', p. 272.

<sup>346</sup> Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, p. 207.

or concealed – both orally and legibly - suggests that Godwin is concerned with exploring the potential of both forms of naming to confine and to liberate. This very vacillation is telling, I think, since it demonstrates unease about a range of different contexts for the circulation of the individual name, which can be read as a contribution to a wider critique of the political uses to which mechanisms of onomastic individualization can be put.

As J.G.A.Pocock's work has shown, association of radical politics with the written word had been entrenched by the popular opposition invoked between an oral and a written constitution during the Revolution Controversy. Burke could celebrate a Constitution that existed 'time out of mind' as *jus non scriptum*, whereas Paine insisted that a constitution, to be valid, must be written.<sup>347</sup> By 1794, in conjunction with the French revolutionary's fervour for collecting data on its citizens, these associations can be read to have thoroughly politicised ideas about oral and written forms of circulation. But the complex manner in which these forms of circulation are negotiated in Godwin's text bears witness to his conflicted attitude towards the progress of the Revolution by 1794, and to the English authorities' persecution of Paine in 1792. By 1794, for a radical sympathizer there was no simple dichotomy between France as an active surveillance state and Britain as a laissez-faire state in which the individual enjoyed true liberty.

An initial reading of *Caleb Williams*, written as French legislators were in the process of codifying onomastic regulations, might seem to suggest that incidences of print dissemination of the personal name symbolize the repressive treatment of the individual by the state. Within the inset narrative of the steward Collins, the

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<sup>347</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1967), pp. 35-36; and Blakemore, *Burke and the Fall of Language*, pp. 9-10.

introduction of various performative written documents in which a name is demanded or included signify a disastrous turn to the narrative. These include the refusal of the freeholder Hawkins to write his name in a poll book, (36) the writ against Emily Melville, (81) and a letter to Barnabas Tyrrell banning him from the local assembly. (90) Over the course of Caleb's own narrative, it is the "printed paper... as good as a bank note of a hundred guineas" picked up by the robber Wilson that first marks the state dissemination of Caleb's personal name as linked to the "description of a felon." (214-15) Upon arrival in London, encountering a new and embellished version of the handbill by the cries of the hawker, Caleb steels himself to buy a copy, "resolved to know the exact state of the fact, and what I had to depend upon" – in short, to find out who Caleb Williams actually is. "I was equalled," he discovers upon reading it, "to the most notorious house-breaker in the art of penetrating through walls and doors, and to the most accomplished swindler in plausibleness, duplicity and disguise." This discovery plunges Caleb into despair: the paper, he complains, is "the consummation of my misfortune," and its existence radically re-draws the aspect of the urban environment in which he hoped to find anonymity and succour: "A numerous class of individuals, through every department, almost every house of the metropolis, would be induced to look with a suspicious eye upon every stranger, especially every solitary stranger, that fell under their observation... It was no longer Bow-Street, it was a million of men, in arms against me." (258-59)

Pamela Clemit has pointed out that this particular incident "alludes directly to the distribution of defamatory chapbooks and handbills by loyalist associations in an effort to silence radical agitation."<sup>348</sup> As Clemit also points out, further strengthening the case for a link between legibility and state repression, "it is the wide circulation of

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<sup>348</sup> Clemit, 'Introduction', p. xii.

the pamphlet that destroys Caleb's last refuge in Wales and makes him determined to denounce Falkland." Perplexed by the sudden coldness of his new neighbours, Caleb learns that a group of travelling bricklayers have brought into the vicinity "the very paper of the Wonderful and Surprising History of Caleb Williams, the discovery of which towards the close of my residence in London had produced in me such exquisite pain. This discovery at once cleared up all the mystery that had hung upon my late transactions. Abhorred and intolerable certainty succeeded to the doubts which had haunted my mind. It struck me with the rapidity and irresistible effect of lightning. I was like a man blasted, his head bare and exposed to the fury of the elements." (281) Caleb's choice of simile once again recalls sartorial insufficiency, linking his chosen alias to a protective garment that, once whipped away, exposes him to lightning-like devastation, which is, of course, conducted by the written text. Caleb's description of this item as "the detested scroll" (283) might serve as a general description of the bureaucratically authorized and disseminated manifestation of the personal name; and print is undoubtedly its medium, literacy the vehicle through which it is disseminated.

As I noted briefly at the beginning of this essay, Caleb's response to the state-sanctioned, legible dissemination of his name has a marked contrast earlier in Godwin's narrative. In a "little public house at the extremity of a village," Caleb overhears "three or four labourers, the gentry of a village alehouse... fall almost immediately into conversation about my history, whom with a slight variation of circumstances they styled the notorious housebreaker, Kit Williams." News of 'Kit's exploits have reached these pub philosophers through exclusively oral means: "Damn the fellow, said one of them, one never hears of any thing else. O' my life, I think he makes talk for the whole county."

Observe the difference, in this case, of Caleb's response to the mention of his name. Seized with "extreme... terrors" at first, he "trembled as if in an ague fit; and at first felt continual impulses to quit the house and take to my heels. I drew closer in my corner, held aside my head, and seemed from time to time to undergo a total revolution of the animal economy." However, ultimately "the tide of ideas turned. Perceiving they paid no attention to me...I began to be amused at the absurdity of their tales, and the variety of the falsehoods I heard asserted around me. My soul seemed to expand; I felt a pride in the self-possession and lightness of heart with which I could listen to the scene; and I determined to prolong and heighten the enjoyment." This prolongation takes the form of actively approaching the hostess of the tavern, and asking her "what sort of man this Kit Williams might be?" The obliging woman replies, to Caleb's delight, "that, as she was informed, he was as handsome, likely a lad, as any in four counties round; and that she loved him for his cleverness, by which he outwitted all the keepers they could set over him, and made his way through stone walls, as if they were so many cobwebs... she said she hoped he was far enough away by this time, but, if not, she wished the curse of God might light on them that betrayed so noble a fellow to a fatal end! – Though she little thought that the person of whom she spoke was so near her, yet the sincere and generous warmth with which she interested herself in my behalf, gave me considerable pleasure." (228-30)

