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"From Manual to Digital: Women's Hands and the Work of Eighteenth-Century Studies"

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In 1994, Martha Woodmansee called the academic arts and humanities the "last bastion" of the Romantic conception of the author—that solitary and original genius with a proprietary relationship to his or her unique ideas. Writing at the dawn of the Internet era, Woodmansee speculated that the digital revolution might force the humanities to reconsider this stance on intellectual property: "As the collaborative nature of contemporary research and problem-solving fosters multiple authorship in more and more spheres, electronic technology is hastening the demise of the illusion that writing is solitary and originary."[1] Nearly three decades later, digital resources, workflows, and methods have indeed pushed humanities fields toward increasingly capacious understandings of scholarly collaboration, attribution, and credit.[2] Yet the myth of the heroic individual researcher persists, most notably in the continued emphasis on solo-authored articles and books as the gold standard for academic hiring, promotion, and tenure. Critics have argued for years that this lingering Romantic view of authorship immobilizes our fields in the face of ongoing publishing, employment, and social crises that relate both directly and indirectly to the rise of digital technologies.[3] Less well recognized are the ways in which this concept of

authorship helps to render humanities scholars inexcusably complicit in global networks of labor exploitation.

In this essay, I call on eighteenth-century scholars to own our fields' inheritance of and ongoing reliance on digital tools, datasets, and research materials produced by casualized, precarious laborers in technology industry sweatshops. I further insist on our responsibility to challenge deep-seated understandings of intellectual property on which the global information economy depends and to which our period of study gave rise. It was the long eighteenth century, after all, that defined communicative expression as intellectual property, knowledge as a source of extractable economic value, and its production as a form of alienable labor. These constructions relied and continue to rely on the figure of the hand, a synecdoche that has helped to police the shifting boundaries between agential and alienated knowledge work. The hand in "handwriting" signifies authorial presence and individuality; in "handiwork," it indicates labor grounded in the body rather than the mind, in tradition rather than originality. The hand also has etymological links to the terms "manual" and "digital," the former now associated with the work of the body, the latter with the seemingly intangible products of binary computation—produced, of course, largely through the operations of fingers (digits) assembling hardware and devices, entering data, or writing software on a keyboard.[4] As a figure for the women who largely perform this work, the hand looms large in the history of efforts to feminize and devalue some kinds of knowledge work and elevate others.

The following discussion begins with an account of the digital infrastructure of eighteenth-century studies today and of recent research that uncovers the hidden histories of Google Books, the HathiTrust Digital Library, Early English Books Online, Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, and the Text Creation Partnership. Building on this work, I offer a new case

study of an offshore outsourcing project commissioned by and for eighteenth-century studies: the digital transcription, in 1970, of the eleven volumes of *The London Stage, 1660–1800*. This work, performed by women keypunchers at China Data Systems Corporation, forms the largely invisible foundation of the NEH-funded digital humanities project that I lead: the *London Stage Database*.

What would it look like to recognize workers like the women of China Data Systems among the many hands at work in our scholarship? What forms of solidarity would such a recognition demand? To answer these questions, I turn to an eighteenth-century woman whose plays have come down to us as the workmanlike products of a workaday writer: Susanna Centlivre. In a receipt documenting her sale of three copyrights to Edmund Curll, I find a story of creative and economic agency and alienation—one richly suggestive of how we might articulate the relationality of scholarly labor in our own time. As I will argue, doing so requires us to go beyond even the reimagining of humanities norms around authorship, collaboration, and publication that has been championed in the digital and public humanities for years. It demands that we divest from notions of labor and property embedded in copyright law, scholarly communication, and technocapitalism; historicize the split between creativity and its material expression; unpack the rhetorical figures that uphold that split today; and, ultimately, radically reconsider our field's foundational assumptions about the nature and value of scholarship. Such a reckoning requires nothing less than a full-scale reevaluation of our labor as such and in relation to the labor of others.

Most eighteenth-century scholars now operate within a copyright regime that defines a "work" as a form of property, the value of which inheres in the novelty or singularity of the individual expression of an idea. This legal framework is putatively designed to protect the

economic rights of the author, but the direct economic value of humanities scholarship is marginal, at least as expressed in book sales figures or royalties. Instead, intangible value is conferred on our ideas within an economy of prestige and then transmuted by our institutions. The reputational gains associated with an acceptance at a top-tier journal, the imprimatur of an academic press, or the citations that follow publication are made manifest in a salaried position, a fellowship, a merit raise, or a promotion.

Recognizing these professional advancements as the primary benefits of authorship in the academic humanities, writers typically transfer most of the pecuniary interest in a work's success to their publishers, though they often reserve certain moral rights in the work as part of the publication agreement. These moral rights—to be credited for the work and to see its integrity protected—are codified by law in many countries. In the United States, by contrast, they are protected weakly and only where they converge with an economic view of copyright as a fundamentally proprietary relationship to a commodity. The site of this convergence is reputation: if a writer's ideas are plagiarized or misrepresented, the logic goes, their personal brand is damaged, and they suffer from lost opportunities to profit from their intellectual property in the future.[5]

Of course, scholarly works never reflect solely on the author, nor are they ever truly solitary achievements, a fact that has become all the more visible with the rise of digital humanities (DH) methods and electronic publication venues. Digital scholarship is not necessarily more collaborative, but its orthogonality to existing institutional structures forces scholars to confront material and social realities streamlined into invisibility within the established workflows of traditional humanities research. For example, scholars have long relied on the expertise of catalogers to navigate archives and then claimed undue credit for

"discoveries" made there— hence, the old joke among librarians about a researcher consulting a finding aid and then calling the subsequent encounter it facilitates "serendipity." Those same scholars may now find themselves in active collaboration with their counterparts in libraries and archives as they navigate the complex legal and technical landscape around high-resolution imaging, metadata curation, and file hosting for a digital exhibit. The day-to-day working conditions in fields like book history and DH have positioned these fields as leaders in the push for humanities academics to better recognize and compensate collaborators across roles and ranks, including students, staff, technologists, librarians, archivists, editors, and community partners. At their best, such efforts help to debunk the myth of Romantic authorship and to embrace instead a "vision of the relational author as a participant in a process of cultural dialogue and exchange" for which Carys Craig has been calling.[6]

Roopika Risam, however, warns that self-congratulatory celebrations of DH's collaborative ethos can serve as a smokescreen for the field's continued dependence on uncredited technology workers: "While there has been some interrogation of the ethics of collaboration between roles among those within the Global North—to varying effect—there has been far less critical interrogation of the role of exploited and casualized labor from the Global South in supporting digital knowledge production in the Global North."[7] Jacqueline Wernimont and Elizabeth Losh enumerate a few of the kinds of outsourced labor on which DH depends: "digitizers scanning pages from books and journals, call center operators fielding customer service questions, assembly line workers manufacturing components, and extraction technicians mining raw materials."[8] Risam, for her part, is particularly concerned with the growing and uncritical use of anonymous workers for work like data entry and transcription, compensated at pennies per task through services like Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Digital projects turn to such

services because the limited options for commissioning time-intensive, monotonous work on a large scale and at low cost push the existing humanities infrastructure beyond its limits.[9] While the turn to "Turkers" may be specific to researchers working at computationally enabled scale, however, the hypocrisy around labor and credit is not unique to DH. Rather, as Risam makes clear, it signals the field's entrenchment within a broader academic culture that centers faculty expertise and subsumes all other kinds of work in the service of a few privileged researchers' agendas.

