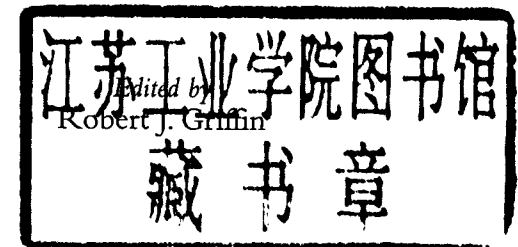


**The Faces of Anonymity:  
Anonymous and Pseudonymous  
Publication from the Sixteenth  
to the Twentieth Century**

*Edited by*  
Robert J. Griffin

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THE FACES OF ANONYMITY  
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First published 2003 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN™  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 and  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England RG21 6XS  
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 0-312-29530-8 hardback

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The faces of anonymity: anonymous and pseudonymous publications from the sixteenth to the twentieth century/edited by Robert J. Griffin  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-312-29530-8

1. Anonymous writings, English—History and criticism. 2. English literature—History and criticism. 3. Anonyms and pseudonyms, English—History. 4. Authorship—History. I. Griffin, Robert J. (Robert John), 1950—

PR121.F33 2003

820.9—dc21

2002072830

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India

First edition: January, 2003

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

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## P R E F A C E

My interest in anonymity was first aroused when I noticed that nearly every book or poem I was preparing for teaching in class was originally published anonymously or pseudonymously. When I began to look into it more systematically, it became clear how immense the subject was, for it seemed to take in nearly every author. That realization quickly led to the decision to pursue a track parallel to my plans for a monograph on anonymity and authorship by soliciting scholars in different periods to write essays drawing on their expertise. This volume is the fruit of that initiative.

In the planning stages I received invaluable advice from Josie Dixon and from my colleagues at *Poetics Today*, Meir Sternberg, Brian McHale, and Orly Lubin.

While working on this project, my research was enabled by grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Israel Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Huntington Library, the William Andrews Clark Library, the Lewis Walpole Library, and the Folger Library. It is impossible to say how grateful I am for this support. I have also learned much from the staffs of these great libraries.

I have received assistance of all kinds from very many people, more than I can name. Nonetheless, I wish to name a few: Leo Damrosch, Frances Ferguson, Joe Litvak, Helen Deutsch, Sonia Hofkosh, Lars Engle, David Kastan, Ronald Paulson, Annabel Patterson, Ruth Yeazell, Geoffrey Hartman, Margaret Ezell, Paul Fry, Roy Ritchie, Mary Robertson, Anna Malicka, Richard G. Williams, Cyndia Glegg, Werner Sollors, and Charles H. Rowell.

I thank the editors of *New Literary History* for permission to reprint in my Introduction material that first appeared in their journal.

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**Robert J. Griffin** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at Tel Aviv University, and the Associate Editor of *Poetics Today*. *Wordsworth's Pope: A Study in Literary Historiography* was published by Cambridge University Press in 1995. He is currently completing a book-length study of the cultural history and poetics of anonymity, 1700–1830.

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Robert J. Griffin*

This collection of ten original essays is, as far as I am aware, the first book of its kind to address the topic of anonymous and pseudonymous publication. Literary studies exhibit a curious reluctance to acknowledge that most of the literature ever published appeared either without the author's name or under a fictive name. We have very few statistics, but the ones provided by James Raven in his essay for this volume are quite astounding. According to Raven, over 80 percent of all novels published in Britain between 1750 and 1790 were published anonymously. During the 1790s, the amount fell to 62 percent, and to less than 50 percent in the first decade of the nineteenth century. But during the 1820s it rose again to almost 80 percent. Given the sheer amount of unsigned and pseudo-signed publication from antiquity to the present, however, my first realization, as editor, was that no book on this topic could adequately survey such a vast field, for it appears that there are very few authors who did not resort to anonymity or pseudonymity at least once in their careers.<sup>1</sup> The focus on England (with one exception), and primarily on literary texts such as poems, novels, and essays rather than printed matter generally, is therefore purely pragmatic. The chronological field delimited, with concentrations in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, runs parallel to traditional literary history's account of the rise of the professional author. Topics covered are genre, gender, nationalism, authorial cross-dressing, collaboration and co-authorship, ghostwriting, hoaxes, attribution, manuscripts, and problems of reading.

"Anonymous" is generally understood as a text whose author is not identified on the title page. Pseudonymity is therefore a subset of anonymity; the important fact in both cases is that the legal name of the

writer is not in evidence. This widespread practice, which cuts across centuries and affects both the production and the reception of written texts, has been under-researched in relation to its ubiquity. Moreover, the critical work that does exist, much of it excellent, confines itself to an author, a genre, or a period.<sup>2</sup> By gathering essays on different periods together in the same volume, this collection serves (at least) two purposes. First, it calls attention to the continuing functions of anonymity in what Coleridge already calls, in *Biographia Literaria*, “an age of personality.” Second, although complete coverage even within these centuries is itself impossible, the chronological range reveals significant historical differences, as well as structural continuities.

Michel Foucault established a kind of default position for thinking about the relation between anonymity and authorship in his widely cited essay, “What is an Author?”<sup>3</sup> For Foucault, modern literary authorship is defined by the author-function, by which he means the various ways the *name* of the author functions in discourse. In an earlier period, literary texts were anonymous whereas scientific texts were named until a reversal occurred:

There was a time when texts that we today call “literary” (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of the author; their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status. On the other hand, those texts that we now would call scientific—those dealing with cosmology and the heavens, medicine and illness, natural sciences and geography—were accepted in the Middle Ages, and accepted as “true,” only when marked with the name of the author . . . . A reversal occurred in the seventeenth or eighteenth century . . . .<sup>4</sup>

In response to this dating, Roger Chartier showed that the author-function for literature existed in the Middle Ages as well, and indeed, since Foucault provides no evidence but his own authority, there seems to be little reason to assume that readers’ or hearers’ interest in authors as the originators of works began in what is now referred to as the early modern period.<sup>5</sup> But if naming occurs much earlier, or, rather, appears to exist as far back as we can go, and thus puts in question the neat chronology of the story, it is also the case that anonymity does not simply disappear with the emergence of a commercial culture. While there is certainly much less authorial anonymity today than several centuries

ago, we are misled if we assume that it is simply a matter of “reversal.” Foucault’s narrative can thus be faulted on two important points: first, there is no necessary connection between copyright ownership and the author’s name on a title page; and second, there is a very large amount of anonymous publication in the nineteenth century while authors in our own day continue to hide themselves behind masks of all kinds. By looking more deeply into these issues we can begin to rethink the relation between anonymity and authorship in fundamental ways.