Here, the orally transmitted name opens up possibilities of plurality that engender an expansion of Caleb's sense of personal identity. The vulgar populace creates a mutation of Caleb's given name in the familiar abbreviation 'Kit', which nickname, as Stephen Wilson has pointed out in his broad social history of naming,

might either act as a hostile “form of community control”<sup>349</sup> or “signal membership of a friendship group.”<sup>350</sup> Caleb’s successive emotional reactions might be read to reflect both these possibilities, with eventual emphasis on the latter. In either case, both the nickname and the conversation open up a series of interpretations of Caleb’s conduct that stand in solid opposition to the monolithic state-sanctioned version of his narrative. One of these versions is a pretty exact replication of Caleb’s own take on the truth: “when two squires lay their heads together, they do not much matter law, you know; or else they twist the law to their own ends, I cannot say exactly which; but it is much at one, when the poor fellow’s breath is out of his body.” Others are less sympathetic. The crucial point is that no account “pass[es] unquestioned. Each man maintained the justness of his own statement, and the dispute was long and obstinately pursued.” I read these pluralities, of name and narrative, as the instigating forces behind the expansion of identity experienced by Caleb.

It would be overly simplistic, however, to use these two scenes to attempt to argue that oral culture is aligned with emancipatory expansion of identities, while written culture represses a disciplinary meta-narrative and thus entrenches social injustice. The transitional stage between a visual and legible society, in which Caleb’s perambulations take place, means that the precincts of orality and literacy overlap, an example of which we have seen already in the portrayal of the simultaneous verbal cries and textual wares of the hawker. In fact, when it comes to Caleb’s own ownership and dissemination of his own name, it could be argued that some of his oral admissions in fact steer him further into the grip of the law, as at the moment at which Caleb gives himself up to Jones, not by “taking off his face” but by announcing

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<sup>349</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 283.

<sup>350</sup> Wilson, *Means of Naming*, p. 287.

his name. Orality acts, in this case, to reinforce the incarceration that was originally the result of the circulation of written forms.

Similarly, it could be argued that one particular instance of legible self-naming – namely Caleb’s published version of his own narrative – is depicted as the sole moment whereby he attains control over public representations of his own identity. He rejects, eventually, the oral pluralities that offered him a temporary escape: “I had gained fame indeed, the miserable fame to have my story bawled forth by hawkers and ballad mongers, to have my praises as an active and surprising villain celebrated among footmen and chambermaids; but I was neither an Erostratus nor an Alexander, to die contented with that species of eulogium.” (262) Another species of eulogium is required, and Caleb finds it in the declaration: “I will use no daggers! I will unfold a tale -!” (291) The pen is likened to the dagger, instrument of assassination. “With this engine, this little pen I defeat all his machinations; I stab him in the very point he was most solicitous to defend!” (292) Caleb’s final lines, though by this point he is professing repentance in addressing Falkland thus, are a rejection of orality and endorsement of written culture as the vehicle by which truth may best be conveyed: “I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my own character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate: but I will finish them that thy story may be fully understood; and that, if those errors of thy life be known which thou so ardently desiredst to conceal, the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale.” (303)

The proliferation of print media creates the conditions under which Caleb’s name can be repeated, publicized and disseminated “by one of his majesty’s most principal secretaries of state” in the interests of detaining him; yet Caleb’s own construction of identity is also conveyed through the form of print – the novel that

bears his name on the title page. Caleb's eventual determination to publish and therefore to control the print circulation of his name can be seen as a defiant riposte to the potentially repressive written and oral circulation of his name conducted by other agents. His switching of forms can be read as an endorsement of the potential of the novel to combat the bureaucratic written forms by which the propertied class, and the state mechanisms that serve it, seek to repress and discipline those lower classes. The challenge to bureaucratic data collection may lie in fiction, as suggested by Godwin's cancelled 1794 Preface to *Caleb Williams*, where Godwin argues that the novel is the appropriate "vehicle" to teach a "valuable lesson" about the intrusion of "the spirit and character of the government... into every rank of society" without "subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterised."<sup>351</sup>

However, given the oft-noted ambiguity of Godwin's chosen ending, I think that an argument mediating neatly between oral and legible forms of circulation ultimately ignores a deeper unease about the problematic nature of *any* form of onomastic individualization. After all, Caleb finds himself destitute of any 'character' to preserve when he advertises his name in written form; his ability to broadcast his personal name has ended up backfiring just as badly as his ability to control his visual appearance. In fact, Caleb's eventual victory in the battle of reputations (in the published ending, at least) can be read as the fundamental respect in which he ultimately displays his inadequacy as a protagonist. Despite originally being content to labour in obscurity, Caleb gradually emulates and appropriates Falkland's "mad and misguided love of fame," (270) his obsessive desire for a "spotless and illustrious name," (132) his worship of reputation as "the idol, the jewel of my life." (99) "My

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<sup>351</sup> 'Appendix B: The 1794 Preface to *Caleb Williams*', in Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, p. 312.

good name shall never be your victim!” he rages, (132) and by the time of his final showdown with Falkland he explicitly frames the two names as being in a relationship of symmetrical balance: “What is it that you require of me? That I should sign away my own reputation for the better maintaining of yours. Where is the equality of that?” (271) Ultimately, I read Caleb’s wretchedness at the end of the novel as a symptom of his degraded state in coming to occupy the same reputation-fetishistic ground as his former master.

Critics have long realised that a primary concern in *Caleb Williams* is the tension between the individual and the wider society around him, and have come to diverse conclusions about Godwin’s view on the ethics of atomization and assimilation. Gregory Dart has argued: “in Godwin’s mind... the moral cost of collaboration was always greater than its supposed material benefits. According to this view of things, cooperation compromised and degraded the workings of individual reason by undermining the principle of intellectual independence.”<sup>352</sup> This hardening certainty on Godwin’s part throughout the 1790s – clearer, Dart contends, in every edition of *Political Justice* – culminates in a refusal to sanction any form of political collaboration or association. Eric Daffron, on the other hand, sees Caleb Williams as illustrative that “imitative sympathy is a particular strategy with both dominant and resistant tactical uses,” and, if anything, veers towards emphasizing the futility of existence, in Godwin’s view, without social bonds. Pointing out that Caleb is made to state that whereas “the pride of philosophy has taught us to treat man as an individual, [he is] no such thing. He holds necessarily, indispensably, to his species,”

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<sup>352</sup> Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism*, p. 86.