Eighteenth-century studies is no exception. For scholars working on our period of study, an enormous amount of research begins in databases, like the HathiTrust Digital Library and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, that are built on invisible, largely offshore labor. The workers behind these resources typically assign the intellectual property in their work to their employer, retaining no moral or pecuniary right to the texts, data, and software they produce. Courts have ruled that such "work-for-hire" agreements are necessary supports to the information economy. Yet these arrangements do far more than just protect the commercial interest of companies in the intellectual property generated by their employees; they also allow those companies to disguise the work of uncredited humans as impossibly seamless user experiences, ostensibly automated content moderation, and too-perfect algorithms.

A particularly striking example of this phenomenon is the Google Books project, which is a central part of the architecture of the HathiTrust Digital Library. Out of the millions of page images, a small, but captivating fraction include accidental glimpses of fingers or hands—traces of the workers on Google's ScanOps team. As peeks into the Internet's hidden processes, these images have fascinated artists like Krissy Wilson, whose *Art of Google Books* blog frames "the adversaria of Google Books"—marginal notes, bookmarks, and other user traces, including those

left by the scanning staff—as aesthetically pleasing tidbits of media history.[10] More than merely whimsical testaments to the collaborations and frictions between humans and machines, though, these inadvertent manicules are compelling precisely because they subvert Google's concerted efforts to conceal the workers behind these images -- as evidenced in the company's termination of contractor Andrew Norman Wilson for capturing footage of the ScanOps team, most of them Black and Latino, using a separate entrance to access the Google campus[11]In the "disembodied, anonymous, brown and black hands" of Google Books, many of them feminine in appearance, Andrea Zeffiro sees "the persistence of bodily acts in data infrastructures" that seek to occlude them.[12] Joseph Yannielli reads in these images "'the invisible hand' of the market … laid bare" and compares them to other hands, also feminine, that were captured accidentally as part of microfilming books in the middle of the twentieth century: "Like the women who programmed the first computers, their work was both invisible and glaring."[13] Indeed, the Google Books project makes it impossible to ignore the inconvenient truth that a vast majority of the essential work of the information economy is performed by women—often women of color, caregivers, and elders— whose labor is systematically devalued and hidden.[14]

In designing the cover image for a 2020 special issue of *PMLA* on "Varieties of Digital Humanities," Allison Booth and Miriam Posner were inspired by the large and growing body of art and criticism in which the hands of Google Books figure tangled relations of technology, scholarship, global capitalism, race, and gender. Booth and Posner's team created an image that evokes these accidental testaments to the laboring body. It offers an ironic echo of Google's stated aim to "put the world's printed heritage at our fingertips," one that the scholars intend as "a critique of the legacy of colonialism in the global production of textual data."[15] Booth and Posner leverage the hand—a figure that mediates between human and non-human actors in the

collective imaginary surrounding digitization—to call for more widespread acknowledgment of technology workers as part of scholarly networks of production.

    As a visual argument, the *PMLA* cover is part of a long tradition of feminist scholarship that attempts to reclaim invisible labor, recognizing, as Lauren Klein puts it in the same special issue, that "it is both a cause and an effect of this invisibility that these forms of labor are undervalued and undercredited (or uncredited altogether) in the end result. The project of infusing value and credit into invisible labor—of making this labor visible to the eyes and to the economy—is a feminist one because, among other reasons, the primary example of invisible labor is unpaid domestic work, which has historically been performed by women."[16] Yet counter-histories of "women's work" often fall into the trap of recovering devalued labor within the same masculinist frameworks through which it was initially marginalized. Recent celebrations of women's roles in early computing, for example, have focused largely on the engineers and scientists who broke barriers in professions dominated by men.[17] Mar Hicks cautions that these triumphalist narratives obscure the reality that the vast majority of mid-century women "computers" performed various technical jobs that were considered more akin to low-level administrative work than to professional careers.[18] Kate Ozment identifies a similar pattern in revisionist histories that reclaim female archivists, librarians, indexers, and catalogers as bibliographers, a title that was traditionally applied only to members of an almost exclusively male professoriate. These studies risk overwriting the fact that this classification system devalued women's work by design, rather than by accident.[19] Hicks and Ozment challenge us to understand the vitality of women's knowledge work, not by reframing it in historically gendered or classed terms, but rather by resisting a hierarchical division of agential work from alienated labor.

This division is implicitly reinforced by feminist and decolonial critiques of Google Books that turn on the figure of the hand—a loaded image that elicits distinctions between the work of the body and that of the mind, between manual and digital labor. To demonstrate how the hand does this ideological work, I turn now to two specific digital resources with particular importance for our period of study: Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO), a database of facsimiles of primary texts in English or produced within the Anglophone world published by Gale; and the subset of materials from ECCO that have been transcribed and published to the open web through the Text Creation Partnership (TCP), known collectively as ECCO-TCP.

For two decades, ECCO and ECCO-TCP have made it significantly easier to access page images and transcriptions of many eighteenth-century books, enabling both day-to-day research and teaching and exciting large-scale analyses.[20] The centrality of these resources to scholarly workflows is reflected in the recent decision by the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies to purchase an institutional subscription on behalf of its members. Yet a growing number of scholars have sounded the alarm about the failure or refusal of publishers like Gale to document their collection priorities and processes.[21] Their lack of transparency poses serious epistemological, methodological, and ethical problems for humanities researchers who wish to account for the contours and biases of their datasets or to understand the material and human costs of access to these digitized documents. In his archaeology of the *Victorian Newspapers Database*, Paul Fyfe argues persuasively that "the efficacy of our scholarship depends upon a largely missing source history of these digital collections," a history that "weaves through variously sold and reconfigured companies, links big data to microfilming and micropublishing projects from the 1920s onwards, and blends labor practices from library acquisitions to the technical work outsourced to the global economy."[22] Understanding how, by whom, and for

whom these resources came to be is every bit as essential as documenting the provenance of an archival collection with which one might work.

Stephen H. Gregg has recently undertaken a line of investigative work not unlike Fyfe's into the history of ECCO and ECCO-TCP, uncovering details about the reliance of those projects on offshore outsourcing.[23] For its plain-text transcriptions, the Text Creation Partnership contracts with Apex CoVantage and Straive (formerly SPi Global), based, respectively, in India and Singapore.[24] These companies appear to specialize in the production of large-scale digitization projects for academic and cultural heritage institutions. Apex, for example, comes up in Fyfe's history of how the British Library's nineteenth-century newspapers made their way online. Given their pervasive, yet hidden presence in humanities academe, Bonnie Mak has recently called these companies "the offshore sweatshops of the digital humanities," although it might be more apt to call them "the offshore sweatshops of the humanities," full stop.[25]

While the TCP's relationships with its vendors are not exactly a secret, it is nearly impossible to uncover details about the people behind these operations or their working conditions. The British Library and the TCP are equally evasive about this stage in the process, while the companies themselves offer little information about their operations on the ground.[26] A tour of Apex's Hyderabad office posted on YouTube in 2020 offers hints as to the kind of workplace in which ECCO-TCP transcriptions may have been produced. The video is designed to tout the state-of-the-art facility, but it also reveals a strongly gendered workforce: a majority of software engineers, supervisors, and managers appear to be men, while the cubicle farm referred to as the "production floor" is populated predominantly (although not exclusively) by women.[27]