The name of the author comes to assume a pivotal role, so the argument goes, because once the manuscript becomes a commodity to be sold rather than a gift to be given away to the fortunate bookseller, as it was under the aristocratic dispensation, and once the author is given formal legal protection as the proprietor of intellectual property, the value of the commodity in the marketplace extends itself back, metonymically as it were, to the author as origin of value. As Mark Rose explains: “The name of the author becomes a kind of brand name, a recognizable sign that the cultural commodity will be of a certain kind and quality. No institutional embodiment of the author-work relation, however, is more fundamental than copyright, which not only makes possible the manufacture and distribution of books, films, and other commodities but also, by endowing it with legal reality, helps to produce and affirm the very identity of the author as author.”<sup>6</sup> In a gloss on Foucault, Simon During puts it this way: “In modernity there has been a shift of author function: the authorial name has become a *property*—in a process we can trace by examining the history of copyright laws.”<sup>7</sup>

This narrative is not totally wrong; there is too much evidence in its favor. Take Trollope’s autobiography as an example. Vigorously defending authorship as a trade, Trollope declares of copyright: “Take away from English authors their copyrights, and you would soon take also from England her authors.” The connection between the name “Trollope” and the commercial value of the commodity is also quite clear. As an established author in the mid-1860s, and suspecting that his work was well-received only because he signed his name to it, he experimented by publishing two stories anonymously in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. But Blackwood offered him, as he says, “perhaps half what they would have fetched with my name,” and since neither story was successful the experiment was dropped.<sup>8</sup>

What I want to argue, nonetheless, is that the widely accepted narrative put in circulation by Foucault, if not wrong, is not nuanced enough, and thus creates significant distortions and misunderstandings. By the terms of its formulation, even if not meaning to, it throws in the shade



or tends to ignore a very large field of actual publication practice. The gaps begin to appear the moment we take perspective from the widespread practice of anonymous and pseudonymous publication.

The history of publication shows unequivocally that there is no cause-and-effect relation between the ownership of literary property, or the lack of it, and the presence or absence of the name of the author. Even when the name is marketed as a commodity, the copyright is not always retained by the writer; even when the copyright is retained, the writer can remain unknown. Authors could (and did) either sell or retain copyright. Authors could (and did) either sign their name to the work or not. While Trollope was signing his name to his books he did not always retain copyright, which caused him difficulties when he wanted to collect and publish his Barchester novels together. Byron gave away the copyright of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as a gift, but signed his name to the book. On the other hand, he sold the copyright of the first five books of *Don Juan* to Murray, and the other eleven to John Hunt, but did not sign the book. Byron's motives are worth noting. Since *Queen Mab*—which challenged both monarchy and Christianity, and which Shelley had signed—had been used against Shelley in court, Byron, who had recently divorced and was engaged in a custody battle, took heed and instructed Murray to keep his name off the book.<sup>9</sup> All of Jane Austen's novels published during her lifetime appeared without her name, yet she tended to retain copyright, paying the cost of printing herself and using the bookseller as a distributor who took a percentage of the profits.<sup>10</sup> Charlotte Smith's husband was legally entitled both to her copyrights and any earnings from them, a situation for women writers that ended only with the Married Women's Property Act of 1870. But Smith signed her books and called attention to her financial plight in her prefaces.

The conclusion is inescapable: naming and copyright protections operate on separate levels of discourse and involve separate sets of decisions on the part of the writer (if indeed the writer is even consulted). When copyright historians discuss the author as owner, that author is an abstract legal identity that does not need to have a specific name for it to function in legal discourse. No copyright law ever required the name of the author to be printed on the title page of a book or pamphlet. In a cogent critique of certain assumptions made by the pioneers who brought copyright history to the attention of literary critics, David Saunders and Ian Hunter have made the point that the legal and artistic identities of the author have been conflated but must be kept apart.<sup>11</sup>

If we consult the laws that regulated printing in England, we discover an interesting fact. At times, various laws and proclamations did indeed require the name of the author to be given on the title page. A Royal Proclamation in 1546 directed that "every book should bear the author's and the printer's name, and exact date of printing."<sup>12</sup> Yet, when the Stationers' Company was incorporated eleven years later in 1557 with the charge of regulating printing and publishing, such language was not in evidence. From the mid-sixteenth century when the regulation of printing was established, there has been only a brief period of roughly twenty years, beginning with the Star Chamber Decree of 1637, when the laws of England required the name of the author to be printed on the title page of a book or pamphlet. After the Star Chamber was abolished in 1641, it was thought expedient during the interregnum not simply to reinstate licensing, which Milton opposed, but also once again to require the name of the author on the title page. Yet, with the Licensing Act of 1662, that requirement was dropped.<sup>13</sup> Following 1695, when pre-publication censorship ended, proposals to require the name (and sometimes the address) of the author on title pages were put forward at various times, but were never adopted into law.<sup>14</sup> At every phase of what Mark Rose calls the "regime of regulation," licensing laws were directed primarily at those who manufactured and distributed the goods. Even when authors were mentioned in the statutes as liable to penalties, including after pre-publication censorship had lapsed, it was the names of the printer or the bookseller that needed to be given in the imprint at the bottom of the page. John Murray could refrain in 1819 from putting his name on the title page of the anonymous poem, *Don Juan*, but following the Seditious Societies Act of 1799 the printer's name, Thomas Davison, was compulsory.<sup>15</sup>