Daffron reads Caleb without social sympathy as inscribed with “the absence of self,” and as appropriately self-styled, in the unpublished ending, as a gravestone.<sup>353</sup>

I want to encourage a new perspective on this question by examining Godwin’s engagement with the ethics of assimilation and atomization through an onomastic lens. I read the published ending of *Caleb Williams* – in particular the extent to which both oral and written transmissions of naming drive Caleb to value reputation as much as Falkland – as expressing scepticism in the very notion of onomastic atomization itself. Distinguishing signs of individuality must, whether driven by oral or written means, lead to the fetishization of reputation, which is ultimately destructive. According to this reading, Godwin differs sharply from Bentham, who sees one of the principal advantages of his proposal as the fact it would confirm and officialize individuality, enabling people to exercise ownership of their own ‘name’ in the reputational sense by eradicating the potential for shared given names or surnames. “According to the present system of things it unfortunately happens that many thousands of persons shall be in many instances called by the same name....The circumstances that recommended a name to one man would recommend it to another. Hence a multitude of inconveniences are continually arising. The infamy or the honour, the profit or the loss, the trouble or the inconvenience which belongs to John is bestowed upon another John to whom it is as little due as it is to Peter.” (13)

Where Godwin and Bentham coincide, though they approach the issue from different perspectives, is that they both roughly align contemporary forms of onomastic circulation as advantageous to the propertied classes, whose “glory it is to

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<sup>353</sup> Eric Daffron, “‘Magnetical sympathy’: strategies of power and resistance in Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*”, *Criticism*, 37:2 (March 22, 1995), pp. 213-20.

be known”, and raise the possibility – though it is treated by Bentham with trepidation and Godwin with ambivalence – that obscurity might benefit those of the lower classes. Again, in making this contention I take into account the material aspect of ‘reputation’. From the circulation of writs, poll books and personal correspondence, to the commission of libellous handbills, to the ability to stand physically apart and speak names from a magisterial perspective at legal proceedings, men such as Falkland and his relative Forrester are able to produce and pronounce the personal name in such a way as to preserve and destroy reputations. Caleb operates from a position of significant disadvantage, with his literary production the only way authoritatively to control his name’s dissemination. Yet even this method is intrinsically compromised within a system of name circulation that privileges individuation over association, and atomised identities over assimilation.

## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to consider the implications of several literary representations of eighteenth-century name change, and to situate them within interdisciplinary contextual frameworks. During this period many different types of imaginative literature, written under diverse conditions, share the tendency to make an act of personal name change central to the internal dynamics of the text. In doing so, they use certain terminologies and rhetorical strategies that insistently link imaginative acts of name change to a variety of philosophical and political discourses, both well-established and immediately topical. These include discourses of arbitrary and affective common naming, the politically weighted debate around the ability of an older generation to 'bind posterity', and considerations of how state-sanctioned systems of rank might stimulate the desire for 'fame' and good reputation. The recurrence of these echoes demonstrates that literary acts of naming both draw upon and stimulate discourses about personal identity that cut across genres. It thus calls the relationships between those genres, particularly the boundaries that are often perceived to separate them, into question.

In particular, I have showed that paying attention to the philosophical and political resonances of literary descriptions of naming acts can suggest new ways in which discourses of class and gender intersect in literature of the 1780s and 1790s. Problematizing forms of personal name that imply group belonging, most notably the hereditary surname and the honorific title, enables writers to consider the range of different social bonds that claim identification from protagonists. The acts of name change negotiated in these texts are engineered to show different identity categories in stark relief, and to stimulate thought or debate among a readership about the competing merits of those categories. Texts as generically disparate as, for example,

Burney's novel engineered to stimulate debate among the polite literati and Paine's political treatise deliberately marketed to a plebeian readership both suggest that the maintenance of class identity can require the sacrifice of gender identity, or vice versa.

This argument about class and gender has derived from my wider conviction that the critical study of personal identity in eighteenth-century Britain would be enriched by an "onomastic turn," by which the act of self-naming would be considered a crucial component in processes of self-fashioning. There are many other directions that this onomastic turn could take in order to further synthesise and contextualise acts of onomastic self-fashioning. For example, observations concerning class and gender could be productively complicated by others exploring acts of name change that engage with discourses of other categories of identity, such as race and nationality. While engaging predominantly with literature published by English writers in dialogue with the English common law, I have also suggested that Scottish, Irish and Welsh ancestries or loyalties came into play in these negotiations in intriguing ways. The Welsh patronymic, in particular, is often seen to come into conflict with the English hereditary surname in discourses of this period, calling into question the relationship between different forms of law, language and national identity within Britain. Enhanced considerations of 'national' naming might complicate my embryonic sense of how names inflected a sense of personal identity. Similarly, many critics have commented on the parallels often explicitly raised between women's legal oppression and slavery, and a comparative study of how slave naming and marital surname change were perceived in writing of the period could enrich this field. And several texts suggest intriguing parallels and discrepancies between perceptions of the re-naming of slaves and the re-naming of servants,

begging the question of the relative importance of class or and of skin colour or ethnicity, in explorations of servitude.

The idea of onomastic self-fashioning might also be productively complicated by applying the concerns of that examination to acts of paratextual naming within the eighteenth-century book trade; the naming of characters, publications, and authors themselves. Investigating the material ways in which names of publications, authors and characters circulated and overlapped can suggest new approaches to identity formation as a phenomenon specific to literary production during this period. Such investigations as have already been carried out around these types of literary naming have, as I indicated in my Introduction, usually been stymied by a tendency to either examine one writer's use of character names in isolation, or else attempted to encompass a broad chronological period that divorces patterns of literary naming from historical context. To understand the likely import of particular acts of onomastic self-fashioning within the literary marketplace, we must first understand why naming was such an important and resonant act during this particular period. To contribute towards this understanding has been the ultimate goal of this thesis. It has attempted to provide a synthesised overview of the various types of cultural weight borne by the act of naming in late eighteenth-century British culture, in the hope that it might lay the foundation for further interrogations of onomastic identity.