While the actual workers behind the transcriptions are hidden from view, a rhetorical

construction of those workers is paramount to the TCP's self-representation as an ethical and innovative public-private partnership. The TCP was founded in 1999 as a collaboration between ProQuest, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), and libraries at the University of Michigan and Oxford to meet the need for machine-readable texts in early modern studies. While Optical Character Recognition (OCR) programs can facilitate automatic recognition of printed characters in page images, these algorithms are trained on modern fonts and are ill-suited to deal with older typefaces. OCR technology powers Gale's full-text search for ECCO, but the extent to which the search yields useful results is a function of scale; manual correction is necessary to render individual texts or small subsets of the total collection suitable for reading or analysis. As opposed to projects that aim to improve existing OCR technologies or to pilot new techniques for computer vision, the TCP espouses a production model that is emphatically dependent on human workers.

To produce high-quality plain text of books printed in eighteenth-century typefaces, the TCP engages two different workers to each type the text by hand and then collates the resulting transcriptions, encoding any conflicts as a gap.[28] The TCP website promotes this method as producing uniquely accurate and useful datasets for researchers, and they have long touted their process with particular recourse to the figure of the hand. For example, a 2012 status report by a University of Michigan Research Librarian, Rebecca Welzenbach, bears the inspirational title "Transcribed by Hand, Owned by Libraries, Made for Everyone"—a slogan that appeared on the TCP's landing page as recently as September 2019.[29] The passive voice does important work here, as the hand becomes the actor behind the transcription, erasing the specificity of the worker to whom it belongs. The hand evokes the human touch behind seemingly automated technological processes, while simultaneously reducing the worker's contributions to merely

mechanical labor, evacuated of intellect or agency. This figure thus helps to relegate transcription to the realm of manual labor and to displace these workers' contributions to scholarship onto the implicitly more creative and intellectual contributions of the TCP team members based in North America, as well as the cultural heritage institutions that ultimately own the product of all this labor. The story of the TCP illustrates how the field of eighteenth-century studies is entangled with the technology industry's gendered and racialized labor practices, which depend on an ongoing exploitation and erasure of digital-age "women's work"—an erasure achieved, in part, through the overdetermined figure of the hand, which we can see at play both in the TCP's rhetorical self-representation and in the accidental glimpses we encounter in Google Books.
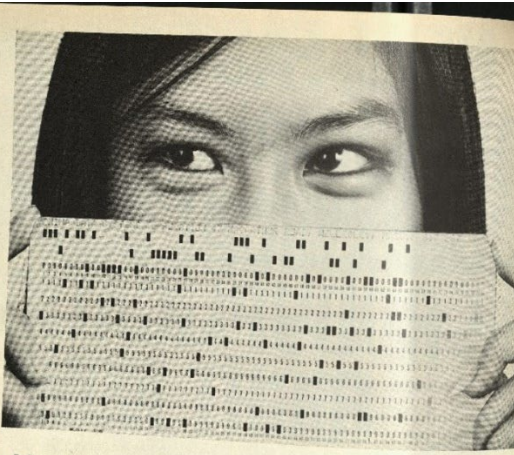
The TCP's history resonates with the origins of a digital project that I lead: the London Stage Database (https://londonstagedatabase.uoregon.edu). Launched in 2019, this open-access resource recovers and revitalizes the London Stage Information Bank, a previously lost project from the days when the digital humanities were known as humanities computing. With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Science Foundation (among others) and with a mandate from the editorial board of the eleven-volume, 8,000-page set of reference books, *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, the Information Bank team set out to digitize and make searchable a massive calendar of all the known theatrical performances in London from the Restoration through the end of the eighteenth century.[30] After considering several options, they ultimately arrived at the same solution as EEBO-TCP would employ decades later: hand-typed transcriptions produced by offshore workers—in this case, women keypunchers based in Hong Kong.

In his memoir, *Travels in Computerland*, project director Ben Schneider, Jr. styles

himself a kind of Gulliver, a literature professor washed up on the unfamiliar shores of mainframe computing. To explain how he came to contract with an offshore keypunching firm, Schneider first recalls the domestic options he considered, offering in the process a revealing glimpse of attitudes towards women's work in the 1970s. One possibility he explored was to retain the services of a typing pool he calls the "MT/ST [Magnetic Tape / Selectric Typewriter] girls," who worked for the local Institute for Paper Chemistry.[31] He also considered the university-adjacent "cottage-industry of faculty wives, typists in academic offices, and local housewives who type dissertations at home" (*TC* 96). Particularly promising were the services of a faculty secretary who "could type your letters, handle your wife's phone calls, and direct a book salesman while she discussed last night's TV with her assistant" (*TC* 112) and a stay-at-home mother who "paid such perfect attention to both the children and me at once, that neither had cause to feel deprived by her ministrations to the other" (*TC* 110). In the guise of praising these women's capabilities, he suggests that document preparation is the kind of mindless work that can be juggled with other, equally feminized tasks, such as caring for children and fielding phone calls. At one point, Schneider himself attempted and failed to perform a batch of typing, discovering, to his surprise, that it was more cognitively and physically demanding than it looked (*TC* 68). This incident is treated, however, as a merely entertaining anecdote that does little to soften the pervasive misogyny.

This devaluation of women's work collides with racial fantasy when Schneider learns of New York-based China Data Systems (CDS) and its overseas keypunching operation, Hong Kong Data Processing. In an advertisement placed in the trade magazine *Business Automation*, Schneider recalls, "I found a picture of a beautiful pair of Oriental eyes gazing over the top of an IBM card" (*TC* 98). This encounter had so strong an impact on Schneider's decision-making

process that he reproduces, in his memoir, much of the text from the full-page ad, which bears the headline "Meet the grand old man of off-shore keypunching" [see Figure 1].

Figure 1. "Meet the grand old man of off-shore keypunching" [advertisement for China Data Systems Corporation]. Reprinted from Business Automation, volume 17, page 32. Copyright 1970.

The "grand old man" turns out to be both the woman behind the punch card and her employer: "Cindy Luk is one of our best keypunch operators. She was with us when we pioneered in off-shore keypunching, and she's still with us. That was only a year or so ago. But so much has happened in the off-shore keypunching field since we began that Cindy is a real old-timer. So are we. And so are the rest of the highly-educated, English-speaking operators in our Hong Kong keypunch center." The advertisement positions CDS as simultaneously a "pioneer" in a new field and the "grand old man" of that field, invoking a colonialist and masculinist imaginary in which

it is possible to be both a trailblazing young buck and an esteemed patriarch. The company can occupy this seemingly paradoxical state thanks to the work of women like Cindy Luk, who is "a real old-timer" after a year on the job.