One of the things this means is that authorial anonymity in England was, essentially, an officially tolerated form of sanctuary, for even in cases where the printer was successfully prosecuted, the author could not always be found. Daniel Defoe eventually was captured by the authorities, and stood in the pillory, and went to jail for writing the anonymous pamphlet, "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" (1702). But Percy Shelley escaped punishment. One copy of his anonymous broadsheet ballad, "The Devil's Walk" (1812), with its attack on the Prince Regent, survives in the Public Record Office where it was discovered in 1871. Shelley's Irish servant, Daniel Healy (the name he gave the judge was "Daniel Hill"), sat in jail for distributing it and the equally illegal *Declaration of Rights* because neither had an imprint indicating the

printer. But Shelley was not arrested even though he was the author and mostly likely had a hand in the printing as well.<sup>16</sup> With the exception, then, of a very brief period in the seventeenth century, governments were reluctant to force all authors out into the open.

I have suggested that Foucault's large narrative about the connection between copyright and naming does not correspond to the historical record, at least in England. This brings us back to the question of numbers. Even without the detailed statistics provided by Raven, an educated guess tells us that anonymity, when defined broadly as the absence of reference to the legal name of the writer on the title page, takes in a very large number of books published at least up to the twentieth century. It involves nearly every author. Anonymity during this period, I would argue, was at least as much a norm as signed authorship. Even if a gradual tapering off is eventually documented, there is still clear evidence that anonymous publication continued to be an option for authors well into the nineteenth century. As late as 1835, John Galt observed that "critics universally regard all authors who give their names as actuated by vanity," a climate that in many cases must have worked against signing.<sup>17</sup> As late as 1871, a review of an anonymous novel, *Desperate Remedies*, speculates whether the author is male or female:

*Desperate Remedies*, though in some respects an unpleasant story, is undoubtedly a very powerful one. We cannot decide, satisfactorily to our own mind, on the sex of the author; for while certain evidence, such as the close acquaintance which he or she appears (and, as far as we can judge, with reason) to possess with the mysteries of the female toilette, would appear to point to its being the work of one of that sex, on the other hand there are certain expressions to be met with in the book so remarkably coarse as to render it almost impossible that it should have come from the pen of an English lady. Yet, again, all the best anonymous novels of the last twenty years—a dozen instances will at once suggest themselves to the novel-reader—have been the work of female writers. In this conflict of evidence, we will confine ourselves to the inexpressive "he" in speaking of our present author, if we chance to need a pronoun.<sup>18</sup>

I cannot, for the moment, linger over this passage and that "inexpressive 'he'." But at least the reviewer, after a display of prejudices, concludes inconclusively. Other readers and reviewers of anonymous books are less delicate—in 1848 a rumor circulated in Mayfair that Thackeray's governess, supposedly the model for Becky Sharp, was the author of

*Jane Eyre* and that Rochester was her vision of her former employer.<sup>19</sup> But, to continue, our author's second book, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), is signed "By the Author of *Desperate Remedies*," and only with the third novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), would the Victorian reader learn that the author's name is Thomas Hardy.

The review itself, naturally, is anonymous, as were most reviews and magazine articles. In the 1860s, *The Fortnightly* was one of the first to sign all its articles, which started a trend, but reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* remained anonymous until the early 1970s, and articles in *The Economist* still are. Debates in the TLS twenty-five years ago repeated arguments that had been made as early as the *Gentleman's Magazine* two hundred years before.<sup>20</sup> Some thought that signing guaranteed integrity because writers could not escape accountability; others thought signing would allow them to gauge the weight of an opinion by knowing its source. On the other side, the argument went that it was anonymity that guaranteed integrity because it freed writers from social and political pressures. Nonetheless, in 1871, the year of the review of Hardy's first novel, an anonymous writer in the *National Quarterly Review* of New York observed that "the amount of anonymous and pseudonymous writing has been enormous within the last half century." In the periodical press of Europe, the writer continues, "anonymous writing is the rule, pseudonymous common, and (except in France) avowed authorship is rare." Yet, it is curious that even in a time of widespread authorial anonymity the reviewer begins his article by noting that "few are aware of the extent and variety of anonymous literature."<sup>21</sup> Even when ubiquitous, anonymity rarely calls attention to itself.

The motivations for publishing anonymously have varied widely with circumstances, but they have included an aristocratic or a gendered reticence, religious self-effacement, anxiety over public exposure, fear of prosecution, hope of an unprejudiced reception, and the desire to deceive. This list is hardly exhaustive. The wish to keep one's identity in the dark could extend so far as to drive authors to communicate with their publishers through an intermediary or under a pseudonym as in the cases of Swift, Burney, Austen, and George Eliot. Swift sent the manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels* to Benjamin Motte with a cover letter signed "Richard Sympton," the sea-captain's cousin. Fanny Burney disguised her handwriting in the manuscript of *Evelina* because, as amanuensis to her father, her hand was known to London publishers; the manuscript was delivered by her brother, in disguise, at night. Charles Burney read the novel out to the family circle, not knowing that his daughter had written it. Austen's brother communicated with her publishers, but she wrote to

a prospective publisher under the name "Mrs. Ashton Dennis," and Lewes handled negotiations for "George Eliot" referring in his letters to the author as "he."