## Appendix 1

### Report on archival research into Royal Licences for a change of surname 1761-1786 at the College of Arms. (Contains data tables)

#### Introduction

The College of Arms is the official repository of the coats of arms and pedigrees of English, Welsh, Northern Irish and Commonwealth families and their descendants. It was established by Richard III in 1484 as a way of bringing the various Heralds of his royal household together and enabling them to keep comprehensive records of arms and family descents. Today the College of Arms is an official branch of UK government. The Heralds' work – though not supported by public funds – covers rights to existing coats of arms and applications for new ones; family history research, whether as part of their involvement in establishing rights to existing arms or not; and identification work. The College is located on Queen Victoria Street in the City of London, and I was working under the guidance of the Richmond Herald Dr. Clive Cheesman and the archivist Lyndsey Derby.

I was able to cover an unbroken period of petitions from 1761-1786 included in Volumes 32 and 33 of the Earl Marshall's Books (223 petitions in total). It is important to note that petitions registered before 1783 and after 1783 were registered under quite different conditions. Before 1783, it was not compulsory for name change petitions to be registered at the College of Arms at all. Many, therefore, were simply sent to and dealt with at the Crown Office and thus would never have come under the remit of the College of Arms. In 1783, the Earl of Surrey – then the Earl Marshall's Deputy at the College of Arms – wrote to Lord North – then the Home Secretary –

expressing frustration at the failure of Home Office officials to deal properly with petitions for a change of names or arms, and suggesting that the bureaucratic process be modified so that the College of Arms became the first port of call for all such enquiries. There is no extant record of North's reply, but it appears from a statement made by the Home Secretary in 1862 Sir George Grey that he granted Surrey's request and that an internal regulation was issued that all such petitions must be dealt with at the College of Arms before being submitted to the Home Office for registration. At some point in 1783, therefore – although the Earl Marshall's Books do not record when – it became compulsory for surname change petitions to pass through the College of Arms before being cleared by the Crown Office, and for the ultimate result, a Royal Licence and subsequent Earl Marshall's Warrant, to be registered in the College's Books.

It appears that the process worked as follows: a petitioner would contact the College of Arms (or instruct their attorney to do so) with the details regarding the desired change of name. The College would allocate a Herald to manage the process, who would co-draft the original petition with the applicant or their solicitor. These petitions themselves are not held in the College of Arms, but a few examples are accessible in Home Office records preserved in the National Archives. The petition would then proceed from the College of Arms to the Crown Office, where it would be assessed and, if approved, passed back to the College of Arms in the form of the Royal Licence for the Earl Marshall's approval. The final product was the Earl Marshall's Warrant. The two documents contained (almost invariably) in the Earl Marshall's Books are the Royal Licence and the Earl Marshall's Warrant.

An obvious limitation of this body of evidence is that we are only able to see the name change petitions that met with approval in both the College of Arms and the

Crown Office – that is, the ones that “made it”. Just as interesting, if not more so, would be those that were rejected, as this would shed more comprehensive light on the criteria that were considered necessary for a transformation of onomastic identity. Most of these, however, are not extant. A few examples of unsuccessful petitions survive in the National Archives.

The kind of information contained in the petitions varied significantly in volume and focus, despite the fact that there was clearly an attempt made by scribes to fit the information provided by petitioners into a template document. Because of the fact that various agents (petitioner, solicitor, Herald, Crown Office officials, Earl Marshall's Deputy, scrivener) were involved in producing the Royal Licences and Earl Marshall's Warrants that are preserved in the College, it is difficult to tell precisely how much importance to ascribe to either the provision or omission of any particular piece of information. For example, many of the Royal Licences give permission, very expressly, for the applicant to take the requested name “only” and “using no other”. Others, conversely, state explicitly that the applicant may take the requested name “in addition to” their initial name. But in many cases, neither of these formulations are used and the Licence simply gives permission for the applicant to “take and use the Surname of x”. What can we conclude from this? That in these instances the applicant deliberately wanted more flexibility in terms of which name to use? Or simply that there were a variety of scribal practices at work, and some officials – either at the Crown Office or the College of Arms – would bother to record the variation whereas others would not? I formed the opinion that the broadly formulaic nature of the Licences and Warrants, the attempt they clearly make to present a uniform body of information, and the huge wealth of detail provided in some cases where it was available, make it likely that both Licences and Warrants are

based fairly accurately on the information provided by the petitioner. While refraining from ascribing a disproportionate emphasis to the provision or omission of any one piece of information in any one Licence or Warrant, it is still worth making a robust record and providing a detailed overview of the trends that emerge in the documents, and drawing qualified conclusions accordingly.

The Royal Licences and Earl Marshall's Warrants are generally recorded consecutively, in the clear and legible handwriting of a scrivener, in the large Earl Marshall's Books. Petitions for changes of surname comprise the dominant content of the books I inspected, and many of these also involve a change of arms. Conversely, there are very few incidences of a change or grant of arms without a corresponding surname modification, although these do occasionally crop up.

## Data tables

The following data tables show my findings based on 223 petitions in the Earl Marshall's Books, College of Arms, 1761-1786. Apart from Tables 1 and 2, I use percentages across years or year brackets in order to facilitate the kind of readings I am most interested in making, though original figures can be made available on request and the first two tables should give an idea of how each year or year bracket was weighted. It was only compulsory to register petitions at the College of Arms from 1783 and the number of registered petitions increases significantly from this date. I have therefore broken the numbers down by five-year periods for the whole period in order to obtain an overview of how the figures for non-compulsorily registered petitions change in the period leading up to 1783; and also by individual year from 1783 to 1786, to provide a more detailed picture of how the numbers

change over the 1780s once it was compulsory to register petitions with the College of Arms. Percentages have been rounded for convenience, meaning that columns may sometimes appear to add to 99% or 101%. It should be noted that because there were very few petitions from 1761-1765 registered in the Earl Marshall's Books and my data set only went up to 1786, no great emphasis should be placed on either the first or last year brackets alone, since the numbers of petitions analysed therein are so small.