The ad copy emphasizes that Luk and her colleagues are "highly-educated" and "English-speaking"—a point so critical that it is reiterated almost immediately: "our keypunch operators come from one of the most efficient and best-educated work forces in Asia. They average more than 12 years of education in English-speaking schools." The ad appeals three times to the typists' education and twice to their English skills, insisting that they are the products of a good colonial education system and so can be entrusted with the same work as their white women counterparts in the U.S. These women of color have a key advantage, however, which is that they can be paid less: "We've cut our turnaround time and our costs. We'll keypunch cards for half the U.S. price or less, with a 10-day turnaround time." In fact, the price difference appears to have been even starker in the case of the London Stage Information Bank: Schneider notes in his memoir that CDS charged him roughly one-fifth of the cost quoted by the U.S.-based CompuScan.

Given the speed, accuracy, and efficiency with which they produce these results, the ad declares that "our biggest asset is still Cindy and the rest of our smart, careful girls." Here, the women are objectified as "assets" and as "girls," a contrast in both gender and age to the "grand old man" that CDS has become on the basis of their work. The visual rhetoric of a veiled young woman of color, paired with the implicitly male gaze and voice of the advertisement, encourages masculinist and Orientalist fantasies of power (echoed in Schneider's description elsewhere of his project as "my little empire" [*TC* 147]), even as it lays bare the economic logic at the heart of offshore keypunching. The enabling condition of the women's alienated labor is the existence of

an intellectual property regime that understands information, ideas, and their expression as economic resources. The existence of a specialized creative class, capable in theory (if not always in practice) of owning the fruits of their knowledge work, is a necessary corollary to the expectation that a massive casualized labor force will produce texts, data, and code without retaining any such rights. Hence, Cindy Luk has been "with us" (the management) since CDS's inception, and she and her colleagues are referred to possessively as "our keypunchers" and "our biggest asset," even as their speedy typing becomes "our keystroke capacity."

The feminization, racialization, and accompanying devaluation of skilled technical work at CDS echoes Lisa Nakamura's history of the recruitment of Navajo women to assemble electronics for Silicon Valley in the 1980s. The myth that Indigenous women had a unique aptitude for circuitry work based on their experience of weaving blankets was applied to East Asian women as U.S.-based corporations moved their supply chains abroad; both groups, as Nakamura points out, were praised for their "nimble fingers."[32] The image of dexterous digits evokes pliability and diminutive physicality, eroticizing handicraft. Although neither Schneider's memoir nor the China Data Systems advertisement refers explicitly to Cindy Luk or her coworkers' fingers, their hands are ever-present in the repeated term "key-punching," a manual operation that transforms information for computational access—digitization in more than one sense of the word.

The figure of the hand activates racialized tropes about Asian women's sexuality that help to naturalize typing as women's work, and the description of the typists as "smart, careful girls" further suggests their innate aptitude for the "care" necessary to do this work. Indeed, "careful" seems to have been a byword for the employment of women computers in early DH projects. The uncredited punch-card operators who encoded the works of St. Thomas Aquinas

for Father Roberto Buso's *Index Thomisticus* in the 1950s were recruited for strikingly similar reasons. Project archivist Marco Carlo Passarotti recalls: "I was told by Father Busa that he chose young women for punching cards on purpose, because they were more careful than men."[33] Here, "care" denotes the precision needed to perform detailed work, but it also suggests idealized feminine qualities associated with the invisible labor of tending to and maintaining vulnerable bodies, environment, and systems that require constant attention. The emphasis on women technologists' aptitude for "care" mediates between traditionally feminized roles—such as mother, homemaker, or weaver—and these women's suitability for employment as manufacturers or operators in an industrialized technology sector.

The figure of the hand helps to ground knowledge work in the raced and gendered body, allowing it to be recast as manual labor and therefore as alienated wage work, outside the realm of intellectual property that might need to be appropriately compensated and credited. These mental moves turn on assumptions that took shape in, but were not yet settled during the long eighteenth century—which makes them easier to see and their alternatives easier to imagine when we turn to the archives of our period. Let's consider a piece of ephemera from the first decade in which authors in England had a statutory right to their own work, and to one of the first workaday women writers in London: dramatist, poet, and Whig panegyrist Susanna Centlivre.

One of the only surviving copies of Centlivre's handwriting is preserved in the papers of antiquarian William Upcott, who collected (among other things) four scrapbooks of autographs from "Distinguished Women" like Margaret Cavendish, Sarah Fielding, Ann Radcliffe, Hannah More, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Frances Burney, Hester Chapone, Maria Edgeworth, and Madame de Staël.[34] While many of these autographs are part of letters, Centlivre's hand appears on a

receipt that documents the sale of her copyright in three plays to Edmund Curll and subsequently

tracks the distribution of shares in those works among other booksellers [see Figure 2].[35]

Figure 2. "Receipt of Susanna Centlivre, 1715." © British Library Board. Add MS 78686 fol. 68.

Under the 1710 copyright statute, authors like Centlivre were considered to be the

original owners of their work, the sale of which was understood to be a one-time transaction that

transferred all legal and financial right to publish and profit from the printed text for fourteen

years.[36] The receipt documents three such sales, recording three payments of 20 guineas each to

Centlivre for the "Copy"—i.e., the copyright—to her plays *The Wonder* (1714), *The Cruel Gift*

(1717), and *The Artifice* (1722):

> May 18th: 1715. Then rec'd of Mr. Curll Twenty
>
> Guineas in full for the Copy of my Play
>
> call'd, The Wonder: a Woman keeps a Secret. Rec'd
>
> the same sum for The Cruel Gift, Susanna CentLivre
>
> & the same for The Artifice. —

(In both wch plays Mr. Bettesworth

has a half share EC) in ye Last Mears + Payne a 3d.

Given the publication dates of the three plays and the date of the receipt itself, Curll appears to have assumed ownership of these copyrights over the course of several years, maintaining an ongoing relationship with Centlivre at the height and tail end of her career.

Curll also appears to have sold shares in these three copyrights to Arthur Bettesworth, William Mears, and Thomas Payne.[37] While the author's labor had a fixed monetary value established when the copyright was sold, the publisher's investment in a work was speculative, premised on the hope of future profits that might or might not be realized. Sharing the ownership of copyrights with other booksellers helped distribute the risks as well as the potential rewards.[38] In the years that followed, editions and collections of Centlivre's works appeared from each of these booksellers, sometimes in collaboration. For example, the first edition of *The Cruel Gift* was published and sold concurrently by Curll and Bettesworth, as was a 1734 reprint.[39] The first edition of *The Artifice* came out from Payne, but Mears, as his equal sharer in the rights, reissued it in 1735 as a standalone edition and repackaged it as part of a collection of *Four celebrated comedies written by … Mrs. Centlivre*.[40]

As mentioned above, the timing of these three plays' publication would suggest that this receipt was either backdated or updated on at least two occasions.[41] Variations in handwriting and ink color, as well as the increasing crowding on the paper, support the latter interpretation. As I read the receipt, the original draft followed the 1714 publication of *The Wonder* and would have read:

> May 18th: 1715. Then rec'd of Mr. Curll Twenty
>
> Guineas in full for the Copy of my Play
>
> call'd, <u>The Wonder: a Woman keeps a Secret</u>.
>
> Susanna CentLivre.