Authors also chose anonymity if they felt that their authorial persona conflicted with their daily one. Scott signed his poetry, but he did not sign *Waverley*, or so he wrote in a letter, because he felt the dignity of an officer of the court in Edinburgh would be compromised if he were publicly known to be an author of popular fiction: "In truth I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me as a Clerk of Sessions to write novels. Judges being monks clerks are a sort of lay-brethren from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected." Jane Millgate adds in a note that Scott had thoughts of becoming a judge himself.<sup>22</sup> Even today, not all writers of thrillers, romances, and detective fiction sign their legal names and for similar reasons. Signing or not signing may depend on genre, but also on specific cultural circumstances. If, in some cases, anonymity protected one's social position, in others it could successfully obscure it. Paul Hammond makes the point that, in the case of the late seventeenth-century poet John Oldham, anonymity conferred authority by hiding his relatively low social status.<sup>23</sup>

It was common for writers to test the waters before revealing their identity in a second edition. The first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), a work purporting to be a translation by "William Marshall, Gent.," from a sixteenth-century Italian original "printed in Naples, in the black letter," is a well-known example. But it could also work the other way around: a known author could retreat into the shade for whatever reason, perhaps in order to slip out from underneath an authorial identity that had become confining. I have already cited Trollope, who wanted to know if his books sold because they were good, or because his reputation was already established. A twentieth-century version of this is Doris Lessing, who published *The Diaries of Jane Somers* (1983) as Jane Somers because, she states in a later preface to the same work, she did not want reviewers to frame their judgments in terms derived from their reading of "Doris Lessing."<sup>24</sup> Stephen King, who published several novels in the 1970s under the name Richard Bachman, offers a variation of this dilemma in *Misery* (1990), a fable of an author trapped, literally, by his reader into writing the kind of story the reader wants to read.

If it is sometimes true that the professional situation puts a premium on the name of the writer, this is not always so. There are also times when the exigencies of writing for bread enforce disguise—it may be counterproductive to flood the market. This is certainly the case with

Mary Robinson who, together with Southey, provided many of the poems published in the *Morning Post* in 1800. Robinson routinely signed her novels, which undoubtedly capitalized on her notoriety as a famous actress and former mistress of the Prince of Wales; she had also collected her previously anonymous poetry into signed volumes in 1791 and 1793. But to disguise the fact that so many of the newspaper's poems were coming from the same hand, poems of hers were printed under the signatures "Tabitha Bramble," "Tabitha," "T. B.," "Bridget," "Oberon," "Laura Maria," "L. M.," "Sappho," and so on.<sup>25</sup> Some of these, it is true, point to Robinson, such as "Laura Maria," the name under which it was already known she had published her Della Cruscan poems. But Tabitha Bramble is a character in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*. Here, the pseudonym functions as a signal to the reader to expect a dramatized, and clearly fictional, point of view; educated guesses would not lead back to the real author.

This last point leads us back to the author-function and the way it can be fruitfully applied to the case of anonymity. For although Foucault identifies the author-function and its historicity with the name of the author, his focus is on how the name circulates in discourse apart from its designation as the proper name of an empirical person. Rather than invoke the flesh-and-blood writer, the name signals the status of a certain kind of writing, works as a principle of classification, and establishes a relation of homogeneity and filiation between texts. But, as is clear from Foucault's example of "Hermes Trismegistus," the relation of filiation between texts obtains even when the author is a fiction. More than that, filiation exists even when the author remains unknown, as in the example of texts that are signed "by the author of." Well-known instances are "by the author of *Waverley*" and "by the author of *Sense and Sensibility*." But a search through a catalog of titles arranged according to year of publication, such as the one at the Huntington Library, shows that, although this designation appears occasionally in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, it is used with greater frequency in the late seventeenth century and is common practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The author of *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753) is given as "By the Author of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*," a book that was itself published anonymously in 1751. Eliza Haywood's name appears nowhere; her *Female Spectator* is advertised opposite the title page, but without attribution to an author. Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* was published anonymously in 1752; *Henrietta* appeared in 1758 as "By the Author of *The Female Quixote*." Indeed, as I have already mentioned, the title of Hardy's second novel in the 1870s employs this phrase as well.

The phrase "by the author of," it should be noted, refers us not so much to a situated person as to a previous performance and acts as a kind of advertisement. My favorite example of this latter type is "*Discipline, By the Author of Self-Control*" (1815). This title suggests, for example, that if you liked *Self-Control* (1811), you'll love *Discipline*. (It is one of those unaccountable oddities of cultural history that this book was published by "Manners and Miller.") In these cases, a relation is established between two texts according to their authorship and yet the author remains nameless. In fact, a book can have several of the characteristics of the author-function as Foucault defines it—status, copyright, relation to other books by the same author, and so on—and yet not have a named author. This is because the author-function describes precisely a function that may be fulfilled by a name but does not require one. It is first of all an empty function, a structural blank space, which may be signed or unsigned depending on the circumstances. And when signed, of course, the name may just as easily be a pseudonym.

Genette makes this point well in coining the term "onymity" (signing the legal name) to go together with pseudonymity and anonymity: "After all, to sign a work with one's real name is a choice like any other, and nothing authorizes us to regard this choice as insignificant."<sup>26</sup> The author's name is another artifact, at a distance from the empirical writer, a signifier within the semiotics of the text that can be manipulated strategically. Over half of what Shelley published during his lifetime appeared either anonymously or pseudonymously, under such rubrics as "By a Gentleman at Oxford," or "Edited by John Fitzvictor," or "By Philopatris, Jun." Signing one's legal name is not an automatic choice, but part of a strategy for associating only certain pieces with a projected persona.

Such logic is behind my choice of the title for this collection of essays. If the legal name and the fictional name are types of masks, I understand anonymity also not as a lack or absence, but positively, as another mask. There is not, as the standard narrative suggests, an opposition between identity and anonymity (identity emerging out of anonymity with the arrival of modernity), but rather a play of subject positions, because even unnamed texts project a "presence." Without a name to individualize the author, an implied authorial consciousness is still inferred by the reader, and, in that process, the historical, social, and cultural codes that comprise the text come to the fore. This does not mean that all readers will see the same face. As Susan Lanser's essay demonstrates, a single text can give rise to two opposing constructions of the implied author. Moreover, although readers tend to assume that a text is the product of

an individual, both anonymous and pseudonymous texts may project a persona that hides their multiple authorship. In other cases, anonymity stands for not a single but a corporate persona, a point made by Paul Hammond in relation to a manuscript collection of erotic poems that project "an ethos, a style of life, a group of attitudes and poses, a shared idiom" (133), and by Dallas Liddle in relation to the corporate persona adopted by anonymous writers in journals and newspapers (54).