### 1. Number of petitions overall, broken down by year bracket

<b>Year Bracket</b>	<b>Count</b>
<i>1761-1765</i>	4
<i>1766-1770</i>	28
<i>1771-1775</i>	43
<i>1776-1780</i>	55
<i>1781-1785</i>	85
<i>1786-1790</i>	8
Total	223

### 2. Number of petitions from 1783-1786, broken down by year

<b>Year</b>	<b>Count</b>
<i>1783</i>	20
<i>1784</i>	22
<i>1785</i>	16
<i>1786</i>	8
Total	66

### 3. Gender of name recipient broken down by:

*i) year bracket*

<b>Year bracket</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Male and female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1761-1765</i>	0%	100%	0%	100%
<i>1766-1770</i>	4%	89%	7%	100%
<i>1771-1775</i>	7%	90%	2%	100%
<i>1776-1780</i>	2%	98%	0%	100%
<i>1781-1785</i>	4%	96%	0%	100%
<i>1786-1790</i>	0%	100%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*ii) year from 1783-1786*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1783</i>	0.00%	100%	100%
<i>1784</i>	5%	95%	100%
<i>1785</i>	0%	100%	100%
<i>1786</i>	0%	100%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### **4. Gender of name bequeather, broken down by:**

*i) year bracket*

<b>Year bracket</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1761-1765</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>1766-1770</i>	14%	75%	4%	0%	7%	100%
<i>1771-1775</i>	14%	86%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>1776-1780</i>	13%	85%	0%	0.00%	2%	100%
<i>1781-1785</i>	13%	80%	1%	4%	2%	100%
<i>1786-1790</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*ii) year from 1783-1786.*

Year	Female	Male	Both	N/A	Unknown	Total
1783	20%	70%	0%	5%	5%	100%
1784	9%	82%	0%	9%	0%	100%
1785	6%	81%	6%	0%	6%	100%
1786	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 5) Social status of name recipient - titled or untitled, broken down by:

#### i) year bracket

Year Bracket	Titled	Untitled	Unknown	Total
1761-1765	0%	75%	25%	100%
1766-1770	19%	71%	11%	100%
1771-1775	12%	72%	16%	100%
1776-1780	9%	84%	7%	100%
1781-1785	4%	87%	9%	100%
1786-1790	12%	88%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### ii) year from 1783-1786

Year	Titled	Untitled	Unknown	Total
1783	0%	95%	5%	100%
1784	5%	72%	23%	100%
1785	0%	94%	6%	100%
1786	13%	87%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 6) Social status of name bequeather - titled or untitled. Broken down by:

## i) year bracket

Year brackets	Titled	Untitled	N/A	Unknown	Total
1761-1765	0%	75%	0%	25%	100%
1766-1770	25%	54%	0%	21%	100%
1771-1775	16%	67%	0%	16%	100%
1776-1780	13%	76%	0%	11%	100%
1781-1785	11%	64%	4%	22%	100%
1786-1790	38%	38%	0%	25%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## ii) year from 1783-1786

Years	Titled	Untitled	N/A	Unknown	Total
1783	5%	60%	5%	30%	100%
1784	9%	64%	9%	18%	100%
1785	13%	50%	0%	37%	100%
1786	38%	38%	0%	25%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>100%</b>

7) Reason stated for petition<sup>354</sup>, broken down by:

## i) Year bracket

Year brackets	Gratitude / affection	Marriage settlement	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
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<sup>354</sup> In these tables, the small number of cases contained under the category 'other' covers the following: A request for 'confirmation' of a name, a simple statement that the petitioner was 'desirous' to change their name, reversion to a previous family name after an earlier name change, 'indenture of settlement', and administrative error in a previous Royal Licence.

	/ respect / regard						
1761-1765	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	0%	100%
1766-1770	29%	0%	21%	46%	4%	0%	100%
1771-1775	14%	0%	28%	58%	0%	0%	100%
1776-1780	18%	2%	24%	50%	4%	2%	100%
1781-1785	12%	2%	28%	48%	9%	1%	100%
1786-1790	13%	0%	25%	62%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*ii) year from 1783-1786*

Years	Gratitude / affection / respect / regard	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
1783	15%	10%	65%	10%	0%	100%
1784	5%	45%	36%	14%	0%	100%
1785	25%	38%	25%	6%	6%	100%
1786	13%	25%	63%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*iii) gender of name recipient*

Gender	Gratitude / affection / respect / regard	Marriage settlement	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
<i>Female</i>	12%	12%	50%	25%	1%	0%	100%
<i>Male</i>	16%	1%	25%	52%	5%	1%	100%

<i>Male and female</i>	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name recipients</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

iv) *gender of name bequeather*

Gender	Gratitude / affection / respect / regard	Marriage settlement	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
<i>Both</i>	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Female</i>	4%	0%	25%	71%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Male</i>	18%	2%	27%	51%	1%	1%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	0.00%	0.00%	20%	0.00%	60%	20%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name bequeathers</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

v) *Social status of name recipient - titled or untitled*

Social status	Gratitude / affection / respect / regard	Marriage settlement	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
<i>Titled</i>	26%	5%	5%	58%	1%	5%	100%
<i>Untitled</i>	15%	1%	27%	51%	5%	1%	100%

<i>Unknown</i>	13%	0%	35%	44%	8%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name recipients</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

vi) *Social status of name bequeather - titled or untitled*

Social status	Gratitude / affection / respect / regard	Marriage settlement	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
<i>Titled</i>	21%	6%	24%	45%	4%	0%	100%
<i>Untitled</i>	16%	0%	27%	55%	1%	1%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	12%	2%	27%	46%	11%	2%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name bequeathers</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

vii) *Relationship between name recipient and name bequeather*

Relationship	Gratitude / affection / respect / regard	Marriage settlement	Request	Testamentary injunction	Other	Unknown	Total
<i>Blood relative</i>	19%	1%	29%	48%	2%	1%	100%
<i>Relative by marriage</i>	21%	3%	21%	52%	5%	0%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
<i>Neither</i>	0%	0%	33%	66%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	11%	0%	25%	58%	5%	1%	100%
<i>Various petitioners</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>average across all relationships</b>							
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**8) Mentions in petition of passage of property or money being conditional upon surname change broken down by:**