In 1717 or so, around the time *The Cruel Gift* was published, the receipt appears to have been updated in two places (italicized for emphasis):

> May 18th: 1715. Then Recd of M^r. Curll Twenty
>
> Guineas in full for the Copy of my Play
>
> call'd, <u>The Wonder: a Woman keeps a Secret</u>. *Recd*
>
> *the same sum for <u>The Cruel Gift</u>,* Susanna CentLivre.
>
> *(In both wch Plays M^r. Bettsworth*
>
> *has a half share EC)*

A final set of emendations appears to have been made around 1722, when "& the same for <u>The Artifice</u>" and "in ye Last Mears + Payne a 3^d" were squeezed in to reflect the sale of the final play's copyright. Read this way, the receipt tells the story of how Curll originally invested on his own in Centlivre's work and then gradually recruited partners to share in the risks and rewards of two of her later plays. Curll evidently seized an opportunity when he "poached" Centlivre from rival publisher Bernard Lintot, buying the rights to *The Wonder* at double Lintot's rate.[42] Curll then brought his frequent collaborator Arthur Bettesworth on board as an equal sharer in time for a second print run, and the two went in together on her next offering, *The Cruel Gift*.[43] A few

years later, Curll again purchased the copyright of one of Centlivre's plays, this time sharing the rights to *The Artifice* three ways with Mears and Payne, instead of splitting the venture with Bettesworth.[44]

Like these editions, the receipt itself is the work of many hands. The signature appears to be genuine; it matches that on a 1710 letter signed by Centlivre and held at the Billy Rose Theatre Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts [see Figure 3].[45]
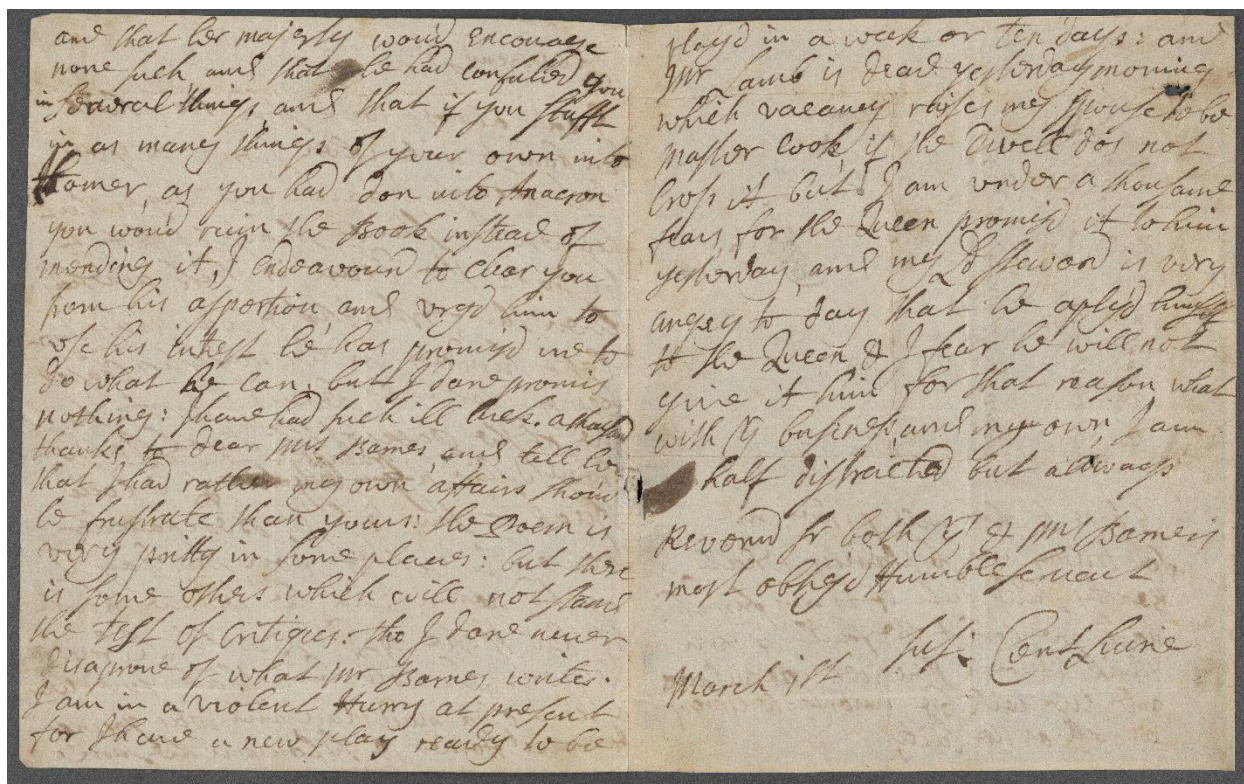

Figure 3. "1719 Mar. 1 – Letter from Susanna Centlivre to Rev. [Joshua] Barnes." Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. T-Mss 2001-065, Box 1, Folder 21.

It is likely that the initials "EC" are Curll's. The rest of the writing appears to be in two or three hands and in slightly different inks. None of it resembles surviving examples of Curll's handwriting, although it could have been produced under his auspices by an apprentice or clerk.[46] If so, the receipt may have been maintained in-house as an ongoing financial record of

transactions related to Centlivre. This would help explain how the receipt ended up in the possession of Upcott, who collected records from several publishers. If the receipt was updated and maintained within Curll's operation, however, he does not seem to have acquired Centlivre's initials to document her confirmation of the two later payments. Another, more intriguing possibility is that this was Centlivre's own copy of the transaction record. The notations concerning *The Artifice* are written in a darker ink and a more open hand than the rest of the receipt, with lettering that exhibits certainkey similarities to Centlivre's letter.[47] If this speculation is correct, Centlivre may have kept this copy of the receipt after receiving her payment from Curll in 1715, had his clerk update it and him initial it in 1717, and then made her own notation about the copyright sale for *The Artifice*.

Why might she have done so? *The Wonder* was first published in May 1714, a full year before the date on this receipt; if Curll was not forthcoming with his promised payment, that may help explain Centlivre's desire to maintain a detailed record of her dealings with him moving forward.[48] Yet she not only recorded the sums of money that changed hands, after which point she had no further rights to the plays; she also noted the names of Curll's partners on those projects, information that might have been useful as she considered where to shop her next play. Indeed, although Centlivre and Curll maintained an ongoing working relationship, the arrangement was not exclusive; she published frequently with other booksellers throughout this same period.[49] Michele Levy suggests that women writers who worked with multiple publishers did so because the gendered power dynamics of these professional exchanges made it difficult to maintain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with any single bookseller.[50] Centlivre's receipt, however, may complicate this characterization of women writers as aspiring, if failed, monogamists. It shows how the appearance of an author working with multiple

publishers may result from collaborations between booksellers themselves and how a playwright's apparent reputational disarray may in fact reflect an abundance and variety of interest in her success. It suggests that the writer in question might try to track that interest and monitor changes in her personal brand—a kind of intangible property that remained her own, no matter who owned the rights to publish her plays.[51] Centlivre's receipt dramatizes the split between the emergent ideal of proprietary authorship and the economic reality of writing as a form of alienated labor. It documents the transformation of Centlivre's plays into fungible and transferable assets, even as her signature assertively announces her connection to the work. It hints at the ways in which the concept of reputation reduces moral rights to a pecuniary concern, enlisting the author's collaboration in the commodification and alienation of her labor. And it hints at the collective material reality that lies beneath all that authorial bluster: like the decontextualized fingers in Google Books, unidentifiable hands crowd the margins of the receipt, enacting the transactions and materializing their effects in the world.