This introduction is not meant to present an exhaustive taxonomy. But I hope enough has been said to suggest that, even taking into account the constraints of the structural givens that condition writing and publishing, the historical particularity of authorship in each case must be respected. The essays in this collection illustrate the importance of contingency and context even as they address issues that are posed, thematized, and encoded in a range of anonymous texts.

Working in very different periods, the late seventeenth and the late nineteenth centuries, Kristine Haugen and Leah Price analyze how anonymity reflects the concerns of a particular cultural moment. Haugen's essay takes up a crucial moment in the Battle of the Books. In the late seventeenth century, the authority of authors and critics was attenuated by their awareness of the shadow of the ancients. But once ancient authority was put in question by Bentley's exposure of a supposedly ancient text as a pseudonymous hoax (the letters of "Phalaris"), what were the implications for the authority of contemporary writers? Haugen increases our sensitivity to the self-reflexivity of the issues at stake in this famous quarrel, while simultaneously calling attention to the nature of Bentley's hard-won authority and to the instability at the heart of all textual constructions.

Leah Price shows how the new social phenomenon of the female secretary-typist in the late nineteenth century intersects with ghostwriting. Secretaries were often not just typists but also ghostwriters for their employers. Surveying novels and stories about hack writers who ghostwrite for wealthy patrons, and juxtaposing them with ones about the new type-writer girl, Price argues convincingly that the anxieties these stories address revolve around gender. While some of the works were published under pseudonyms, Price's focus is less on the semiotics of the title page than on ghostwriting as both theme and cultural allegory of the New Woman in the marketplace. If some of these fictions attempt to reinforce traditional gender roles, others destabilize the power relations that were apparently naturalized in the gendering of the boss-secretary relation by exposing and in some cases reversing that relation.

Without denying either the social constraints on women in the early modern period or prejudices against women writers, matters addressed by the women themselves in their works, Margaret Ezell, in surveying the functions of the phrase "By a Lady," questions whether anonymity is simply imposed on women writers of the time. For, in these cases, women employed neither anonymity nor a male pseudonym, but chose instead, while suppressing their name, to foreground gender and social position. The question then becomes: What did the feminine signify and how might it be deployed? By careful analysis, Ezell establishes both the commercial value of female authorship and its potential political force.

Holly Laird, in her account of the Victorian "Michael Field," the pseudonym of coauthors (and lovers) Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, argues that collaborative authorship presents a challenge to ingrained thinking about authorship as "solitary genius" (in Jack Stillinger's phrase). But, if the pseudonym appears to deny the fact of collaboration, Laird asks us to understand the union between Bradley and Cooper as the creation of a third entity. Laird focuses on the authors' self-understanding of their writing as a romantic marriage that subsumed their identities, and traces the set of associations that led them to choose the name Michael Field as its signifier.

Susan Lanser addresses one of the central methodological problems posed by an anonymous or pseudonymous text: in the absence of reliable extra-textual information about the writer, how in fact does the reader construct the meaning of the text? The case of the anonymous text foregrounds the circularity of reading and the centrality of the notion of the implied author by highlighting the extent to which, as Lanser neatly puts it, "reading abhors an authorial vacuum." By analyzing a text that has received two diametrically opposed readings from modern critics—a narrative (among other things) of a woman who tours Europe dressed as a man and who eventually puts aside her disguise in order to settle down with another woman—Lanser suggests the problem inheres in the notion of *the* implied author. Once we understand that it may not be possible to identify the sex of an implied author, we understand further that the notion of the implied author itself implies a unified construction of a plural text, whereas "a text's consciousness may be general without being singular."

Marcy North asks a different question about reading. Since many authors are no longer anonymous, how can we recover the original context of their anonymity, specifically, how does a modern reader recover the context of anonymity for an author as famous as Shakespeare? Here, recovering anonymity means recuperating aspects of meaning encoded

in the circulation of manuscripts that have become obscured through the conventions of book publishing. North analyzes manuscript anonymity as a material and thematic frame for reading sonnets by Shakespeare copied into seventeenth-century commonplace books and manuscript compilations, and then speculates on the milieu in which the sonnets circulated before they were published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609. A common and expected condition of many texts, North warns that anonymity signifies in more than one way and could "denote both choice and accident, name suppression and negligence."

Is there any relation between the anonymity of the author and the content of a book? Clearly not in every case, otherwise a majority of books published before, let us say, 1900 would dwell on their own anonymity in self-reflexive fashion. Yet, clearly also, in some books the theme of a lack of identity is pursued so consistently within the text that authorial anonymity needs to be seen as more than a convenient convention of disguise. Several contributors open up the self-reflexive dimensions of an anonymous text in which anonymity (or pseudonymity) is simultaneously theme and allegory.

Susan Eilenberg and Brian McHale, especially, place reflexivity in the foreground. While critics of *Frankenstein* have previously drawn a parallel between Mary Shelley's anonymity and her monster's, Eilenberg explores just how various and subtle the meanings of anonymity may be. By showing how deeply Mary Shelley meditated the nature of social anonymity as the threat of an unassimilable Other, Eilenberg aligns herself with critics who have traced the political or psychological allegory of the monster as a figure for oppressed social groups or repressed psychic contents. But she develops these issues in relation to the specific linguistic peculiarity pointed out by Catherine Gallagher, which is that nothing is signified by something: the substantive "nothing." If "nothing" and "nobody" are substantives holding a positive place in the chain of language, the monster embodies the paradox—he is not so much alive as undead. In him, negation is animated. Eilenberg's essay stimulates thought in several directions, one of which must be the implications of the unstable and uncanny nature of human subjectivity, grounded as it is in language.