*i) Year bracket*

<b>Year bracket</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1761-1765</i>	50%	50%	0%	0%	100%
<i>1766-1770</i>	61%	39%	0%	0%	100%
<i>1771-1775</i>	56%	44%	0%	0%	100%
<i>1776-1780</i>	49%	49%	0%	2%	100%
<i>1781-1785</i>	51%	40%	2%	7%	100%
<i>1786-1790</i>	62%	38%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*ii) Year from 1783-1786*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1783</i>	60%	20%	0%	20%	100%
<i>1784</i>	41%	46%	9%	3%	100%
<i>1785</i>	25%	69%	0%	6%	100%
<i>1786</i>	63%	37%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*iii) gender of name recipient*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Female</i>	38%	62%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Male</i>	54%	42%	1%	3%	100%
<i>Male and female</i>	33%	66%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name recipients</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*iv) gender of name bequeather*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Female</i>	71%	25%	0%	4%	100%
<i>Male</i>	52%	45%	1%	2%	100%
<i>Both</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	40%	20%	0%	40%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name bequeathers</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*v) Social status of name recipient - titled or untitled*

<b>Social status</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Titled</i>	58%	37%	0%	5%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	52%	43%	0%	4%	100%
<i>Untitled</i>	52%	44%	1%	3%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name recipients</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*vi) Social status of name bequeather - titled or untitled*

<b>Social status</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Titled</i>	51%	48%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Untitled</i>	54%	42%	1%	3%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	54%	39%	0%	7%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name bequeathers</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## viii) Relationship between name recipient and name bequeather

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Promised</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Blood relative</i>	52%	47%	0%	1%	100%
<i>Relative by marriage</i>	59%	41%	0%	0%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	1.35%
<i>Neither</i>	66%	33%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	53%	34%	3%	8%	100%
<i>Various petitioners</i>	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all relationships</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 9) Petitions specifically mentioning that name recipient's issue to are bound to similar conditions broken down by:

## i) year bracket

<b>Year bracket</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1761-1765</i>	75%	25%	100%
<i>1766-1770</i>	78%	22%	100%
<i>1771-1775</i>	79%	21%	100%

<i>1776-1780</i>	82%	18%	100%
<i>1781-1785</i>	87%	13%	100%
<i>1786-1790</i>	50%	50%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*ii) year from 1783-1786*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>1783</i>	80%	20%	100%
<i>1784</i>	100%	0%	100%
<i>1785</i>	94%	6%	100%
<i>1786</i>	50%	50%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*iii) gender of name recipient*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Female</i>	38%	62%	100%
<i>Male</i>	83%	17%	100%
<i>Male and female</i>	100%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name recipients</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*iv) gender of name bequeather*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Female</i>	82%	18%	100%
<i>Male</i>	83%	17%	100%
<i>Both</i>	50%	50%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	100%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	40%	60%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name bequeathers</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## v) Social status of name recipient - titled or untitled

<b>Social status</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Titled</i>	68%	32%	100%
<i>Untitled</i>	84%	16%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	74%	26%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name recipients</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## vi) Social status of name bequeather - titled or untitled

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>N/A</i>	100%	0%	1.35%
<i>Titled</i>	85%	15%	100%
<i>Untitled</i>	82%	18%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	76%	24%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all name bequeathers</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## viii) Relationship between name recipient and name bequeather

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Mentioned</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Blood relative</i>	82%	18%	100%
<i>N/A</i>	100%	0%	100%
<i>Neither</i>	66%	33%	100%
<i>Relative by marriage</i>	93%	7%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	75%	25%	100%
<i>Various petitioners</i>	100%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all relationships</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

ix) Mentions in petition of passage of property or money being conditional upon surname change.

Property condition	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Total
<i>Mentioned</i>	78%	22%	100%
<i>Not mentioned</i>	88%	12%	100%
<i>Promised</i>	100%	0%	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	57%	43%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all petitions</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

10) Relationship between name recipient and name change bequeather, broken down by:

i) Year bracket

Year bracket	Blood relative	Relative by marriage	N/A	Neither	Unknown	Various petitioners	Total
<i>1761-1765</i>	25%	0%	0%	0%	75%	0%	100%
<i>1766-1770</i>	64%	7%	0%	0%	29%	0%	100%
<i>1771-1775</i>	58%	16%	0%	0%	26%	0%	100%
<i>1776-1780</i>	53%	9%	0%	2%	35%	2%	100%
<i>1781-1785</i>	44%	18%	4%	2%	32%	0%	100%
<i>1786-1790</i>	38%	0%	0%	0%	62%	0%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all year brackets</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>

ii) Year from 1783-1786

Year	Blood relative	Relative by marriage	N/A	Neither	Unknown	Total
1783	35%	15%	5%	0%	45%	100%

1784	41%	23%	9%	5%	23%	100%
1785	50%	19%	0%	6%	25%	100%
1786	38%	0%	0%	0%	63%	100%
<b>Weighted average across all years</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Figure 2. Richard Newton. 'On a journey to a Courtship in Wales.' London: William Holland, 1795. (British Museum, London)



Figure 3: Isaac Cruikshank. 'Hints Towards a Change of Ministry'. London: S W Forbes, 1797. (British Museum, London)



Figure 4: Charles Williams. 'A Brighton Breakfast, or morning comforts'. London: S W Forbes, 1802 (British Museum, London)



Figure 5. Thomas Colley. 'Perdito and Perdita – or – the man and woman of the people.' London: William Richardson, 1782 (British Museum, London)