The figure of the hand returns us, finally, to the circumstances of the receipt's preservation—in a scrapbook of signatures gathered by the antiquarian widely credited with originating the practice of collecting autographs—and to the ways in which that practice has been used to devalue women's knowledge work. The fetishization of a writer's autograph epitomizes the Romantic idealization of the author as a singular, irreducible individual, even as it grounds the legibility of that individuality in a mark made by the body. Centlivre has been framed by modern critics as a figure of resistance to Romantic authorship. Jacky Bratton, for instance, has argued that nineteenth-century critics erased Centlivre from the literary canon because they did not value her "intertheatrical" sensibility—an approach to dramatic writing that recognized actors, audiences, and the material conditions of performance as crucial collaborators

in constructing the meaning of a play. Her work, notable for its innovative use of the resources of the stage and cast, was denigrated as "commercial, entertainment, professional, feminine, and in all possible ways both inferior and dangerous to true art."[52] Held up to an ideal of aesthetic achievement as masculine and autonomous, Centlivre was dismissed as a mere workmanlike producer of crowd-pleasing scripts. Even as recently as 1983, a revival of *A Bickerstaff's Burying* met with hostility from critics who called Centlivre "a journey-woman of the theatre" and an "industrial playsmith."[53] Centlivre's image today remains that of a skilled craftsperson— deft at manipulating her materials, to be sure, but lacking the spark of individual genius that differentiates the artist from the artisan.

These links between Centlivre's gendered embodiment and her status as a laborer were forged in her own lifetime. For example, she received this backhanded praise from Richard Steele on the occasion of the premiere of *The Wonder*: "it is no small Satisfaction to me, that I know we are to be entertained to Night with a Comedy from the same Hand that writ *the Gamester* and *the Busie Body*. The deserved Success these Plays met with, is a certain Demonstration that Wit alone is more than sufficient to supply all the Rules of Art. The Incidents in both those Pieces are so dexterously managed, and the Plots so ingeniously perplexed, as shew them at once to be the Invention of a Wit and a Woman."[54] The "same Hand" that Steele mentions serves here as a synecdoche for the playwright herself and suggests the reputational value that has accrued to her work as a result of her previous successes: though she did not consistently publish under her own name, she usually at least published as "the author of" hit works like *The Gamester* (London, 1705). In Steele's usage, the "Hand" also helps to figure Centlivre as a manual laborer, an association reinforced by the description of her plotting as "dexterous." The qualities of the work that show it to be the work of many hands (such as the

complexity of the stage business in *The Wonder*) become signs of Centlivre's ingenuity, rather than her expertise, when they are framed within an understanding of good authors as singular creators.

Centlivre paid forward Steele's condescending endorsement of her embodied creativity, describing her actor-collaborators in similar terms and in ways that privileged her status and agency as the playwright. The preface to *The Wonder*, for example, famously attests to the interdependence of playwrights and actors:

> I Don't pretend to write a Preface, either to point out the Beauties, or to excuse the Errors, a judicious Reader may possibly discover in the following Scenes, but to give those excellent Comedians their Due, to whom, in some Measure the best Dramatick Writers are oblig'd. The Poet and the Player are like Soul and Body, indispensibly necessary to one another; the correct Author makes the Player shine, whilst the judicious Player makes the Poet's Fame immortal. I freely acknowledge my self oblig'd to the Actors in general, and to Mr. Wilks, and Mrs. Oldfield in particular; and I owe them this Justice to say, That their inimitable Action cou'd only support a Play at such a Season, and among so many Benefits. Let this encourage our English Bards to Write, furnish but the artful Player with Materials, and his Skill will lay the Foundation for your Fame.[55]

Centlivre describes the writer as "oblig'd" to the actor, not once, but twice; her debt to Robert Wilks and Anne Oldfield is insistently economic, described as the comedians' "due" and as the "Justice" they are "owed." Yet the acknowledgement performs a kind of *noblesse oblige*. "Poet and Player" may be as interdependent as "Soul and Body," but the word order suggests that it is

the Poet who is the Soul to the Player's Body. Reinforcing the association of acting with the labor of the body, Centlivre describes the Players as "artful" and as possessing the "Skill" to work with the "Materials" they are furnished. In context, it is clear that the sense of the word "art" invoked here is that of craftsmanship—the practical application of technical skill.

To consider the actors' well-trained and laboring bodies as essential collaborators in the creative process could be radical, were Centlivre to frame her own efforts in the same way. But she does not. The actors "lay the Foundation" for the writer's "Fame," a phrase that echoes her earlier statement that "the judicious Player makes the Poet's Fame immortal." Centlivre smugly congratulates herself for being willing to "freely acknowledge" the actors' contributions and to admit that they are "in some Measure" essential to her success, but she does not entertain the possibility that they might be truly co-equal co-creators. They are, instead, in a "support" role. Humanities academics today likewise gesture towards more inclusive forms of acknowledgment, but in ways that remain fundamentally wedded to existing models of intellectual property and hierarchies of labor. At a moment when many of our ways of knowing are dismissed, ridiculed, and attacked in the public sphere, scholars are understandably hesitant to relinquish frameworks of knowledge production in which our expertise is central and understood to be valuable, both socially and economically. Yet, as I have argued, the Romantic model of authorship to which our fields cling both enables and obfuscates our dependence on uncredited, undercompensated, offshore workers to produce the databases we all use.

The figure of the hand helped define the woman writer as a mere craftsperson and the woman computer as a manual laborer. As a synecdoche for the body, the hand situates gendered knowledge workers on the boundary between agential and alienated labor and highlights how they are essential to the production of information that they do not own. The enduring scholarly

fascination with the fingers that appear in Google Books attests to the ongoing overdetermination of this hand, and to the ways our understandings of labor, property, and the body remain bounded by terms established in the eighteenth century. It is our particular responsibility as scholars of the period to unpack the rhetorical figures that uphold unjust labor structures; to conceive of ourselves as knowledge workers, rather than proprietors; and to join in solidarity with the many other hands at work in eighteenth-century studies.

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[1] Woodmansee, "On the Author Effect: Recovering Collectivity," in *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature*, ed. Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 25.

[2] *Digital Technology and the Practices of Humanities Research*, ed. Jennifer Edmond (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020): http://books.openedition.org/obp/11899.

[3] See, for example, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).

[4] Richard Holden traces the evolution of the term "digit" and how it came to refer to the discrete numeric values in binary code ("digital," *OED Blog*, 16 August 2012: https://public.oed.com/blog/word-stories-digital). See also Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 12.

[5] Roberta Kwall, *The Soul of Creativity: Forging a Moral Rights Law for the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 30–31.

[6] Craig, *Copyright, Communication, and Culture: Towards a Relational Theory of Copyright Law* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 3.

[7] Risam, "The Stakes of Digital Labor in the Twenty-First-Century Academy: The Revolution Will Not Be Turkified," in *Humans at Work in the Digital Age: Forms of Digital Textual Labor*, ed. Shawna Ross and Andrew Pilsch (London: Routledge, 2020), 245.