Brian McHale trains his sights on a contemporary controversy, poems that purport to be translations into English of Yasusada, poet and survivor of Hiroshima. But since Yasusada is a mask adopted most likely by Kent Johnson of Ohio, the ethics and purposes of impersonation take center stage. For Charles Bernstein, Yasusada is a hoax motivated by white-male resentment at the preference given to women and minorities

by editors of poetry. McHale disputes this reading by producing a taxonomy of literary hoaxes from Ossian and Rowley to Ern Malley and Alan Sokal, arguing that Yasusada is a mock-hoax in which the whole point of the impersonation is to expose its own inauthenticity, and hence the fictional quality of national identity construction. As a parody of Japanese poems translated into English, Yasusada foregrounds the factitiousness of the construction of Japanese-ness in American culture.

Vincent Carretta presents us with an attribution question by reprinting here for the first time, and thus making more widely available, ten letters that originally appeared in the *Morning Post* in the late 1770s under the name "Gustavus Vassa," an attack on the slave trade in the *Glasgow Courier* in 1792 signed "Gustavus," and an anti-war piece signed "Othello" that appeared in 1794 in *The Cabinet*. Is this the same Gustavus Vassa whose African name was Olaudah Equiano and who published his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, in 1789, and did he subsequently sign "Othello" in a journal operated by known friends? It is crucial to the political force of Equiano's autobiography that he is a named historical person. The oddity pointed out here by Carretta, though, is that Equiano's slave name, Vassa, which is also his legal name, was the name of an early Swedish king who freed his people and thus had become the generic name for a liberator in eighteenth-century journals. This situation raises the possibility that one's legal name can function as a pseudonym in print.

James Raven's overview of anonymous novels in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is based on solo and collaborative research over many years. Aside from statistics, he provides a sociology of the book trade during this period. Empirical evidence of this sort has the power to radically adjust our notions of authorship. For instance, how many scholars would have guessed that in the 1810s, while 56 percent of all novels were published anonymously, the great majority of the 44 percent of those that were named, were by female authors? Thus, counter to intuition, during this period the female name is not being suppressed; rather a certain model of femininity is actually being promoted, apparently for commercial reasons. Raven's numbers make us hungry for more. For instance, we know that anonymous publication was still widespread in the late nineteenth century, but how widespread was it really? Would reliable numbers for this period similarly challenge current assumptions about authorship? Only the most complacent will answer in the negative.

In conclusion, taken together, these essays show that anonymity is not simply a residual characteristic of oral or manuscript culture, but continues for several centuries to be a dominant form, perhaps the norm, of print culture as well. Anonymity was not always a form of ethical, or religious, or socially imposed self-effacement, but had commercial uses as well. It intersects with different social and cultural contexts across several centuries. Moreover, neither anonymity nor pseudonymity have disappeared in the present, and are especially in evidence in electronically distributed writing of all kinds. Therefore, some historical understanding of anonymous publication must be integral to our understanding of authorship and writing generally. This volume hopes to stimulate further research in that direction.

### Notes

1. See Archer Taylor and Fredric J. Mosher, *The Bibliographic History of Anonymity and Pseudonymity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); Samuel Halkett and John Laing, *A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications in the English Language* (Edinburgh: W. Paterson, 1882–88); and William Prideaux Courtney, *The Secrets of Our National Literature: Chapters in the History of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Writings of our Countrymen* (London: Archibald Constable & Co, 1908).
2. For further study see: J. W. Saunders, "The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry," *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951), 139–64; Marcy North, "Ignoto in the Age of Print: The Manipulation of Anonymity in Early Modern England," *Studies in Philology* 91 (1994), 390–416; Paul Hammond, "Anonymity in Restoration Poetry," *The Seventeenth Century* 8 (1993), 123–42; Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Alexander Welsh, *George Eliot and Blackmail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Peter Manning, "The Nameless Broken Dandy and the Structure of Authorship," *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 145–62; Jerome J. McGann, "Byron and the Anonymous Lyric," *The Byron Journal* 20 (1992), 27–45; Jan Fergus, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Sharon Marcus, "The Profession of Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and Jane Eyre," *PMLA* 110 (1995), 206–19; Geraldine Friedman, "Pseudonymity, Passing, and Queer Biography: The Case of Mary Diana Dods," *Romanticism on the Net* 23 (August 2001) <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/23friedman.html>>; Dallas Liddle, "Salesmen, Sportsmen, Mentors: Anonymity and Mid-Victorian Theories of Journalism," *Victorian Studies* 41 (1991), 31–68; Marc DaRosa, "Henry James, Anonymity, and the Press: Journalistic Modernity and the Decline of the Author," *Modern Fiction Studies* 43 (1997), 826–59; Brenda Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader': Virginia Woolf's Last Essays," *Twentieth Century Literature* 25 (Fall/Winter 1979), 356–441; E. M. Forster, "Anonymity: An Enquiry," *Atlantic Monthly* 135 (1925), 588–95; Henry Seidel Canby, "Anon is Dead," *The American Mercury* 8 (1926), 79–84; James Fergusson, "The Life and Works of Anon," *The London Mercury* 27 (January 1933), 246–49; Robert Wells, "Distinctive Anonymity," in *The Poet's Voice and Craft*, ed. C. B. McCully (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994), 167–81. This list is necessarily selective. A special issue of *New Literary History* [33 (Spring 2002)] devoted to anonymity appeared while this book was in production.