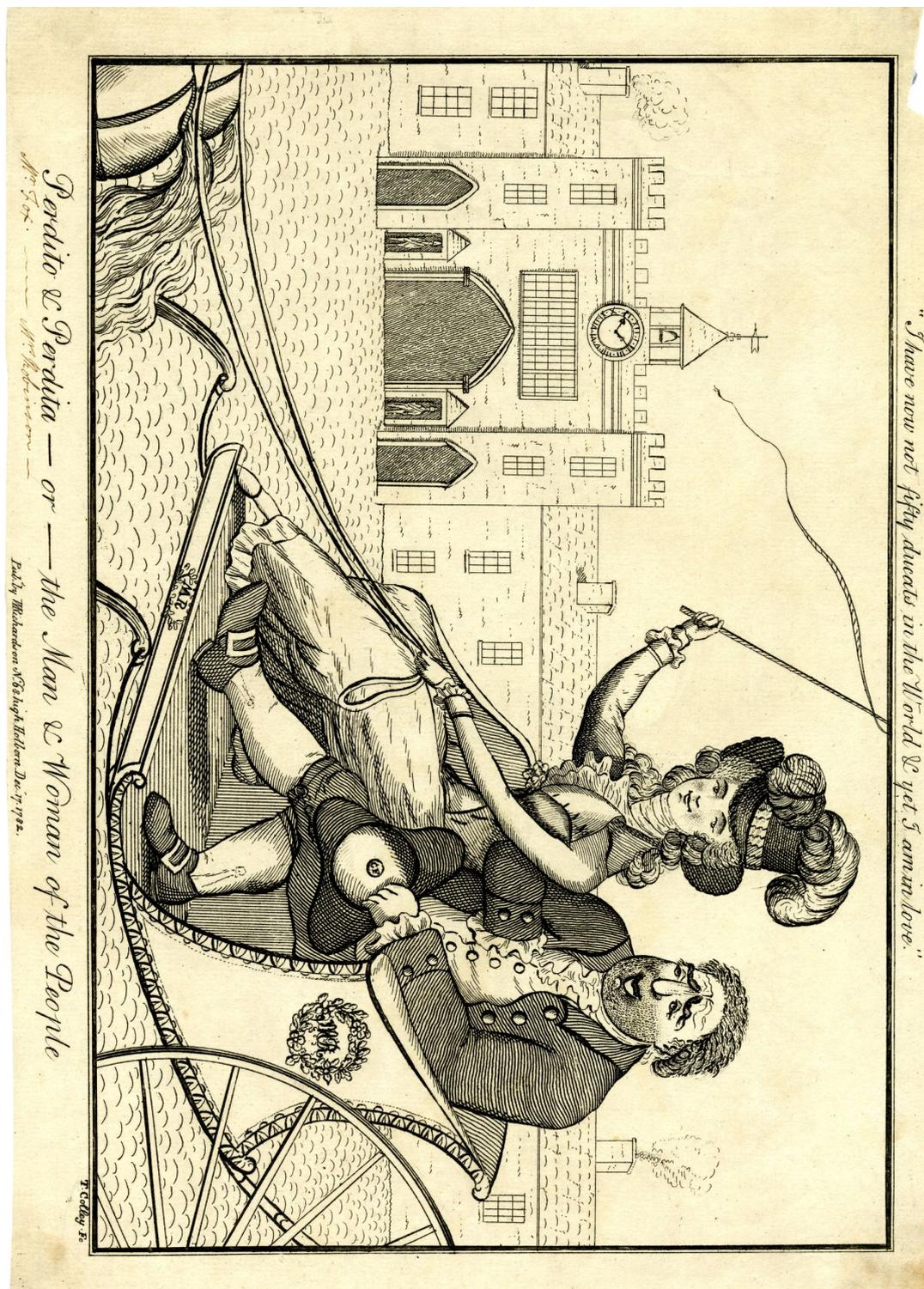




Figure 7. James Sayers. 'Frontispiece for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of Dr J-n's Letters'.  
London: Thomas Cornell, 1788. (British Museum, London)



Figure 8. Number of Royal Licences registered at the College of Arms, 1761-1785

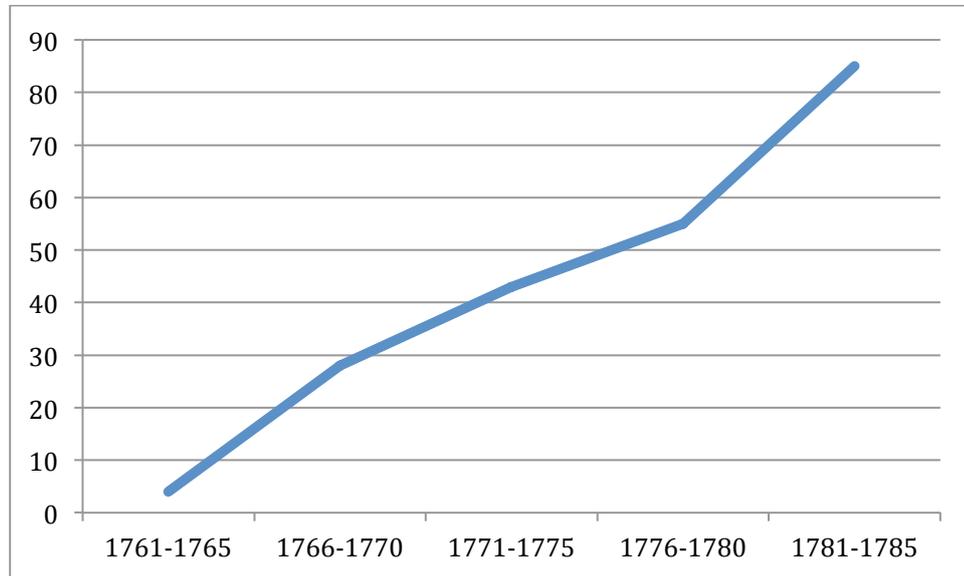
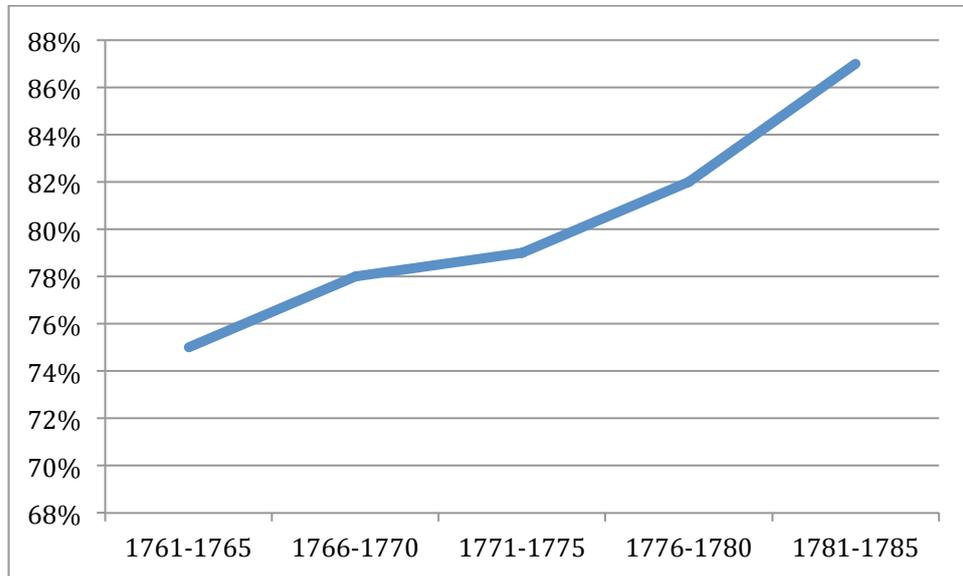


Figure 9. Proportion of petitions for Royal Licence mentioning the name recipient's heirs bound to the same conditions, 1761-1785



## Abbreviations

EJL - *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (1768-1783)*. Ed. Lars Troide.  
5 vols. Montreal, Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queens University  
Press, 1988-2012.