[8] Jacqueline Wernimont and Elizabeth Losh, "Introduction," *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Digital Humanities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), xxii; https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-4e08b137-aec5-49a4-83c0-38258425f145/section/466311ae-d3dc-4d50-b616-8b5d1555d231#intro.

[9] See Emily C. Friedman, "Ownership, Copyright, and the Ethics of the Unpublished," in *Access and Control in Digital Humanities*, ed. Shane Hawkins (London: Routledge, 2021), 226; and Tim Causer, Kris Grint, Anna-Maria Sichani, and Melissa Terras, "'Making such Bargain': *Transcribe Bentham* and the Quality and Cost–Effectiveness of Crowdsourced Transcription," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 33, no. 3 (2018): 469.

[10] Wilson, *The Art of Google Books*: https://theartofgooglebooks.tumblr.com.

[11] Andrew Norman Wilson, *Workers Leaving the Googleplex* (2011),

http://www.andrewnormanwilson.com/WorkersGoogleplex.html. Wilson has continued to

explore similar themes through the critically acclaimed art exhibit *ScanOps* (2012-ongoing).

[12] Andrea Zeffiro, "Digitizing Labor in the Google Books Project: Gloved Fingertips and

Severed Hands," in *Humans at Work in the Digital Age*, 133–54, 137, 140.

[13] Joseph Yannielli, "The Secret History of the Severed Hands," HASTAC, 22 November 2014,

https://www.hastac.org/blogs/jyannielli/2014/11/22/secret-history-severed-hands.

[14] On the makeup of this labor force, see Shawn Wen, "The Ladies Vanish," *The New Inquiry*

(11 November 2014), https://thenewinquiry.com/the-ladies-vanish. See also Lisa Nakamura,

"Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture,"

American Quarterly 66, no. 4 (2014): 919–41; Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, *Data*

Feminism (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020), Chapter 7, https://data-

feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/0vgzaln4#n2vrr0fw1rc; and Mary Gray and Siddarth Suri, *Ghost*

Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass (New York:

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019).

[15] Booth and Posner, "Introduction: The Materials at Hand," *PMLA* 135, no. 1 (2020): 14, 15.

[16] Klein, "Dimensions of Scale: Invisible Labor, Editorial Work, and the Future of Quantitative

Literary Studies," *PMLA* 135, no. 1 (2020): 24.

[17] See, for example, James Essinger, *Ada's Algorithm: How Lord Byron's Daughter Ada*

Lovelace Launched the Digital Age (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2014); Janet Abbate, *Recoding*

Gender: Women's Changing Participation in Computing (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012); Liza

Munda, *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II*

(New York: Hatchette, 2019); and Margot Lee Shetterly, *Hidden Figures: The American Dream*

and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race (New York: William Morrow, 2016).

[18] Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Its Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), 5–9, 17. See also Jennifer S. Light, "When Computers Were Women," *Technology and Culture* 40, no. 3 (1999): 455–83.

[19] Ozment, "Rationale for Feminist Bibliography," *Textual Cultures* 13, no. 1 (2020): 167.

[20] Michael Gavin, "How to Think about EEBO," *Textual Cultures* 11, nos. 1 and 2 (2017): 70–105; see also Peter C. Herman, "EEBO and Me: An Autobiographical Response to Michael Gavin, 'How to Think About EEBO,'" *Textual Cultures* 13, no. 1 (2020): 207–16; and Gavin, "EEBO and Us," *Textual Culture* 14, no. 1 (2021): 270–78.

[21] Ian Gadd, "The Use and Misuse of Early English Books Online," *Literature Compass* 6, no. 3 (2009): 680–92; Bonnie Mak, "Archaeology of a Digitization," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 65, no. 8 (2014): 1515–26; and Cassidy Holahan, "Rummaging in the Dark: ECCO as Opaque Digital Archive," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 54, no. 4 (2021): 803–26.

[22] Fyfe, "An Archaeology of Victorian Newspapers," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 49, no. 4 (2016): 548, 549–50.

[23] Gregg, *Old Books and Digital Publishing: Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), and "Eccentric Connections: Towards a Decolonial (Digital) Book History," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 34, no. 4 (2022): 471–82.

[24] SPi Global was based in the Philippines. These companies also maintain offices in the U.K. and the U.S. and additional centers in countries including China, Nicaragua, and Vietnam. See "About," Apex CoVantage, https://apexcovantage.com/about/; "Contact Us," Straive

https://www.straive.com/contact-us; and "Contact Us," SPi Global, as preserved in the Internet

Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20210119205839/https://www.spi-global.com/contact-us.

[25] Mak, "Confessions of a Twenty-First-Century Memsahib: The Offshore Sweatshops of the

Digital Humanities," paper presented at the MLA Convention, Austin, Texas, January 2016. An

abstract of the paper is preserved on the personal website of Andrew Pilsch:

https://oncomouse.github.io/mla16.html.

[26] Margaret Maurer has found the TCP website rife with grammatical sleight-of-hand seemingly

crafted to give the misleading impression that transcription occurs in house; "EEBO-TCP's

Keyers and the Scholarly Labor of Digitization," Shakespeare Association of America (pre-

circulated paper, 2021), 7.

[27] Apex CoVantage, "Meet the Team at Apex CoVantage,"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EKLInwwUrY.

[28] "The Results of Keying Instead of OCR," Text Creation Partnership,

https://textcreationpartnership.org/using-tcp-content/results-of-keying/.

[29] Homepage, Text Creation Partnership, 15 September 2019, as preserved in the Internet

Archive:

https://web.archive.org/web/20190915042804/http://www.textcreationpartnership.org:80.

[30] *The London Stage, 1660–1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments and Afterpieces,*

Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment. Compiled from the Playbills,

Newspapers and Theatrical Diaries of the Period, ed. William Van Lennep, et al., 11 vols.

(Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961–68).

[31] Schneider, *Travels in Computerland; or, Incompatibilities and Interfaces: A Full and True*

Account of the Implementation of the London Stage Information Bank (Reading: Addison-

Wesley, 1974), 53, see also 67 and 133. Subsequent citations will be made parenthetically as *TC*.

32 Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits," 933–34.

33 Passarotti, quoted in Melissa Terras and Julianne Nyhan, "Father Busa's Female Punch Card Operatives," *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016),

https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/1e57217b-f262-4f25-806b-4fcf1548beb5.

Nyhan's book, *Hidden And Devalued Feminized Labour in The Digital Humanities: On The Index Thomisticus Project, 1954–67* (London: Routledge, 2023) is in press as of this writing and promises to reveal further findings from this research.

34 On the provenance of these items, see Michelle Levy, "Do Women Have a Book History?" *Studies in Romanticism* 53, no. 3 (2014): 304–5; and Theodore Hofmann, Joan Winterkorn, Frances Harris, and Hilton Kelliher, "John Evelyn's Archive at the British Library," *The Book Collector* 44, no. 2 (1995): 200–6. See also the collection description at

http://searcharchives.bl.uk/IAMS_VU2:IAMS033-002037628, and Janet Ing Freeman, "Upcott, William (1779–1845), antiquary and autograph collector," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

35 Evelyn Papers, Vol. DXIX, British Library Add MS 78686, fol. 118, recto.

36 Playwrights like Centlivre were not granted legal property in performances of their work until 1833, although they customarily received the profits from an author's benefit performance every third night of its initial run, and in some cases at subsequent benefit performances. See Jane Wessel, *Owning Performance | Performing Ownership: Literary Property and the Eighteenth-Century British Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), and Derek Miller, *Copyright and the Value of Performance, 1770–1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2018).