3. For the argument that follows I draw heavily on my article, "Anonymity and Authorship," *New Literary History* 30 (1999), 877–95.
4. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josue V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 149.
5. Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 58.  
Papyrus rolls in ancient Greece and Rome were labeled by titles written on tags, called "syllabi," attached to their vellum covering. Collected works of authors were kept together in a separate bucket that would be marked "Plato," "Homer," or "Thucydides." For further information see Fredric G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932), 60 ff.
6. Much earlier, among others whose names we know, a Sumerian poetess of the twenty-third century B.C.E., Enheduanna, "left a considerable body of compositions of a very high order—seventeen centuries before Sappho. Her portrait has survived and her biography can be reconstructed in outline." See William W. Hallo, "Assyriology and the Canon," *The American Scholar* 59.1 (Winter 1990), 108. Hallo states that literature written in cuneiform (which continued in use until the first century B.C.E.) constitutes the oldest non-anonymous poetry in existence.
7. Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1–2.
8. Simon During, *Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), 124.
9. Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, ed. Michael Sadleir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 107, 205.
10. Byron to Murray, 4 December 1819, cited in Luke, 202. Byron first wrote to Moore on 19 September 1818, that he would not sign his poem because it is an experiment that he will discontinue "if it don't take." Later, in order to maintain the poem's formal anonymity, he wrote to Murray on 8 October 1820: "Recollect that if you put my name to 'Juan' in these canting days—any lawyer might oppose my guardian right of my daughter in Chancery . . ." See *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), vol. 6, 68; vol. 7, 196.
11. Jan Fergus, *Jane Austen: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 14 ff.
12. David Saunders and Ian Hunter, "Lessons from the 'Literatory': How to Historicize Authorship," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Spring 1991), 479–509.
13. D. F. McKenzie, "Stationers' Company Liber A: An Apologia," in *The Stationers' Company and the Book Trade 1550–1990*, eds. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1997), 39. I thank Douglas Brooks for bringing this instance to my attention.
14. Susan Stewart, in *Crimes of Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13, states that after 1662 the author's name was required, but this is not so; the 1662 act required only the printer's name, but also that the printer know the name of the author if asked.  
A copy of the 1637 decree can be found in *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1640 A.D.*, ed. Edward Arber, 5 vols. (London: Priv. print., 1877), vol. 4, 529 ff; the relevant text is section 8. The 1642 Parliamentary order was collected in the Thomason Tracts (B.M.E. 207.2; Wing E2639). When Parliament passed an ordinance for the licensing of the press on 14 June 1643 there was no mention of the author's name. Renewals of this ordinance (30 September 1647, 20 September 1649, and 1 January 1652/3), however, specifically require the name of the author to be printed on title pages; see *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, eds. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, 3 vols. (London: Pub. by H. M. Stationery off., printed by Wyman and Sons Limited, 1911). An order issued in the name of the Lord Protector on 26 August 1655 tried to effect more efficient enforcement of these ordinances; see Thomason Tracts, B.M.E. 1064.58. For the 1662 Licensing Act, see 14 Car. II, c. 33, in *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 5 (London: George Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1822). The relevant

- text is section 16: "And be it further enacted and declared that every person and persons that shall hereafter print or cause to be printed any Booke Ballad Chart Pourtracture or any thing or things whatsoever shall thereunto and therein print and set his or their owne Name or Names and also shall declare the Name of the Author thereof if he be thereunto required by the Licenser . . ." (430). This act was subsequently renewed without change until it was allowed to lapse in 1695.
15. Daniel Defoe, *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press* (1704), ed. John Robert Moore (Oxford: Blackwell for the Luttrell Society, 1948). Bolingbroke made a similar proposal around the time of the Stamp Act in 1712; cited in Irwin Ehrenpreis, *Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962–83), vol. 2, 568. In 1799, while the Seditious Societies Act was going through the House of Commons, it was suggested that "all anonymous works should have the name of the author printed on the title-page"; cited in C. H. Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (London: H. Johnson [etc., etc.] 1839), 800. In 1835, John Galt argued that all works should be signed because it was unfair for printers to be prosecuted while authors had a means of escape; "Anonymous Publications," *Fraser's Magazine* 11 (May 1835), 549–51.
  16. Hugh J. Luke, Jr., "The Publishing of Byron's *Don Juan*," *PMLA* 80 (1965), 200. The Seditious Societies Act of 1799 (39 George III, ca. 79) required that all presses be registered, and the name and address of the printer be given on the front of each single paper published, and "upon the first and last leaves of every paper or book which shall consist of more than one leaf"; cited in C. H. Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (London: H. Johnson [etc., etc.] 1839), 800.
  17. For this fascinating incident, see Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), 158 f.
  18. John Galt, "Anonymous Publications," *Fraser's Magazine* 11 (May 1835), 551.
  19. *Athenaeum*, 1 April 1871, 398; reprinted in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, ed. R. G. Cox (New York, 1970), 1. The review in *Spectator* considers the book's anonymity to be a wise move: "By all means let him bury the secret in the profoundest depths of his own heart, out of reach, if possible, of his own consciousness. The law is hardly just which prevents Tinsley Brothers from concealing their participation also" (3). Herbert Tucker called my attention to the phrase "inexpressive she" in *As You Like It* III.ii.10, and suggests that, although the meaning of "inexpressive" changed from "inexpressible" to "neutral," the reviewer must have had Shakespeare's line in mind.
  20. *The Quarterly Review* 84 (December 1848), 174.
  21. For a recent comprehensive survey of the debates on anonymity in Victorian journalism see Dallas Liddle, "Salesmen, Sportsmen, Mentors: Anonymity and Mid-Victorian Theories of Journalism," *Victorian Studies* 41 (1991), 31–68. For the *Times Literary Supplement*, see John Gross's policy statement, "Naming Names," *TLS* 7 (June 1974), 610–11, and letters to the editor on June 21 and June 28. See also Martin Amis's recollection of the transition, "The Coming of the Signature," *TLS* 17 (January 1992), 18. For an earlier version of the argument based on the position of the person writing, see a letter to Sylvanus Urban, *Gentleman's Magazine* (December 1787), 1044, given the title "Utility of the real names of our Correspondents" in the Table of Contents.
  22. *National Quarterly Review* 23 (1871), 42–3.
  23. Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 60, 204 n. 3.
  24. Paul Hammond, "Anonymity in Restoration Poetry," *The Seventeenth Century* 8 (1993), 130.
  25. Doris Lessing, *The Diaries of Jane Somers*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), vii.
  26. R. S. Woof, "Wordsworth's Poetry and Stuart's Newspapers: 1797–1803," *Studies in Bibliography* 15 (1962), 152 n. 5.
  27. Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 39–40.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Rehearsing the Absent Name: Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets Through Anonymity*