PL - *The Piozzi Letters, Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi (formerly Mrs.  
Thrale)*. Eds. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom. 6 vols. Cranbury, NJ,  
London and Mississauga, ON: Associated University Presses, 1989-2002.

## Glossary

This is an alphabetical list of onomastic or linguistic terms that I use frequently throughout this thesis.

**Abstract name** (n.): A *common name* that denotes an action, idea, quality or state, contrasted with *concrete name*. E.g. 'Chivalry', 'identity', 'affection'.

**Binomial** (adj.): Having, or characterised by, two names. The most common variation of this is a *given name* followed by a *hereditary surname*. E.g. 'Frances Burney'.

**Byname** (n.): A name pronounced after the given name, and usually last in the name clause. I include both *hereditary surnames* and *patronymics* under this category. E.g. 'Sterne', 'ap Morgan'.

**Common name** (n.): A noun or noun phrase usually referring in its usage to a concept or thing that is general rather than particular. Divided grammatically into count and uncount nouns (which distinction is not very important for this thesis) and semantically into *abstract* and *concrete names*. E.g. 'Conversation', 'marriage', 'lantern', 'tradition'.

**Concrete name** (n.): A *common name* denoting a physical object: a person, an animal or an observable and touchable thing. Contrasted with *abstract name*. E.g. 'hand', 'water'.

**Given name** (n.): The name that a person is given by others in infancy, often but not always at baptism. The first placed word in the name clause. Referred to by some eighteenth-century commentators as the 'Christian name'. E.g. 'Cecilia', 'Tristram', but also 'Citizen' if conferred by a parent.

**Onomastic** (adj.): Of, related to or connected with names or naming.

**Onomasticon** (n.): A vocabulary or lexicon of (especially *personal*) *proper names*, usually represented in alphabetical order. E.g. William Camden's *Remaines Concerning Britaine*, Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi's *Lyford Redivivus*.

**Onomastics** (n.): The study of the history and origins of proper names. Also, naming habits or practices.

**Patronymic** (n.): A name derived from that of a father or male ancestor by addition of an affix indicating such descent. E.g. 'ap Morgan', 'Ben-Judah'.

(adj.): Of a personal or family name derived from the name of a father or male ancestor by addition of an affix indicating such descent .

**Proper name** (n.): A noun or noun phrase referring in its usage to a particular unique person, place, animal etc. Contrasted with *common names*. Includes *personal proper names* and *place names*.

Early eighteenth century grammars often imagined the large category of a 'Noun' to comprise a distinction between 'nouns Substantive' - what we would now call nouns - and 'nouns Adjectival' - what we would call adjectives. It is only in the second half of the century that the opposition between proper and common names develops as the most important organisatory principle within the category of 'noun'. Given this instability, I have chosen the word 'name' over 'noun' for my own discussion.

As explained in my Introduction, I use the more expansive term 'proper name' over 'proper noun' in its modern sense because I wish to consider all components of the unit(s) of language used to address people, including descriptors (e.g. Citizen Richard Lee, Lord Compton Ferrers, *Cecilia: or, Memoirs of an Heiress*) whereas the strict modern definition of a proper noun is by definition a single word (e.g. Caleb, Smith, Paris).

**Personal proper name (n.):** The name by which a person is identified or known. Included in the category of *proper names* alongside *place names*. In this thesis, I consider all parts of a name clause (eg. 'Mrs.' (Title) 'Hester' (given name) 'Lynch' (middle name) 'Piozzi' (surname)) to be personal proper names.

**Place name (n.):** The name of a geographical location such as a city, country, lake etc. E.g. 'Bath', 'United States of America', 'Mont Blanc'. Generally, the discussion of place names falls outside the scope of this thesis, but in the eighteenth century a degree of overlap takes place between aristocratic *surnames*, *honorific titles* and the place name of the estate belonging to the individual in question. E.g. The 'Earl of Oxford' can be referred to as 'Oxford', or 'Castle Howard' is named after the Howard family.

**Surname (n.):** The name that a person traditionally bears in common with his or her biological or adoptive family, meant to signal literal or figurative hereditary kinship. Usually the last placed word in the name clause. Referred to by some eighteenth-century commentators as the *cognomen* or *family name*.

**Title (n.):** An appellation attaching to an individual to represent social, marital or professional status.

**Honorific title:** This is used in some modern contexts to refer to all titles (eg. 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.' As well as 'Lord' or 'Baroness'). However, in this thesis I use it as an appellation conferred by royalty and attaching to an individual or family to represent rank, function, office, or attainment, or the possession of association with certain lands. E.g. 'Lord', 'Lady', 'Sir', 'Baron', 'Baroness', 'The Honourable', 'Count', 'Comte'.

**Civil title:** An appellation attaching to an individual which, while it originally may have signalled a particular professional occupation or social status, is in this period largely used to profess general respect of address. E.g. 'Mr.', 'Miss', 'Mrs.', 'Monsieur'. Signifies a lack of *honorific title* and includes *marital titles*. 'Monsieur' and 'Citizen' are often understood in radical discourse of the 1790s to signal, respectively, political loyalism and political radicalism.

**Marital title:** An appellation attaching to an individual to represent marital status. Included within the category of *civil titles*. Since a man keeps 'Mr.' before and after marriage, this category only applies with any significance to women, who are generally known in this period as 'Miss' before marriage and 'Mrs.' afterwards. Amy Erickson argues that the use of 'Mrs.' to denote marital status, rather than professional authority, only becomes popular around the late eighteenth century, but I have found the convention of annexing it to marital status reasonably stable in my sources.

**Democratic title:** An appellation attaching to an individual to represent adherence to a democratic political philosophy and / or

inclusion in a real or figurative republic. The most obvious example of this in the period is 'Citizen'. Opposed to *civil titles*.

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