37 I have identified the booksellers based on the title pages of the plays in question, in consultation with the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the Stationers' Company records published by *The Records of London's Livery Companies Online* (https://www.londonroll.org), and the Stationers' Company Register, Microfilm 985/6, British Library.

38 Terry Belanger, "Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 5–25; Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 41; Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660–1710* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). Splitting ownership of a copyright at the point of its entry into the Stationers' Register was common enough that the latter includes a column for "Shares."

39 See the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) entries: http://estc.bl.uk/T34448 and http://estc.bl.uk/T25994.

40 See ESTC entries: http://estc.bl.uk/T25994, http://estc.bl.uk/T26867, and http://estc.bl.uk/N31922.

41 Joseph Haslewood, writing under the pseudonym "Eu. Hood" for *The Gentleman's Magazine*, included this receipt in a list of interesting items from Upcott's collection and asserted that "The last two plays were added to the receipt at a later period," citing the initial performance dates of *The Cruel Gift* and *The Artifice* as evidence that the receipt could not have been written all at once in 1715; see "Literary Contracts … From MSS. In the possession of Mr. Upcott, of the London Institution," *Gentleman's Magazine* 94, no. 1 (1824): 319. Haslewood evidently clipped this description of the receipt and pasted it into the entry on Centlivre in his annotated copy of

the first volume of Giles Jacob's *The Poetical Register* (British Library General Collection

C.45.d.17), 33. For the ascription of the work of "Eu. Hood" to Haslewood, see Emily Lorraine

de Montluzin, *Attributions of Authorship in The Gentleman's Magazine, 1731–1868: An

Electronic Union List* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia,

2003), https://bsuva.org/bsuva/gm3/GM1824.html; see also Alan Bell, "Haslewood, Joseph

(1769–1833), bibliographer and antiquary," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*

(Oxford University Press, 2004).

[42] Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, *Edmund Curll, Bookseller* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

2007), 50. On Lintot's relatively meager copyright payments to Centlivre, see Mattie Burkert,

Speculative Enterprise: Public Theaters and Financial Markets in London, 1688-1763

(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 119 and 221n105.

[43] The first edition of *The Wonder* exists in two versions: one that lists only Curll as publisher,

and another that lists both Curll and Bettesworth (http://estc.bl.uk/N36132 and

http://estc.bl.uk/T26870). John O'Brien speculates that "the different imprints reflect the two

men's different financial stakes in the first edition, with Curll taking the lead role from the start";

see "A Note on the Text" in *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret*, ed. John O'Brien

(Petersborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 33. The 1719 second edition (http://estc.bl.uk/T26869)

lists both men on the title page, as does the 1717 first edition of *The Cruel Gift*

(http://estc.bl.uk/T34448). *The Cruel Gift* was also advertised as being available for purchase in

the shop of Rebecca Burleigh, a frequent collaborator of Curll's; see *Daily Courant* 4743 (2

January 1717), verso.

[44] The title page of *The Artifice* (http://estc.bl.uk/T26858) is dated 1723 and lists only Payne as

its publisher. However, newspapers advertised its availability at London bookshops beginning in

October 1722 and indicated that it was printed for and sold by Mears, Payne, Curll, and several others booksellers; see, for example, *The Post Boy* 5183 (11 October 1722), verso. The second edition was printed in 1735 for Mears "and the proprietors" (http://estc.bl.uk/T26867 and http://estc.bl.uk/N5590). The same year, *The Artifice* was also included in a collection published by Mears titled *Four Celebrated Comedies Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs. Centlivre* (http://estc.bl.uk/N31922).

[45] To my knowledge, two handwritten copies of Centlivre's works survive from her lifetime, and both appear to be professional transcripts, rather than autograph manuscripts. The first is a formal presentation copy of the unpublished work "A Poem on the Recovery of the Lady Henrietta Holles from the Small Pox," held in the British Library (Harley MS 7649, ff 7r–10r). A c. 1709 manuscript of *The Busie Body* is located in the Houghton Library at Harvard University (MS Thr 39). The catalogue notes that the hand is "unidentified," but it again appears scribal.

[46] Curll was not a member of the Stationers' Company and any apprentices he may have had were not legally bound and so left no paper trail with the Company; see Baines and Rogers, *Edmund Curll*, 325 n10. Samples of Curll's hand are reproduced in Claude Willan, "'Mr Pope's Penmanship': Edmund Curll, Alexander Pope, and Rawlinson Letters 90," *The Library* 12, no. 3 (2011): 259–80.

[47] Centlivre's letter exhibits several different ways of forming repeated letters and combinations of letters, making comparison somewhat difficult; however, both samples exhibit a rapid, informal hand, more angular than rounded in appearance, with comparatively open lettering.

[48] For a notice of the initial publication, see *The Post Boy* 2962 (4 May 1714), verso.

[49] During the years encompassed by the receipt, Centlivre's farce, *The Gotham Election* (London, 1715), was published by S. Keimer (http://estc.bl.uk/T26854) and republished by J.

Roberts as *The Humours of Elections* (http://estc.bl.uk/T26876), and her hit, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (London, 1718), was printed for Mears along with J. Browne and F. Clay (http://estc.bl.uk/T22948).

[50] Levy, "Do Women Have a Book History?" 303, 308.

[51] As Jane Wessel points out, "Research into eighteenth-century celebrity culture is seldom connected to questions of intellectual property law," even though "performance and celebrity were increasingly valued as forms of intellectual property" ("Mimicry, Property, and the Reproduction of Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century England," *The Eighteenth Century* 60, no. 1 [Spring 2019]: 66). On Centlivre as a celebrity, see my *Speculative Enterprise: Public Theaters and Financial Markets in London, 1688–1763* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 80–81 and 212–13 nn3–9.

[52] Bratton, "Reading the Intertheatrical, or, The Mysterious Disappearance of Susanna Centlivre," in *Women, Theatre and Performance: New Histories, New Historiographies*, ed. Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 20.

[53] Peter Hepple, "Ragbag of a Production," *Stage and Television Today*, 8 December 1983; John Barber, "Epicene Island," *Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 1983. These reviews have been preserved in the Production Files for *Wedlock/Deadlock*, dir. Fidelis Morgan, King's Head Theatre Club, London, now housed in the V&A Theatre Collection.

[54] Markmaduke Myrtle [i.e., Steele], *The Lover* 27 (27 April 1714), verso. This issue exists in two versions, only one of which includes commentary on *The Wonder*.

[55] [Susanna Centlivre], *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret. A Comedy. As It Is Acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. By Her Majesty's Servants. Written by the Author of The Gamester* (London: E. Curll and A. Bettesworth, 1714). The full text is available through ECCO-

TCP at http://name.umdl.umich.edu/004798029.0001.000. The transcription derives from Gale

Document Number CW0110075278, which is a facsimile of the British Library's copy

(http://estc.bl.uk/T26870). Centlivre's name does not appear on the title page, but she signed the

dedication and was, by 1714, well known as the author of *The Gamester*.