Marcy L. North

Modern editions of Tudor and Stuart literary texts consistently relegate early anonymity to a footnote. We read these texts as Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, and Milton's *Maske presented at Ludlow Castle* despite the fact that important early editions appeared anonymously.<sup>1</sup> Even the title of this essay on anonymity conforms to the modern expectation that early authors' names will frame any critical discussions of their works.<sup>2</sup> As missing names have resurfaced over the years, scholars have attached them to texts (or reattached texts to authors' names) with the assumption that attribution belongs to that illusive category of authors' intentions. The anonymity instigated by the author is no exception; scholars simply read the author's choice to remain anonymous as subordinate to the assumed ambition of the author. One could argue that replacing authors' names is necessary for our modern system of information management, but the practice unfortunately obscures several of the ways that texts were received, read, and interpreted in early modern England. For many types of early literature, anonymity worked as a meaningful frame, signaling the genre or publication medium of the work, its legality or illegality, and its institutional sponsorship or patronage. Anonymity pointed to the author's class status or gender, to his or her claims about the worth of the work, or to the particular time in an author's literary career (youth, for instance) with which the work was to be identified. Anonymity also defined certain texts as common wisdom or popular fable; these texts required no author because they belonged

to everyone and to no one. Even as late sixteenth-century booksellers discovered that popular names could sell books, anonymity remained incredibly common.<sup>3</sup> Lyric poems, ballads, controversy pamphlets, political satires, and play texts, to name only a few examples, circulated frequently without authors' names. Few writers of the period succeeded in avoiding anonymity; if they did not choose this familiar authorial stance themselves for some particular work or occasion, it might be chosen for them or happen to them at any point in the transmission of their works.

Although Shakespeare's name dominates the title of Thomas Thorpe's 1609 edition of the sonnets, more than one-half of the twenty-four individual Shakespeare sonnets that have been located in early manuscripts appear anonymously—a fact that has attracted little critical attention from scholars studying the sonnet variants.<sup>4</sup> Almost all of the anonymous manuscript copies of the sonnets appear in commonplace books from the second quarter of the seventeenth century, and it is possible that Shakespeare's name was simply lost in the intervening years between the Thorpe edition and the later circulation of these poems. There is reason to believe, however, that at least some of these sonnets appear anonymously because they originally circulated in a manuscript culture where names were highly unstable texts and where alternative, often discrete modes of authorship and text presentation thrived.<sup>5</sup> This essay asks what the anonymity of these post-publication copies of the sonnets can tell us about the sonnets' initial circulation and reception. Do the anonymous sonnets reveal assumptions about authorship and transmission that Shakespeare shared with coterie authors of his period? Do they contain traces not only of textual derivation but also of the material conditions under which Shakespeare worked? Could anonymity reveal something about the very author it threatens to conceal?

My argument builds upon Peter Beal's reluctance to dismiss these late manuscript copies of the sonnets as insignificant textually. "It is at least a possibility," he argues, "that certain of the texts found in miscellanies of the 1620s and 1630s ultimately derive from early MS copies of individual sonnets and have no connection whatsoever with the 1609 edition."<sup>6</sup> If Beal's qualified guess proves true, Shakespeare might have had manuscript circulation and even anonymity in mind as the medium and frame for his sonnets when he composed them. Using the seventeenth-century evidence and the few contemporary references to the early circulation of the sonnets, my essay recreates manuscript anonymity as a material and thematic frame for the sonnets and rereads them through that anonymity. Borrowing the critical technique in Arthur Marotti's essay on

Shakespeare's sonnets as literary property, I look within the sonnets for Shakespeare's awareness of contemporary attribution practices and for his familiarity with the unstable material conditions of poetry circulation.<sup>7</sup> Revisionist textual theorists such as Marotti, Beal, and Margreta de Grazia have made the terms "textual instability," "malleability," and "mediation" much more familiar in recent years, and they have argued convincingly that one cannot always categorize non-authorial mediation as an "error."<sup>8</sup> Yet few of these scholars have discussed anonymity's complex relationship to mediation, that is, anonymity's functionality at almost all levels of text production. Shakespeare, I want to argue, was acutely aware of that relationship.

My discussion highlights Sonnet 71, "No longer mourn for me when I am dead," which imagines its own anonymity and which appears anonymously along with Shakespeare's Sonnet 32 and poems by Drayton, Herbert, Donne, and Suckling in a mid-seventeenth-century commonplace book. Several of the other anonymous Shakespeare sonnets help me to build a credible context for this reading. Sonnet 116, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," appears in an anonymous expanded version in a seventeenth-century songbook.<sup>9</sup> Sonnet 128, "How oft when thou, my music, music play'st," appears anonymously in a composite collection in the Bodleian Library.<sup>10</sup> Of particular interest are the many anonymous copies of the popular "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow" that vary in important ways from the Thorpe edition. Although information about the transmission of Shakespeare's sonnets before 1609 is scarce, the seventeenth-century evidence captures and preserves certain aspects of the earlier circulation, and it identifies anonymity as a valuable interpretive frame and an important step in the early transmission process. The seventeenth-century manuscript copies of the sonnets show us a poet who faced the realistic possibility that, as he put it in Sonnet 72, "My name be buried where my body is."<sup>11</sup>

### Shakespeare and Social Anonymity<sup>12</sup>

Shakespeare is one of the most difficult authors to reread through early anonymity, for not only did his name develop into a market commodity quite early in his career, his name also functions today as a seemingly indisputable icon for the English literary canon and as a sacred standard of quality and genius.<sup>13</sup> Modern students struggle to imagine a Shakespeare text for which the author's name and reputation are not central editorial and literary frames.<sup>14</sup> Scholars, likewise, look to the written or printed name, the "William Shakespeare" or "W.S.," as the